

Submission  
No 426

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

**Name:** Name suppressed  
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Partially  
Confidential

TOR (j) any other related matters

NSW should embrace the cat terms: feral or domestic, and domestic owned, semi owned or unowned. Stray cats are NOT feral cats.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Identifying-Best-Practice-Domestic-Cat-Management-in-Australia-RSPCA-Research-Report-May-2018.pdf>

NSW to establish a domestic cat committee & cat management strategy with domestic cat expert stakeholders, including RSPCA, APWF, AVA, AIAM, & community cat rescuers. Recognise community cat rescuers / carers to include their scope of cats saved and rehomed in estimating resources and funding (not just NSW rehoming organisations).

Both the NSW Companion Animal Act and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act require improvements to ensure desexing programs and the efforts of community cat rescuers can proceed without impediments or constraints, e.g. threats of abandoning cats, biodiversity risks not being adequately assessed to specific areas, and CAA clause 32 where a cat may be seized for harming any single animal (other than vermin) which includes pest animals, other introduced animals or native animals where the population is not at risk.

TOR (a) the impact of cats on threatened native animals in metropolitan and regional settings

The widely used and often quoted generalised extreme numbers of wildlife impacts should be considered misinformation as based on inappropriate studies with flawed numbers and wildlife populations effects implied rather than investigated.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Rand-Myth-cats-Wildlife-2023.pdf>

“...there is no scientific evidence that domestic cats... have any viability or conservation impacts at a population level on native wildlife. Australian population studies have not found a measurable effect”

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2023/07/10/position-statement-on-domestic-cats-and-australian-native-wildlife-populations/>

Evidence-based research is needed that mandated cat containment can achieve objectives for cats and wildlife and if introduced, then effective monitoring provides evidence that the potential negative impacts are eliminated or mitigated.

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf>

TOR (b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers

Mandated cat containment is not effective. APWF has findings from a number of Australia councils which show it does not achieve aims and is not cost effective / value for money.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/08/31/australian-pet-welfare-foundation-position-statement-on-cat-containment/>

Many cat owners are unable to contain their cats e.g.: housing limitations on leased properties by landlords, body corporates, and complaints from neighbours; homes do not have air conditioning, nor are owners able to afford air con operating throughout the very long and more humid summers; not being able to afford outdoor cat enclosures; the lack of acceptance of cat enclosures by neighbours putting owned cats at risk in their own backyards; concerns about the welfare of cats as not all accept being in small enclosures.

Mandated cat containment becomes a barrier to those assisting stray cats. It may be interpreted that all roaming cats are "illegal" which may also mean the community members and specifically community cat rescuers are also seen to be "illegally" assisting. This can halt all efforts to save, desex and rehome/ adopt abandoned cats.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Inquiry-into-pounds-in-NSW-APWF-submission-final.pdf>

Studies on information from Hobson Bay, Hume, Casey and Yarra Ranges councils has been assessed. It is also recognised that mandated containment also contributes to risks for increased cruelty to cats for stray and pet cats.

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

TOR (c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions

"...there is growing evidence of environmental contamination from home furnishings and dust affecting cat

health... Keeping cats indoors can cause frustration and unwanted behavioral challenges leading to stress and compromised health, especially in multi-cat homes"

<https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7829302/>

"There are some circumstances under which a cat's physical and mental needs will not be successfully met in

containment due to a range of factors including the presence of other animals, space available, human

factors, and ability to modify the property. There are also some cats who are unable to cope with

containment... Mandatory 24/7 containment may increase the potential for negative impacts on animal

welfare and the community, compared to voluntary implementation of 24/7 containment on an individual

basis, by imposing it on people and cats who are not suited or capable of implementing it appropriately"

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf>

TOR (d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives

Education and obligations for responsible pet ownership on webpages, brochures, and social media is fairly static and low on engagement levels. It is recommended the NSW government lead, and each council delivers

face-to-face cultural education and change management programs to respect and care for companion animals. The councils and their animal management officers (AMOs) may work collaboratively with community cat rescuers and community leaders on solutions for the vulnerable / low incomes and for cultural groups where respect for animals is currently not a priority nor meeting our NSW legal obligations.

“Person-centered and culturally competent policies and programs that focus resources on addressing root causes of pet health and welfare issues as opposed to an emphasis on code enforcement can create more positive, scalable, and sustainable improvements in human, other animal, and environmental health and welfare outcomes.” Punishment to Support: The Need to Align Animal Control Enforcement with the Human Social Justice Movement <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/10/1902>

TOR (e) implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies  
Implications for councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies include the following (these summary points are supported by 16 evidence-based points from the APWF):  
escalating cat nuisance and new roaming cat complaints; additional costs, effort and resources to manage a higher number of captured roaming cats; additional monitoring and reporting to be able to measure results, which to date have not provided value for money in several councils who have just basic information; escalating euthanasia rates; traumatic impacts to council and pound staff due to very high rates of euthanasing healthy adoptable animals; traumatic impacts to the communities, community cat rescuers, also care givers, and feeders seeing their cats in colonies decimated by either authorities or cat haters; and taking responsibility for, and managing cat haters falsely interpreting cat containment legislation and regulations to empower themselves to trap and harm/ cull cats with inhuman methods - all state and council communications (and the NSW Companion Animal Act with focus on clause 32, and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act) need to be improved and provide clear interpretation of clauses.  
<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

TOR (f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs  
Large scale (mass / high intensity) desexing programs for owned, semi owned and unowned cats are supported for their effectiveness in minimising cat populations. This is achieved by significantly limiting the breeding of cats, which also benefits each cat and the communities, and are cost justified in reducing council

and pound efforts. Australian examples include: APWF Community Cat Programs in QLD, Banyule Council in Vic, and the KCSAH NSW desexing programs in Weddin, Parramatta, Campbelltown, and Hornsby councils where semi owned cats and community cat rescuers were involved. It is noted that RSPCA SA intends to run a form of TNR, including "Reduce strays taken to shelters by helping community members understand that sometimes cats are better left where they are. Promote the approach of "leave a healthy cat where they are and monitor" to stray cats."

<https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-faq/>,  
<https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-news-2/>  
<https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Aust-Community-Cat-Program-2024-Report.pdf>  
Banyule Council desexing program <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615>  
<https://weddinlandcare.com.au/milestone-for-keeping-cats-safe-at-home-project>  
KCSAH RSPCA NSW  
<https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:AP:4d1d5b58-63b5-4a70-8196-212fdded377d1>  
RSPCA KCSAH presentation at AIAM <https://aiam.org.au/page-18158>  
<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/cat-plan-explainer/>  
TNR with stray cats in Australia <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/7/6/46>

TOR (g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system  
It is strongly recommended that council pound systems and resources will need to be significantly increased based on an assessment of the additional needs from the number of: the estimated un-microchipped yet owned cats allowed to roam and b) the domestic semi owned and unowned cats (strays), including funding:

- to support and increase rehoming, and temporary care,
- euthanasia rates and additional resources needed to humanely process higher numbers of unwanted pets, and to ensure council pound staff are supported through compassion fatigue;
- communication with stakeholders and the whole community, including community cat rescuers, care givers, and feeders seeing their cats in colonies decimated who need support through compassion fatigue and potential primary trauma themselves;

additional effort, information, guidelines and engaging with the community for repressing cat haters  
trapping and surrendering cats to ensure cats are treated humanely, meeting social licensing and governmental obligations,

- increased administrations, customer service representatives, AMO and Ranger roles for the above.

[https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272212677\\_Euthanasia\\_in\\_Animal\\_Shelters\\_Management's\\_Perspective\\_on\\_Staff\\_Reactions\\_and\\_Support\\_Programs](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272212677_Euthanasia_in_Animal_Shelters_Management's_Perspective_on_Staff_Reactions_and_Support_Programs)  
<https://thewoof.org/animal-welfare/understanding-euthanasia-in-animal-shelters>  
<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

TOR (h) the outcomes of similar policies on cat containment in other Australian states or territories

A number of councils in ACT, WA, SA, Vic, Qld have mandated cat containment, but where is the evidence of

measured impacts and improvements on wildlife? APWF summarises several councils showing negative

outcomes. Even the total ban in Halls Gap for 30 years has no evidence, nor any positive impact on the feral

cats. In LGAs where cat containment has been implemented it appears the number of cats being abandoned

is not decreasing, and there still remains a need for community cat rescuers who take on the burden of

abandoned cats assisting desexing and rehoming, without involving current council pounds.

"Due to the ambiguity surrounding the risks and effectiveness of 24/7 containment, the RSPCA advocates that

further research is undertaken to provide evidence of the positive and negative outcomes of cat containment

before 24/7 containment can be adequately assessed."

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf>

<https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-15/mayor-says-halls-gap-cat-ban-success-native-wildlife/102337372>

TOR (i) options for reducing the feral cat population

It recommended it is timely to review the 2014 NSW bill in relation to feral cats: a) as cat terms need to be more tightly classed in line with the RSPCA

2018 definitions etc, b) new evidence-based science is gathered on feral cats near urban areas (peri-urban areas), c) new evidence-based research is gathered

on impacts

to wildlife in specific LGAs and locations, and d) communities expecting humane methods for feral cats

who most recently were domestic cats and it is difficult to assess if they are generation-old feral cats or

recent domestic abandoned cats.

<https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/feral%20cats-do-trap-neuter-return-programs%20work/Feral%20cats%20do%20trap%20neuter%20return%20programs%20work%20ebrief%2018%202014.pdf>

The use of 1080 poison needs to cease. 1080 is not a humane approach to killing any animal (RSPCA, Animal

Liberation, APWF, Animal Justice Party) and was banned in other countries decades ago, the impacts of 1080

include convulsions likened by a vet to be electrocuted for up to 2 days, and it kills many non-targeted native

animals. <https://www.al.org.au/ban-1080>

<https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-the-rspcas-view-on-using-1080-for-pest-animal-control/>

Conservation fencing areas and "training" zones are supported

<https://www.australianwildlife.org/conservation-fencing-provides-hope-for-threatened-wildlife/>

Gene technology for suppressing feral cat breeding is supported

<https://www.australianwildlife.org/our-work/feral-cat-and-fox-control>

Additionally some other general ideas:

- Rebates to cat rescuers and independent people who fund desexing of street and neighbourhood owned cats out of their own pockets (like when people get refunds on tolls on toll roads)
- MASS education TV, Printed press campaigns on desexing pets
- set up high volume desexing clinics like in the USA, and also train "desexing vet nurses" so not just vets can perform procedures usually, simple procedures
- set up incentives for young vets to do a cat welfare & desexing placement similar to doing a "rural rotation" for young doctors
- NSW councils to offer free desexing to all.
- Free/highly subsidised catifying backyards with netting & other incentives on catios & enclosures to encourage cat containment, through a central body with rebates and clear easy pathways