



Hello,

I am Dr Jacquie Rand, Emeritus Professor of Companion Health at the University of Queensland and Executive Director and Chief Scientist with the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation.

The Foundation's mission is to improve the wellbeing of pets and people through a **One Welfare** approach. We do this through evidence-based programs, advocacy, and research. We advocate for humane, effective urban animal management policies, and conduct independent research to inform governments, welfare agencies and the community. Our vision is zero euthanasia of healthy and treatable cats and dogs in shelters and pounds across Australia.

I am pleased to provide a message of support for all those who are attending the Sydney Save Community Cats rally.

As you are aware, the situation in Australia for cats is dire. Approximately one third of cats entering shelters and municipal pounds never leave alive. In fact, 25% of councils in NSW that admit more than 50 cats a year kill 70–100%, and over half of those are kittens (Chua, 2023). Public sentiment is increasingly hostile to cats because they are being unfairly demonized for wildlife predation. Humane, evidence-based methods such as desexing cats being cared for by caregivers remains illegal across Australia.

Free-roaming cats in our cities and towns is a community problem that requires a whole-of-community solution. Success depends on collaboration between local government, welfare agencies, veterinarians, community carers, rescue groups, residents and funding from the state government.

Our **Community Cat Program** is the first of its kind in Australia and is generating, robust peer-reviewed data that demonstrates a compelling need for legislative reform. Through this program, we have desexed, microchipped and vaccinated more than 4,500 owned and semi-owned cats, supported the adoption of over 500 semi-owned cats into loving homes, and returned home timid and shy healthy cats that would have otherwise been humanely killed. We work directly with residents who feed or care for cats but lack the financial means or legal protection to seek help.

The **results** have been transformative: in Rosewood, cat intake into receiving shelters has reduced by 60%, euthanasia by 85%, and community complaints by 39%. Further, monitoring with trail cameras has verified a significant reduction in free-roaming cats.



Australian
Pet Welfare
Foundation

Improving the health and wellbeing of
pets, people and their environments

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Community Cat Programs provide humane management of urban free-roaming cats, replacing decades of the failed trap-adopt and-kill approach with free cat desexing and community support. We have documented that lethal methods of control result in severe adverse psychological impacts on caregivers and are not aligned with One Welfare.

In contrast, **Community Cat Programs provide powerful examples of the One Welfare approach** in action, showing how animal welfare, human wellbeing, and environmental health are deeply interconnected and strengthened through supportive, collaborative solutions.

Our estimates are there are over 200,000 rescuers and carers looking after more than 300,000 cats in cities and towns across NSW. The **emotional bond that is formed between cat carer-givers or semi-owners and their cats is well documented** and is as strong as the bond that cat owners have with their cat.

The Community Cat Programs in NSW, Victoria and Queensland demonstrate that **compassionate, data-driven strategies can break the cycle of cat overpopulation, shelter crowding, and needless euthanasia.** Their success is not hypothetical, it is already delivering measurable outcomes: fewer cats entering pounds, fewer healthy animals killed, fewer complaints from the public and fewer free-roaming cats. This is the future of urban cat management. But without sustained funding and political will, these gains remain fragile. If we are serious about protecting wildlife, improving community well-being, and supporting the people on the frontlines of animal care, the expansion and long-term support of programs like these is not optional, it is essential.

In summary, we have compelling evidence that community cat programs are an **effective, efficient and humane strategy for managing urban cat populations,** especially when volunteer rescuers and carers are integrated in the teams and optimise human and animal wellbeing.

I wish you all the best for striving to better assist state and local governments with effective cat management and gain funding for the important work you are doing.

Bless you,

Jacquie Rand

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