



World League's

Feline Protection Program

2019



*Framework of WLPA's approach
to no-kill cat rights and rescue*

feline protection team

Attending Vet

Dr Donna Schofield Attending Veterinarian

Corporate support for rehoming cats is appreciated from

PetO Annandale
PetO Alexandria
Rozelle Collectors' Market
Storage King Rozelle and Balmain
Beecroft Vet Hospital

WLPA Committee of Management

Ms Halina Thompson	President, WLPA/ Foster carer
Dr Teresa Carden	Management Committee Member/ Foster carer
Ms Margaret Bowman	Hon Secretary & Weekend Adoption Centre Carer
Ms Sue Ward	Hon Treasurer
Ms Trish Kinsella	Committee Member
Ms Leone Manwaring	Fundraiser, Management Committee Member

Public Officer

Ms Helen Olde

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Ms Albertina Dishlyanova "	Weekend animal carer (from July 2019)
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WLPA is entirely donation-based and is a registered charity. Donations can be directed to the following website and are appreciated:

www.wlpa.org/donate

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introduction

Throughout the world the extent to which species of wild cat are at risk as species, varies considerably. In Australia, where neither wild cats nor companion animal cats are indigenous, the focus of cat protection is on the latter group of urban owned and unowned cats. World League for Protection of Animals (WLPA) assists Australian **urban** cats under its Feline Protection Program, leaving aside the important question of domestic cat management and population control in rural and remote Australia where cats undoubtedly impact and threaten, as humans do, native animals.

This document overviews WLPA's Feline Protection Program in the Australian urban context and identifies the policies which further elaborate WLPA practices in cat rescue, rights, rehoming and welfare.

Current estimates are that there may be more unowned than owned cats in some Australian capital cities. These two populations, owned and unowned domestic cats overlap: owned cats frequently become abandoned and they may migrate to colonies of free-roaming, unowned cats. Most free-roaming unowned cats can become domesticated and homed and when rescued early, their kittens most often become loving pets like any other kitten. Interventions for each group also overlap. Individuals from both groups are given equal consideration as to their welfare, their rights to life and a right to a safe loving home and their right to protection by WLPA and others.

That there are so many unowned and undesexed urban cats, whose origins stem from abandoned and mismanaged pets, presents a confronting welfare problem. Societal mismanagement of cats results in as many as 55,000 surplus kittens being born each year in Sydney alone for whom homes must be found. Thousands die prior to rescue and each year up to 80,000 healthy cats and kittens are euthanized by vets or by Council-funded pounds and shelters in Australia, some 37,000 in NSW. This is because resources are not allocated to rehoming and a judgment is made that homes will not be found for all of them (a view that leads to cultures of killing).

The no-kill stance of WLPA

Cat overpopulation is the single greatest feasibility threat to resourcing and sustaining feline protection programs. A no-kill stance has both potential and limitations at this time.

- Its potential is that ongoing campaigning can potentially change cat abandonment rates, improve cat containment and improve desexing rates.
- Its limitation is that WLPA as a primarily a foster-carer-based service, can only take in and rehome low numbers of cats and kittens.

Urban cat protection then is too big a job for any single animal charity and WLPA can only contribute to this larger effort. The work is costly, labour-intensive, is often upsetting and involves multiple simultaneous approaches.

WLPA's Feline Protection Program is organised under the following activities:

- Media and social media campaigns
- Foster caring including for a time through the Cat Cafe
- Assertive rehoming
- Desexing unowned community cats
- Assistance to disadvantaged cat rescue volunteers

WLPA is a 16 D Exempt rescue charity under the Act

WLPA provides a low-intake, no-kill Adoption Centre and foster carer program as the centre piece to our rehoming efforts. We cared for over 620 cats in 2018 and rehomed 388 along with rabbits and dogs. This work is donation, volunteer and vet-partner supported. In 2017 WLPA became a recognised 16D Exempt charity under the Companion Animals Act with permission to rescue from pounds to save the lives of animals already trapped in that kill system. In reality, most of our work is undertaken to prevent animals being impounded. Activities include nutrition for unowned cats, population control of designated colonies of unowned cats and for unwanted cats who are really semi-owned ('community cats'); helping local neighborhoods to manage lost, abandoned and unowned cats to prevent colonies emerging; kitten rescue and assertive rehoming; and assistance to disadvantaged cat rescuers. WLPA hosts an appointment-based adoptions centre 7 days a week.

Campaigns: 'Get Netted' and 'Adopt an Adult Cat: the Mature Choice'

These campaigns aim to address the behaviours and contexts of cat mismanagement. We believe they should be secure. Lack of security is particularly a problem when seeking to rehome an adult cat.

'change must happen to ensure humane societal management of cats'

WLPAs media and social media campaigns seek social change in neglectful and ambivalent attitudes towards cats, both owned and unowned. It challenges the tendencies of Australians to demonise cats leading to the abandonment and maltreatment of them. It also challenges the tendency to trivialise 'cat people' and cat rescue and rights work.

Just as most Australians are appalled by the slaughter of whales, our campaigns ask that people step up for cats to protect and care for them in a variety of ways. WLPAs convey that it is no longer acceptable for people to assert, 'I'm not a cat person' and WLPAs communicate that it is morally unacceptable for any person to ignore a cat in need in their midst eg a lost cat outside their home or an unowned cat with kittens in their garden.

Our media campaigns 2018-2021 aim to deliver the following key messages:

- promoting adult cat adoption "Adopt an Adult Cat, The Mature Choice"
- removing landlord-imposed barriers to pet ownership
- moving from pet-friendly to pet-safe homes and apartments ('get netted! Campaign') which aims to increase cat security
- increasing cat desexing
- increasing responsible pet ownership in culturally informed ways
- promoting no-kill responses by the authorities to community cats
- engaging the community for resourcing cat rescue and care.

To ameliorate the suffering of cats we must enhance the capacity of citizens to care about and to care for cats. These messages are delivered year to year and in different communities and contexts as needed.

cat rescue

Cat rescue is performed by small groups of friends or neighbors who work together with WLPA to be a first point of contact in a neighbourhood for cats in need or in trouble, for example:

- An abandoned pet
- A lost cat
- A migratory undesexed male cat causing disturbance
- An unowned cat who has had kittens in someone's garden
- An emerging colony of urban unmanaged free-roaming cats
- One or more kittens found without their mother cat
- An owned cat with an injury or clear welfare need for advocacy.

Like other prevention and early intervention programs (eg Neighborhood Watch for crime prevention) community cat rescue provide a way of organising EARLY for the best outcomes. A volunteer from WLPA encourages people to ban together cooperatively to manage a situation which if left without a response, would result in a major animal welfare problem emerging. Cat rescue involves the following outcomes:

1. Identify local people who are willing to work together as early as possible to manage unowned, lost or abandoned cats or kittens.
2. Prevent new colonies of unowned cats emerging.
3. Attend in a timely way to solo animals needing assistance.
4. Achieve neighbourhood resourcing for cat welfare eg host garage sales to pay to desex a cat or kitten or to support feeders of cats.
5. Maintain contact with WLPA or other nominated cat charity acting as a lead agency for the Compassion Circle for equipment, rehoming help and access to discounted veterinary care.
6. A suburb by suburb organised response for any other cat need.

Over time such groups educate the community toward sustainable shared care of cats in need and more responsible pet ownership. This will in turn, reduce the current very significant burden on cat welfare charities working with thousands of abandoned cats each year.

intervene early

foster caring

Foster caring provides a normal home environment and routine for rescued cats and kittens. It ensures happy kittenhoods for hundreds of rescued kittens, and gives adult and special needs cats the care they need to make a new start. In some cases, foster care enables a lost or unowned cat to end their lives in comfort and knowing they are cared for until it is time to end their suffering.

Foster caring avoids these animals entering shelters or living in catteries so that they are socialised as family pets as early as possible after weaning. Most importantly, foster caring avoids the overcrowding of animals which is central to maintaining quality care.

Foster caring is usually for 2-3 months for kittens during which time all opportunities for the kitten to be viewed by visiting prospective adopters are provided. Foster caring for a juvenile or adult cat is a minimum of 3 months and may take up to 12 months. Litters of kittens are kept together and with their mother cat until adoption wherever possible. Additional litters can only be taken by a carer once the first litter is adopted. WLPA's foster carer coordinator, attending vet and home visitors provide support to foster carers.

WLPA foster carer recruitment is ongoing because the work can be very demanding. Each foster carer gives countless hours of their valued time to care for these animals. Foster caring aims to achieve the following outcomes:

- Socialisation by adult cats for kittens and keeping litters together
- Keeping additional litters entirely separate/ never mixing litters
- Continuous care by one carer (or family) from rescue to adoption
- 100% security while also providing sunlight and access to outdoor play
- Premium nutrition to help the cat/kitten be healthy and homeable
- Scheduled routine veterinary care via WLPA vet partners
- Assertive rehoming commencing at 8 weeks of age
- Placement in adoptive homes from 10 weeks of age
- 1 week follow up post-adoption to ensure the kitten/cat has settled

(also see assertive rehoming outcomes)

happy cats



The joy of fostering Daisy from rescue, to the arms of adoptive parents



assertive rehoming

Assertive rehoming is a philosophy and a set of practices found through experience and through research to work to rehome a cat. All cat types are eligible where the vet and WLPA agree that homing is in the best interest of the individual cat. That is, cats who were free-roaming prior to rescue are eligible for rehoming regardless of their socialisation status. It questions the idea that it is necessary that cats achieve some measure of socialisation 'readiness' prior to rehoming. Instead, assertive rehoming searches for adopters who can facilitate care and socialisation (the carer fits the cat) rather than the cat having to pass a socialisation test prior to rehoming (the cat fits the carer). Cats ideally make their adaptation with their forever carer, while WLPA provides support, garden enclosures and so on.

As a philosophy, assertive rehoming accepts almost all cats or kittens for rehoming consideration, since as a companion animal species, cats have a basic right to a home whether or not they are someone's 'pet'.

Assertive rehoming also takes a stand against the overcrowding of cats as it does against the killing of healthy cats and kittens, which is commonplace in pounds and many other shelters. WLPA rehoming is only to those households with low cat numbers (up to 5 cats).

Catteries and sanctuaries while unavoidable in some circumstances are the antithesis of assertive rehoming. They represent only a necessary and temporary half-way house to a cat's forever home but not what the rescuer community should aim for. Assertive rehoming aims to help every cat journey to his or her forever home under the following principles:

1. Optimism for every cat for eligibility for adoption
2. Honesty about the cat's history, health, socialisation and needs
3. Act early to advertise the cat, including with professional photography
4. Educate / support the adopter about the needs of the cat
5. Provide a home visit to approve the adoption and settle the cat in
6. Provide 4 months minimum follow up
7. Accept return if required
8. Usual caveats to adoption apply: no unsafe balconies, no busy roads, no rehoming to those with more than 5 cats already.

What works?

Assertive rehoming is a coordinated, **team-based** and continued effort that is made until the cat is homed in a safe and loving environment. For kittens, this requires a **7-day per week team-based effort**. Effort is first concentrated on strategies which work the fastest eg on-line rehoming via GumTree website and staffing and responding to telephone enquiries. This and other websites which yield most success are used first, followed by all other strategies:

- Agency and additional pet homing websites
- Hard copy posters at vets, pet stores and shopping centres
- Facebook and social media and targeted emailing
- Play dates and trials
- Strategies which do not expose the kitten to stress are deployed to ensure a cat is homed
- Press advertisements

As strategies do not elicit results, new ones are attempted immediately.

Adoption Centre

WLPA conducts a by-appointment adoption centre 7 days from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm to the public. Kittens likely to interest a person are brought to the centre for viewing with advanced notice. Prospective adopters can view photos of all cats for adoption in the network. Educational materials, toys and caging to settle a cat in a new home is available. **The centre is open from 10 am to volunteers on weekdays and from 9am on weekends to facilitate care.**

Animal Advocate Program

Where a kitten or cat is not adopted within the 4 month period of standard assertive rehoming, the cat is provided with an animal advocate. This person assesses all strategies used to home the cat and renews effort using their social networks. This mechanism ensures that no cat is left forgotten in foster care without continuing homing effort using personalised effort. The animal advocate is appointed within the rescue network and changes for the cat each 3 months until one secures the cat a home. (The advocate is not the primary carer of the cat who is continuous, but must meet the cat).

desexing community cats

Unwanted kittens suffer the burden when people fail to desex their cats. Large numbers of 'unowned' cats need desexing as do cats where financial help is needed to get an owned cat desexed.

Trapping, Neuter and Release (TNR) is a well-documented, evidence-based part-solution to the problem of containing populations of unowned cats. It works where there are boundaries to a colony (such as a water way or railway) and where migratory cats are kept at bay. One hundred percent of the cats at a location must be desexed and kittens must all be removed permanently from the colony. By year 2, colony numbers should stabilise. The problem is, the authorities oppose this intervention suggesting it is cruel for cats born in the wild to remain in the wild or 'homeless'.

WLPA's approach is nonetheless to desex unowned community cats, both those in colonies, and individuals living in gardens of peoples' homes. The outcomes expected from WLPA-managed desexing programs are:

- A leader is appointed and works to coordinate care at a defined site
- Volunteers working on a designated site are covered by WLPA insurances and work is conducted with duty of care to human and animal safety
- Feeders are rostered, are reliable and are persons who can afford the cost of feeding colony cats on an ongoing shared basis
- Feeders and rescuers work as a team for successful desexing work
- Feeders and rescuers engage local community support
- Photograph identification of all animals on the colony is undertaken
- Microchip ID is linked with photographic ID after desexing.
- Animals are vaccinated, desexed and are rehomed **to a carer/owner** in accordance with WLPA policies and procedures.
- Cats are provided with appropriate detailed assessment by a vet at the time of desexing: dental check, worming, vaccine and fitness.
- Cats are provided with 10 days post-operative care by the rescuer.
- All kittens under 7 months of age are considered eligible for rehoming.
- Adults are rehomed under the care of specific property owners.

population control

policy summary on feline welfare

Intake of kittens and cats to WLPA

Intake may vary year to year and should have clear well-communicated targets of the numbers of cats and numbers of kittens able to be accepted, depending on the skills and availability of volunteers and the number of paid staff to coordinate care, the Adoption Centre and foster care.

WLPA is open to intake 7 days a week by telephone (NOT EMAIL, NOT FACEBOOK). Consideration may be given to inhibiting intake, but currently, phones are answered in an attempt to accept animals otherwise at risk.

Numbers able to be rescued is determined from year to year by the Management Committee in close consultation with staff and volunteers after all available evaluation information is collated and discussed. Kitten intake is dealt with entirely separately to adult intake since the risk management is very different. The overall goal is to assist the maximum number of cats and kittens in any one year possible, while managing risk effectively. Intake should be equitable and different rescuers given a target.

Unsocialised adults are not be accepted to the Adoption Centre. Kittens seldom live at the Adoption Centre but are shown by foster carers by appointment. The interface between foster care and the Adoption Centre should take note of the prevention of disease.

Adoptions at WLPA are donations of health care for each cat

- Cat adoption: adult \$150
- Kitten adoption 8 to 36 weeks: \$280
- Kitten pair adoption \$250 each kitten. Should be a sibling pair if possible.
- Teenage cat 37 weeks to 1 year \$200 to \$230
- No kitten or cat is permitted to be given away.

- Adopters are not permitted to avoid routine health care prior to, or that scheduled after adoption in order to reduce the cost of the kitten's health.
- Members and volunteers of WLPAs who are rescuing kittens or cats who are desexed or otherwise treated at WLPAs expense, must pay the adoption fee. No one is to keep cats long-term without adopting.
- Adoption paperwork is completed within 1 week of the adoption by the Adoption Centre staff and entered /updated on the database.

Assertive rehoming

Assertive rehoming is the philosophy of rehoming. It enables a no-kill stance. It refers to the **systematic, individualised and sustained effort made by a team** to rehome a cat or kitten. Multiple, concurrent approaches of known-to-work strategies aim to remove barriers to cat adoption and to respond quickly when a prospective adopter enquires about a cat.

Cat surrender

A fee is payable where a person is surrendering a cat or kitten to WLPAs.

A fee is payable to WLPAs when a rescuer rescues an adult cat reflecting that it takes a year to rehome an adult cat at a minimum cost of \$1000 in care.

The surrender fee per kitten is \$20.

The surrender fee for an undesexed cat is \$300. A tax deductible receipt for this donation is provided to the person surrendering the cat. The desexing is done immediately the animal is ready, unless the cat is pregnant.

The fee for a found abandoned pet cat who is desexed is \$200.

The fee is waived if the surrender is from rescuers managing designated cat colonies where colony desexing is taking place. Endless work at the one colony is not permitted. A strategic and evaluated approach is encouraged. If a non-systematic haphazard approach is taken, the surrender fee applies.

If a volunteer finds a kitten or cat or knows of a friend who has cats to rehome, the surrender fees still strictly apply (and no cats are killed).

Fee-for-service humane cat removal from private property

WLPAs provide a fee-for-service humane alternative to pest control where the removal of a free-roaming or unowned cat is required by a property owner. The outcome for the cat will be rehoming but may take up to a year.

Foster carer support and acknowledgement

It is the policy and practice of WLPA to value, thank and support foster carers for their dedicated and emotionally-charged work.

Foster carers have 24 hour access to nominated support persons who can trouble shoot regarding cat care and approve vet care.

Foster carers may claim out of pocket expenses for transporting an animal, foods and related care costs and emergency vet care (after consulting with the President or Coordinator or their nominee).

Foster carers are listed and thanked in publications of the association.

Foster carers are consulted about all management plans for the journey of an animal to their forever home and regarding the health care of a cat or kitten. Foster carers are full partners in this decision making. Foster carers must approve of an adoption of a cat or kitten they are caring for.

Foster carers complete a Foster Carer Agreement and their homes are approved for fostering particular types of cats or kittens. WLPA may provide enclosures, equipment and caging to assist foster carers' work.

It is expected that foster cats will not go into insecure gardens, nor to apartments or houses with unnetted balconies.

Foster carers must agree with and participate in the policy and practices of assertive rehoming. That is, they cannot keep an animal for life without adopting.

Foster carers have first choice to adopt those in their care.

Foster carers may not give away the cat or kittens in their care.

The Centre Coordinator coordinates carers and provides direct support to a portion of the overall number of carers. A number of other foster carer supporters work to support care and rehoming on a district by district basis.

Health care for rescued cats and kittens

All kittens and cats where possible are given a fungal topical bathing upon arrival or as early as possible after arrival unless they are injured, have wounds or flu.

WLPA provides a microchip from 8 weeks and two vaccinations 3 to 4 weeks apart from age 6 weeks and veterinarian assessment for all rescued cats in

readiness for immediate rehoming when a kilo in weight and when over 8 weeks (ideally 10 weeks).

Kittens vaccinated for the first time at 6 weeks are provided with 3 vaccinations, the adoptive family paying for the third wherever possible. Those vaccinated later are at risk of death from feline parvo virus, but may receive only 2 vaccines at the discretion of the vet.

Unsocialised cats are provided with microchip and vaccination at the time of desexing and are wormed twice prior to rehoming. This aids the population health of the colony and the individual. It is the preference that releases be adoptions to competent carers who make a lifetime commitment to the feeding and health care of the cat.

Cats are not rehomed if just desexed until 10 to 14 days.

Identification of rescued cats and kittens

Rescuers working with WLPA using their own funds to pay for vet partner services should microchip the cat in their own name. Cats from colonies who are the day to day responsibility of a rescuer are deemed to be owned by the rescuer whether or not assistance is offered from WLPA from time to time.

It is the responsibility of rescuers to register their rescued animals and to ensure that all such animals are on the Companion Animal database, the Pet Registry.

Mandated desexing

All cats and kittens must be desexed as part of the adoption contract.

Four months followup support by WLPA aims to ensure that desexing is actually done: it is provided by vets, with transport through WLPA's adoption centre volunteers. Telephone support builds rapport and garners further support for WLPA frequently resulting in follow up 2nd and 3rd adoptions.

People preferring to desex their cat at their own vet (independently of the adoption process) must provide a desexing certificate to WLPA by the time the cat is six months old.

Desexing occurs at 4-6 months of age. It may be done earlier if this is the kindest way to microchip, vaccinate and desex the kitten under general anaesthetic. Generally however, cats are socialised, well and adjusted after rescue, and are well-settled into their temporary placement or adoptive home, prior to facing surgery.

WLPA does not support early desexing at 1 kilo.

Nutrition for unowned cats and kittens

WLPA cannot undertake the life-term care, custody or feeding of any cat. All cats must be assertively rehomed by the rescuer with WLPA assistance or by foster carers and adoption centre/secretariat staff.

Where the cat is not available or suitable for adoption WLPA members invite members of the community to take responsibility for the feeding and costs associated with caring for unowned cats.

In cases of extreme hardship WLPA may provide time-limited assistance for up to one year until those persons in the community can be found.

WLPA may provide volunteers to assist on a roster of feeders for the life of the cat.

Pre-adoption foster care placements - length of stay

Cats and kittens remain wherever possible **with the one foster carer from rescue to adoption** to reduce stress, disease spread and to optimise the socialisation of the kitten or cat.

Welfare rate desexing

Welfare rate desexing is provided on **a case-by-case basis by WLPA Vet Partners by negotiation**. Vets may decline to offer the discount at any time. When the discount is given, this service represents thousands of dollars of donated services by participating vets per year. Welfare rate desexing is **exclusively for homeless rescued cats and kittens**, to facilitate the early adoption of rescued cats and kittens and for those from colonies subject to formal TNRR programs. Welfare rate desexing is not organised for people in the general community for their own pets. Nor is it used for the desexing of rescuer pets or the strays found by their friends.

Welfare rate non-routine health care

Very few vets can provide discounted general medical services other than the routine health care of cats and kittens at the time of desexing. Welfare rate veterinarian services for injury, dental and illness are strictly limited and must be approved by the President of the association, an office bearer of the association where the President is unavailable, or by the coordinator of the secretariat. These services may include euthanizing a cat, health care for the older cat, disease detection and medicines.

Adoption Policy

WLPA adopts to people aged 24 and over with settled lives able to make a life-long commitment to the pet for the length of that animal's life.

WLPA is careful about adopting to vegans and vegetarians and must ensure they are willing to serve raw meat and foods made of meat to cats.

WLPA prefers not to adopt to people 80 and over due to mobility of the adopter and the escape vulnerability of adult cats.

WLPA does not adopt out to apartments without flyscreens.

WLPA does not adopt out to apartments without either flyscreens or netted or secure balconies to ensure a cat is safe from falling to their death/escape.

WLPA does not allow pets to be adopted as gifts or surprises.

Cats may be returned with refund less \$40 within 2 weeks of adopting.

Cats ,may be returned thereafter with a surrender fee and one month's notice.

Kittens should be adopted to homes with air conditioning where possible.

Ventilation (for health) and sunlight (for quality of life) are important considerations in assessing a home as a suitable life-long habitat for cats.

White cats and cats likely to get skin cancer must be indoor cats.

All cats must be inside the boundary of the property secured by netting, fencing, outdoor enclosures or other technologies.

Adoption Education and Home Visit

It is mandated that all animals adopted out by WLPA are visited at least once. This is usually at delivery of an adult and a week after a kitten is adopted or within 10 days of the adoption, if a kitten.

The Post Adoption Services Manager schedules these visits with relevant, skilled and trained volunteers.

The reason is that adults are escape risks and must be provided with a cage or tent by WLPA at the point of adoption and delivered and settled by a person who knows the cat (foster carer or Adoption Centre team member).

A kitten may be safe to take home but needs checking a week later for runny eyes, nutrition, behaviour, toileting and so on.

The excitement of selecting a new pet often means that the adopter does not absorb what information they are given at the adoption. A home visit is a better opportunity to do paperwork and education in the comfort of the new home.

Animal Paperwork

Must be done at law at the point of adoption along with payment or as soon as possible thereafter. WLPA explains it may take a week to conclude paperwork through the mail.



Cats enjoying The Living Room at the Adoption Centre



GET NETTED

Garden enclosures protect your cats

Stop cats going missing

Stop thousands being killed at pounds each year

Stop horrific injuries from balcony falls

World League for Protection of Animals Inc.

www.wlpa.org . 02 98174892