

**Submission  
No 63**

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

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**Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales -**  
<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/inquiry-details.aspx?pk=3011#tab-termsreference>

I have worked in local government compliance for 15 years. I first worked for Brisbane City Council in 2009. During that time I worked in their Warra Animal Shelter at Bracken Ridge. Every day, residents and compliance officers would bring in trapped cats. Our policy was that if the cat was feral, we would hold it for 24 hours, scan to check for a microchip and then put it straight to sleep. For less friendly cats we would hold for 5 business days and then potentially rehome them, however usually unless they were very friendly, they were put to sleep. During this time, our backyard in Northgate was inundated with cats. I had a 2 year old at the time who could not use his sandpit as it was littered with stray cats faeces. My husband and I bought a cat trap and in 14 days we trapped 12 cats in our back yard. None of these cats were microchipped and a lot of the females were pregnant. We were able to arrive at the shelter, no appointment needed and drop the cats that day. After these trappings we notice a massive increase in native birds coming to our yard as well as some blue tongue lizards. My point is that the Council was able to provide this service to us as rate payers.

In 2018, my family moved to Broome in Western Australia. I started working as a Ranger with the Shire of Broome. Broome has a lot of community housing where cat populations would get out of control. Often we would come into community comes and trap as many as 20 cats in a house and they would be put to sleep immediately, unless they were friendly and then we would try to rehome then after spending their 3 days in the pound. None of the cats were ever microchipped, otherwise we would keep them for 7 days. The Council offered to cover half the cost of sterilisations to families that has concession cards, however a lot of the time if they were very poor, SAFE Broome would cover this whole cost to reduce the cat numbers. A lot of the time my coworkers and I would end of fostering a litter of kittens until they were able to be flown down to Perth for adoption as there was no room left in our 12 cage pound facility.

In January 2023, we moved back over to the east coast to Sydney. I got a job straight away at the Sutherland Shire Animal Shelter. It was quite a shock honestly, that the shelter had over 150 cats at any time and would hold very feral cats for months and months without putting them to sleep, to maybe finally put them down after more than 12 months. I had to clean out the cat cages of these feral cats, many times getting scratched through the cage doors. These cats were terrified and did not want to be owned. The first chance they would get would be to run away if ever adopted. What was more appalling to me was the lack of service the Shelter was able to provide to its residents. People would call stating they had found kittens in the yard and the shelter would have to say to them, we have no room. There was no room to take cats that were roaming, due to the shelter keeping these full feral cats for over a year. This made absolutely no sense to me. When I brought this up with the supervisor, I was treated as cruel and unreasonable, they thought of the facility as a rehabilitation for cats. There is a rate payer funded facility, not a rehabilitation. A lot of the residents would just give up trying to bring these animals into the shelter. While they may have had them contained once, they reasonably, could not hold these cats for weeks until the shelter has a spot. Ultimately, this frustration of cleaning endless feral cats cages led me to change Councils. Now I am working in a Companion animals role, primarily auditing pets that have been identified and are not lifetime registered. I have noted large amounts of feedback from owners of cats that the reason they didn't register them was that they have been hit by cars from young ages. This obviously could be prevented by stricter measures of owners being made accountable and keeping their cats contained to their property.

In short, I would like to say that due to the overwhelming number of cats in NSW shelters and the shelters lack of interest in turning over feral cats, NSW does not have the ability to sustain any more cats not being contained onto their properties. Cats that are still unsterilised are more likely to wander and lead to more unplanned kittens on the streets which will only further increase the burden on shelters. NSW, more than any other state, because of its tendency to hold cats in Shelters, needs to have the most stringent laws containing cats to their properties.