

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to support humane, science-based solutions for improving cat welfare and protecting wildlife in NSW. I urge you to consider evidence-based approaches that address the root causes of both cat and wildlife management challenges, promoting humane, effective, and long-term outcomes.

1. Humane Community Cat Programs

Evidence from around the world shows that killing cats has not been effective in controlling populations or protecting wildlife. Instead, proactive community cat programs focusing on rehoming, targeted desexing, trap-neuter-return (TNR), and community education have achieved significant success. These strategies support councils, shelters, and veterinary staff, reducing strain on resources while promoting animal welfare.

A recent NSW Government-commissioned report highlights the ineffectiveness of culling cats and emphasizes large-scale desexing programs as a more viable alternative. Additionally, the NSW Pound Inquiry recommends funding for councils and rescue organizations to implement targeted desexing programs, particularly in disadvantaged communities with high stray cat populations. This compassionate, community-focused approach is proven to reduce stray cat populations sustainably without placing undue blame on cats.

2. The Vacuum Effect and Long-term Solutions

Population control methods, like culling, often ignore the ecological "Vacuum Effect." When cats are removed from an area, new animals typically move in, leading to continued population growth. Community cat programs and supportive initiatives like the Community Cat Program have successfully mitigated this issue by addressing the underlying causes of stray cat populations, resulting in lasting and humane outcomes.

3. The Flaws of Mandatory 24-Hour Cat Curfews

While many pet owners already confine their cats responsibly, mandatory 24-hour curfews primarily target stray or semi-owned cats. These cats have no identifiable owners, making curfew enforcement challenging. Curfews often lead to unintended consequences, such as increased abandonment, cruelty towards cats, and higher rates of impoundment and euthanasia.

Data from councils in Victoria demonstrates the ineffectiveness of cat containment laws. For example, in Yarra Ranges, complaints about cat-related issues rose by 143% after a 24-hour curfew was implemented, impoundments increased by 68%, and euthanasia by 18%. Similarly, the City of Casey has seen a 296% rise in impoundments over 20 years of a containment policy. This evidence underscores that containment laws are ineffective and may worsen the issues they aim to address.

4. Education and Responsible Pet Ownership

An effective solution lies in educating communities about responsible pet ownership. Community outreach, media campaigns, and school programs are vital to teaching proper pet care, the importance of spaying/neutering, and creating safe indoor environments for cats. These initiatives can significantly reduce the impact of cats on local wildlife while enhancing the quality of life for pets and their owners.

5. Addressing the Root Causes of Wildlife Threats

While cats are often blamed for wildlife challenges, human-driven factors play a much larger role in endangering native species. Habitat destruction, urban development, deforestation, and vehicle collisions are primary threats to many species. Wildlife rescue data from NSW indicates that habitat

loss, collisions, and dog attacks pose greater risks than cat predation. A focus on habitat restoration and biodiversity projects would more effectively protect wildlife than targeting cats alone.

Conclusion

I strongly advocate for compassionate, science-backed solutions that prioritize community-based cat programs, responsible pet ownership education, and targeted desexing initiatives. These approaches offer sustainable, humane results and reduce the burden on communities, councils, and shelters. In addressing wildlife threats, habitat restoration and conservation efforts should take precedence, recognizing that effective cat management and wildlife protection can coexist.

Thank you for considering these points as you work towards policies that support both animal welfare and ecosystem health.

Sincerely,