

Submission
No 322

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

Name: Miss Wanda Gordon

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Wanda Gordon

NSW Parliament

Dear Sirs/Mesdames,

Re: Inquiry into the Management of Cat Populations

I write to express my views as a concerned animal advocate who seeks only the most humane treatment of animals be upheld by laws, regulations and which promote the genuine care, commitment that we all should share for the welfare of all animals and sentient creatures. I can only support a humane solution for cat welfare in any State or Territory of Australia which upholds both Australian and European standards of animal welfare.

Effective and Proven Evidence Based Solutions

Controlling populations should always involve non-lethal measures which reflect community standards and deny the use of inflicting pain, cruelty or inhumane methods which are condemnable and should attach a lengthy term in prison for violating animal welfare expectations and hopefully laws. Allowing the Government or RSPCA to take the role as an abattoir and slaughter any domestic or non-domestic pet or animal is reprehensible, cruel and can NEVER be accepted as a solution a civilise society can accept while upholding the expectations of animal welfare being a priority.

Controlling populations requires the following measures be implemented:

1. All breeders of cats be required to only sell desexed cats and kittens;
2. All animal organisations only sell desexed cats and kittens;
3. Government grants boost community animal welfare funding which is provided to their organisations to pay for desexing or surrendered felines;
4. Community grants encourage all vets to set the desexing costs at \$50 per desexing to promote greater uptake to neuter felines;
5. Greater community programs that focus on rehoming and desexing/
6. Improved education campaigns that encourage people to help abandoned pets which have ended up on the street and homeless so as to ensure they are taken to a no-kill shelter to be rehomed.
7. Trap, neuter and release (TNR) to occur in animal sanctuaries where cat colonies are established in a securely fenced area designated for the colony. This has been proven as highly effective in reducing stray populations. According to Tan, Rand and Moreton (2017) “trap, neuter and return associated with high desexing rates in colonies, and adoption of kittens and friendly adults substantially reduces colony size, and improves the welfare of cats and kittens. This model is cost-effective for municipalities, and should be legalized in Australia.”
8. Desexing is an important aspect of reducing shelter intake.
9. TNR is used in many countries overseas including Singapore, Canada, Italy and the United States and has been successful especially when “Semi-ownership” which is common in Australia, occurs. According to Tan, Rand and Moreton (2017) “where some care, usually food, is provided by people who do not perceive they own the cat, improves the chances of providing humane

treatment for cats. This was indicated with the following: "approximately 80% to 90% of stray cats entering shelters or pounds that have some socialization to humans, and therefore not considered feral."

10. Rehoming, community or shared ownership, TNR initiatives will ease the burden on councils, shelters and rescue groups, and importantly (as you will read on) will commit to better supporting the well-being of vets, nurses and volunteers involved in the humane treatment of animals and cats.

Furthermore, a NSW Government-commissioned report supports large-scale desexing programs instead, showing that killing programs are ineffective.

Animal cruelty and the significant human cost.

The government and any organisation that is to borrow an Australian colloquial term "in bed with it" insisting on the killing of any animals whether it be cats, kangaroos, wombats or our iconic heritage horses called the brumbies, are opening themselves up to a law suit for personal injury.

This is quite clear when consideration is given to empirical data of Tan, Rand and Moreton (2017) that "Culling of a magnitude sufficient to substantially reduce urban cat populations ... have significant social and human welfare implications. Approximately 50% of the workers involved with euthanasia of animals develop post-traumatic stress which is associated with depression, substance abuse, hypertension, sleeplessness and suicide."

This evidence is also corroborated by the Australian Veterinarian Association which indicates that veterinarians are now 4 times more likely to die by suicide than the general population. Morgan (2023) reported that "between 1979 and 2015, according to US CDC National Centre for Health Statistics.... nearly 70% of veterinarians have had a colleague or peer die by suicide, and close to 60% have experienced work-related stress, anxiety or depression."

Community Grants – Community Education

You need to review the NSW Pound Inquiry which has recommended proactive solutions as follows:

1. Monetary grants issued to councils and rescue organisations which fund large-scale, targeted desexing programs across the state.
2. Targeted community and veterinary funding for community cat desexing in areas with large homeless cat populations, especially to support disadvantaged communities.

Clearly such targeted programs are necessary to continue long-term. Improving and promoting compassionate solutions that do not lead to cruelty being inflicted on cats, demonising of cats who are abandoned by cruel people who expect a domestic pet to fend for itself is needed. It really is time that cruel ideas are quashed and cruelty is inconceivable for a modern humane 21st century society. There are much better ways to reduce stray cat populations without lethal methods and without blaming and demonising cats who were abandoned by irresponsible owners and expected to fend for themselves.

Funding needs to boost ways to support community and "semi-owners" and legal owners in disadvantaged areas. Such support must be heavily discounted or even 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 eventuating as abandoned pets are starved by cruel, irresponsible owners.

Cat Containment

Most council by-laws require cats to be contained inside an enclosed catio or residence at all times. Responsible and educated cat owners will comply with confining their pet but education needs to be provided to improve all owners understanding of their obligations. Then consideration must be given to the community and semi-owned cats and stray cats who do not have an owner to promote and encourage the cats confinement. Imposing 24-hour cat curfews also could cause people to abandon their pet to avoid council impound fees after the cat is trapped. It is also a major concern of cruel persons committing unmonitored, illegal acts of animal cruelty of the cats. Increasing impoundment of roaming cats is likely to lead to euthanasia and again this has an unacceptable risk and human factor for the persons who indeed care and uphold animal welfare. Furthermore, the 2018 RSPCA council containment laws has seen no change in cat roaming. This is evidenced in the Pet Welfare Organisation (nd) reports on the 2018 RSPCA findings which indicated that councils with containment laws have not seen reductions in cat-related complaints or wandering (APWF, nd). This APWF report also notes that "In Yarra Ranges (Victoria), three years after introducing a 24-hour cat curfew, cat-related complaints rose by 143%, impoundments by 68%, and euthanasia by 18%, while the population grew by just 2%. Similarly, in the City of Casey (Victoria), 20 years after implementing a cat containment policy, impoundments were up by 296% and complaints had also increased." Same experiences in the council of Hobsons Bay (Victoria) led to the rejection of cat curfews as they are not effective in resolving cat roaming or population issues. Therefore, it is essential that the earlier suggestions of community grants for desexing and rehoming be promoted as the most viable and humane option to support reducing any cat population and related issues.

Education Campaigns – promoting responsible Pet Ownership

Educating communities about responsible pet ownership is essential. Insisting on the government and animal welfare organisations support and encourage 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. Education campaigns on television and programs which promote rehoming of pets is one way to reach a wider audience. Community outreach, media campaigns and school programs teaching pet care, the importance of spaying/neutering and safe indoor environments are essential. Encouraging television stations to provide a regular segment that promotes the rehoming of pets has had a success in Central Queensland for rehoming impounded dogs. This would also be a significant way to promote cats in shelters needing to be homed or to promote the uptake of foster carers. Perhaps this could be a way to encourage "semi-owned" cats towards gaining "legal" owned cat status. Further local initiatives that help manage community cat populations through rehoming programs, targeted desexing and fostering.

Who is the culprit really? Be honest!

The number one killer of wildlife is due to loss of habitat. The number one killer is humans. Governments giving orders to clear land for farming is to blame. Governments approving mining and gas and infrastructure expansion is to blame. So while the government and its "partner" may be looking to use the vulnerable, abandoned, hungry domestic cat victim for wildlife losses – this is quite inaccurate and misguided. Bush Heritage Australian (2024) indicates that "land clearing encroaches further and further into Australia's natural habitats.

The large-scale destruction of native woodlands, forests, wetlands and grasslands is widely considered the biggest threat to biodiversity in the country.” So, clearly human actions including deforestation, clearing land for farming and urban sprawl are wiping out habitats for native wildlife.

Furthermore, the key threat to wildlife are: habitat loss, vehicle collisions, dog attacks. NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard 2022-23 Data:

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

Conclusions

Therefore, the government must commit to honesty and acknowledge humans are the number one predator and guilty culprit in the loss of wildlife and habitat. Blaming vulnerable, abandoned domestic pets who needs humane and welfare support is the priority. We must say no to cruel, psychopathic killing at every opportunity. We must prioritise cat welfare and support humane management practices, including free and heavily discounted desexing services, insist on breeder desexing of pets before sale, media promotion of pets and fostering and ongoing community education about responsible ownership, TNR, community ownership. The collection of humane measures which promote animal welfare will also promote veterinary and animal welfare workers health and wellbeing too. Humane solutions are the only way forward and it really will make a difference in the lives of people who care about humanely treating all animals and the animals who may be the target of cruel, evil and inhumane lethal government policies and practices which are vile and incomprehensible in our 21st century supposedly “civilised” and “advanced” world.

I ask you move away from living in the Dark Ages and move into the 21st century and uphold community expectations especially as regards the humane and non-lethal treatment and solutions for all animals that we share the earth with.

Yours sincerely,

Wanda Gordon
B. Laws. B. Arts (French). GDTL

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