

Submission  
No 346

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

**Name:** Mrs Leeanne Tyler-Olsen

**Date Received:** 20 November 2024

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Dear Minister Sharpe,

I am writing to urge the NSW State Government to develop and enact strong laws mandating domestic cat containment within the boundaries of their owners' property.

I live in Bundanoon in the Southern Highlands and I am developing a habitat garden to support local wildlife, including a wide variety of local birds and especially small birds like Blue Wrens, Brown-Faced Honey Eaters, White-Eared Honey Eaters and Eastern Spinebills.

Recently a domestic cat has been hunting in my garden. When I spoke with the cat owners to explain how I was developing the garden and why, I was initially met with a total lack of understanding. These two elderly people seemed to think that it was my responsibility to keep the cat off my property. When I explained that although current laws do not specify cat containment, it would be in the best interest of their cat and the local wildlife if she was kept within the confines of their property.

However, the cat continued to roam and I saw her another three or four times on our property. Our nearest neighbours were also concerned for our local birds and the ducks on their pond. They had seen said cat trying to get at the ducks from their small jetty.

Further discussion with the cat owners ensued and my husband explained that roaming domestic cats do indeed kill wildlife, even though their owners may be unaware of the damage they do. He sent them information regarding same and also information on purchasing a cat run. They messaged him to say that they had ordered a cat run and to their credit, we have not since seen the cat.

My point is that cat owners must be made responsible for the safety of their pets and also the safety of wildlife. Even in cities and suburbs, roaming domestic cats can do much damage to the numbers of birds, reptiles and small marsupials. Furthermore, many city and suburban cats are killed on the road. Although cat road deaths in this area are not particularly obvious, there are feral cats in the nearby Morton National Park and they have sometimes been reported by locals as on their property at night. A domestic cat would stand no chance against a feral.

I think that education is key to helping people understand that we share our world with a wider ecosystem and that ecosystem is key to the health and beauty of the environment in which we live. Indeed, it is key to our own survival. The more that people understand the natural world, the more likely they are to protect it. I therefore encourage the government to take a carrot and stick approach to this issue by running a campaign that is both educative and potentially punitive for cat owners who do not obey new laws. There is much information about why cat containment is a good idea and this could be presented along with containment laws and the consequences for disregarding them.

I hope that this submission has given impetus to the development of strong containment laws and also given a real-life example of why they are so important. If we are to halt Australia's wildlife extinctions and learn to value and live alongside our beautiful and unique birds, reptiles, mammals and marsupials, then cat containment laws are one step towards achieving this.

Sincerely,

Leeanne Tyler-Olsen