



Alternative meats: eating feral animals

SA NEWS

Unique method of killing feral cats among research projects UniSA wants to fund through crowdsourcing

Tim Williams, Education Reporter, The Advertiser

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FERAL cats would be culled by injecting the native animals they prey on with poisonous implants, in a project UniSA wants the public to

fund through a crowdsourcing campaign.

Universities have begun using crowdfunding sites to fast-track or expand projects, fund research unlikely to receive traditional grants, and allow young academics to build a research profile and boost their chances of winning grants.

The feral cat-culling trial is one of three projects UniSA aims to fund through its first crowdfunding scheme launched this week, with targets as high as \$40,000.

Using natural poison from natives plants found in Western Australia, senior chemistry lecturer Dr Anton Blencowe wants to manufacture implants the size of a grain of rice to inject into small native mammals.

The implant would be inert until its host mammal was eaten, releasing the poison and killing feral cats, but not native predators which have much higher tolerances to the poison.

“For every native animal that is unfortunately attacked and eaten by a cat, hundreds of other native animals will be saved thanks to the implant,” Dr Blencowe wrote on the project’s campaign page on chuffed.org.

“The implants should make the difference between success and failure for many fauna reintroduction programs and vulnerable populations.”



Another project would expand research into the effectiveness of interactive video technology — the kind used by Adelaide-based Australian Dance Theatre in its acclaimed work *Proximity* — for the rehabilitation of stroke survivors.

The third would fund an education program for staff of non-government organisations to help them prevent suicide among asylum seekers.

If the projects reach their targets, UniSA will contribute an extra 20 per cent. The lead researcher for each project must commit between \$500 and \$1500 themselves, depending on their seniority. Donations over \$2 are tax deductible.

UniSA Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research) Tanya Monro said the chance to link researchers directly with the community was just as valuable as the money raised.

A crowdfunding campaign last year raised more than \$20,000 for a Flinders University study on how cage diving affects shark behaviour.

But a spokeswoman said crowdfunding would mostly be used by young academics “to kick off their research careers” by seeking smaller amounts of around \$6000, “ahead of them applying for larger and more traditional research grants”.

Universities each have different approval processes for crowdsourcing campaigns.

Adelaide University said use of crowdfunding had been “limited” so far, but it was “a growing and potentially exciting new avenue”.

“The university is currently developing a framework to manage these opportunities,” a spokesman said.

Details of the UniSA projects are at unisa.edu.au/crowdfunding



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