

Submission  
No 97

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

**Name:** Name suppressed

**Date Received:** 9 November 2024

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Partially  
Confidential

Dear Sir/Madam,

The following is my submission to the 'Inquiry into the management of cat populations in NSW'.

My submission will focus on the suggestion to adopt 'cat containment measures' as a means of protecting wildlife. I will largely focus on my personal experience with cats in putting forward a view that such measures would be ineffective, disproportionately target vulnerable members of the community and be costly and difficult to enforce.

I have had pet cats since childhood and in that time my views on how one should have a pet cat has changed. For example, a cat I adopted in 2006 and which lived until 2022 was both an indoor and an outdoor cat and I allowed it to go outside, generally when it indicated that it wanted to. I saw firsthand how she would occasionally catch wildlife and bring it home. As an animal lover, this was something that would distress me greatly. Consequently, when that cat passed and I obtained two kittens, I resolved that they would remain indoors, other than when on a leash (which they have not adapted to) or in a 'cat net' enclosure (which they have somewhat adapted to). I have done this in order to minimise their impact on wildlife. This outcome was achieved because I became more aware *through education* on the impact of cats on wildlife.

My 80 year old mother similarly has cats which has decided to keep indoors. However, she is dealing with the consequences of a stroke and is not as physically or mentally agile as she once was. She therefore has one cat which manages to get out every now and then when she is entering or exiting her home. This cat will generally stay out for several hours before returning home. This is the plight of every cat owner who keeps their cat/s indoors – *they occasionally get out*.

**Were cat containment measures in effect would my 80 year old mother potentially be subject to punitive measures when this situation arises?**

My mother's plight makes me think about other groups in the community who may be subject to a punitive regime under cat containment measures - People who suffer from mental and/or physical disabilities may struggle to keep their cats indoors, whilst economically disadvantaged people who cannot afford cat litter and who allow their cats to go to the toilet outside may be adversely affected by this regime.

In a previous occupation I spent seven years travelling to Indigenous communities in Western NSW and saw extreme neglect of cats and dogs which was a symptom of the extreme social dysfunction there. Cats and dogs were often pregnant and suffering from untreated injuries and conditions such as tick infestation. There was usually no individual ownership of these animals which were often seen as community animals and community members were protective of them despite the obvious neglect. There was rarely any effort to desex animals due to the cost. In such communities it is unclear to me how failure to

contain individual cats could be attributed to individual owners for the purpose of punitive action.

I assume that any punitive regime under cat containment measures would involve a mix of cautions, fines and potentially the seizure and euthanising of roaming cats. Given that people in vulnerable groups often can't and don't pay fines the effectiveness of such a measure is questionable. Fines of course, are subject to appeal, potentially in court, but I am not sure that the use of local council resources to deal with fines that have escalated to court matters is a good use of rate payers' money.

I don't believe that cat containment measures should be compulsory. They will inevitably have a disproportionate impact on vulnerable members of the community and punish indoor cat owners whose cats almost inevitably get outside on occasion. Compulsory measures will need a punitive regime which will be potentially expensive and time consuming for local councils to enforce.

Education is a much better option. I can say that because it was with me. Of course, not everyone will be open to education or will care about keeping their cat inside, but the focus should be on *limiting* the impact of cats on wildlife, because *eliminating* the impact is a practical impossibility.

Regards,