

**Submission
No 125**

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

Name: Mr Marc Cottee
Date Received: 15 November 2024

Dear NSW Legislative Council,

I am sure that you would already be aware that even seemingly gentle, well-fed, domesticated cats (even wearing bells) do frequently kill many small creatures. E.g. back in 2021 the House of Representatives Environment and Energy Committee attempted to address this issue through their 'Project Noah'. More recently, 2023 ANU research found that roaming pet cats kill around 66 million native animals each year in Sydney alone. Pet cats kill 390 million animals per year across Australia, and that on average each roaming pet cat kills 40 native reptiles, 38 native birds and 32 native mammals per year (<https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/news-and-media/media-releases/each-roaming-pet-cat-kills-110-native-animals-per-year-on-average>). Cats do this killing any time of day that they are allowed to roam outdoors.

I am an environmental educator and ecologist, with decades of first-hand experience observing bushland ecosystems around urbanised areas. As part of my role for local government I also regularly discuss site-specific as well as broader environmental and ecological issues with residents who live near bushland reserves. Cats roaming through habitat - ranging from back yards to bushland - killing birds, mammals, reptiles, amphibians and insects, is an issue that often gets reported to me. Some of these residents are responsible cat owners themselves, and many have lamented at the weak cat management legislation that enables ignorant or negligent cat owners to allow their cats to roam and thus kill.

Working for local government in a bushland education, conservation and engagement role, I and my colleagues are thwarted by outdated and weak cat management legislation which, in effect, offers very little protection for our native fauna - or for the safety of the domestic cats themselves.

After the 2019 Black Summer fires, where over 3 Billion native animals perished (https://assets.wwf.org.au/image/upload/v1/website-media/resources/Animals_Impacted_Interim_Report_24072020_final) - with surviving animals at increased risk of predation by feral animals - it has now become a critical priority to protect our remaining native fauna and help them to recover their populations.

Scientists are increasingly coming to appreciate that seemingly insignificant creatures can play crucial ecological roles, and that robust, biodiverse ecosystems are much more resilient to the chaos of climate change and pollution, as well as the spread of Zoonotic Diseases, including Avian Bird Flu, Coronavirus, Monkeypox, Ebola (possibly HIV) and other serious diseases. Robust, biodiverse ecosystems also help protect our crops and livestock from diseases.

With one of the highest cat populations in Australia, NSW has a huge and time-critical imperative to create clear, ecologically informed and easily enforceable legislation that will compel cat owners to comply with 24/7 cat containment across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Kind regards,