

Submission
No 393

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the LC inquiry - Management of cat populations in NSW

I make this submission in my personal capacity as a responsible cat owner. We have five cats (including a foster fail) rescued from local no kill NSW cat charities. I also foster when I can and fundraise for a small no kill cat charity made up entirely of volunteers. Our five cats are registered, desexed and contained within our property all the time and do not roam. I do this to keep them safe from cars and humans who would do them harm and to keep wildlife safe from them.

In my view reducing and managing the cat population in NSW is impossible without:

- affordable and accessible desexing programmes for cats:
 - make it mandatory (with the means to enforce it)
 - affordable – preferably free
 - accessible – widely available in all inner City and rural areas
- affordable (reduced cost for those in need) and accessible veterinary services for pet owners
- limiting and controlling cat breeding – preference should be in favour of adopting a rescue cat rather than killing cats in shelters and breeding other types of cats for purchase:
 - consider a rescue tax. For someone willing to spend \$ on buying a pedigree cat why not add onto the purchase price a mandatory donation to a cat no kill shelter
- raising awareness of the importance of desexing cats in communities:
 - explain why desexing cats is so important for their health and to control populations
 - start with school children but also get out in the community and educate adults
- raising awareness of the importance of adopting a rescue cat rather than buying a pedigree cat – start admitting how many cats are killed every day because they are not wanted
- raising awareness and incentives for responsible pet ownership:
 - pet ownership is for life - not until you move house, find a partner, have a child or until some other life event takes place that you consider more important than your cat's life
 - educating people that cats can live 10-20 years and that is how long you commit for
 - requiring pet owners to register their pets and how this can be enforced
 - keeping their cats confined to their property all the time or at least during set times e.g. at night
 - offering incentives for cat netting and other such containment measures
 - change the messaging. Stop demonising cats. It is not cats that are the problem but irresponsible and often cruel and uncaring people

Killing cats in shelters is just trying to manage the symptoms. It is not managing the cause of the problem. People are dumping unwanted pets that are not desexed. Likely for lots of reasons but I would submit the biggest reason being that their cat was not desexed or contained and it got pregnant and had kittens they cannot afford or want to keep.

Social media spreads untrue, horrific and sensationalised information suggesting cats are single handedly responsible for the decimation of native animals without that information being

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fact checked so that it is current, correct and complete. Nor is it considered in context with destruction of habitat and many other factors.

I have seen the same photo of a cat with a bird in its mouth circulating at various times for years on social media in support of killing/containing cats. Who knows when that photo was taken, where it was taken (i.e. within or outside of Australia!) and whether it is even real or was artificially generated.

There isn't a lot of publicity of the volume of cats (often someone's unwanted pet) that are killed in shelters across NSW. If people knew that maybe it would encourage a family to adopt rather than shop or encourage them to desex their pet (which is not cruel) rather than allow it to have just one litter....

I have lived in Australia for over 10 years. I am exhausted with the constant hatred towards cats which is encouraged at State and Federal govt level, blaming cats for a human made problem. And the constant what can we do about it. There have been a lot of inquiries at State and Federal level all of which I can only assume receive similar submissions to mine. And yet I don't see any action following on from them. It really is quite simple. Desexing works.

For those nay sayers who say it won't work or its too expensive run a trial and then look at the evidence. It is simple maths. If a cat cannot breed it remains a single cat and the population is reduced by one when it sadly dies. As opposed to the alternative if a female cat is not desexed. A simple google search will reveal that a desexed female cat becomes capable of having kittens at only a few months old and is capable of having multiple litters per year with multiple kittens per litter. Whilst the numbers vary (some suggest a single cat and her offspring can produce 400,000 kittens), all the different formulas have one thing in common a single desexed cat will lead to multiple cats. And despite decades of trying, trying to kill them all isn't working.

The NSW Government should fund desexing programmes and fund charities who offer desexing programmes in conjunction with running the education campaigns I have mentioned above.

If you make something free and easy for people and explain why it is a good thing, they will be more likely to do it. You could also reward those who do it e.g. with a voucher towards vet treatment etc. And penalise by way of introducing offences for those that don't. It is not going to be quick given the scale of the problem but over time desexing will work to reduce the cat population.