



# Keeping Cats Safe at Home

## Impact Report

December 2023

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*Mr Troy Wilkie*  
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*This project has been assisted by the NSW Government through its Environmental Trust.*





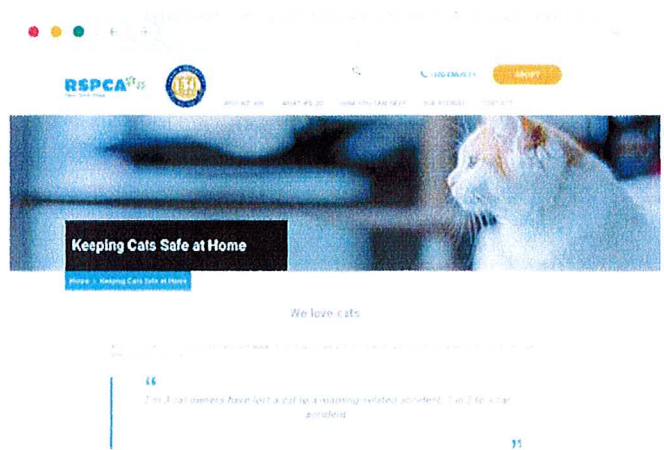
# Project Outputs

Keeping Cats Safe at Home has delivered on six key project outputs:

## 1 - Webpage

- Ranks highly in Google searches
- Engaging and packed with accessible information for cat caregivers
- Linked to blog articles on key project messages and related topics including:
  - Trick training for your cat
  - I found kittens! What should I do?
  - I found a stray cat! What should I do?

[rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe](https://rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe)



## 2 - Information resources for cat caregivers

These resources equip cat caregivers with the information they need to successfully prevent their cats from roaming while meeting all their needs and making their lives great.

Five core resources have been translated into four additional community languages (Arabic, Simplified Chinese, Hindi, Korean).

- What your cat needs at home
- Settling your new cat into the family
- How to keep your cat safe at home
- Enrichment: help your cat live their best life at home
- Transitioning to the safe-at-home lifestyle

[rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe/resources](https://rspcansw.org.au/keeping-cats-safe/resources)





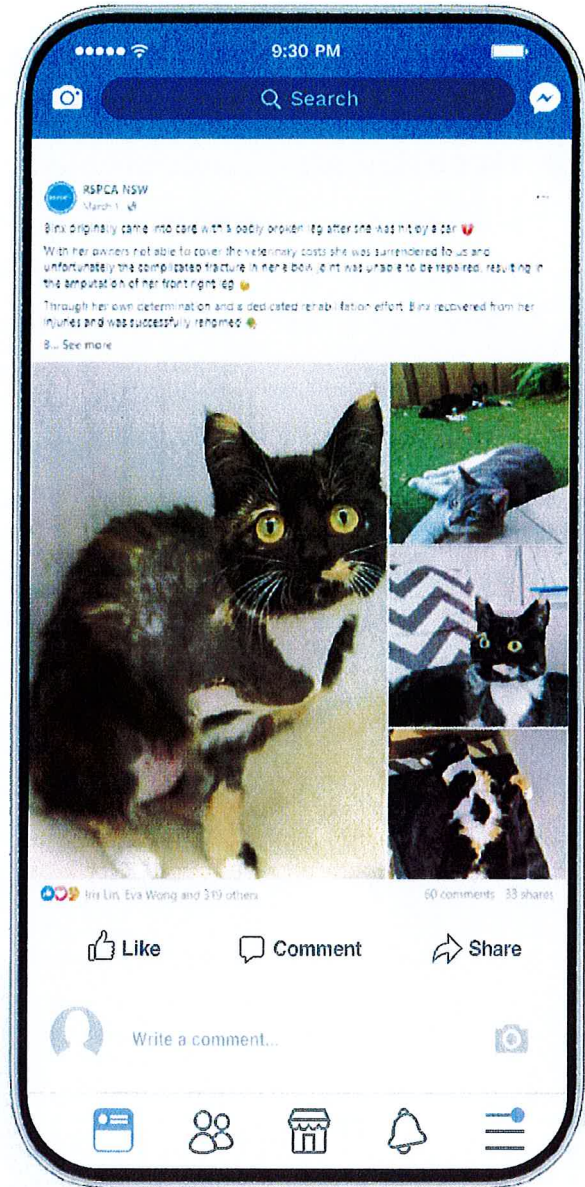
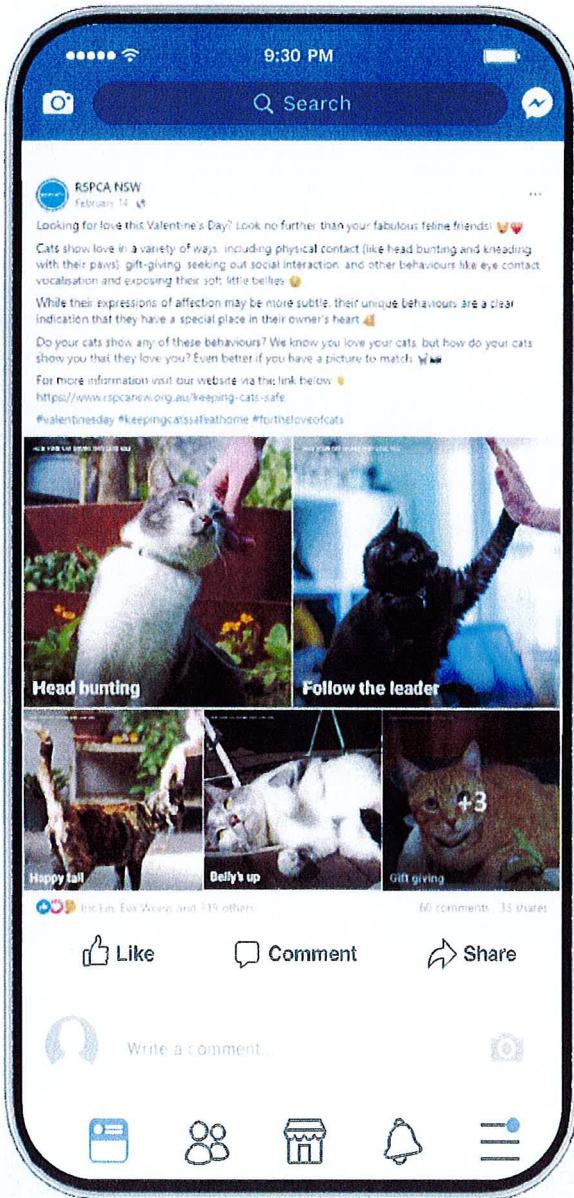
# For the Love of Cats

**February 2023**

**>8,000** reactions


**>400** comments


**>700** shares




- Any Nicole**  
Cat netting is a great solution for balconies to keep the cats safe but still allow fresh air and good vision.  
Like Reply
- Lindsay Goodings**  
Poor little poppet, I'm so glad she's recovering well.  
When I lived in a unit, I bought bamboo screening to put around the railing, which covered all the gaps and allowed my cat to at least have somewhere to sit outside.  
Like Reply
- Kim Kilpatrick**  
Poor sweetheart, glad to hear Mini is recovering well 🐾  
Like Reply
- Jodie Di Nucci**  
anyone worried about fixtures or permanent stuff not being allowed in rentals on balconies, use PVC pipe and cat netting!! you can make a big structure to fit the balcony with PVC pipe and zip tie the netting to it and keep your kitties safe.  
Like Reply
- Caitlin McMenamin**  
Keep your cats inside or create a safe enclosure, use a lead - it's just not worth the risk!  
Like Reply
- Shao Mac**  
🐾❤️  
Like Reply
- Michelle Stodart**  
Glad mini is recovering well 🐾

## PARRAMATTA

 **The Context:** Urban council in the heart of Sydney. Demographically diverse population of 256,000 people. Amongst the lowest rates of cats roaming in NSW, with 70% of pet cats in Parramatta fully contained according to our social science research. Some localised populations of unowned cats in lower socio-economic suburbs, and some overwhelmed caregivers caring for large numbers of semi-owned cats.

 **The Approach:** Partnered with City of Parramatta Council to locate unowned cat hotspots and engage with overwhelmed cat carers and volunteer cat rescue groups. Case management provided by RSPCA Sydney Desexing Coordinator, transport and trapping assistance provided for participants by Council Companion Animal team where required.

 **The Impact:**

- Intake of cats and kittens from the Parramatta council area to the RSPCA Sydney shelter decreased by 46%
- Cat-related nuisance complaints to council decreased by 49%
- Cats arriving at council pound decreased by 41%

*“ Before the cat desexing program every second call we would get would be a cat job.*

***Now after 12 months of desexing we haven't had any cat jobs in about two months even though this would usually be the height of kitten season.** Most of the cat jobs I have been getting lately have been owned and microchipped cats who were lost and I have been able to return to their homes. It has been a big change for the better. ”*

***Taylor Power, Companion Animal Management Team,**  
City of Parramatta Council*





Paul Flint, Regulatory Officer, Walgett Shire Council and the team from NorthWest Vets.



**“ Complaints have reduced dramatically** since this program of desexing began. Clearly the program has had a significant impact on unwanted litters and roaming cats in Walgett. **”**

**Paul Flint,**  
Regulatory Officer,



Healthy Pet Day in Collarenebri with the RSPCA NSW Outreach team.



RSPCA NSW Education Officer Jacinta Sillince delivering a Keeping Cats Safe at Home school education visit at Walgett Community College Primary School.





Ray Budd, Giselle Gagliano, Luke Sheehan, Allison Knowles, Tess Bailey-King, Melanie Cooper and Gemma Ma with Leo - the hundredth cat desexed under the program.

## Program keeping cats safe

From the front page

"This program has enabled Council to reach out to a large proportion of the public to instigate education surrounding the benefits of not only microchipping and desexing their cat, but also the benefits of keeping cats

safe and happy indoors," Ms Knowles said.

"Weddin Shire Council greatly appreciates the support and assistance that the RSPCA, Lachlan Valley Vets, and partnering financial stakeholder Weddin Landcare have provided in devel-

oping and undertaking the project.

"It is with this support that the Council has been able to reach the milestone of 100 cats being desexed and microchipped.

"Council is looking forward to continuing with the

project in the future," Ms Knowles said.

Mrs Bailey-King said that not only is desexing cats good for maintaining their numbers, but also to prevent them from going into the wild, and for the cat's long term health.

*Article from the Grenfell Record October 13, 2022 to mark the milestone of 100 cats desexed through the Keeping Cats Safe at Home desexing program.*

*"This has been **really brilliant**"*

***Ray Budd,**  
participant with 19 cats.*



# Research

The **Keeping Cats Safe at Home** behaviour change strategy was not only based on a strong foundation of social science and psychology research, it has also contributed to the evidence base on domestic cat management. To date we have published three original research articles in high-ranking international open-access journals:

1. Ma GC, McLeod LJ. Understanding the Factors Influencing Cat Containment: Identifying Opportunities for Behaviour Change. *Animals*. 2023; 13(10):1630. <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13101630>

Open Access Article

## Understanding the Factors Influencing Cat Containment: Identifying Opportunities for Behaviour Change

by  Gemma C. Ma<sup>1,2\*</sup>  and  Lynette J. McLeod<sup>3</sup> 

- <sup>1</sup> Sydney School of Veterinary Science, The University of Sydney, Camperdown, NSW 2006, Australia
  - <sup>2</sup> Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals New South Wales, Yagoona, NSW 2199, Australia
  - <sup>3</sup> School of Psychology, Speech & Hearing, The University of Canterbury, Christchurch 8041, New Zealand
- \* Author to whom correspondence should be addressed.



*Animals* 2023, 13(10), 1630; <https://doi.org/10.3390/ani13101630>

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2. Ma GC, McLeod LJ, Zito SJ. Characteristics of cat semi-owners. *Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery*. 2023;25(9). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1098612X231194225>


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Original Article





Journal of Feline Medicine and Surgery  
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 Sage

## Characteristics of cat semi-owners

Gemma C Ma<sup>1,2\*</sup>  Lynette J McLeod<sup>3</sup>  and Sarah J Zito<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

**Objectives:** Unowned/stray domestic cats threaten wildlife, as well as create a community nuisance and contribute to high rates of euthanasia in animal shelters. These cats can experience poor welfare, contribute to the pet cat population and compromise attempts to control feral cats. However, many unowned domestic cats are cared for by semi-owners who do not consider they own these cats; therefore, semi-owners are a potentially important target population for human behaviour change interventions. The present study aimed to describe the characteristics of cat semi-owners and compare these with the general population of cat owners and non-cat owners to inform future cat management interventions.

**Methods:** An online questionnaire open to all residents of New South Wales, Australia was developed and advertised. Respondents were asked: 'do you care for other free-roaming or stray cats (not including the cats you own)? whether they owned cats, about characteristics of their home and their agreement with 16 capability, social opportunity and motivation (COM) items relating to cat containment.'

**Results:** Questionnaire responses were received from 8708 people, including 586 semi-owners (7%). Semi-owners were significantly more likely to be female, live in urban areas, live in lower socioeconomic areas and rent their home. Most semi-owners also owned their own cats and owned more cats than non-semi-owners.

**Conclusions and relevance:** Semi-owners of unowned/stray cats are a valuable potential target audience for human behaviour change interventions. Understanding that these semi-owners often have their own cats, might already be overwhelmed with cat-caring responsibilities and are disproportionately from lower socioeconomic backgrounds should guide intervention design. A nuanced approach is needed that prioritises the wellbeing of cats and semi-owners for semi-owners to buy in. Any intervention should also recognise that semi-owners often face multiple complex barriers to neutering or claiming ownership of the cats they care for, especially cost and trust in the authorities.