

Submission  
No 323

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

**Organisation:** Tamworth Open Garden Trail Assoc.

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I am writing on behalf of the Tamworth Open Garden Trail Association. We are a group that encourages people to grow water-wise and native habitat gardens in suburban Tamworth, NSW. Recently, we hosted an open garden trail that attracted 460 people. Many visitors commented on the gardens that incorporated native habitat plants and we had a lot of positive feedback on the bird species that were present in those gardens. Unfortunately, we all know that pet cats that are allowed to wander kill birds, even if they are adequately fed in their homes. Therefore, this group is very much in favour of cats being contained to their own properties. This would allow home owners to enjoy the native species in their gardens without fear of simply creating a cat smorgasbord.

We have been promoting keeping cats inside, or contained in catios, to our members. We strongly believe that this is a basic responsibility for pet ownership, and that it also makes one a good neighbour. No one wants to plant native trees, only to have their Dusky Woodswallows taken by cats! We are also in an area that is frequently by the Critically Endangered Regent Honeyeater. Cats pose a serious threat to this struggling species. Part of the joy of planting native flowers, trees, and shrubs is having them visited by native animals and insects. We believe that suburban gardens can provide much needed habitat for these animals, especially in times of drought or during migrations. But seeing people's pet cats predate birds, frogs, and lizards negatively affects the mental health of garden owners, and often leads them to be less engaged with their gardens and nature in general. Having cats contained to their owner's properties will drastically reduce the amount of cat predation that occurs in metropolitan areas.

Since bringing up the issue of outdoor cats, we have had positive engagement from many people. Therefore, we believe that responsible pet ownership initiatives would gain traction in this region. After all, people all keep their dogs contained!