

**Submission
No 375**

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

Name: Mr Amitav Dash
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Thank you for the opportunity to submit a comment on this issue.

First off, I don't believe there is such a thing as a nuisance species (plant or animal) — if there was such a thing, humans would top the list of those nuisances and detriments to the environment.

Most ancient cultures that live in synchronicity with the world see every species of life as having a specific purpose and value because all life is interconnected. Trying to control one damages the balance of an ecosystem and almost always has unexpected or unwanted effects down the line.

As such, killing cats in NSW is simply bad science and bad policy — and is a knee-jerk reaction and scapegoat to the problems humans have created.

Instead of taking the most extreme position (which is cruel, unscientific, and will almost certainly create new problems that will need to be dealt with in the future), take a reasoned, logical, and ethical approach.

To do this, there are four (4) strategies to follow:

1. Focus on Evidence

We already know that:

(a) Killing cats to protect wildlife hasn't worked before and won't work now.

(b) Community cat programs that focus on rehoming, targeted desexing, TNR and community education are highly effective at reducing stray cat populations. (This is particularly effective when partnered with grants and other supports for owners in disadvantaged areas)

(c) Community cat programs ease the burden on councils, shelters and rescue groups, while supporting the well-being of vets, nurses and volunteers involved.

2. Cat Containment

While most companion cat owners are already keeping their cats confined, some face barriers like housing restrictions, high costs to modify properties, or lack of information. Mandatory 24-hour cat curfews, however, 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.

3. Educating Pet Owners

No long-term, lasting change can occur without ongoing, collaborative education. Educating communities about responsible pet ownership is essential to any solution.

4. Wildlife

As mentioned earlier, the responsibility for the damage to wildlife starts with the biggest culprit — us. Humanity is the biggest threat to wildlife. Cleaning up around the edges will only

produce a temporary change (even with the best solution). For real change, the biggest issue has to be addressed.

Deforestation, clearing land for farming, and urban sprawl are wiping out habitats for native wildlife, making it easier for introduced species like cats to thrive. Unlike native animals, cats don't rely on specific ecosystems to survive, which means they can adapt and thrive in these altered environments. Instead of just pointing fingers at cats, we need to focus on fixing the root causes, like projects to restore habitats and bring back biodiversity.

Real change begins when we honestly look at and address the real problems and don't scapegoat others to avoid our own complicity and responsibility.