

Submission  
No 25

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

**Organisation:** Hunter Valley Cat Haven

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Hunter Valley Cat Haven is a Cat Rehoming Organisation that has been operating in the Hunter Valley NSW since 2013.

We are at the frontline dealing with the on going crisis in cat management in the Hunter Valley area.

Cats and kittens are suffering and our non funded volunteer based Rescue is at breaking point.

Councils are using the cats are free to roam loop hole in the law to leave abandoned injured, sick and dumped cats on the streets and in the bush.

Clearly these cats were once owned, Council's advice to the public seeking help for these cats/kittens is to "put them back where you found them, cats are free to roam".

Or in some cases take them to a different area and leave them there if they are annoying you.

They have advised Vet Practices they will not pick up stray, lost and found cats any longer as they are free to roam so they are not to take them in from members of the public and this includes kittens.

There is a significant increase in the dumping of both cats and kittens as there's no assistance available for people finding themselves in situations where they desperately need help.

People are moving and abandoning their pets due to the rental crisis. This is now common. Neighbours report people have moved and abandoned their cats and they can't get assistance from Council's or the RSPCA.

Entire litters are being found dumped in the bush, on roadsides or farms. Cruelly left to starve, be run over or becoming prey to other animals.

Vet Practices are opening up in the mornings to find cats and kittens have been dumped on their doorsteps overnight.

Some people are having perfectly healthy animals euthanised as they can not find anywhere to take them. We get multiple emails and messages stating sadly they have no option but to convenience kill their cats if we can't take them. This takes an emotional toll on us.

Imagine the impact this is also having on Vets and their staff, they are contacting us desperately trying to find a lifeline for these poor cats and kittens dropped off to be killed.

We are receiving requests from Real estates, schools, businesses, the public, Vet Practices, Rural Properties, Domestic Violence Services, NDIS support groups, homeless people, families of people that have died leaving their cats homeless, people unable to care for their pets due to ill health, elderly people going into aged care, palliative care, boarding kennels, the list is endless and overwhelming.

We go to call outs and what we find is shocking, houses with cat colonies breeding out of control, dead and sick kittens, cats in poor condition and starving. The home owners overwhelmed and struggling. Neighbours angry and upset. In one home alone there was over a hundred cats and kittens.

All these people seeking help are being directed to our small volunteer based non funded Rescue and in most cases by Councils.

We work in full time employment, we have our own families and commitments, we are dedicated to helping cats and kittens in the Hunter, we are their only hope however we are now at breaking point.

We need help.

There needs to be mass funded desexing programs, this will reduce the number of unwanted kittens being born ending the cycle.

We need assistance in low socioeconomic areas with education and desexing. People can keep their pets if offered help with desexing microchipping and registration. We need to help stop the breeding cycle in these areas before it gets out of control. We need funding to help these people. They trust us.

Community cat groups including ourselves are monitoring, feeding, desexing and reducing cat populations, we are caring for these cats and stopping the breeding. These cats are not feral, they are semi owned and to poison them is a level of cruelty that is abhorrent to many people.

Cats can live happy healthy lives indoors but we need time to introduce and change peoples attitudes to this by education without making cats and kittens the targets for acts of cruelty by demonising them for being outside at night. They need our help not more hatred and cruelty directed at them.

We are told constantly about the acts of cruelty committed on cats and kittens, we recently dealt with a man putting 4 x 2 week old kittens in a bucket full of water telling the children to watch them swim. He was sick of his cat having kittens. The children managed to save the last 2 kittens before he drowned them too.

This has to stop!

People when faced with fines for cat curfews will just abandon their cats, they will not get them microchipped they will deny ownership.

How are Council Rangers and Pounds going to implement and manage cat curfews?

The current requirement to have kittens desexed by 4 months of age has just caused an increase in the dumping of older kittens. They are not having them microchipped, registered or desexed, they dump them rather than pay the fines. While we understand the benefits of early desexing it's not working. Only Rescues are desexing at 12 weeks. Most Vet practices recommend waiting until the kitten is 6 months of age to the general public.

The current system is broken, it is a crisis situation, it is overwhelming, we ask that you please listen to those of us that are on the frontline so we can work together for a better solution and implement changes that will work.

Kind regards

Hunter Valley Cat Haven

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