

Submission
No 353

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

Name: Mrs Ellie Robertson

Date Received: 20 November 2024

Mrs Ellie Robertson ,

18 November 2024

Inquiry Into the Management of Cat Populations In New South Wales

Thank you for the opportunity to provide the following submission in response to the NSW Government's invitation for public feedback on the Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales.

Please find below my comments and views on the current situation and further down solutions that should be implemented ASAP.

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

a) the impact of cats on threatened native animals in metropolitan and regional settings

NSW Government's own Environment and Heritage website dashboard for Wildlife Rehabilitation Data 2022-2023 lists:

- *Unsuitable environment*: 413 incidents
- *Collision with motor vehicles*: 310 incidents
- *Habitat changes*: 52 incidents
- *Dog attacks*: 98 incidents
- ***Cat attacks*: 37 incidents**

The [Rand myth of domestic cats & urban wildlife](#) provides a helpful summary of common misconceptions

Deforestation, clearing land for farming and urban sprawl are wiping out habitats for native wildlife, while making it easier for introduced species like cats to thrive. Instead of taking the lazy way out, we need to focus on fixing the root causes, like projects to restore habitats and bring back biodiversity.

b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers

Strict mandated 24/7 cat containment have shown to increase impoundments and lead to higher euthanasia rates without actually solving issues like roaming. Cat containment laws didn't reduce complaints about roaming cats or make a noticeable difference.

For example, the RSPCA's 2018 report shows that councils with containment laws have not seen reductions in cat-related complaints or wandering.

c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions

In principle, I am very much in favour of mandatory 24-hour cat curfews. Before getting a cat enclosure a few years ago, my cats were always in before sunset and out after sunrise and monitored throughout the day.

However, mandatory 24-hour cat curfews often target semi-owned or stray cats, which have no owners to enforce confinement. These curfews can backfire, with some people abandoning cats to avoid fines, adding to the stray population. Demonising cats can also encourage harmful actions, with mandatory curfews sometimes leading to unchecked cruelty, as there's often little oversight on trapping practices or what happens to the cats afterward.

I believe mandatory 24 hour cat curfews should still be something to aim for. However, finding solutions to the issues I have just stated should be explored beforehand.

d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives

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 patios, can help keep both cats and wildlife safe.

Community outreach, media campaigns and school programs teaching pet care, the importance of spaying/neutering and safe indoor environments.

Supporting local initiatives that help manage community cat populations through rehoming programs, targeted desexing and fostering.

e) implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies

Councils need to be held accountable for the roaming cat situation. Councils have been advised multiple times on various ways to control roaming cats and exploding populations. However, Council merely has Band-Aid solutions and not getting to the root of the problem. Councils do not seem to take the situation seriously otherwise they will invest more money in programs to find solutions.

f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs

This is a no-brainer and goes without saying. Stopping cats reproducing obviously will control numbers. Reducing numbers will reduce wildlife killing, will reduce overflowing shelters, will reduce road accidents and many more benefits. This should be a number one priority for the government at all levels.

g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system

As I said previously, I am very much in favour of 24-hour cat containment under strict conditions. Stopping cats getting out and about, will stop cats reproducing and if they are not reproducing there won't be that many strays or abandonments and if that's the case, quite clearly, the pressure on the pound system will be considerably.

h) the outcomes of similar policies on cat containment in other Australian states or territories

Obviously demographics will play some sort of role when it comes to cat containment policies. These policies will need to be tailored for areas with particular needs, e.g., rural and lower socio-economic demographics.

i) options for reducing the feral cat population

The only option is a humane option. I'm not sure about this question. Is this question referring to feral cats as in completely wild with no human contact?

If yes, and if these cats are not rehomingable (as certified by an animal welfare organisation), then I would suggest trapping and neutering and then releasing. If by releasing them and they pose a significant threat to native wildlife then the option would be to humanely put these cats sleep.

If these cats can be rehomed, then every effort should be made to keep them until they find a safe, secure and loving home.

j) any other related matters.

I would like to think that this inquiry is serious and legitimate. I would like to think it is not a propaganda exercise to appear that the government is concerned about this issue.

I would like to think that this inquiry will take on board and act upon the very valuable suggestions, data, experience and solutions submitted by welfare organisation who know first-hand, the problems and ways to find solutions