

Submission  
No 324

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

**Name:** Mr Martin McNally

**Date Received:** 21 November 2024

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## Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales

Name: Martin McNally

Date: 21/11/2024

Dear Committee,

I appreciate the opportunity to make a submission to the Inquiry.

I would like to clarify that my objective is to provide a neutral, honest and informed opinion on the Terms of Reference. The reason is that I have observed polar opposite views from members of the cat community, the government organisations that should be managing cats and other organisations that have a political agenda.

In January this year, my wife Alena, notified me that through a Facebook post, it was reported that a kitten was witnessed to be thrown out of a car window into a local reserve. I took action by coordinating a search of this kitten and setting up a WhatsApp Group which became know as MIA (Missing In Action). The search was ultimately unsuccessful. The search was picked up at the time by Yahoo news who published an article – see link below.

[Surprise twist in furore over ‘irresponsible’ cat trap found in Aussie suburb](#)

This is evidence of how controversial the topic of cat population management is in the local communities across the State of NSW. The impact of ignorance, a lack of honest information – some would call misinformation - and deliberate tactics from Local, State and Federal Government bodies along with their Advisory Committees to mislead people and place the voluntary Cat Community at risk.

Below is evidence of this. This sign issued by Sutherland Shire Council intentionally makes three misleading statements.

- (a) Feeding cats does not correlate to the breeding cycle by any stretch. There is no science to support this assertion.
- (b) Roaming cats under the current legislation are legally “free to roam”. Cats, like other animals, eat other animals, native or not. As a neutral party to this debate, I find it strange that cats are treated as not native. Of course they are native as are all animals born in Australia. I also find it bad form that when it suits them, Government departments and the RSPCA as well as the supposed enforcement authorities (e.g NSW Police) always advise that cats are “free to roam”. I would call that “buttering your bread on both sides” 😊
- (c) The third point starts to delve into conspiracy and really stretches the imagination by implying there might be “health concerns” for “residents and pets” by placing food out because it attracts “unwanted vermin”. Placing food out is not the same as littering and using that piece of legislation misinforms and empowers members of the public that what the volunteers are doing is illegal. To be clear, feeding stray cats is NOT against the LAW. I would also point out that stray cats are identified as unchipped before being fed. I would also point out that volunteers use natural containers to put the food into which does not breach any laws on littering. However, using this legislation is poor form by this Council. I have heard reports that because of these types of signs, cat volunteers, mainly ladies, have been assaulted and threatened by a minority of empowered members of the public (FYI, there is a member of the public currently working on the statistics of Ladies assaulted and threatened – which I can provide at a later date). These matters had to be referred and managed by NSW

## Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales

Police. Even by reporting my own concerns to Council management about the significant risk of harm, they preferred to leave this sign up.



I have always believed that nothing is coincidence. When we could not find "MIA", we discovered a very large stray colony of cats – some would refer to them as "feral". This colony is estimated to be made up of cats and kittens numbering 80+ ! It is located in a low socio-economic area, like it seems are most stray cat colonies in the Sydney basin.

What I initially observed in January were traumatised, starving, scrawny cats who were suffering every cat malady including persistent pregnancies. I would like to make some observations at this point:

- (a) I believe the word "Feral" has been weaponised by certain scientific advisory groups to the NSW Government and Federal Government. When we refer to the word "Feral" are we defining this as wild cats who the environment has morphed into small horses or cats who are normal sized and are suffering the effects of trauma by being for example dumped out of a moving car window?
- (b) If this cat colony was eating so many "native" animals why were they starving and scrawny? Why were their immune systems depleted? Why were they suffering mental health issues?
- (c) Why were there so many pregnancies back in January. Yet in a period of just 9 months, there has been only one unconfirmed pregnancy in the colony in the last 3 months?

I would ask the Committee to reflect on these honest observations.

On March 1<sup>st</sup> 2024, I scheduled a meeting with my local NSW State Minister, Mark Speakman. A Councillor from the Sutherland Shire Council, Kent Johns, also kindly attended. In attendance was members of the local community that had lived with this large cat colony over two decades,

## Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales

community cat feeders, a member of a local cat rescue and a Public Relations Officer from the local Veterinary Hospital, Veterinary Specialists of Sydney. What I observed in this meeting was fascinating. Both the Minister and Councillor lacked full understanding of the issue of cat management and in fact welcomed an education on the subject from the experts around the table. The outcome of that meeting was that the Minister and Councillor would attempt to approach NSW Government and Local Council. However, this would seem to have been unsuccessful as I have heard nothing back from either the Minister or Councillor.

I was asked by the Minister and Councillor to provide a report on the issue and recommendations which was input by all these stakeholders – see “Problem Statement\_Final.pdf” – this document addresses the majority of the Terms of Reference in this Inquiry and our recommendations for the way forward.

In the spirit of providing an informed opinion, I did reach out to the Advocacy Director of the Invasive Species Council. However, he did not get back to me by the time I made this submission. I would ask the Committee to consider the financial and political ramifications and apparent conflicts of interest posed by Committees whose true intention may not be entirely supportive of the welfare of cats. There are lucrative research grants on the line for alleged threats to the environment which are supported by ill advised politicians, one of whom might be the current Federal Minister, who proposes to spend \$60 million killing “Feral” cats – see links to “Final Threat Abatement Plan” below. Purely as a finance expert, I would always expect that any cost for the taxpayer has a correlating benefit whether financial, non-financial or economic. I would easily assess from my observation of how cat colonies split for the sole reason of severe trauma, that there will not be a net benefit for the Federal Minister in this regard. Its short-sighted programs like this that drive the wrong outcomes for cat management.

Response to your enquiry: Final Threat Abatement Plan [SEC=OFFICIAL] 📧 Inbox x



**Invasive Species** <invasivespecies@dcceew.gov.au>  
to me, Invasive, Customer ▾

[SEC=OFFICIAL]

Dear Martin

Thank you for your email below, and for contacting the department's Contact Centre, regarding your interest in the *Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats*.

The updated threat abatement plan is currently being finalised for release by the end of this year.

Public consultation on the draft threat abatement plan is now closed, however you can still view the consultation draft of the plan on the department's consultation hub:  
[Draft updated threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats. - Climate \(dcceew.gov.au\)](#)

In the meantime, the existing approved threat abatement plan for the key **threatening** process of predation by feral cats can be found on our website at:  
[Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats - DCCEEW](#)

I trust this information is helpful.

Kind regards  
Bronwyn

### Threat Policy and Planning Section

Biodiversity Division | **Threatened** Species Commissioner Branch  
Ngunnawal Country, John Gorton Building, King Edward Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600 Australia  
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Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water



[DCCEEW.gov.au](#) ABN 63 573 932 849

**Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales**

I thank the Committee for their work on this Inquiry and am available if further information is needed.

Your faithfully

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Martin McNally