

Submission
No 438

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

Name: David Re
Date Received: 17 November 2024

**Animal welfare committee
Legislative Council NSW**

Inquiry - Management of cat populations in New South Wales

Local government is scared of cat owners

My experience this year with the Canterbury Bankstown City Council provides a salutary example of how not to deal with cats - either feral or domestic - in a bushland reserve supposedly under a council's protection.

While exercising regularly in the council's bushland reserves in the Georges Hall and Lansdowne areas I have encountered cats there (but not so many small birds and reptiles).

In February 2024, I observed cats in the middle of a bushland reserve, The Crest Reserve, in Georges Hall. They were at least 300 metres from any house. There were kittens. They were next to a council work shed. I saw them in hunting mode seeking out prey. Council workers told me that the cats had been bringing dead birds into the shed, and fleas. They had put metal reinforcement around the shed's garage door to keep the cats out.

I reported this to the council and wrote to each councillor alerting them to this and suggesting that the council declare Wildlife Protection Areas in its bushland reserves as nearby councils, such as Parramatta and Georges River, had done. The response to my correspondence was largely non-responsive, suggesting that the cats were domestic (strangely this group was at least 300 metres from any house) and that it was an 'emotive' issue. Well it is certainly that for the tasty but helpless wildlife they are consuming.

I also told the councillors that these cats clearly posed a threat to native fauna under section 32 (1) of the Companion Animals Act, which provided the council with legislative authority to remove them.

Under that section, the council can take action to 'lawfully seize a cat if that action is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (...) from injury or death'.

In a carefully worded response to me the council said that, 'control issues involving companion animals are an emotive and sensitive issue and Council has limited mechanisms to legally address domestic cats under the Companion Animals Act'.

This is nonsensical and it was obvious that the council was prioritising political concerns, namely, not offending cat owners, over its obligations to protect the fauna living - and

dying - in its area. I wrote again pointing out that the Companion Animals Act provided it with the necessary shield to act.

On 25 March 2024, the council's CEO's office wrote to me again saying, 'However, as stated in my previous correspondence, this does not mean that Council is unaware of the issue. Council will continue to undertake a range of measures from calling for legislative changes, exploring opportunities for implementing Wildlife Protection Areas through to education.'

In April 2024 the council resolved to write 'to the Minister for Local Government Ron Hoenig urging him to empower Councils by introducing a tougher and more streamlined approach when it comes to dealing with nuisance domestic cats.'

However, regardless of this, the council took no real action in response to my reporting of the presence of cats in a bushland reserve. Its 'education' initiatives alone, self-evidently, cannot prevent roaming cats from entering and living in bushland areas and attacking native fauna. Cat owners will continue to let their cats roam while this remains legal.

The council's resolution also only dealt with 'nuisance domestic cats' as opposed to cats in general, including feral cats.

Submission - legislate for cat containment throughout the state

My basic submission is that the NSW Parliament should legislate to empower local government - in a manner similar to Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory - to gazette cat containment areas.

But this should be only a first step.

No valid reason can exist in the Australian context to allow these ferocious predators - against whom our native fauna has no protection - to roam and hunt.

Cats must be contained either indoors or in enclosed outdoor cat runs. The evidence supporting this is overwhelming.

The committee should therefore recommend a blanket ban on cat roaming throughout the state, in other words, a state total cat containment policy.

David Re

16 November 2024