

**Submission
No 407**

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

Name: Mr David Goudie
Date Received: 19 November 2024

Dear Committee,

No further evidence is required to substantiate the enormous impact roaming domestic cats have on suburban native species in NSW. To protect suburban native wildlife in our streets, parks and backyards, and to encourage their return, we must control cat ownership in this State. As uncomfortable as this might sound politically, it is simply the truth.

It is unrealistic to rely on attitudinal change programs and ultimately cat owners themselves to self-manage cat control. The only way to affect the change required is via enforced legislation.

The current NSW model is completely counter-productive. That is, on the one hand to invest enormous effort and funds supporting native species protection, and at the same time allow the unfettered ownership of domestic cats AND to allow them to legally roam great distances from their homes to hunt at will.

Not only do domestic cats destroy native biodiversity in the yards of their owners, they also decimate native populations throughout local areas. Allowing cat ownership and roaming is analogous to allowing residents to buy native animal poison and not only spread it around their own yard, but also throw it through the streets, in parks and over the fences of other residents, legally. Or to put it another way, it is like allowing residents to buy and own cane toads with no responsibility to control their movements, allowing them spread into the local area resulting in multiple local native species deaths every night.

The fact that people like cats is not relevant. If we agree that Australia's urban native animal populations are worth protecting then the most significant action we can take to protect them is to control roaming domestic cats. Please do not be distracted from this simple truth when preparing your action plan to move forward.

Here are a few immediate actions you might like to consider:

- Introduce a cat ownership licence, with fees and mandated 'keep at home' requirements.
- Make it increasingly more expensive to maintain such a cat licence
- Empower local councils to fine cat owners for breach of 'keep at home' requirements.
- Introduce 'roaming cat' council management programs, with humane capture and return programs and associated fines.
- Support local residents with similar framework and tools to capture and deliver to council roaming cats on their property
- Introduce point system for offending owners, with repeat offenders risking cat licence loss

I expect the above measures will make a significant and immediate impact in reducing predation of local urban native species by domestic cats. For enduring results however, the following bigger picture ideas might also be considered as part of a multi-pronged, long term strategy:

- Committing to a domestic cat-free future for NSW, announcing a date for the cessation of all new cat licenses (eg 2040)
- Supporting government programs for the breeding and returning of wild native species to suitably assessed suburban backyards.
- Introducing native animal housing requirements to suburban DAs.
- Allowing, encouraging and supporting residents to choose native (versus introduced) animals for semi-wild backyard pets. For example certain species of possums, gliders, bandicoots, reptiles etc.

As a concerned NSW resident with personal experience with the loss of backyard native wildlife a direct result of roaming domestic cats, I sincerely hope my submission is both persuasive and helpful. This is very important issue that can be solved, but only if the root problem is addressed properly. Please be careful to avoid recommending only those actions deemed politically palatable.

If there is anything I can do to support this process further please reach out at any time.

Kind Regards,

David Goudie