

**Submission
No 157**

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

Name: Susan Philp
Date Received: 22 November 2024

Dear Sir/Madam,

I have been a volunteer for Hunter Wildlife Rescue since 2018 and although this is a comparatively short period the damage sustained by many species of wildlife is quite dreadful. I rescue any Australian native animal and I care for lizards and birds. The impact of roaming pet cats on our native wildlife is NOT FULLY UNDERSTOOD by the majority of cat owners. The figures which are readily available to everyone cat owner or not are appalling, but figures alone do not IMPACT on the mind of a cat owner. It is only when that individual sees FIRST HAND firstly the damage and secondly the SUFFERING of mauled and injured animals that they can comprehend what their cat is doing. Most of the time the wildlife is left to suffer a lingering death unseen and unheard. If the pet were injured the owner would take it as to a vet but wildlife is left unattended and suffering.

I have owned cats myself and I must admit that I did not realise the extent of the damage/killing of wildlife that they must have inflicted. Where I now live I have neighbours who have two cats. These cats are indoor cat which are allowed out ONLY WHEN IN THE COMPANY OF THEIR OWNER, never alone. The cats are happy and healthy and one is 21 years old and has been an INDOOR cat all its life. This people are the minority of cat owners in NSW.

I therefore support sensible 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 both valued companion animals and 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 are happy and can live up to 10 years longer than cats that roam which are often injured or killed through fighting, car accidents and disease. ALSO keeping cats inside stops them being eaten by pythons and bitten by other snakes which are only either eating to live or defending themselves against cats.

This 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.

Kind Regards,

Susan Philp