

**Submission
No 116**

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

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With regards to welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions, provided cats have adequate enrichment they can live a happy life indoors particularly if they have a window to look out of or even a contained catio with safe outdoor access.

The Sunshine Coast in QLD has a cat containment policy and this is largely complied with by cat owners. Compared to states which do not have a cat containment policy, less cats are seen outdoors on the Sunshine Coast.

Education about the benefits of desexing is extremely important to reduce the number of kittens being born to homeless cats. A subsidised desexing program would assist people whose reason for not desexing their cat is a lack of disposable income. This upfront investment would pay off in the long run, as it would result in a reduction of homeless kittens and help to “break the cycle”. Cats can get pregnant as young as 4 months old, and one cat can have several kittens. A single cat could have more than 100 kittens in her lifetime. If these kittens were also not desexed, they could each go on to have hundreds more kittens between them, adding to the number of homeless cats.

Many “feral” cats are simply homeless cat and given the chance would be suitable for rehoming. To reduce the “feral” cat population in a humane and ethical way, more funding should be given to animal shelters and rescue organisations such as Sydney Dogs and Cats Home, Maggies Rescue and Sydney Street Cats to name a few.

Any plans to “reduce the feral cat population” must be supported by robust investigation and evidence including an independent third party review of recommendations. Cats have inherent value as sentient beings and must be considered as such. Humans have a responsibility to ensure the welfare of all animals and to maximise their chances of a safe life free from danger and harm, especially intentional harm. Mass killing cats to reduce the population is abhorrent, immoral and unjustified. It is a low effort solution which does not consider the viable and much more humane alternatives. Killing an animal when it is not medically necessary is a clear breach of animal welfare. In addition, methods such as poisoning can unintentionally affect other species for example homeless dogs which eat the cat carcass. This raises another issue of what would happen to the dead bodies of homeless cats. Rehoming homeless cats and providing adequate financial support to animal shelters must be the first priority in dealing with “feral” cat populations.

For cats who are unable to be rehomed, providing financial assistance and support for Trap Neuter Return groups would reduce unnecessary suffering of homeless cats and reduce the “feral” cat population in the long term. This is a far more ethical approach which values the lives of sentient beings who want to live. Alternatively, other reproductive controls (for example contraceptive vaccines) could be implemented in “feral” cat populations.

With the concern around the “feral” cat population, placing a ban on breeders would mean more people are willing to look to animal shelters and rescue organisations to adopt, further reducing the “feral” cat population.

Many cats are surrendered due to the rental crisis and people being unable to find suitable pet friendly housing. Even with law reforms, landlords can decide to choose an applicant with no pets over an applicant with pets. This could also influence someone’s decision to let their cat roam outdoors.