

Submission
No 425

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 18 November 2024

Partially
Confidential

Submission to the NSW Government - Opposition to Cat Curfew and Population Management Inquiry

Dear Members of the Inquiry Committee,

I am writing to strongly oppose the proposed introduction of a cat curfew and any population "management" measures that may arise from this inquiry. While I understand the intention behind the inquiry is to address community concerns regarding cat overpopulation, I urge you to consider the unintended and deeply concerning consequences of such policies—both for the welfare of cats and for broader community dynamics.

A Call to Human Compassion, Not Harm

Cats are living, sentient beings with their own intrinsic value and right to life. A cat curfew or other punitive measures focused on "managing" the population can easily devolve into violence and cruelty.

Just two years ago in North NSW, a man proudly filmed and posted online the horrific act of trapping and drowning his neighbour's cat in a wheelie bin. This heartless act was not a singular event but an example of what can happen when we foster a culture of hostility towards animals. Policies like cat curfews send a message that cats are something to be controlled, penalized, or eliminated, rather than beings to be cared for and respected.

Unfortunately, it is not difficult to foresee that these types of policies will embolden people who may already have violent tendencies toward animals. When laws give people the green light to act with hostility toward cats—whether by trapping, euthanizing, or simply confining them—the potential for cruelty escalates. We cannot ignore the real possibility that this inquiry may lead to more cases like the one in North NSW, or worse.

Overloading Shelters and Pounds: A Tragic Consequence

Furthermore, history has shown us that such measures often backfire, leading to a surge in abandoned and surrendered cats, overwhelming animal shelters and rescue organizations. The recent reports of shelter overcrowding, combined with limited funding and resources, underscore the potential for tens of thousands of innocent cats to face an untimely and unnecessary death. We cannot ignore the strain this would place on already overburdened rescue groups, many of whom are already working at full capacity to save as many animals as they can.

Without proper resources and the appropriate support for responsible pet ownership, including desexing and education programs, a cat curfew could set in motion a devastating cycle of abandonment and neglect, resulting in catastrophic consequences

for the cats themselves. We must ask ourselves: Is it humane to risk the lives of thousands of animals in the name of population control?

International Standards: We Can Do Better

When comparing this inquiry with international standards, it is important to note that many countries have shifted toward more compassionate, non-lethal methods of managing cat populations. For example, countries like the UK, the US, and parts of Europe have embraced the concept of *Trap-Neuter-Return* (TNR) as a highly effective, ethical approach to reducing cat populations without resorting to killing. TNR involves humanely trapping stray or feral cats, neutering or spaying them, and then returning them to their colonies. This has proven to be a far more sustainable and humane method for controlling population sizes while also improving the quality of life for the animals involved.

In contrast, curfews and population management that focus on punitive measures tend to be driven by emotion, rather than evidence-based practices. They often fail to address the root causes of overpopulation, such as inadequate access to affordable desexing programs and the prevalence of irresponsible pet ownership.

A Holistic, Humane Approach to Cat Welfare

I urge you to consider a more compassionate, holistic approach to managing cat populations, one that does not involve curfews or the destruction of innocent lives. Instead, I propose that this inquiry broaden its scope to include the following critical measures:

1. **Legalisation and Support for TNR Programs:** Allow rescuers to legally manage and reduce feral colonies through TNR programs. This method not only stabilises cat populations but also improves the quality of life for the animals, reducing the incidence of disease and suffering.
2. **Funding for Desexing Programs:** Implement funding to support community-driven desexing initiatives, especially in low socio-economic areas where pet owners may struggle to afford these essential services. Preventing unwanted litters is one of the most effective ways to reduce overpopulation in the long term.
3. **Addressing Cat Hoarding Without Punishing the Animals:** We must take assertive action to address the issue of cat hoarding, but this should never result in harm to the cats involved. By focusing on rehabilitation and support for hoarders, we can ensure that cats are removed from unsafe environments and placed in loving homes.
4. **Targeted Education and Community Support:** There are communities where cultural, religious, or socio-economic factors contribute to high cat populations. It is essential to provide targeted education and support to these areas to address the root causes of overpopulation, and to equip individuals with the tools and knowledge they need to care for their pets responsibly.

Conclusion

In closing, I implore you to reconsider any measures that would promote a cat curfew or lethal population control, and to instead focus on sustainable, humane strategies that promote the welfare of cats and their communities. We have a moral and ethical obligation to protect animals from harm, and I believe we can achieve a solution that respects both animal welfare and the legitimate concerns of our communities. I trust that you will make a decision that reflects compassion, humanity, and a commitment to doing what is right for both animals and people.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



November 2024