

**Submission
No 108**

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

Name: Susan Pasmik
Date Received: 11 November 2024

'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.'

'I hold that the more helpless a creature, the more entitled it is to protection by man from the cruelty of man.'

Mahatma Gandhi

I love cats and wildlife. Both need our protection. Cruel solutions of killing cats to protect wildlife have proven to be ineffective and teach our children that cruelty is acceptable. Additionally, it reinforces a message in society that animals are disposable. This disposable mentality is one of the reasons so many pets end up on the street or in shelters or pounds to be euthanised.

When I was a more financially secure, able-bodied, energetic younger woman I was actively engaged in cat rescue activities. I had moved into a suburb where cat colonies abounded. Many colonies developed because someone had a female cat they didn't desex for cultural or financial reasons. When the poor cat had kittens and they didn't want them, they abandoned them to fend for themselves. Some survived to then breed more kittens.

To me, a cat is a cat. I don't distinguish between feral or domestic ones. I love them all. To address the problem of these cat colonies, a few locals and I became actively engaged in Trap, Neuter and Return. We engaged a network of other like-minded individuals and vets to help.

We desexed hundreds of cats and rehomed countless kittens (after they were desexed). Sometimes we fed the colonies but often there were pensioners or others in the area that were feeding them and wanted to continue. They were more than glad we were there to help.

Directly across the street from me, I desexed twenty-six cats that were being fed by locals. This colony was able to live happily, as it aged and eventually died out, on cheap cat food, not wildlife.

Once, an RN working in a public hospital contacted me because a 4-month-old feral kitten was in a pest control trap and was destined to be executed. I agreed to take her if the pest controller would bring her to my house. He did, strapped petrified in the back of his ute. At the time I was set up to tame feral kittens and cats.

I named her Karma. She became an affectionate, beautiful tame cat that I adored till she died at age twelve from cancer. I still miss her. She's not the only feral I adopted and domesticated. I know of others who will not slaughter an innocent animal because it has been deemed a pest. However, not everyone can be cat whisperer or have the time or space needed to tame a feral but are quite happy to keep feeding it and would love help getting it desexed.

From my own life experiences, I know that well-fed feral cats are less likely to kill wildlife. They come to depend on whoever feeds them for their tucker. I also know that domesticated cats very rarely kill anything if they are constrained from roaming. I've had cats that feared birds and still do!

What we need are:

- kinder community cat programs focused on responsible ownership, rehoming, desexing, education, and the management of cat colonies.
- Government grants to councils and rescue groups to finance Trap, Neuter, Return programs in disadvantaged areas with large homeless cat populations.

- Areas with large disadvantaged or working class need to be able to access cheaper or free desexing and microchipping. Animal welfare groups provide vouchers but don't have the resources to help everyone.

- Mobile vets would be useful to help people with disability and pensioners who need help with travel and mobility.

Yes, cats do kill wildlife but so do we on a much larger scale through urbanization, fossil fuels, deforestation, and on our roads. It's easy to blame a voiceless animal as the problem. Let's show we are better than that and set an example using more humane approaches.

Susan Pasmik