



CANA calls for desexing, adoption and support amid surge in surrender of unwanted cats

National animal welfare charity Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN or CANA) is advocating for desexing, adoption and support amid a surge in surrenders of kitten and cats that are 'no longer wanted'.

"We are seeing a large spike in cats and kittens being relinquished to our member shelters around the country, intensifying the stress they are already experiencing," said Trish Ennis, CEO of Australia CAN.

"The increase in the numbers of unwanted kittens is a result of cats breeding all year round due to warmer weather. We are urging people to desex their pets, consider adoption and support animal welfare charities so they can continue to help save lives."

Australia CAN members that rescue cats and companion animals are [Sydney Dogs and Cats Home \(NSW\)](#), [Animal Welfare League Queensland \(AWLQ\)](#), [Animal Welfare League South Australia \(AWL SA\)](#), [Saving Animals From Euthanasia \(SAFE\) Inc \(WA\)](#) and [Lort Smith Animal Hospital \(VIC\)](#). (Member [Dogs' Homes of Tasmania](#) only rescues dogs.)

According to data consolidated from the five members of Australia CAN for YTD February 2024, there's already a **48% increase** in cat and kitten surrenders nationally compared to the same time period last year.

In Feb 2024 alone, **42%** of cats surrendered to the five members were due to "no longer being wanted" – with **84%** relating to kittens. Other reasons for surrender that month include financial (11.7%), owner medical (10%), renting issues (8%) and change in circumstances (6%).

AWLQ is currently over capacity with cat surrenders and only accepting cats and kittens on a case-by-case basis.

In NSW, Sydney Dogs and Cats Home (SDCH) received 220 kittens between December 2023 and February 2024 – averaging 17 kittens per week, said Melissa Penn, Managing Director of SDCH.

"Did you know female cats are able to have around 180 kittens in their life, and they can start reproducing from as young as 4 months old? Cat populations get out of control very quickly, and without enough homes wanting to take them, they end up in shelters – if they are lucky!" she said.

In WA, SAFE Inc Founder Sue Hedley OAM said it's devastating for veterinarians, council rangers, SAFE and other animal rescue services to have to euthanise friendly cats.

"As a society, this toll is heavier now than it was when I founded SAFE 21 years ago," she said. "If we all take proactive measures, like being vigilant with homeless cats and kittens ensuring they reach rescue services for desexing and rehoming, it is bound to yield a positive impact. SAFE Inc is committed to assisting in the desexing of owned female cats as part of our collective effort to tackle the issue of overpopulation."



Desexing and adoption help save lives

The number of cats and kittens ending up in shelters sends a strong message about the importance of desexing, explained Ms Ennis.

“Unwanted litters places significant strain on rescue organisations and shelters, many of which are already operating at full capacity and unable to accommodate all animals in need,” she said. “The most effective method to curb the overpopulation of stray cats (and dogs) is through desexing.”

If you're a pet owner, low cost desexing may be available through the National Desexing Network, a proud initiative of AWLQ. For more information, visit <https://ndn.org.au/>

Pet adoption also directly helps animal welfare charities by freeing up space to accommodate more animals in need.

“Adopting a pet is also a highly ethical alternative to purchasing one from a pet store or breeder,” said Ms Ennis. “It is a great way to improve the life of the pet, and owners get to experience the proven benefits of caring for an animal in need.”

With the theme ‘Sweeter than any-bunny,’ AWLQ is making it more affordable to adopt a pet, with heavily discounted prices for adult cats (and dogs) in a mission to rehome as many animals as possible during the Easter holiday period.

“Our priority is to find loving homes for all our current adult cats (and dogs) in order to continue our promise to take on other animals requiring our help,” said Caroline Esera, AWLQ Marketing and Communications Manager. “We encourage people to consider adopting a sweet forever feline. Because when you adopt a shelter cat, you're actually saving two lives: the pet you adopt and the next homeless animal you help make room for.”

If you are unable to adopt a pet, consider fostering to provide temporary care for shelter cats (and dogs). Contact your nearest Australia CAN member for more information.

The impact of supporting animal welfare

Animal lovers can also [support animal welfare organisations](#) by volunteering, donating or leaving a gift in their will or trust. Workplace Giving is also a great way for companies to support the animal welfare charities their employees care about.

“Together Australia CAN members have more than 300 years of combined experience in caring for animals in need! Our members provide rescue, shelter, rehoming, foster care, health and enrichment to more than 50,000 animals every year!” said Ms Ennis,

“Supporting animal welfare organisations aid in the implementation of spay and neuter programs, education initiatives and advocacy efforts at reducing the suffering of animals and promoting responsible pet ownership.”

Animal lovers can support the direct-care of Australia CAN member agencies by donating via www.australiacan.org.au

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IMAGES – Kittens & Adoption

About Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN)

Companion Animal Network Australia (Australia CAN) is a registered charity representing the companion animal welfare work of our six member agencies across the country, including Animal Welfare League QLD, Animal Welfare League SA, Lort Smith (VIC), Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, Dogs' Homes of Tasmania and Saving Animals From Euthanasia Inc (WA). Together, our members provide rescue, shelter, re-homing, fostering, health care and enrichment services to more than 50,000 animals every year.

Through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, we celebrate the human-animal bond and promote responsible pet ownership. We use our national voice to campaign for the humane treatment of all companion animals and we rally support for programmes that deliver high welfare standards.

Australia CAN celebrates the human-animal bond and promotes responsible pet ownership through national campaigns, partnerships and initiatives, including the Rent with Pets and Pets in Aged Care programs. To discover more, visit www.australiacan.org.au