

Submission
No 414

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

Name: Miss Federica Caregnato

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Submission to the Parliament of New South Wales on Cat Welfare and Population Control

To: The Parliament of New South Wales

From: Federica Caregnato, Concerned Resident and Rescued Cat Owner

Subject: Urgent Call for Comprehensive Action to Address Cat Overpopulation and Welfare

I am writing to urge the New South Wales government to take significant and humane action to address the ongoing crisis of cat overpopulation, animal welfare, and the environmental impact of free-roaming and feral cats. As a rescued cat owner, I have seen firsthand the benefits of responsible pet ownership, including the positive effects of desexing, contained living, and adoption. I support PETA's proposed strategies and believe they are crucial to creating a sustainable, humane solution to these pressing issues.

A fundamental solution to the issue of cat overpopulation is to reduce the number of new animals entering a world where shelter resources are already stretched thin. Every year, Australian shelters are forced to euthanise approximately 50,000 healthy cats and kittens due to overcrowding. Meanwhile, a staggering 1.32 million cats are still purchased from breeders, pet stores, and online outlets, contributing directly to this crisis. It is critical to reduce the number of animals entering shelters and homes through irresponsible breeding and sales.

Implementing extensive and affordable desexing programmes, funded by the state government, is a crucial step in preventing the birth of thousands of unwanted cats. A single free-roaming, unfixed cat can produce up to 5,000 offspring in just seven years. Desexing not only prevents this exponential population growth but also significantly improves the health and welfare of individual animals. Spaying and neutering reduce the risks of various cancers, prevent the spread of deadly diseases, and improve behaviour by reducing roaming and fighting. The overwhelming benefits to individual animals, as well as the wider community, make desexing programmes an essential tool in addressing the crisis.

While addressing the overpopulation issue, it is vital to avoid inhumane, ineffective measures like poisoning and shooting, which cause unnecessary suffering to cats and other animals. Poisoning, especially with sodium fluoroacetate (1080), is both environmentally damaging and cruel. It can be ingested by non-target animals, including wildlife and companion animals, resulting in agonising deaths. Similarly, shooting cats—often at night and in moving conditions—leads to prolonged and painful deaths due to inaccurate shots. These methods are not only inhumane but also counterproductive in protecting wildlife.

Rather than resorting to such measures, we must focus on prevention, education, and support for animal shelters and rescue groups. The government can play a crucial role in funding these efforts, which include microchipping, fostering, adoption, and desexing initiatives.

In light of these concerns, I strongly urge the New South Wales government to consider the following actions:

Ban on the sale of animals by breeders, pet stores, and online platforms, to prevent the proliferation of animals without homes.

Ban on kitten farms, which profit from the exploitation of animals and contribute to overpopulation.

Continuation of mandatory microchipping, to assist with the identification and responsible ownership of cats.

Increased public education on the importance of cat desexing, at-home confinement, environmental enrichment, and the benefits of adoption.

Government funding for adoption groups and shelters to provide better housing for impounded animals and improve rehoming rates.

Government funding of desexing programmes to make these services more accessible and affordable to the public.

Humane euthanasia practices in cases where necessary, with a clear end to cruel, ineffective lethal methods such as poisoning and shooting.

Conclusion

As a rescued cat owner, I believe that we can, and must, do more to protect the welfare of both cats and wildlife in New South Wales. The implementation of these measures will not only improve the lives of individual cats but also contribute to a more sustainable, humane solution to the issue of overpopulation. I implore the government to act swiftly and decisively to protect both the animals and the environment, ensuring a better future for all.

Thank you for considering this urgent matter.

Sincerely,

Federica Caregnato

Rescued Cat Owner and Advocate for Humane Cat Management