

Submission
No 266

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

Name: Ms Stephanie Carrick

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Management of cat populations in New South Wales

Submission by Stephanie Carrick, 22nd November 2024

To the Animal Welfare Committee,

I write to you with my personal traumatic experiences as both a registered wildlife rescuer who has attended dozens of rescues of native animals from cat attacks, and as the owner of two happy and healthy 15yo rescue cats who have spent the entire lives contained. I wholeheartedly agree and implore that all cats should be contained for the sake of our precious wildlife, and also to ensure longer, healthier lives for cats.

The significant impact of cat attacks on human resources, both within the wildlife rehabilitation sector and veterinary industry is immense, and is a financial burden which is currently not shouldered by those responsible - cat owners. Millions of native animals are lost to attacks by both domestic and feral cats each week (Invasive Species Council, 2024). In my own area, which does not have feral cats, we still attend hundreds of cat attacks each year, with those surviving needing an enormous amount of effort needed to rehabilitate.

If a bird, reptile, or mammal escapes a cat attack, the bacteria from a cat's mouth is deadly, and animals will die a horrible death from infection without treatment. All cat attacks that pierce the skin of a native animal require a round of antibiotics to survive. In NSW alone thousands of animals are rescued each year after being attacked by cats (with these numbers grossly under reported). Every one of these rescues will require a vet visit, either to administer antibiotics or to humanely euthanise, with those surviving then requiring a week with a registered carer to complete treatment. Then, most frustratingly we need to return it back to its territory where irresponsible owners allow their cats to roam. And so the awful cycle continues.



Img 1&2: A juvenile ringtail possum attacked by a cat in my care that was rehabilitated and released after vet treatment.

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I would not be surprised that the effort to save the thousands of native animals attacked by domestic cats would run into millions of dollars. The owners, and the decision makers seem largely unaware of just how much time, effort, and money is spent, and how much pain and suffering is caused by domestic cats.

Moreso, cat attacks are horrific. I can speak personally to the trauma of marsupials and birds dying in my arms after sustaining bites that crush organs and piece lungs. This preventable trauma is an all too often event for wildlife rescuers and vets contributing to well-documented mental health issues plaguing both sectors. Cat containment would take considerable pressure off both the time and mental energy spent dealing with the aftermath of cat attacks.

However for the 200 threatened species at risk from cat attacks, mostly small birds and small ground dwelling mammals and reptiles, the chance of survival if predated by a cat is slim. Domestic cats are also unnecessarily taking away the food sources of larger threatened species like Powerful Owls.

Roaming cats are a problem that can be easily solved that will have enormous benefit to our wildlife, our wildlife carers, and our veterinarians. Contained cats, like my own, will also live longer, healthier lives. Local councils should also be able to place controls on cat ownership in sensitive biodiverse areas. Cat owners are largely clueless to the havoc their roaming cats cause in their absence and I would implore the government to listen and act on expert advice.

I urge the State Government to implement cat containment regulations as soon as possible, to take the enormous burden off the wildlife rehabilitation sector and place more responsibility on cat owners .

Kind regards,

Stephanie Carrick
Project Manager, Total Environment Centre
Committee Member, Waverley Council Sustainability Expert Advisory Panel
Wildlife Rescuer and Carer, WIRES East