

Submission
No 307

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

I appreciate the opportunity to consult and submit my thoughts on the Inquiry into the management of cat populations. Throughout my life, myself and my family have been involved in rescue and taken in street cats. To this day, I continue to do so and thought I have always taken in cats from different rescue situations, ex-street cats are always my favourite! I currently have ten cats. It is a lot of work and personal expense, but I think it needs to be understood how big this issue is. I am a small player in this very big situation, doing what I can. All of my cats are desexed and all are ex-street cats. I know many people who do Trap Neuter Release (TNR) work in Western Sydney which is where most of my cats originated from. They are tireless, passionate, selfless people who really are trying to make a difference against so many odds. But we are not a huge population of people and there is a lot of work to be done. Government support is important to ensure this issue is tackled effectively.

Issues street cats faced are numerous and devastating. These include: collision by vehicles; trapping; cruelty from humans, including poisoning, physical violence and torture, and dog attacks. I have noticed much demonization and hatred of cats, promoting violence towards them. This encourages a type of justification of cruelty towards them and a reduction of them to a faceless villain. This has been ongoing since my teenage years when boys in my class bragged about torturing kittens. It was abhorrent and the stories I heard still haunt me to this day (I am now in my forties) and no doubt will do so until the end of my life.

One of the crucial elements to look at in cat population management is desexing. Trapping of feral cats can be difficult but not impossible. Alternatively, there are trained people who can administer drugs via dart where needed. For example, a gentleman who runs a husky rescue near Canberra <https://www.alphadog.com.au/about> and has assisted me several times with cat transport, Marcus Filliger, is a military marksman and trains zoo staff in the Ukraine to shoot tranquiliser into wild cats to transport them from areas under attack by Russian military. He has promoted administration of sterilization drugs to kangaroos instead of the persistent cull of Eastern Grey kangaroos in the state that has been going on since 2008 <https://www.smh.com.au/environment/sustainability/a-north-pole-marathon-and-kangaroo-culls-in-the-act>.

In regards to habitat management and protecting wildlife there are some shining examples of regenerative agriculture which includes restoring properly functioning ecosystems. These practices can have wonderful success in managing introduced species. One of the strategies used is the re-introduction and protection of native dingoes, another demonized species <https://wooleen.com.au/the-wooleen-way/>. Sadly two of the dingoes on this reference property have been killed, promoted by local bounty control measures <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-10-03/dingo-hunting-bounty-two-pets-disappear-murchison/>. This is a tragic example of how control measures can be abused and ineffectual.

TNR, which has proven to be successful in US studies <https://www.alleycat.org/resources/trap-neuter-return-research>, deserves support and promotion. I believe support to rescue groups, individuals, community shelters and owners would be well received and an effective use of resources. Useful support would be to provide care, food and most importantly, desexing services. Compassion fatigue is real, and can be incredibly overwhelming. Support would provide some much needed relief to carers.

Another essential component of Cat Population Management is education. Community programs such as <https://www.wearefamily.nsw.gov.au/> help to educate expectant and new parents on the benefits and joys of children experiencing pet ownership. It provides knowledge, skills and strategies to make sure the experience is safe, as well as physically and emotionally enriching. This reduces the likelihood of the pet being abandoned due to the addition of a baby to the family. It is important that community education include multilingual resources as different cultures can have different views on street cats and desexing. School education programs educate children, and indeed their caregivers, on the benefits of rescue and responsibility of animal care including desexing.

In conclusion, issues facing street cats, and several important aspects of cat population management have been outlined. The later include desexing, habitat management, TNR and education have been detailed with several examples. I hope this submission proves useful to the program. I would be happy for this submission to be shared publicly.