

Submission  
No 99

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
**Date Received:** 10 November 2024

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Partially  
Confidential

## **Submission to the inquiry into the management of cat populations in NSW**

10 November, 2024

We need a serious cat containment policy in NSW to protect our native wildlife, which is already under threat from so many other pressures.

As a child who grew up in a family which owned cats, I understand the joy pet cats bring to their owners. Our pet cats were kept indoors at night but they were allowed to roam freely during the day, killing and bringing home many mice, lizards and small birds.

The Invasive Species Council estimates there are now about 4.9 million domestic cats in Australia. These domestic cats have a significant impact on native wildlife, according to Prof Sarah Legge of the ANU, among others. This is especially so because most of them live at really high densities in suburbia, which means their predation toll is higher than it would be if they were living in a bush or rural area. If they are not desexed, offspring from these domestic cats can and does contribute to feral cat numbers.

Modelling Legge has done for the Invasive Species Council suggests that roaming pet cats kill 546 million animals per year in Australia, of which 323 million are native. It's a staggering and unsustainable number.

It doesn't have to be this way. There is plenty of evidence to show that we can protect our native wildlife from domestic cats by keeping pet cats inside owners' homes. This has the added benefit of protecting the cats themselves from harm – being hit by cars, being in fights with other cats, being bitten by snakes etc.

According to the RSPCA, people can give their cat everything they need at home including food, water, litter trays and opportunities to do all the things they naturally love doing, such as climbing, scratching, running, jumping and pouncing.

Cat owners will tell you that *their* cat is well-fed, wears a bell, is kept in at night and has never brought home a dead animal. But time and time again, studies have found that even these domestic cats are still out there hunting, day and night.

It will not be easy convincing cat owners that cat containment is important. I urge NSW parliamentarians to first run a major cat containment education campaign that explains how cats, their owners and our precious native wildlife can benefit from a cat containment strategy. That should make it easier to implement vital cat containment regulation.

Thank you