

**Submission  
No 404**

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

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Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Management of Cat Populations in NSW

Subject: Compassionate and Effective Management of Cat Populations

Dear Members of the Committee,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the continued reliance on lethal measures for managing cat populations. History has shown that killing cats to protect wildlife has not been effective and is a cruel approach that fails to address the underlying issues.

Instead, community cat programs that focus on rehoming, targeted desexing, trap-neuter-return (TNR), and community education have proven to be highly successful in reducing stray cat populations. These initiatives not only ease the burden on councils, shelters, and rescue groups but also support the well-being of veterinarians, nurses, and volunteers involved in animal welfare.

Support for alternative measures is backed by a NSW Government-commissioned report which indicates that large-scale desexing programs are far more effective than killing programs. The recent NSW Pound Inquiry has recommended proactive solutions, advocating for grants to councils and rescue organizations that will fund extensive, targeted desexing programs across the state. Specific focus should be placed on community cat desexing in areas with high populations of homeless cats, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Such programs represent a compassionate, long-term solution that addresses stray cat populations without vilifying them.

Moreover, we can significantly assist semi-owners and owners in disadvantaged areas by offering free desexing and microchipping through programs like the Community Cat Program. Evidence shows that proactive community cat initiatives can effectively decrease stray cat populations, reduce nuisance complaints, and prevent wildlife predation.

It is important to address the ecological principle known as the Vacuum Effect when creating policies for managing cat populations. This principle demonstrates that removing animals from an area leads to an influx of new animals, as the root causes of overpopulation remain unaddressed. Hence, removal efforts are not sustainable or effective.

Regarding cat containment, it is critical to acknowledge that most responsible cat owners already confine their pets. However, barriers such as housing restrictions, modification costs, and lack of information can hinder compliance. Mandatory 24-hour cat curfews primarily target semi-owned or stray cats—who often lack responsible owners to enforce such measures—and can inadvertently lead to increased abandonment as a reaction to fines. Historical data indicates that strict containment laws have resulted in heightened impoundments and euthanasia rates without successfully reducing roaming issues. Reports from the RSPCA and data from various councils in Victoria demonstrate that containment policies have not achieved their intended outcomes.

Furthermore, educating pet owners about responsible pet ownership and the benefits of keeping cats safely indoors or within controlled environments is paramount. Community outreach initiatives, media campaigns, and school programs should emphasize the importance of desexing, safe indoor environments, and the ethical management of community cat populations.

Wider issues related to wildlife conservation must also be taken into account. While cats are often blamed for wildlife decline, human-driven factors such as habitat destruction, land clearing, and urban sprawl have a far more significant impact. Key threats to wildlife include habitat loss, vehicle collisions, and dog attacks, as evidenced by the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard 2022-23 data.

To protect at-risk wildlife, we must adopt well-rounded, scientific, and humane approaches that prioritise habitat conservation and tackle the primary threats to biodiversity, rather than singularly focusing on cats.

In conclusion, I urge the Inquiry Committee to consider these evidence-based recommendations for managing cat populations, placing emphasis on humane, effective, and compassionate strategies that acknowledge the complexity of the issues at hand.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Sincerely,

Jackie Wolf