

Submission
No 72

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission: Protecting Both Cats and Wildlife with Compassion and Evidence-Based Solutions

I'm sharing this submission as someone who truly cares about animal welfare and believes that protecting both cats and wildlife requires thoughtful, humane strategies based on evidence. The current approach of demonizing cats, or worse, calling for culling, won't address the real issues impacting wildlife.

Evidence Shows: Killing Cats Doesn't Work and Isn't Humane

There's clear evidence that killing cats hasn't effectively solved issues related to wildlife protection. Not only is it cruel, but it doesn't get to the heart of the problem. Community cat programs, like rehoming, desexing, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), and public education, have a much better track record. They reduce stray cat populations in a humane way and also lower the strain on councils, shelters, and rescue groups. A NSW Government-commissioned report even backs large-scale desexing over killing, showing that more humane, science-based methods are both ethical and effective.

Proven Solutions through Community Support and Funding

In light of the recent NSW Pound Inquiry, there's a clear, proactive recommendation: provide grants to councils and rescue groups for targeted desexing. With community cat desexing programs, especially in disadvantaged areas, we can achieve long-term reductions in stray populations without resorting to harmful methods. These programs also benefit the broader community by decreasing nuisance complaints and ultimately helping to protect native wildlife.

The Vacuum Effect and Why Killing Isn't the Solution

Removing cats from an area without addressing underlying population issues only creates the "Vacuum Effect." When one group is removed, others move in to take their place. Sustainable, humane methods, such as desexing and rehoming, allow us to reduce the root causes of population growth instead of creating an endless cycle of removal and replacement.

Data-Backed Results on the Downside of Cat Curfews

While some believe that 24-hour cat curfews will help, the data tells a different story. In councils where cat curfews have been tried, such as Yarra Ranges in Victoria, complaints about cats went up by 143% and euthanasia by 18%. Impoundments and complaints also increased in places like the City of Casey, where 20 years of curfews didn't solve the problem. We should focus on educating people on how to safely contain cats within their properties instead of relying on blanket curfews, which can lead to abandonment and cruelty toward strays.

Supporting Responsible Pet Ownership through Education

Responsible pet ownership is a huge part of the solution. By educating communities on safe containment options, like "catios," and the benefits of spaying and neutering, we can help both cats and wildlife. Outreach campaigns, school programs, and partnerships with local organizations can empower people to keep their pets safely contained and protected, which in turn protects wildlife.

Human Impact: The Bigger Picture on Wildlife Threats

Blaming cats alone overlooks the larger impact that human activities have on wildlife. Habitat destruction, urban development, and infrastructure changes are far more significant threats to wildlife than cat predation. Data from the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard shows that vehicle collisions, habitat loss, and even dog attacks pose greater risks. For example:

- **Unsuitable environment incidents:** 413
- **Vehicle collisions:** 310
- **Dog attacks:** 98
- **Cat attacks:** 37

To truly protect wildlife, we need to address these root issues through habitat conservation, wildlife-friendly infrastructure, and responsible pet ownership rather than scapegoating cats.

In other words stop the deforestation and urban sprawl.

A Humane, Well-Rounded Approach

The best approach combines several key elements: habitat restoration, mandatory desexing for all cats sold, higher penalties for cat abandonment, registration, and accessible pet owner education. By targeting the real issues behind stray cat populations and working to protect vulnerable wildlife, we can create a compassionate, effective solution that works for everyone.

Thank you for considering this submission. I hope it helps NSW move toward humane, evidence-based policies that will protect both cats and wildlife in the long term.