

Submission
No 449

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

Name: Mrs Natasha Brown

Date Received: 15 November 2024

We must prioritise cat welfare and support humane management practices, including desexing and education!

I am writing to share my concerns about the current approach to managing cat populations in New South Wales and to advocate for a more humane, effective solution. As someone who cares deeply about animal welfare and wildlife conservation, I strongly believe that killing cats is not the answer to this issue. It has been tried before and simply doesn't work.

The evidence is clear, lethal control programs fail to reduce cat populations sustainably. Removing cats from an area only leads to more cats moving in, a phenomenon known as the Vacuum Effect. What we need are long-term solutions like desexing programs and trap-neuter-return (TNR), which have proven time and time again to work without resorting to cruelty.

A NSW Government report and the NSW Pound Inquiry both recommend large-scale desexing as the most effective way to reduce stray cat numbers. Instead of culling, we should focus on programs that address the problem at its root, such as community cat desexing in areas with large homeless cat populations. This approach is both compassionate and sustainable.

I also want to raise concerns about mandatory cat curfews. While they may sound like a solution, evidence from places like Yarra Ranges and City of Casey in Victoria shows that curfews and containment laws have made things worse. In these areas, cat-related complaints and impoundments actually increased after curfews were introduced, and euthanasia rates went up as well. These laws often penalize semi-owned or stray cats, those who have no owners to enforce containment, leading to abandonment and more cats on the streets.

A much better approach is education. We need to help people understand the importance of desexing, keeping cats contained, and treating them with compassion. Programs like the Community Cat Program have been successful in reducing stray populations through targeted desexing and microchipping. These efforts benefit not only cats but also the communities they live in by preventing nuisance issues and reducing the burden on shelters and councils.

When it comes to wildlife protection, it's easy to blame cats for the decline of native species. However, we must acknowledge that human activities, like habitat destruction, urban sprawl, and deforestation, are the primary drivers of wildlife loss. The latest data from the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard shows that vehicle collisions and dog attacks are responsible for far more harm to wildlife than cats are. To truly protect our native species, we need to focus on habitat restoration and reducing human impacts, not just target cats.

In conclusion, I strongly urge the committee to consider humane, evidence-based strategies for managing cat populations. Rather than focusing on killing or containment laws, we should invest in large-scale desexing, TNR programs, and community education. These solutions are proven to work and are far more compassionate. If we truly care about both cats and wildlife, these are the kinds of approaches we need to prioritize.

I hope the committee will take a thoughtful, long-term approach to this issue.

Sincerely,

Natasha Brown

NSW Resident