

Submission
No 242

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

Name: Ms Kathryn Woolfe

Date Received: 22 November 2024

Inquiry into Management of Cat Populations in NSW

I DO NOT SUPPORT THE AUSTRALIAN DRAFT THREAT

ABATEMENT PLAN with its proposal to reclassify stray cats under the feral cat class, with intentions for ALL stray cats to be poisoned, shot, trapped and culled like feral cats - this will halt ALL rescue efforts for stray (semi owned are cats ie. once owned and dumped/ colony) cats.

I do not want all stray cats eradicated, as most of these cats are the victims of irresponsible owners, who decide they no longer want them, and dump the cats or kittens.

Classifying roaming cats as "illegal" means the recently abandoned, would be sent to council pounds which are not enabled for a large influx and there would be higher levels of euthanasia than we are having now. Or worse cats would be killed in the field. Or much worse, roaming cats would be killed with inhumane techniques by members of the community.

Therefore, I do not agree with the draft Threat Abatement Plan to treat stray cats as a subclass of feral cats. I believe this is a negative step for the Management of Cat Populations in NSW

- I do not agree with mass culling / euthanasia of stray cats
- I support my local community cat rescuers who are volunteers and work with my community face to face. They do excellent work in rescuing and rehoming cats and kittens, and they work tirelessly with colony and street cats.

I firmly believe we need more fully funded high intensity desexing programs for owned and semi owned (colony) cats under rescuers & carers.

I will discuss these issues in the following paragraphs.

Term of Reference B)

The effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers. **Mandated cat containment is not effective.** APWF has findings from numerous Australian councils which show it does not achieve the aims and is not cost effective / value for money.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/08/31/australian-pet-welfare-foundation-position-statement-on-catcontainment>.

Mandated cat containment becomes a barrier to those assisting stray cats.

Mandatory Containment may be interpreted that all roaming cats are "illegal," which, may also mean the community members and specifically community cat rescuers are also seen to be "illegally" assisting. **This may cause the cessation of all efforts to save, desex and rehome/ adopt abandoned cats.** <https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Inquiry-into-pounds-in-NSWAPWF->

Many cat owners are unable to contain their cats:
due to housing limitations on leased properties by landlords,
body corporates, and complaints from neighbours.
this is especially relevant in the current housing shortage, and lack of
rental accommodation.

Enclosures in yards and gardens are expensive and landlords may not give permission.

Many homes are not suitable for containing cats. While, tenants or those paying off a mortgage do not have air conditioning due to our present economic downturn, and cost of living crisis.

Many cat owners are unable to afford air conditioning, or the cost of electricity, especially during hot summer weather and heat waves. It is cruel to keep a cat inside. Mandatory containment puts added pressure on those on medium to low incomes.

The lack of acceptance of cat enclosures by neighbours puts owned cats at risk in their own backyards. There are cases in which neighbours open the enclosures and let the cat/cats out while their owners are at work.

There are many concerns about the welfare of contained cats, as not all cats cope in small enclosures.

Should a cat or the owner be punished? They will if containment is mandatory.

Studies on information from Hobson Bay, Hume, Casey and Yarra Ranges councils has been assessed. **It is also recognised that mandated containment also contributes to risks for increased cruelty for stray as well as owned cats.**

Welfare Concerns Relating to Mandatory Cat Containment

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-catcontainment/> welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions “...there is growing evidence of environmental contamination from home furnishings and dust affecting cat health... Keeping cats indoors can cause frustration and unwanted behavioural challenges leading to stress and compromised health, especially in multi-cat homes” <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7829302/> “There are some circumstances under which a cat’s physical and mental needs will not be successfully met in containment due to a range of factors including the presence of other animals, space available, human factors, and ability to modify the property. There are also some cats who are unable to cope with containment.

Mandatory 24/7 containment may increase the potential for negative impacts on animal welfare and the community, compared to voluntary implementation of 24/7 containment on an individual basis, **by imposing it on people and cats who are not suited or capable of implementing it appropriately**” <https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf> the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives.

It is imperative, the NSW government should take leadership, and each council delivers face-to-face cultural education and change management. In some communities cat owners do not believe in

desexing. Education is necessary because the rescues often bear the brunt of abandoned cats and kittens.

The councils and their animal management officers (AMOs) may work collaboratively with community cat rescuers and community leaders on solutions for the vulnerable / low incomes and for cultural groups where respect for animals is currently not a priority nor meeting our NSW legal obligations.

Person orientated and culturally competent policies and programs that focus resources on addressing root causes of pet health and welfare issues as opposed to an emphasis on code enforcement can create more positive, scalable, and sustainable improvements in human, other animal, and environmental health and welfare outcomes.

implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies Implications for councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies include the following (these summary points are supported by 16 evidence-based points from the APWF): escalating cat nuisance and new roaming cat complaints; additional costs, effort and resources to manage a higher number of captured roaming cats; additional monitoring and reporting to be able to measure results, which to date have not provided value for money in several councils who have just basic information; escalating euthanasia rates; traumatic impacts to council and pound staff **due to very high rates of euthanising healthy adoptable animals**; traumatic impacts to the communities, community cat rescuers, also care givers, and feeders

seeing their cats in colonies decimated by either authorities or cat haters; and taking responsibility for, and managing cat haters falsely interpreting cat containment legislation and regulations to empower themselves to trap and harm/ cull cats with inhuman methods - all state and council communications (and the NSW Companion Animal Act with focus on clause 32, and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act) need to be improved and provide clear interpretation of clauses.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-toconsider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

The sad reality is in our society there are many cat haters who are already attacking roaming cats, and many will easily feel encouraged to attack all roaming cats if new legislation comes in, where many cat owners are not physically, or financially able to contain their cats.

Term of Reference (f)

The effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs

Large scale (mass / high intensity) desexing programs for owned, semi owned and unowned cats are supported for their effectiveness in minimising cat populations. This is achieved by significantly limiting the breeding of cats, which also benefits each cat and the communities, and are cost justified in reducing council and pound efforts. Australian examples include: APWF Community Cat Programs in QLD, Banyule Council in Vic, and the KCSAH NSW desexing programs in **Weddin, Parramatta, Campbelltown, and Hornsby councils where semi owned cats and community cat rescuers were involved. It is noted that**

RSPCA SA intends to run a form of TNR, including “Reduce strays taken to shelters by helping community members understand that sometimes cats are better left where they are. Promote the approach of “leave a healthy cat where they are”.

A significant initiative in managing cat populations in NSW is the “Adopt Don’t Shop Campaign” instead of buying a cat or kitten from a pet shop, backyard breeder, registered breeder, or online from Gumtree etc. people are encouraged to adopt from a council pound or from one of the cat rescues.

Many cats and kittens are the victims of impulse buying, these cats/kittens are often dumped, not desexed, unvaccinated/ or microchipped, and are often totally unsuitable for the household in temperament etc. In comparison the Cat Rescues screen the potential adopter, for suitability for cat ownership, match the temperament, age etc, and arrange a meeting with the rescue, the cat and the potential adopter. They also allow a trial period in which the adopter can decide whether the cat is the one for their household. If unsuitable the rescue will take the cat back into care. All cats are desexed before adoption. The part Cat Rescues play in managing cats in NSW is inestimable

Desexing a cat is beneficial to the cat and the community. Large scale desexing is an intelligent, practical and humane, approach in managing cat populations in NSW. It breaks the cycle of unwanted kittens, and overcrowding in pounds, while allowing rescues to save

/rehome street/colony/stray cats. However, funding is necessary, and NSW Govt. must lead the way if any real progress is made in the humane management of cat populations.

Mass desexing is the simplest, compassionate and humane way for a progressive society to manage the population of cats in NSW.

Subsidised desexing is often carried out by some of our pounds, including the AWL. There is a voucher system for people on low incomes. However, none of this is sufficient in our present cost of living crisis, in which many people are overwhelmed with high rents, electricity, the high cost of groceries and basic food items.

Veterinary costs are high especially for the disadvantaged. And the cat rescues who do not receive Govt. funding like the RSPCA and AWL. despite the amazing work the unpaid Rescues do to manage the population of cats and kittens in NSW. It comes from their own pockets, fundraisers and raffles.

I am amazed at the work they do. Taking cats from the street often injured cats and working miracles with them on a tight budget. I have seen these cats arise like Phoenix from the ashes of the street, dumped, pregnant, starving, and apparently unadoptable. In the experienced care of the rescues and their team of fosterers, they are eventually adopted into a loving human family, and create great joy in a NSW household. The rescues achieve this miracle on a shoestring budget, with determination, love and compassion.

If anyone can manage NSW cat populations, it is the cat rescues who save cats all over Sydney the suburbs and the Rural areas of NSW.

Thank you for allowing me to express my opinion, and thank you for your time. It is greatly appreciated.

Kathryn Woolfe MSc.

