

**INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS
IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I have worked with 100's of stray and lost street cats for about 25 years, with various animal welfare groups.

A concerted effort is required to address this increasingly challenging problem humanely. Starting with community education and support:

a. Informing cat owners of the absolute necessity to lock their cat/s in very securely following a home-move, for a minimum of 3 weeks, for the cat/s to bond to their new home. Otherwise, the cat will attempt to return to previous home / territory & often become hopelessly lost (stray / 'feral') & incur numerous hazards (see below).

b. Informing cat owners of the benefits of keeping a cat indoors and / or in a very secure cat enclosure. (e.g. research has confirmed contained cats live an average of 15 years old, compared to roaming cats under 5 years old). This is due to multiple hazards for roaming cats (e.g. cars, foxes, dogs, ticks, snakes, toxins such as rat / snail / ant poison or 1080, sociopath cat haters). Safer for cats and wildlife! (Expand on cat's impact on wildlife).

c. Incentives to build very secure cat enclosures or catios. (Eg strata rules encouraging discreet cat netting on patios, fines for roaming cats from dusk to dawn, transfer to pound, etc). Govt subsidies (e.g. \$3000 towards cost of cat enclosures) and provide a list of competent, qualified cat enclosure tradesmen. Advice re best materials, etc to use).

d. Incentives to neuter cats (whether owned or stray) eg voucher system to pay neutering, etc, costs to vets. Perhaps even pay owner and / or concerned cat catcher \$50 for every cat neutered.

e. Strong penalties for inhumane, cruel or neglectful treatment of cats.

f. Encourage neighbourhood groups to form positive, collaborative plans and actions to address the cat challenges in their neighbourhood (eg roaming or stray cats, breeding cats, neglected cats, neutering, re-homing, assisting a neighbour to build a very secure cat enclosure, etc).

h. Govt subsidies to cat welfare groups who pro-actively assist to trap, neuter and re-home stray, roaming and / or breeding cats. Evidence based approaches.

i. Govt funding to assist in hoarding and squalor situations (eg to fund a co-ordinated approach to catching, neutering, boarding cats while a squalor clean-up is arranged to the home, with psychological support and counselling for the hoarder, if required. Conditions attached to return of their cats eg consenting to neutering, some re-homing and for ongoing cat care and domestic assistance to prevent recidivism, deterioration. Regular follow-up).

j. Promoting lost and found Facebook, etc, internet sites, with constructive, effective, evidence-based advice to rapidly locate and catch lost cats.

"Re your lost cat: Please search sheds, garages, under buildings, in drains, bins, skips, in between tall walls and fences, roof and wall cavities, on rooves, up trees, vacant buildings, storage areas etc. (Might be locked in / trapped somewhere, surviving on insects, etc).

Create a temporary, stable ramp (eg put of a branch of wood) from inside to outside of drain, call down & leave strong food outside of overnight.

Don't trust neighbours to search!!! Best ask permission to or go with.

10pm - 5am walks with strong smelling food and torch, when no cars: call calmly, stop, listen, wait.

Leave strong smelling food (eg tinned Whiskas cat food meat and fish flavour or hot BBQ chicken) and water out overnight, near exit point and possible hiding places / where might be trapped. If eaten, last resort, a cat trap on level ground in a safe location. Google how to use safely, monitor closely.

Posters, leaflets and door knock. CCTV cameras.

Vets, pounds and animal welfare organisations regularly with photo.

Ensure microchip details are correct, register as lost.

Do all at previous address, if puss recently moved home. (One cat recently travelled 26km to previous address, arrived 6 weeks after lost. Another found 500 metres away from where lost, 7 months later. Most cats need to be locked in for 3+ weeks to bond to a new home, otherwise sooner or later might try head back to previous home or territory. Most cats are escape artists until bonded to new home eg breaking through mosquito netting and forcing sliding doors / windows open. Be extra vigilant!).

New / timid cats & esp kittens prone to hiding / getting stuck under / behind / in furniture. So also check in / behind / under drawers, wardrobes, low lounges, recliner chairs (don't move leg rest until double-checked), fridges: behind where warm, washing machines (always check inside before washing).

Track down where any vehicles puss might have entered travelled to, do same there.

See Find Booboo page: determined owner perservered for 7+ months before found her skinny cat.

Sadly, most cat lovers learn the hard & traumatic way that there are too many risks and hazards for roaming cats. (Eg cars, dogs, psychopath cat haters, ticks, toxins, foxes, snakes, pounds, locked in a shed, etc).

Please consider keeping indoors and / or invest in a very secure cat enclosure or catio. (Research has found it adds 10+ years to average age of cats. Safer for cats and wildlife).

Nevertheless, don't give up searching, might be ok this time".

k. Promoting cat enclosure Facebook sites, for great tips to build a secure, economical and creative, fun cat enclosure.

The government needs to take the lead to humanely and constructively address the challenges of lost, stray, 'feral' (scared) and breeding cats. Please implements some, or all, of the above strategies. Most or all of the above strategies could also (with enough incentives and funding) be implemented with feral bush cats. Provide funding for un-rehomable cat sanctuaries, including for neutering and other vet costs.

I personally have tamed the most wildest, fiercest, spiciest, fang-baring, claw striking cats, to be the most cuddliest, purring, devoted lap cats. There is hope for every cat to have a good, safe life. Last resort, to be humanely put down.