

From: Media Relations**To:** Australian Media**Email:** kd@catrescue.com.au**Fax:****Phone:** 02 9011 6053 / 0418 203 954**Pages:** 1 of 3

Media Release - Landmark motion to be voted at Local Government conference

Rescue group set to change legislation for thousands of small lives

NSW Young Lawyers bring resources to program

Monday, October 23, 2006. A landmark motion is being put forward at this week's Local Government conference in Katoomba and if successful will go to the Minister, to support CatRescue's campaign for Mandatory Desexing.

Animal Welfare Group "CatRescue" is making big waves in the Animal Welfare industry. The group is lobbying to introduce mandatory desexing in NSW, with heavy supporters in the camp to help draft legislation, they are aiming to succeed.

CatRescue is encouraging the community to write to their local mayor asking to support this motion which many see as the most obvious way of reducing the cost and impact of the tens of thousands of unwanted animals that die in Shelters every year.

CatRescue, a rescue group founded by Sydney IT Specialist Derek Knox and Animal Welfare Worker Kelly Lachman has been aggressively swamping the animal industry with guerrilla marketing to promote rescue programs and legislation change. "In order to drive effective change we must work with the people who are most impacted, that means working openly with Councils and rangers to understand their world" expressed Mr Knox.

Speaking this week whilst launching a petition to support changes in legislation to include mandatory desexing, Mr Knox was not surprised that Councils were supportive in the drive to make mandatory desexing a reality.

"Rangers and Councils deal with the coalface, they have the thankless task of managing the mess that is left after breeding season, the euthanasia of thousands of unwanted baby animals." Claims Mr Knox. Rangers are our personal friends, our job is to make their lives easier by reducing the deaths"

NSW Young Lawyers joins the program.

The NSW Young Lawyers Animal Rights Committee has put its full support behind the program, providing legal assistance in drafting and developing the program as well as a solid sounding board for legal issues in this area.

Angela Radich, Chair of NSW Young Lawyers Animal Rights Committee said "This was an issue we were already passionate about., and CatRescue approached us with a logical and inclusive program that took into account the feedback of councils and the community . This project is about reducing the costs to the tax payer and saving thousands of lives"

The Animal Rights Committee brings together some of the finest young legal minds in Australia, many from top tier law firms, with a focus on animal rights and the advancement of law to provide better quality of life and standards of care for animals. "We have a number of projects we are working on across all manner of animal welfare issues" said Ms Radich, "This project is clearly linked to an outcome that reduces the suffering of animals"

The proposed changes

The proposed changes are based heavily on the Canberra model, where Mandatory Desexing is already in place, and include provisions for pet owners and breeders to hold licence to have a "sexually entire" animal.

In these changes, animals born after 2006 are required to be desexed at an early age. The progressive introduction of desexing for new animals would mean a slow and manageable change to the current program and give the public and councils time to adjust.

This would also mean greater control of "Backyard breeders", who are seen by many to be a major cause of the pet overpopulation program through indiscriminate breeding for fun and profit.

RSPCA NSW Shelter Manager Karen Schlieper states one of the biggest problems is in fact accidental backyard breeders who "love seeing the animals have puppies or kittens".

Ms Schlieper says that when these people then surrender such litters to the RSPCA they are offered desexing vouchers for the bitch or cat – but this is usually refused. This means the cycle of unwanted animals is continued.

The proposed changes would mean backyard breeders would be required to register and pay to have an animal for breeding purposes and this would provide clear data on what happens to the subsequent litters. "There is very little reason to breed domestic animals when there are so many already dying in pounds" Said Mr Knox.

Subsidies exist for low income families.

A common piece of feedback is around the cost of desexing, with people uncertain how low income families will afford this change, but CatRescue believes that with ownership, like running a car, comes responsibility.

"Many subsidy programs are in place to assist low income families to desex, but the bottom line is, if you cant afford to desex then you probably cant afford to have a healthy and companion animal anyway, and certainly cant afford to have a new litter of kittens appear in your cupboard.

Subsidy programs exist from groups such as the National Desexing Network (www.ndn.org.au) and Cat Protection Society, generally it is lack of awareness and often general apathy causes people to ignore these programs, until they find a litter of kittens in the house.

“If people really want to have an undesexed animal, then the changes allow for them to register one and a system would mean that Council can track the flow of animals from source to disposal, so owners who dump would be very visible” Said Mr Knox

Voting at the Local Government Conference

The motion to support this program is being put forward by Ian McKenzie, an executive member of the Local Government Association.

“I have drafted a late motion for the LGA conference in late October. If it is passed, a letter will go to the Minister from the end of the year, unless we organise otherwise”

Surveying 152 NSW based councils, there was a lot of support for proposed changes to the Companion animals act regarding desexing, but equally there were many areas that needed strong discussion around who would police, manage and fund such a radical change.

The cost to the tax payer

The current program of mass euthanasia is estimated to cost around 120m a year to the Australian Tax payer, with an estimated 200000 unwanted animals killed every year. The infrastructure, salaries and operational expenses required to support this much work is expensive, and the human cost of trauma, stress and productivity losses weigh heavy.

Engaging with Council & Local Government the only solution

Mr Knox recently spoke at a NSW Council animal management seminar. “We took heart in hearing from many councils about how they reduce the deaths, and we believe councils get a bad rap when it comes to animal management”

Many animal groups avoid council and government. We believe that the only effective way to drive change is to engage with council to show that there are alternatives that can work. The economic argument for Mandatory Desexing makes sense..

The group claim that often people wring their hands and wait for the government to wave a magic wand, but that true change wont happen without community involvement given the complexity of what is at stake.

“Many people condemn Council or RSPCA animal workers because there is euthanasia, but they don’t themselves have a better answer to the problem. It’s a simple question of numbers, there are not the homes for the extra 200,000 animals born every year” Says Kelly Lachman. “Ideally we can have a no kill society, but it can only happen in combination with mandatory desexing”

Issue about to hit home with 100, 000 unwanted births

Sydney is now entering breeding season, and any undesexed female cat is now at the greatest risk of becoming pregnant. In many cases these unplanned births result in kittens being dumped.

“People who love their cats sometimes have the hardest time understanding the logic” Said Mr Knox. “Brother and sister cats will breed together, cute fluffy purebreds will breed with multiple males in a single night. As a result the tireless workers of the RSPCA and council rangers will be kept busy finding dumped litters of kittens and most of who will die needlessly though lack of homes.”

What can you do to help

Desexing is the only solution to the problem of over population.

If you cannot afford to have your cat desexed, there is information on programs to help fund desexing available on our www.catrescue.com.au website. Some councils run “desexathon” programs. But CatRescue urges you not to wait as it will cost more in the long run.

To prepare for this frenetic period, CatRescue is looking for more carers that can take on and foster care small groups of 2 cats during this peak season. By foster caring it gives us space and time to find new homes and keeps the cats healthy and happy.

“CatRescue doesn’t have a shelter or shopfront, so it’s the goodwill of people in the community that saves lives.”

Cat caring is very straight forward as cats are largely self reliant, all you need is the basics. Food, Litter and some common sense. Invariably the cats become part of a family life and you end up knowing all about cat care as a result. It’s an education experience for your whole family.

The www.catrescue.com.au website was used to launch the campaign and petition this week in preparation to what it expects will be a long summer of kitten and puppy dumping.

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