

Submission
No 413

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

(No title)

As a person who has owned cats for over 20 years, I fully support the four ideas proposed as part of this survey. Arguably, pet, stray and feral cats pose the greatest threat to Australian wildlife, and they carry and transmit diseases that can be transmitted to humans, including cryptosporidiosis, leptospirosis and toxoplasmosis. Cats most likely to carry these diseases are free-roaming cats and disease can be transmitted to humans through contact with cat faeces or urine e.g., children coming into contact with buried cat scat at playgrounds, or people picnicking.

Australia has seen positive progress over the last 40 years in terms of improved cat owner responsibility. As with dogs, or any other pet, I believe cats should be contained to the owner's property, unless on a leash. Increasing community awareness about keeping cats indoors for their own safety (prevent fighting and car strikes) and to protect our wildlife has been increasingly supported by the community over the last few decades, with many areas instigating cat curfews and pet cat exclusion zones near areas of critical wildlife habitat. However, I would support more than a mandatory curfew and encourage the Ryde council to set their long-term targets at mandatory cat containment, beginning in suburbs with high density housing (e.g., Macquarie & Macquarie Park) where there will be less backlash and increased current compliance. Furthermore, the Macquarie area backs onto the Lane Cove National Park, and nocturnal wildlife, including animals considered critical-weight range animals (i.e., those most vulnerable to cat predation) are abundant in the suburbs, including long-nosed bandicoots. I see bandicoots on the street in Macquarie Park several times a week at night. Diurnal animals are also at great risk from cats, which frequently prey on our smaller reptiles, including water dragons and skinks, such as the blue-tongue lizard. Local Land Service and National Parks and Wildlife are both committed to greater collaborative efforts to manage invasive species. This would include increased collaborative efforts councils to manage any local feral cat populations.

A major concern is the lack of mandatory and accessible desexing for all cats. The annual kitten season puts enormous strain on shelters. Increasing funding, aid, education and enforcing mandatory desexing can have startlingly beneficial impact for the shelter and cat community. See link for a case study on the benefits of intensive cat desexing programs (<https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Aust-Community-Cat-Program-Dec-2021.pdf>). Much of the proposed ideas have been implemented elsewhere in NSW or Australia, allowing access to lessons learnt and a roadmap to develop a council cat program.

Overall, implementing mandatory desexing via increased awareness, vouchers, and ongoing funding/support, as well as curfews and mandatory cat containment initiatives and increased education will:

- Set a progressive example of pet and stray (colony) cat management for other Sydney suburbs to follow
- Reduce strain on shelters in a time when pet surrenders are at a peak, with the knowledge that long-term protocols will reap long-term benefits, with shelters requiring less support in the future, if cat desexing efforts are maintained
- Reduce costs to owners with fewer vet bills from outdoor injury and disease on cat owners
- Reduce the impact of cats on native wildlife

-Contribute towards establishing the desired mindset for Ryde, Sydney and Australians to have in relation to responsible pet ownership and protecting our wildlife. What children grow up with now will become the minimum standard when they are adults.

-Increase pet cat health and longevity and reduce transmission of zoonotic diseases from cats to humans

-Have overflowing benefits into other council areas through word of mouth and in leading by example