



The WORLD LEAGUE for PROTECTION of ANIMALS, Inc.

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Feline Protection Program (FPP)

'Step up for cats'

2012



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

contents

Feline protection team

Introduction

Campaign 'Step up for Cats'

Cat Compassion Community Circles

Foster Caring

Assertive Rehoming

Trapping Neuter Rehome or Release

Policy summary on feline welfare

feline protection team

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Dr Donna Schofield	Attending Veterinarian
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Jess Davis	Foster Carer and PetStock rehoming program
Meg Cressey	Administration

Caring for Community Cats - Compassion Circle Leaders

Halina Thompson	North West Sydney
Chris Letts	Marrickville and Inner West
Devina Celeste	Inner City
Dr Teresa Buss-Carden	Telopea, Dundas
Margaret & Dick Woodleigh	Campsie
Margaret Hamilton	St Leonards
Wendi Reis	Engadine

Contributing Vet Partners (discounted and donated health care to homeless cats and kittens)

Dr Ben Sjevera & Team, Princes Highway Veterinarian Hospital, Kogarah
Dr Donna Schofield, Pet Cure Pty Ltd, Glebe
Campsie Veterinarian Hospital
The Cat Hospital, Paddington
Lane Cove Veterinarian Hospital
Fig Tree Veterinarian Hospital
Bass Hill Veterinarian Hospital
Box Hill Veterinarian Hospital
ActiVet Carlingford Veterinarian Clinic
Lyons Road Veterinarian Hospital, Drummoyne
Balmain Veterinarian Hospital
Petersham Veterinarian Hospital
West Ryde Veterinarian Hospital

Rescue the Rescuer Partners (Rehoming and special interventions)

Elenora Heights Veterinarian Hospital
Brookvale Veterinarian Hospital
Gladesville Veterinarian Hospital
Maggies Rescue, St Peters

Corporate support for rehoming cats is appreciated from

PetStock Management and Staff, Camperdown Hills (kitten foods in the rehoming display)
Royal Canin (donated foods)
Animal Welfare League

introduction

Throughout the world the extent to which species of wild cat are at risk 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. WLPA deals only with Australian **urban** cat welfare under this Feline Protection Program, leaving aside for now, the important question of domestic cat management and population control in rural and remote Australia where cats may impact more on native animal welfare.

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

Current estimates are that there may be more unowned than owned cats in some Australian capital cities. These two populations, owned vs 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 home and to protection by WLPA.

That there are so many unowned and undesexed urban cats, whose origins stem from abandoned 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. This is because resources are not allocated to rehoming and a judgment is made that homes will not be found for all of them.

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 and improve desexing rates.

- Its limitation is that WLPAs as a no-shelter, 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 WLPAs can only contribute to this larger effort. The work is costly, labour-intensive and involves multiple simultaneous approaches.

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

- 'Step up for cats' media and social media campaign
- Cat Community Compassion Circles
- Trapping neuter rehoming or release (TNRR)
- Foster caring
- Assertive rehoming
- Assistance to disadvantaged cat rescue volunteers

Making a local hands-on contribution

The WLPAs provide a low-intake, no-shelter, foster carer and on-line rehoming-based program in Sydney and surrounds. This work is donation, volunteer and vet-partner supported. Activities include nutrition for unowned cats, population control of designated colonies of unowned cats ('community cats'); helping local neighborhoods to manage lost, abandoned and unowned cats to prevent colonies emerging ('Cat Community Compassion Circles'); kitten rescue and assertive rehoming; and assistance to disadvantaged cat rescuers. WLPAs host an appointment-based adoptions centre 7 days a week. From December to June each year, kittens are the focus of rehoming effort, while for the remainder of the year, juvenile and adult cats are homed.

Campaign: 'step up for cats'

The slogan, 'step up for cats' addresses the behaviours and contexts of cat mismanagement in Australian society. This is the other major approach and is outlined in detail in the next few pages.

step up for cats

'step up for cats'

This media and social media campaign seeks social change in neglectful, and ambivalent attitudes towards cats, both owned and unowned, in urban Australia. 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 the work of cat rescue.

Just as most Australians are appalled by the slaughter of whales, this campaign asks that people 'step up for cats' to protect and care for them in a variety of contexts and ways. It will convey that it is no longer acceptable for people to assert, 'I'm not a cat person' and will 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.

Step up for Cats is a long-term undertaking (2012-2020); we must educate people about all the issues that lead to the overpopulation of cats, that in turn leads to the euthanasing of healthy cats and kittens and educate them about what needs cats have and how to meet those needs.

This national electronic and social media campaign 2012-2020 aims to deliver key cat welfare messages and urges Australians to step up for cats in the following ways:

- removing landlord-imposed barriers to pet ownership
- increasing cat desexing
- increasing cat security to reduce road kill
- increasing responsible pet ownership in culturally sensitive ways
- promoting no-kill responses by the authorities to community cats
- engaging the community for resourcing cat welfare.

To ameliorate the suffering of cats we must enhance the capacity of citizens to care about and to care for cats. 'Step up for Cats' tells people directly what to do at the level of individual ethics and action. Importantly, it is a generic slogan and umbrella campaign name under which selected messages can be delivered year to year and in different communities and contexts as needed.

social change

cat compassion circles

Cat Compassion Community Circles are small groups of citizens who work together to be a first point of contact in a neighbourhood for cats in need or in trouble. The cat may be any cat in any predicament, 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 a clear welfare need for advocacy.

Like other prevention and early intervention programs (eg Neighborhood Watch for crime prevention) community cat compassion circles provide a way of organising EARLY for feline welfare. They provide a contact person or group in neighborhoods for local people to ban together cooperatively to 'step up for cats'. They manage a situation which if left without a compassion circle, would result in a major animal welfare problem emerging. Community cat compassion circles achieve the following outcomes:

1. Identify local people who are willing to work together as early intervention 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 circles of compassion will 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.

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. WLPA's foster carer coordinator, attending vet and feline protection team 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
- 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 prior to 8 weeks of age
- Placement in adoptive homes from 8 weeks of age
- 1 week follow up post-adoption to ensure the kitten/cat has settled

(also see assertive rehoming outcomes)

happy cats

assertive rehoming

Assertive rehoming is both a rescue 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 as firm 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 adopts a 'its just one less', rather than an 'its just one more', mentality to help every cat journey to his or her forever home. The following principles apply for safe assertive rehoming:

1. Optimism for every cat for eligibility for adoption
2. Honesty about the cat's history, health 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 6 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 10 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 walk-in adoption centre weekdays from 11.00 am to 6.00 pm and an appointment-based centre for weekends. Kittens likely to interest a person are brought to the centre for viewing. 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.

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).

Rescuing the Rescuer

This program rehomes adult cats from over-enrolled rescuers: those whose numbers are too large due to over-rescuing. The program recognises overcrowding can happen easily but must be prevented to maintain care quality. It operates year round, with concentrated effort after kitten season.

tnrr for community cats

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, and where cats are desexed and kittens are removed permanently from the colony. **By year 2, colony numbers should stabilise.**

However, WLPA adopts TNRR: Trapping, Neuter, **Rehome** or Release to facilitate population control and the rehoming of all kittens from designated managed colonies. WLPA will consider some individual adult cats for rehoming where they have an inability to compete on the colony; where they are dumped at colonies or where it is in the interest of the cat. The outcomes expected from WLPA-managed TNRR programs are:

- A leader is appointed and works to coordinate TNRR at a defined site
- Volunteers working on a designated site are covered by WLPA insurances where the site is an approved TNRR site 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 and all the cats can be identified by name prior to removal.
- Microchip ID is linked with photographic ID after each animal is desexed so that cats are not trapped for desexing twice.
- Animals are desexed and released or are rehomed in accordance with WLPA policies and procedures, ensuring that traps are never left set and unattended.
- Cats are transported to the vet on the morning after the night's rescue to suitably experienced vets in managing colony cats.
- Cats are provided with appropriate detailed assessment by a vet at the time of desexing: dental; worming, and fitness for release.
- Cats are provided with post-operative care by the rescuer.
- All kittens under 7 months of age are considered eligible for rehoming.

policy summary on feline welfare

Adoption

Cat adoption costs from \$200 per kitten or cat up to 1 year old to cover the cost of routine health care and early kitten care. Cats older than this are adopted from \$170 but the true cost of their health care is also around \$200 where discounted veterinarian services have been obtained.

No kitten is permitted to be given away. Nor are adopters permitted to avoid routine health care prior to, or that scheduled after adoption.

Members and volunteers of WLPA who are rescuing kittens or cats who are desexed or otherwise treated at WLPA expense, must apply the adoption fee and then reimburse WLPA for these veterinarian expenses.

Assertive rehoming

Assertive rehoming is a principal policy objective of WLPA that 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 WLPA. This is \$30 per desexed adult cat and \$10 per kitten where the animals are brought to WLPA. The surrender fee for an undesexed cat is \$80. A tax deductible receipt for this donation is provided to the person surrendering the cat.

The fee is waived if the surrender is from rescuers managing designated cat colonies where colony desexing is taking place and where the cat cannot be released.

Fee-for-service humane cat removal from private property

WLPA provides 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. The fee is comparable to pest control being \$200 per cat where WLPA removes the cat and takes him or her into WLPA care.

Foster carer support and acknowledgement

It is the policy and practice of WLPA to value, thank and support foster carers for their dedicated 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 his or her 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.

Foster carers must agree with and participate in the policy and practices of assertive rehoming.

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 and two vaccinations and veterinarian assessment for all rescued cats in readiness for immediate rehoming.

Kittens vaccinated for the first time at 8 weeks are provided with 3 vaccinations, the adoptive family paying for the third wherever possible.

Unsocialised cats for return rather than rehoming are provided with microchip and vaccination at the time of desexing and are wormed twice prior to release. This aids the population health of the colony and the individual.

Male cats are released after 2 days. Females are released after flank desexing between 4 and 10 days. Females with mid-line desexing are released after 10 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.

Those rescuers using WLPA accounts at vets to desex a homeless cat, require WLPA consent prior. They should microchip the cat to themselves or WLPA and return all adoption funds to WLPA. The adoptive family will be issued with a WLPA receipt and will be eligible for followup by WLPA as needed. Full compliance with the NSW Companion Animals Act is required.

Mandated desexing

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

Six months followup aims to ensure that desexing is actually done: it is provided by vets, with transport through WLPA's adoption centre volunteers.

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.

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 member assistance or by foster carers and adoption centre/secretariat staff.

Where the cat is not available or suitable for adoption and is released to a colony after desexing, 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

Cats and kittens remain wherever possible with the one foster carer from rescue to adoption to reduce stress and socialisation setbacks.

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.

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.

World League for Protection of Animals

Feline Rescue & Rehoming Program

HEALTH CARE RECORD

Primary Carer or Foster Carer:

To be completed upon rescue until end of follow up period once re-homed or released. Provide copy to new owner.



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Date rescued:		General condition & special needs:						
Cat Name:		M	F	Chip No:	Colour	Breed	Type: (C)(S)(O)+(LQ)	
				Estimated DOB:				
Ringworm baths (min x1)	Ringworm oral meds if >6wks	Parasite & Wormers ≥4wks a) b) c) d)		Flea Treat & Product	Immunisation if ≥8wks	ReHomed to:	Desexed	Change of Owner form done or release date
<i>(insert dates of each)</i>	<i>(insert dates)</i>	a) All wormer b) Tape wormer c) Baycox d) Maintenance wormer liquid		<i>(insert dates)</i>	<i>(insert dates & clinic)</i>	Date:	<i>(insert date)</i>	Date released:
						To:	Issues if any:	
						Phone:		
						Mob:		
						Email:		(or) Change of owner form sent to Council if re-homed:
						Address:		
						New Name:		(or) Cat remains in foster care:
						Paid: \$		

						*Certificate must be photocopied	
TYPE: C=Colony cat CK=Colony Kitten S=Stray (ie abandoned or lost) OS=Stray that is found i chip/owned SK= stray kitten LQ=Lactating Queen <i>record on the back additional information as needed</i>							

