

**Submission
No 200**

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

Name: Daniela Osiander
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As a resident of Surry Hills and volunteer wildlife carer for 15 years, I am deeply concerned about the impact roaming pet cats are having on our native wildlife. Fifteen years as a wildlife carer means fifteen years of trauma about the unnecessary suffering of many dozens of cat injured wildlife dying in my care alone despite best efforts - most commonly from the horrific infection even a few barely noticeable cat scratches cause in our wildlife. Almost all animals that have suffered even the tiniest of scratches from a cat will die unless we administer strong antibiotics, causing massive stress and extended care for that animal. Most victims just die a slow and horrible death in dark corners without ever having been found. This is a horrendous and totally unnecessary price to pay for nothing but the entitlement and lack of care of pet cat owners.

I strongly 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.

Cats are valued companion animals but also one of the world's most successful predators. In NSW alone, approximately 96 million native mammals, birds and reptiles are killed by roaming pet cats every year – with about 110 native animals killed on average by every roaming pet cat. Despite these horrific statistics, about 70% of cat owners still allow their pets to roam. This needs to change!

We can't change the nature of cats, but we can and must change the culture that allows pet cats to roam and kill. We wouldn't allow dogs to roam. Nor any other pet I can think of. Why do we still assume this was ok for cats? Even despite us knowing the horrific consequences of this?

We urgently need responsible pet ownership, and this starts with clear rules to ensure pet owners keep cats contained exclusively to their own property, indoors only or in dedicated cat runs - not least to save our native wildlife.

But this will also benefit pet cats. Cats that are kept at home live up to 10 years longer than cats that roam which are often injured or killed through fighting, car accidents and disease. In fact, any cat I've ever known to be allowed to roam was killed or lost doing so. In Munich, where I am originally from, the equivalent of the RSPCA would not let you adopt a cat unless you guaranteed that it was contained 24/7 - because anything else would simply not have met their welfare standards. Why is NSW so far behind??

For best outcome, this vital reform has to be accompanied by funding for education, strong compliance and by making desexing and registration easier. We also need clear rules around desexing by 4 months of age at the latest to prevent unwanted breeding, as well as requirements for all local governments to develop and implement companion animal management plans and specifically cat containment policies. Exceptions for breeders should be much more restricted and checked. For instance, vet care should only be available for desexed animals or by producing a breeder's licence which needs to be much harder to obtain and only by strict annual registration criteria.

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.

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.

Kind Regards,

Daniela Osiander