

Submission
No 397

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

Name: Ms Lynette Desmond

Date Received: 19 November 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to lodge a submission on this important matter.

Cats have formed relationships with humans for thousands of years. The Egyptians worshipped cats. Cats have been used to keep mice and rats away from grain crops and later cats have been kept as companions for a great many people.

Cats should be divided into at least 3 categories. (As per RSPCA)

- (a) Feral
- (b) Owned cat (not pet cat)
- (c) Semi owned and unowned domestic cats (not feral).

Regarding the terms of reference.

- (a) The impact of cats on threatened native animals in metropolitan and regional settings.

There has been research on this issue and there is no evidence that domestic and semi owned cats in metropolitan and regional areas have any great impact on the wildlife in those areas. The cruel murder of domestic cats will not achieve any increase in the health of wildlife populations. The wildlife populations are impacted by land clearing, human activity, car accidents and dog attacks and then cats. Cats are not the main problem for wildlife in suburban areas.

To blame cats is wrong, unjust and a poor excuse and leads to deranged people attacking innocent cats and it does not help protect wildlife.

- (b) The effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers.

The councils that have mandated cat containment have found it is not effective. Many owners can not contain as they are in rented accommodation or in units where body corporates will not allow a balcony to be enclosed. An outdoor enclosure is essential for the cat's wellbeing.

- (c) Welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions.

Where the unit or house is not airconditioned an animal will suffer if kept inside 24 hours a day. Also when a cat is discovered outside by Council some owners abandon the cat so as not to pay a fine. The high cost of cat enclosures insures an area could have more stray cats to deal with . Councils also report that 24 hour curfews increases the work of the council as there are more complaints about cats and an increase in impounded cats. A house with multi cats there could be an increase in behaviour problems.

Cats that are strays will also suffer as cruel individuals will think it is OK to torture cats and of course stray cats cannot be contained.

- (d) The effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership.

Education of the community is the way to go. Desexing programs and education on animal welfare all help. The joys of animal ownership needs to be highlighted, as well as the benefits to the individual cat or dog. Education on responsible pet ownership including keeping cats in at night is another initiative that needs to be highlighted to the community.

(e) Implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing containment policies.

Councils are short of money and are probably unable to run many programs and I do not believe that mandatory cat containment works for metropolitan and regional areas. But responsible ownership, desexing, and help for the many many community rescue groups that help catch and desex cats and rehome would be the way to go.

Councils have not the sufficient funds to enforce a cat containment policy and State Government funds are required to help the Councils and rescue groups look after and help stray cats in the community.

I believe any cat containment policies would increase council work and not be as effective as education and financial help for volunteers, pounds and shelters to desex, socialise and rehome stray cats.

(f) The effectiveness and benefits of implementing large scale desexing programs.

These programs would need State Government funds and are a great help in reducing the problem of stray cats in any community. The burden falls to rescue groups and the Councils so extra funding is essential.

(g) The impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system.

I'm not sure but I suspect the number of cats surrendered to the pound or let loose in the community would increase and the number of cats euthanised would increase to a level unacceptable to the community.

(h) The outcomes of similar policies on cat containment in other Australian States or territories.

Some councils report that there has been no impact on wildlife with the cat containment policies.

(i) Options for reducing the feral cat population.

The definition of 'feral' must be tight. The definition used by the RSPCA is acceptable and does NOT include current unowned domestic cats. These true feral cats are a problem in country areas but 1080 MUST NOT be used. It is banned in most countries as it is extremely cruel and barbaric and kills non-targeted native animals and birds (per RSPCA).

Fences can help and chemicals that can suppress feral cat breeding can help.

(J) other related matters

Again the cats must be divided into 3 categories (not 2)

Feral

Owned cat

Semi owned and unowned domestic cat (not feral)

In Summary all policy changes should be in conjunction with RSPCA, Animal Welfare League, Animals Australia, Cat Protection Society and vet associations and some other major welfare groups.

