

**Submission
No 440**

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

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INQUIRY INTO THE MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS IN NSW

Submission

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry.

I spent several years as a volunteer with a local RSPCA branch, and was involved in the surrender and rehoming of hundreds of animals during that time. As a result of that experience, there is no doubt in my mind that one of the first things that must be addressed in managing cat populations is mandatory desexing, with effective scrutiny. Currently, NSW law requires desexing of companion cats by four months of age, with an annual fee payable for non-compliance. However, there is no organisation or governmental body tasked with overseeing this requirement, which is why “kitten season” arrives every year, with rehoming organisations routinely overwhelmed with baby felines.

Addressing this issue, in my view, would require:

- a major public education program focussed on microchipping and desexing; and
- significant public investment in financial assistance towards microchipping and desexing.

The public education program should extend to people who feed “semi-owned” cats.

For such an enterprise to have a noticeable impact, all levels of government would need to cooperate, along with vets, researchers, conservation groups and animal welfare and advocacy organisations. A piecemeal approach would have little to no effect.

The NSW Government should carefully regulate cat breeders and require them to desex animals before sale, unless to another recognised breeder.

It must be an offence to sell or give away any undesexed cat, and this must be enforced.

Cat containment should also be encouraged, but only in conjunction with education regarding the physical and psychological needs of cats. Cat owners should be encouraged to provide access to outdoors for their pets, ideally in an environment which keeps their cats safe and protects wildlife.

In terms of feral cats, they must not be demonised. Cats did not choose to come to Australia, and they should not be made to suffer for exhibiting natural behaviours. While acknowledging their major impact on wildlife, we must also remember that we as humans are also significantly responsible for negative impacts on our native animal populations, through land clearing, motor vehicle collisions and the effects of human-induced climate change.

Research into humane control methods which have minimal impact on other species needs to be a priority of the State and Federal Governments. Truly effective eradication can only be achieved currently within predator-proof enclosed areas, so research into innovative forms of control is an area in need of urgent and serious scientific study.