

Submission  
No 59

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

**Organisation:** Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society

**Date Received:** 20 November 2024

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Dear members of the enquiry panel,

I have attached a letter sent to Minister Hoenig, to which he has replied expressing the government's concerns and directing me to make a submission on behalf of Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society (OFF).

The context of this letter is more about changing the Companion Animals Act 1998 to give more power to our councils in line with other states, but there is more that I would like to add.

- \* The Act should be amended to align the requirements for cat ownership to be the same as for dog ownership. For instance registration of cats to be mandatory.
- \* Containment of cats should in line with the Victorian legislation, as in they must be kept indoors during the day and night.
- \* Promote cat welfare and responsible ownership (including containment) via awareness programs that would be streamlined if cats were required to be registered.
- \* Develop specific information and resources for multicultural communities.
- \* Increase the rates of cat desexing by for example rebates for local residents using council-based programs, financial support for low income pet owners, financial incentives for council's to trial then implement high volume desexing clinics.
- \* Incentives could also provided to local organisations such as Men's Sheds & Fix It Sisters to assist residents in constructing safe and simple cat enclosures.

While you may have seen this article from The Conversation I would like to provide the link and some comments on pertinent points in it.

<https://theconversation.com/two-thirds-of-us-support-banning-pet-cats-from-roaming-a-ban-would-save-millions-of-native-animals-and-billions-of-dollars-229180>

The article states that their survey shows:

We found a clear majority (66%) of people support cat containment. A strikingly small proportion of people, about one in 12 people (8%), are opposed. The remaining 26% were ambivalent, selecting "neither support nor oppose".

I hope this is correct, but when push comes to shove I think the number opposed will increase.

I think the first issue which has to be overcome is almost every cat owner's belief that their cat is "different" and it doesn't roam and/or kill wildlife and/or it has a bell to warn birds. As the article notes:

... four out of five cats allowed outside will hunt and kill an average of two to three animals per week ("but my cat is the one out of five", "my cat wears a bell").

"Many cats continue to hunt successfully despite wearing a bell, as they tend to hunt by staying completely still then pouncing suddenly when they spot prey, so the bell is often not enough warning." (<https://www.countryliving.com/uk/wildlife/pets/a46547098/should-cats-wear-bell-collars/>)

The second issue is that many cat owners see the need to restrict cats only at night. As the article notes, night curfews only protect nocturnal species such as possums. 24 hour

containment is essential to protect e.g. lizards, echidnas, sleeping possums, smaller birds, birds nests.

The third issue is that I suggest a large number of people don't have any concerns about local wildlife - lizards, possums etc., as they think they are plentiful or totally absent or unimportant. They see plenty of birds but they only see the larger bird species (cockatoos, magpies, noisy miners etc.). They see wildlife as only being in the bush remote from cities (kangaroos, koalas etc.), therefore not a concern from roaming pet cats in most suburbs.

To change these entrenched attitudes will require a good deal of community education - ads on social media and TV, school and community presentations (e.g. P&C, town hall meetings, Scouts/Guides, Lions Club, Rotary, Probus, RSL etc.). This has to be part of the implementation of containment.

Perhaps the saddest indictment of this dire situation and a most significant "call to arms", comes from a paper produced by the CSIRO with ANU,

"Australia having the worst mammal extinction record of any country in the last 250 years, with both unowned and domestic cats responsible for the death of 6 million animals annually."

Kind regards,

Scott Shade

Secretary



# Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society Inc.

Working to protect, conserve and enhance the natural environment  
locally and globally, since 1955

25 August 2024

Minister for Local Government  
The Hon. Ron Hoenig MP  
52 Martin Place  
Sydney NSW 2000

## NSW Companion Animals Act 1998

Dear Minister,

Oatley Flora & Fauna (OFF) would like to raise very real concerns about the current weak legislation in NSW that does not allow our Local Councils to prevent domestic cats roaming in our parks, reserves and bushland, attacking and killing our unique and precious native wildlife.

This is not a minor problem. Roaming cats cause enormous damage to native wildlife. A recent article in *The Conversation* estimated that about 23 million native animals are killed by roaming domestic cats in Australia every year. (See *The Conversation*, 23 May 2024, *Two-thirds of us support banning pet cats from roaming. A ban would save millions of native animals – and billions of dollars.*)

Australia is in an extinction crisis and to our shame we are also a mammalian extinction hotspot.

Feral and invasive species are a major factor in this crisis in our national parks and regional areas but equally roaming domestic cats in our cities kill huge numbers of our resident native birds, amphibians, mammals and reptiles.

The current NSW legislation states:

### *30 Cats prohibited in some public places*

#### *(1) Cats are prohibited in the following places—*

*(a) Food preparation/consumption areas (meaning any public place, or part of a public place, that is within 10 metres of any apparatus provided in that public place or part for the preparation of food for human consumption or for the consumption of food by humans).*

*(b) Wildlife protection areas (meaning any public place or any part of a public place set apart by the local authority for the protection of wildlife and in which the local authority ordered that cats are prohibited for the purposes of the protection of wildlife and in which, or near the boundaries of which, there are conspicuously exhibited by the local authority at reasonable intervals notices to the effect that cats are prohibited in or on that public place).*

This is totally inadequate, since there is little chance of a cat being caught by a Council Ranger in a wildlife protection area, especially at night. It would be far better, as other jurisdictions have shown, to enable LGAs to make their own decisions about how to control domestic cats.

The solution is within reach and there are working examples in other Australian jurisdictions. The Victorian legislation is quite straightforward and puts the onus on a council to decide whether, what hours and where to adopt a cat control policy:

This is the relevant section of the Victoria Domestic Animals Act 1994:

## **25 Cats found at large**

**S. 25(1) amended by Nos 76/2005 s. 13, 65/2007 s. 11(2).**

*(1) If a cat is found at large outside the premises of the owner or not securely confined to the owner's premises, in a municipal district or a specified part of a municipal district in respect of which an order under this section has been made, during the hours specified in the order, the owner is guilty of an offence and liable to a penalty of not more than 1 penalty unit for a first offence and 3 penalty units for a second or subsequent offence.*

*(2) A Council may, by resolution, make an order under this section.*

*(3) An order made by a Council under this section must be published in the Government Gazette and in a newspaper circulating in the municipal district of the Council making the order.*

Adoption of this simple change into NSW legislation would allow NSW LGA's to set aside areas they regard as most important for cat control and implement suitable times in each area. They could consult with their communities and deal with any issues that their community may have. Following implementation, people could then report to their LGA any cats they see wandering outside in restricted areas/times.

Given the multiple threats faced by our native wildlife it is now time for NSW to catch up with other jurisdictions and allow LGA's to make their own decisions to help control roaming domestic cats. This issue can no longer be ignored and changing our legislation is a practical and relatively easy to implement measure to prevent the annihilation of native wildlife.

Yours sincerely

Scott Shade, Secretary, Oatley Flora & Fauna Conservation Society  
cc. Minister for Climate Change, Energy, Heritage and the Environment

Refer to - <https://invasives.org.au/media-releases/pet-cat-containment/>