

**Submission
No 265**

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

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I believe there are several obstacles to adoption of a cat containment policy from entrenched community attitudes, which however can be overcome with suitable education and provision of relevant information.

I think the first issue which has to be overcome is almost every cat owner's belief that their cat is "different" - it doesn't hunt and kill wildlife and/or it has a bell to warn birds. As the article notes (<https://theconversation.com/two-thirds-of-us-support-banning-pet-cats-from-roaming-a-ban-would-save-millions-of-native-animals-and-billions-of-dollars-229180>):

... four out of five cats allowed outside will hunt and kill an average of two to three animals per week ("but my cat is the one out of five", "my cat wears a bell").

With regard to wearing bells, "Many cats continue to hunt successfully despite wearing a bell, as they tend to hunt by staying completely still then pouncing suddenly when they spot prey, so the bell is often not enough warning." (<https://www.countryliving.com/uk/wildlife/pets/a46547098/should-cats-wear-bell-collars/>)

The second issue is that many cat owners see the need to restrict cats only at night. As the article in The Conversation notes, night curfews only protect nocturnal species such as possums. Twenty-four hour containment is essential to protect birds and animals active in the daytime, as well as their burrows, nests and other areas where they retreat to.

The third issue is that I suggest a large number of people don't have any concerns about suburban wildlife. They see wildlife as only in the bush - kangaroos, koalas etc, or as plentiful birds (large birds such as noisy mynas, magpies, ravens etc), therefore they believe wildlife predation by roaming cats is not a problem in most suburbs. They do not realise how many more species would return if cat predation was largely eliminated and how much biodiversity would be improved.

The fourth issue is that cat predation may be regarded by many people as a minor contributor to wildlife deaths compared to fox predation, vehicle collisions etc. Of course this is wrong. As the article in The Conversation points out, over 300 million birds and animals are killed each year by roaming cats.

To change these entrenched attitudes will require a significant, extensive and ongoing community education program including ads on print media, social media and broadcast media, radio program interviews/discussions, school presentations and community presentations (e.g. P&C, town hall meetings, Scouts/Guides, Lions Club, Rotary, Probus, RSL etc). This has to be part of the implementation of containment policies in order to gain widespread community acceptance and an adequate degree of compliance. Both State and

local government will need to be involved and good co-ordination of education programs will be required.