

Submission
No 280

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission: Management of cat populations in New South Wales

Cats are an introduced species and the overpopulation of cats in Australia has been caused by humans and cats should not be treated in an inhumane way. Breeders of cats including registered breeders, and backyard breeders should not be allowed to make a profit on selling cats they are the reasons Australia has a cat management problem. There are not enough homes for the cats that already exist and profiting from breeding more cats is unethical and causing direct harm and destruction to native wildlife.

Summary of Recommendations:

1. Domestic cats should not be bred or sold commercially without robust regulation; pet shops and the in-person and online sales of cats should be regulated to ensure that only desexed and microchipped shelter/rescue animals are sold at prices that only cover the cost of the cats' care, so that breeding cats is a non-profitable activity. We should be moving towards banning breeding of cats on purpose. Until this is implemented breeders should need to pay a large fee to the Office of Local Government and people who buy from breeders should incur a large fee when breeders transfer ownership to the buyer to incentivise adopting from a shelter/rescue group.

2. There needs to be more government funded support for rescue organisations who are currently doing the bulk of cat management work in Australia. Supporting local initiatives that help manage community cat populations through rehoming programs, targeted desexing and fostering.

The recent *NSW Pound Inquiry* has recommended a proactive solution: providing grants to councils and rescue organisations to fund large-scale, targeted desexing programs across the state, including community cat desexing in areas with large homeless cat populations, especially disadvantaged communities. These kinds of programs are a long-term, compassionate solution that reduces stray cat populations without demonising cats.

The best solution is helping semi-owners and owners in disadvantaged areas by providing free desexing and microchipping through programs like the [Community Cat Program](#).

Proactive community cat programs have been scientifically proven to reduce stray cat populations, decrease nuisance complaints and prevent wildlife predation.

Increased communication and collaboration between local government, rescue groups and vet hospitals.

More programs run by local government (desexing, education and companion animal compliance). Local government needs to take more accountability, but they need more funding from the OLG. Many Local governments will not do any work with strays, refuse to pick up injured and stray animals. These cats end up at after hour vets in other LGA's and those councils sometimes step up. Many councils are getting other councils to do their work for them and where the responsibility is not being transferred cats are suffering and cat populations growing. All local

governments need to have desexing programs not just some, there needs to be more consistency.

3. Educating communities about responsible pet ownership is essential. Encouraging people about how to keep their cats safely indoors or contained within property boundaries, such as in cat enclosures, can help keep both cats and wildlife safe.

Community outreach, media campaigns and school programs teaching pet care, the importance of desexing and safe indoor environments. It is essential that there needs to be education of the ethical procurement of cats, and adoption needs to be promoted in conjunction with messages about sustainability and ethical choices.

Create and promote community and media campaigns that encourage creative, kind ways to keep cats as companion animals and rescue and adopt not buying cats. Future public awareness and education campaigns must recognise the cruelty and animal welfare issues caused by cat breeders.

Future public awareness and education campaigns should focus on the sentience and individual worth of cats in order to foster compassionate wildlife conservation techniques.

Education that the onus should be on humans to minimise the impact of cats' predation on wildlife, by minimising the number of cats that exist across all Australian environments. People who breed and buy cats are part of the problem. People who rescue/adopt and desex existing kittens/cats are part of the solution.

4. More affordable desexing options funded by the NSW Government.

5. Refer to non-domesticated cats as "free-living" or 'free-roaming' rather than "feral". All cats should be treated in a humane way and not treated cruelly just because no one is a 'legal owner'. Acknowledge sentience and intrinsic right to humane treatment of cats regardless of their relationship to humans.

5. Reject the inhumane treatment of cats based on their location, category of existence, social connection to humans, or any other factor.

6. Conduct new surveys of total cat numbers in Australia. Current data used to make legislation/policy are out of date

7. Native habitat and species conservation in Australia must be addressed holistically, with research and policy focusing on the five drivers of Biodiversity Loss and the causes and impact of widespread habitat loss – not on killing non-native animals.

8. Future research and policy surrounding cat population control should focus on non-lethal methods unless this is the best interest for the cat for veterinary/humane reasons.

9. Australia should begin research into TNR and TDARS adapted to the challenges and conditions unique to Australian landscapes, with particular focus on their efficacy of reducing wildlife predation by cats.

10. Develop and use public consultation strategies that are reasonable, fair, appropriate and demonstrate that community opinion and input is valued and respected