

Submission  
No 222

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

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Dear Parliamentarian,

Written below is the standard email recommended by the Invasive Species Council to whom I regularly donate. I agreed wholeheartedly with their email.

I would like to add a personal note.

I am a cat owner and in the ignorance of my youth, I used to let my cat roam. Regrettably it took me some time before I realized the destruction that my cat was causing to the environment. Skinks and blue tongues vanished from the yard, as did the wrens and the frogs. I realized that planting out my yard with native plants was attracting wildlife for the cat to hunt. A dead male superb fairywren in its mouth one afternoon was my wake up call and my cat was confined to my house.

I have to say that since being confined to the house, my cat is a happier creature. It no longer has those occasions of appearing strung out. It no longer suffers injury. It is definitely a happier cat.

Unfortunately now, my cat has been replaced by other cats from the neighbourhood. I have inadvertently created the ideal hunting ground. For a time I was trapping cats and giving them over to the RSPCA who, for a time, had a contract with Maitland Council to take these cats. That arrangement has since terminated. About 12 months ago when I called the Council to find out the new arrangements I was horrified to learn that all they did was scan the cat's chip and give me an address to return the cat to (and cop abuse from the owner for trapping their cat making me feel like the criminal).

Cats can legally, in fact, have an absolute right to roam wherever they wish. My rights to have a cat-free yard don't exist. I no longer have the right to sit in my garden and enjoy the wildlife native to our great country. I have to put up with someone else's cat crapping in my kid's sandpit, walking muddy footprints over my car and harassing my cat from my own yard in the middle of the night. The NSW Government and Council have building codes relating to fencing that prohibits me from building a fence capable of keeping a cat out.

The current expansion of housing estates in the Maitland area next to bushland is exacerbating the problem. New home owners can bring their cats and let them roam. We invest millions in taxes to protect wildlife. We should just save that money for something else if we are to allow people to let their cats roam. The current policy is like allowing industry to dump millions of tons of toxins and heavy metals into our river systems and investing our taxes in research on how to remove pollutants from river systems.

Cats are happier when confined. Roaming cats is an excuse for lazy pet ownership. People don't get any therapeutic benefit of cat ownership by opening a door, having no interaction with the animal after it wanders out, and opening a door after several hours to let it back in.

I have the right to have a cat free yard.

NOW,

As a resident of Maitland, I am very concerned about the impact roaming pet cats are having on our native wildlife. 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.

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,

Matt Adderley