

Submission
No 40

INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Chris' Cat Rescue

Date Received: 27 October 2024

Lately my rescue has become a dumping ground for undesexed abandoned pets, not street cats as I usually focus on. Currently I have over 12 friendly mums and litters under my rescue taken in within the past 2 weeks. I get messages daily to take people's pets as they don't want to/or can't care for them anymore. Last month, we had 9 cats crammed in 3 carriers dumped in the rain on a dark night at the local vets carpark. 7 of those 9 were pregnant females. I have trapped confused dumped cats from people's backyards, I've been handed them in person, I've got people messaging me about cats everywhere in our community that need attention, that look dumped- but I am one person, with only one home I share with my family and this shelter.... and it's taking its toll.

There is simply nothing in place and no support available from our local or even state government. In fact, the polar opposite is true. The current housing crisis, and rental crisis is causing this explosion of abandonment. Yet no one with the power to make positive change is stepping up to acknowledge or assist our communities in this dire time.

In 18 months of volunteering my services, I am becoming more and more frustrated, disillusioned by our own spokespeople and laws introduced (council and government). I've taken in almost 250 cats, and rehomed well over 100 in 12 mths; the council have personally handed me 16 cats to rehome. Yet they still won't waive the registration fees and permit fees on the cats I save (all cats desexed after 3 mths require a penalty fee to be paid) which is just simply stupid and unjustified in my situation. Usually, I adopt cats out at a hugely reduced rate, as the new owner will have to pay these huge fees to the council and wouldn't take the cat otherwise. It's just so disappointing that we can't just help each other solve this crisis.

I've requested to be a rehoming organisation.... however this goes through a multitude of checkpoints, and is no quick fix for me as it could take up to 12 mths to be approved (possibly longer). Given I have all these cats and my own family to care for, and am so time poor, I now have to have time to complete writing up a whole bunch of legal documents (no templates provided by the government of course) for their approval. Then the council will provide a site inspection at my home. Given they have been to my home dozens of times, and given me multiple cats to rehome, it's just ridiculous that all this red tape exists. It's all so hard to help.

I understand now why all the rescuers in NSW burn out and suffer so much and are financially hit hard. There is no council or government support - and they make it so time consuming and lengthy to get any approval for waiving fees as a "rescue". Everytime I have tried to wind down operations and take a break, I have people contacting me daily, telling me they have nowhere to go and there's no one else to turn to.

So many things need changing. Breeding should be ceased. Desexing laws need to be mandatory and subsidised. Most Aussies own a pet so it certainly should qualify.....we pay for bike lanes/netball courts/wheelchair accessibility similarly as a benefit to the whole community irrelevant if they use it. This would help change our cat problem, not the ridiculous laws they have in place to desex cats at 3mths.

If the government actually spoke to us rescuers, they would realise that people of that mindset (not desexing cats) will just avoid council fees and fines by not chipping and simply never taking their cats to a vet to desex. There is no way to find them. Just go on facebook lost pets and

take a look at all the posts of pets not chipped/desexed because they were "indoor" only. It's a joke and a broken system (a system only just updated by our government THIS YEAR - not to mention the website has been broken for the 4 mths its been in operation!! At a minimum, the whole team of politicians who thought this process up should be removed from government for all the mess they've created.

Then due to the housing crisis /money/life , everyone has to leave pets behind , so rescuers pick up these undesexed , usually pregnant , dumped kitties - often 8-9mth olds themselves. And we pay the price. I recently emailed the NSW OLG as encouraged by Hornsby Council, to request waiving the permit and registration fees until I am officially approved - I mentioned I even assisted council trapped cats 16 times. They emailed me back saying that perhaps these penalties would educate me and I should get pets desexed earlier !!?? We pay for these stupid services in government! When I emailed them back , they replied suggesting I contact Hornsby council for this approval . What a waste of my day !! I just go in circles.