

## **Statement from Kristina Vesk, CEO Cat Protection Society of NSW**

The Cat Protection Society of NSW stands with you to say: all cats deserve to be treated with respect and kindness.

Cats are sentient creatures who feel pain, hunger, joy, attachment, thirst, cold, fear, comfort ... cats have rich emotional lives.

Those of us who've gained the trust of a cat know what a special gift that is to receive. With the lives some cats have had to endure, it is nothing less than a miracle that they might trust a person again.

Our heartfelt thanks to all of you who care for cats!

Whether you work alone, with a group, with a formal rescue or organisation ... every act of care and every moment of kindness matters.

Most of you aren't just spending your own time helping cats but also your own money.

It's exhausting and hard.

Some – maybe even many of you – are burnt-out. You need to look after yourself too – please don't feel bad about that.

Through the DIVA Cats program, Cat Protection has come to know many of you unsung heroes caring for community cats.

We look forward to continuing to work with you – we can see there is much to do, and much to be gained by working together.

We can ease – and hopefully one day end – the heartbreak and suffering caused by feline overpopulation.

Only a One Welfare approach will succeed in managing the plight of feline homelessness and we're pleased to see that acknowledged in the NSW Parliamentary Committee report on the Management of cat populations in New South Wales, along with the recognition of the effectiveness desexing programs.

The lives of cats – whether owned or homeless - are entwined with people, other animals and the environment around them. This means that there can be no generic approach to "cat management" because cats live in a multitude of different circumstances and environments.

Knee-jerk one-size fits all approaches, like mandatory cat containment, won't work – as the Parliamentary report acknowledges.

Whether to manage urban community cats or populations of animals that threaten sensitive natural environments, approaches must be scientific, evidence-based and ethical. Approaches must be humane and must be compassionate.

Cruelty must be rejected. Always.

The Parliament must reject the falsely named 'conservation' hunting bill. It is no such thing. It is a proposed law to put more guns in more hands in more places and to get taxpayers to fund a gun lobby. It must be rejected. It is not too late to write to the Premier and to your local member and tell them to reject this outrageous backwards step in our gun laws.

What we need are laws and policies that respect the sentience and dignity of all animals and adopt humane approaches to population management ... starting with accessible and affordable desexing.

Councils depend on unpaid rescues, charities and informal groups, and kind and generous individuals – like us, like you – to help cats and kittens in their communities. Councils benefit from the generosity of private vet clinics who are always there helping with discounted desexing and welfare work.

It's long past time for councils to stop whining that their hands are tied and time for them to start doing. It's time for councils to start working with you, to start working with us; to start supporting their community rescue groups; to start collecting data; to start listening; **TO START CARING ABOUT CATS AND THE PEOPLE WHO LOVE THEM!**

Because every cat deserves a loving and responsible home.

And every cat carer deserves respect!

With our best wishes

Kristina & all at Cat Protection