

**Submission
No 154**

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

Name: Sally Clarke
Date Received: 22 November 2024

Dear Members of the Cat Containment Inquiry

As a resident of Mount Gibraltar in Mittagong, a location near a bushland reserve that accommodates threatened species, and many Habitat for Wildlife and Land for Wildlife private properties, I am very concerned about the impact roaming pet cats are having on our native wildlife. I therefore support amendments to the law to enable local governments to enforce anti-roaming laws for pet cats, bringing NSW into line with almost every other state.

I live on a one acre property that runs down to a neighbouring creek bed that serves as a tenuous wildlife corridor to the Nattai River. It is increasingly disturbed by housing developments, tree felling and landscaping projects. Wildlife is becoming increasingly vulnerable to attacks by free-roaming cats and more cats are being moved into the area. My partner and I have been working hard to expand this corridor by creating a Habitat for Wildlife. Sometimes I feel we are creating a hunting ground for domestic cats. I regularly put my wildlife camera out at night and regularly catch cats entering our property.





These cropped images of three cats who regularly cross our property are from one night on 27 August 2024

I understand Cats are both valued companion animals but they are also one of the world's most successful predators. In NSW, approximately 96 million native mammals, birds and reptiles are killed by roaming pet cats every year – with about 110 native animals killed by each roaming, hunting pet cat. Unfortunately about 70% of cat owners still allow their pets to roam.

We can't change the nature of cats, but we can change the culture that allows pet cats to roam and kill. We urgently need responsible pet ownership, and this starts with clear rules to ensure pet owners keep cats contained to their property to save our native wildlife. This will also benefit pet cats. Cats that are kept at home can live up to 10 years longer than cats that roam which are often injured or killed through fighting, car accidents and disease. One just has to look on Facebook Lost and Found sites to see how many cats go missing, and community pages to see how frustrated neighbours are becoming. Not only do they kill wildlife but they also defecate in gardens, including vegetable patches, giving rise to the potential for disease, and cry at people's back doors. This all leads to poor neighbourly relations. This and the impact on wildlife is bad for the mental health of communities.

The cat containment reform should be accompanied by funding for education, compliance and to make desexing and registration easier. We also need clear rules around desexing by 4 months of age to prevent unwanted breeding and requirements for all local governments to develop and implement companion animal management plans.

I am therefore calling on the NSW Government and the Animal Welfare committee to support:

Amendments to the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 to enable local governments to enforce anti-roaming laws for pet cats at a local level, bringing NSW into line with almost every other state.

State government funding of a minimum of \$9 million to fund compliance, education, desexing, identification and registration programs.

Requirements for all local governments to develop companion animal management plans to protect wildlife, as is required in Victoria.

Development of a state-wide web resource for responsible pet ownership.
Making desexing mandatory state-wide by 4 months of age, as is required in WA, Tasmania, ACT and SA.

Yours sincerely
Sally Clarke