

**Submission
No 373**

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

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Killing cats to protect wildlife is cruel and doesn't work. It's been tried before and failed to solve the problem.

Programs that focus on rehoming, desexing, TNR (trap-neuter-return), and educating the community are much better at reducing stray cat numbers. These programs also help councils, shelters, and rescue groups while supporting vets and volunteers.

When I lived in Sydney I volunteered with the Animal Welfare League and the Cat Protection Society. Both of these organisations are doing vital work with colony cats - feeding and desexing. They rely on donations, but should be funded by government and council initiatives.

A report by the NSW Government shows large-scale desexing programs work better than killing cats. The NSW Pound Inquiry recommends funding councils and rescue groups to run desexing programs, especially in disadvantaged areas. These programs tackle the root causes of stray populations without blaming cats.

Helping cat owners in low-income areas with free desexing and microchipping is the best way forward. Research shows this reduces stray cats, cuts complaints, and protects wildlife. Desexing is proven to be the key solution.

Cat Containment

Most cat owners keep their cats indoors or contained, but barriers like housing rules, costs, or lack of information can make this hard. Mandatory 24-hour curfews don't work for stray or semi-owned cats since there's no one to enforce the rules. Curfews often lead to more abandoned cats and cruelty, making the problem worse.

Strict cat containment laws lead to more cats being impounded and euthanized without fixing the issues. For example:

In Yarra Ranges (Victoria), complaints rose 143%, impoundments 68%, and euthanasia 18% after a curfew was introduced.

In City of Casey (Victoria), complaints and impoundments rose even 20 years after containment policies began.

Some councils, like Hobsons Bay (Victoria), have rejected curfews because they don't work.

Educating Pet Owners

Educating people about responsible pet care is crucial.

This includes:

Teaching how to keep cats safely indoors or contained using enclosures.

Running campaigns and school programs on spaying/neutering and indoor cat safety.

Supporting programs that rehome and desex community cats.

Wildlife

Blaming cats for wildlife loss ignores the real issue: human activity. Habitat destruction from farming, deforestation, and urban development is the biggest threat to wildlife, not cats. Cats adapt to these changes, but native animals often cannot.

Protecting wildlife means restoring habitats and addressing key risks like collisions and dog attacks. Recent NSW wildlife data shows:

Habitat issues: 52 incidents

Vehicle collisions: 310 incidents

Dog attacks: 98 incidents

Cat attacks: 37 incidents

I now live in a rural community where cats are "vilified" as the number one killer of local wildlife, and routinely trapped, shot, and poisoned. This treatment and mindset is cruel and unjustified, as shown in the above figures. These methods are also indiscriminate and often kill the wildlife instead.

The focus should be on habitat conservation and addressing real threats, not just targeting cats.