

Submission  
No 179

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

**Organisation:** Catmint Cottage Sydney Rescue Incorporated

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I'm going to make this as simple as I can.

The Draft Threat Abatement Plan which labels stray, semi owned and community cats as a sub class of feral cats with the plan to erase them by shooting, poisoning, trapping is anathema, not only to me but to the rescue community who have sacrificed their lives to make a difference. While councils and government continue to turn a blind eye.

From a personal perspective, my husband and self have sacrificed our entire retirement period since 2007 for him and 2009 for me to rescue cats off the streets, raise funding, treat, adopt out.

Now it has gone up so many notches to feeling like I am running an emergency centre. I'm stuck to the computer for hours referring, advising, responding to texts and phone calls and having to refuse help to people desperate to place stray cats with a rescue organisations like ours.

The continual stress has eroded our lives. You might think the local council is grateful to us for removing and rehoming street cats all these years, for facilitating thousands of desexings, for counselling desperate residents with referrals but apparently we are the elephant in the room. We suffer physically, financially and emotionally but are not seen.

And we are just a cog in the wheel of rescue. There are thousands of others in similar positions. All of us suffer because the councils and government don't care. It looks as if we don't even exist unless we have a rehoming licence. As a charity working on street cats we never had need of such a licence because we work with street cats.

It has been observed that the community rescuers are not even mentioned on any statistics. Yet if you put us all together you would likely find that the numbers rescued have outpaced any large organisations, particularly those that are government funded.

What is it like on ground zero? Daily we are confronted by photos of suffering cats on social media that we are powerless to help. Maintaining the numbers in care and being confronted by these situations has caused mental health issues, compassion fatigue, terrible suffering.

Weekly we are told of 'hoarders' being found, sometimes with up to one hundred cats. People die or move and there are the cats, undesexed, sick, starving. How do we cope with all of this? why don't we give up?

We implore the government to fund a large free desexing initiative through councils that can work through community rescuers. Trap Neuter and Return to area when possible will also reduce the numbers of free roaming cats and this could be done through colony feeders. There is SO much that could be done if only government would see the light. Please don't ignore community rescuers, they are the backbone of what is needed to reduce the numbers of free roaming cats.