

**Submission
No 304**

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

Name: Ms Sophie Sevim
Date Received: 22 November 2024

Considered Committee Members,

I am making this submission as one of countless individuals who take it upon themselves, to "manage" as best we can populations of unowned, unwanted and abandoned cats through desexing, rehoming and education. I do not have any charity affiliation, and I do not receive any recognition, support or reimbursement for the time, inconvenience and financial burden imposed - I simply recognise the problem with cat overpopulation and the suffering currently experienced by abandoned/unwanted cats.

I would also like to state that many if not most of the people most entitled to comment on this issue of cat overpopulation - are simply TOO BUSY dealing with the problem at stake to make a submission. I speak for them when I say that the welfare of these cats as sentient beings is of paramount concern and importance, each cat with its own tragic story and equally deserving of care, kindness and consideration. There can be no umbrella definition of either pet or pest.

It cannot be clearer what needs to be implemented to make progress in managing cat populations. To decrease the impact of cats on wildlife predation long-term, ease the burden placed on council pounds, shelters and rescue groups and to manage the current overpopulation crisis - AFFORDABLE MANDATORY DESEXING is the only way. Providing grants to councils and rescue organisations to fund large-scale, targeted desexing programs around the state - this was recommended as the forward-thinking solution by the recent NSW Pound Inquiry. To anyone like me who sees first-hand the problem when thousands of kittens are born each year with nowhere to go - often left to their own devices breeding as early as 3 months old - it beggars believe that this core root of the issue has been sidelined in preference to killing indiscriminately any cat without registration. The reality is there is too much suffering as there is, implementing a methodical eradication program will not achieve anything, it is both a recklessly insensitive and obsolete solution to a problem which requires a proactive approach. Killing cats to protect wildlife and decrease populations hasn't worked before and it won't work now.

This inquiry will surely be of no consequence if a new approach isn't realised. You will be presented with statistical evidence from initiatives such as the Community Cat Program who highlight the effectiveness of targeted free desexing, TNR, and community education. You will hear about RSPCA's 2018 report showing that councils with 24/7 containment laws actually saw an INCREASE in cat-related complaints, impoundments and euthanasia - there certainly is no evidence that this works. I highly object to the suggestion a 24/7 cat containment law will promote responsible pet ownership or manage cat populations - it will only add further pressure on families who cannot afford to spend an extra \$20 a week on kitty litter just to keep their pets. Furthermore, it will give an ever-increasing number of people hellbent on finding a scapegoat for their anger and frustration cause to inflict cruelty and retribution on innocent animals.

I have to say that writing this has been extremely distressing for me; to contemplate a program of mass extermination of these intelligent and sensitive creatures or a future where placing impossible restrictions and penalties on cat owners is a reality is heartbreaking. I've dedicated so much personally to do what I can to minimise the suffering, birth and death of cats who would otherwise be considered 'problem' cats. Please work with us, the community members who want to solve the overpopulation crisis - we are the ones most invested in seeing a reduction if not end to cat homelessness. The cause is primarily human decision making - the uneducated mum who decides to let her cat have a litter for the 'joy' of seeing kittens or the person who adopts a cat they can't afford to get desexed; or the lazy owner that moves state and leaves their cat behind pregnant - these are the roots which must be addressed by desexing and educating, not punishing and killing animals for being alive. Humans are responsible for far far far more destruction and devastation to native wildlife and populations of threatened species. I've spent time trapping and desexing homeless cats and rehoming kittens born on the streets only to see the beautiful unique beings they become with kindness, compassion and mercy. I know this is having an impact. Please don't make my efforts in vain,

Yours Sincerely

Sophie Sevim