

Submission
No 246

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

I would like to contribute this submission to the NSW inquiry into Management of cat populations in NSW.

I am deeply committed to preventing the extinction of Australian native wildlife species, but I do not believe that culling of stray cat populations is the best way to do this.

Cats are, unlike most other introduced species, one of the two most common domestic pets in NSW, in Australia and in the western world more broadly. This means it is a species for which the 'contain-domestic cats and kill-stray-cats' strategy would not work, as there are no clear boundaries between the movements of stray cats, domestic pets, urban and suburban human living environments and stray and domestic cat inhabitations. This lack of boundaries has two major implications: firstly, it will make any containment strategy unsuccessful, and secondly, it may promote a 'kill any unsupervised animal' mentality in some private citizens and groups, who feel emboldened to do as the government has legislated. As such, it would also promote violence across suburban and urban communities in NSW.

Attempts to reduce the stray cat population by short-term kill methods is unlikely to be successful in the medium-to-long term. It is also an inhumane and unethical strategy that risks the killing of many non-stray domestic cats. Organisations and individuals working in this sector have long promoted the following alternatives that have been shown to be effective:

1. Trap-Neuter-Release programs for stray cats, as this has been shown to result in stabilisation of existing stray colonies.
2. Education of human communities about the importance of de-sexing cats.

In extension of point 2, above, there is a view shared by many people in NSW society that is actively contributing to the cat population problem: this is the view that cats and dogs are the same as humans in possessing a 'sexuality' that is part of their identity, that they can 'express' and that is 'taken' from them through desexing. This incorrect view forms the basis of many people's active resistance to desexing cats and dogs. It is also a view not addressed by existing veterinary assumptions that owners are generally willing to desex an animal, or that objections to desexing rest on costs or inconvenience (which are extrinsic reasons for failure to desex). This erroneous view of animal sexuality contributes directly to the continuous production of more stray cat populations in NSW. A government-funded education campaign that debunks this view, combined with legislated mandatory desexing of cats, would be a better solution to the problem than legislated killing.