

Submission
No 450

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

Name: Name suppressed
Date Received: 19 November 2024

Partially
Confidential

1. Make Trap Neuter Return legal. Many of these cats have been abandoned by irresponsible owners and these cats will never have the luxury of a loving home however they are loved and fed by community cat carers. TNR is used in many countries and is more effective and humane than cruel trap and kill. The community cats killed at Stockton near Newcastle in a botched culling is a perfect example of the cruelty and was called out by media and the community

<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-12-20/port-of-newcastles-stockton-breakwall-cat-cull-sparks-fury/13001868>

Also this resulted in a study of the care givers involved who witness the after effects of the massacre and the effect on their mental health (PTSD)

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/367145982_The_Impact_of_Lethal_Enforcement_Centred_Cat_Management_on_Human_Wellbeing_Exploring_Lived_Experiences_of_Cat_Carers_Affected_by_Cat_Culling_at_the_Port_of_Newcastle

TNR and community cat programs result in -

- Reduction in euthanasia of 82%
- Intake decreased by 66% city-wide
- 50% less cats being surrendered direct to the pound
- 51% fewer nuisance cat-related calls in the targeted area (see link below Australian Institute of Animal Management)

<https://aiam.org.au/resources/Documents/Cat%20Management%20Forum%20resources/Community%20Cat%20Programs%20What%20does%20your%20community%20need%20from%20you%20JC..pdf>

<https://aiam.org.au/resources/Documents/Cat%20Management%20Forum%20resources/2024%20AIA%20workshop%20GM.pdf>

2. Offer free desexing With the cost of living people are giving away free kittens on gumtree and recipients are not desexing causing more kittens to be dumped on streets or given away so the cycle continues with no end in sight. Please bring in free desexing for owned and community cats alike. Most vets are charging up to \$500 to desex a female cats which is the main reason people don't desex and dump.

Also some cultures believe it unnecessary or cruel to desex cats. Education campaigns need to be implemented in all languages in areas where they will be seen.

Please refer to the link below of the initiative of Weddin Shire Council's strategy to address the overpopulation and welfare of cats in the area and is one of the 7 evidence based best practice free desexing and microchipping programs being run. *"This desexing achievement represents the future of local cat management, it is the answer to reducing cat euthanasia rates and keeping cats out of pounds and shelters", said RSPCA NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home Project Manager, Dr. Gemma Ma"*

<https://weddinlandcare.com.au/milestone-for-keeping-cats-safe-at-home-project/>

3. Stop Councils' exorbitant fees for late registration. Penalising people for registering over 4 months discourages people from chipping/desexing and registering. Many kittens are just dumped once over 4 months. With the cost of living this is an added expense.

4. Mandated Cat Containment is ineffective and will be the target of cruel cat haters because many of these are homeless cats and some owners will not or cannot keep cats inside. The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation is strongly opposed to mandated cat containment please see link below.

“Mandated cat containment has been proven to be an ineffective strategy; a failure at reducing wandering cats in the short and long term, both in Australia and internationally. Mandated cat containment is not an effective strategy to reduce wandering cats because most wandering cats are strays with no owner to contain them. Even for cats with an owner, containment is often not achievable due to factors such as housing limitations, lack of financial resources and concerns about the welfare of confined cats.”

Mandated cat containment will create more nuisance complaints, cruel and inhumane trapping by cat haters and members of the public, increased cat and kitten euthanasia, increased \$ costs for local governments, increased mental health damage to community cat carers as well as vet staff.

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

3 Potential risks associated with mandatory 24/7 cat containment (From RSPCA)

There is presently limited data on the impacts or effectiveness of legislative change to require cat containment, but basic principles and risk assessment indicate the potential for negative consequences and suggest actions that could be taken to mitigate these. Although there is a lack of research and strong evidence in this area, the RSPCA considers based on the best available evidence, basic principles, and risk assessment that the following broad potential risks of mandatory cat containment include:

- Increased incidence of cats being surrendered or abandoned due to owner inability or unwillingness to transition currently roaming cats to a contained lifestyle and provide an appropriate contained environment.
- The expense of erecting cat-proof barriers to contain cats on a property could be a barrier to cat ownership or retaining cats, which would have an inequitable impact on existing or potential cat owners on low incomes. The potential difficulties of mandatory containment for cat owners in rental properties would include getting permission from the property owner to have a cat and/or to erect cat-proof barriers, and additional associated expenses which could be incurred multiple times if the renter needs to move property.
- Cat owners might avoid permanently identifying their cats, to reduce the risk of a penalty being imposed if their cat is caught roaming away from home, which could reduce the probability of a roaming cat being reunited with their owner.
- High euthanasia rates or negative welfare outcomes for impounded cats.
- Imposing a significant financial and resourcing burden on local government and animal management services.
- The potential for a significant impact on the operations and staff at animal shelters, pounds, and animal welfare organisations.
- Community members who do not like cats might be incited to trap or even harm cats outside their owner's property.
- A perception that cat containment will resolve all cat-related community issues, which could lead to a reduction in resourcing of other important cat management projects (e.g. programs for desexing and/or effective and humane management of unowned and semi-owned cats).
- Inadequate education on cats' physical and mental needs. Insufficient understanding of cats' physical and mental needs and appropriate containment methods could lead to people containing their cats in unacceptable ways such as by tethering.

• If no 'grandfathering' clause* is included in Council by-laws, cats who are unable to cope with containment will suffer with welfare compromise, potentially develop associated physical or mental problems, be surrendered, or euthanized.

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

5. **More funding grants for small local independent rescues and community cat carers** and not just the big organisations. These heroes spend thousands of their own money trying to help and save cats off the streets who have been let down and dumped by irresponsible humans.

6. **Make NSW RSPCA be involved more** to help to fix the issue by providing no or low cost desexing, advocating for TNR, and helping support local rescue groups and community cat carers, instead of referring most of their client calls onto smaller rescue groups who don't have the funds or manpower to help.

<https://www.rspcasa.org.au/cat-plan-explainer/>

8. **Cease the Media and Govt war on cats** which is encouraging cat haters to suggest inhumane methods of killing cats online and gloating over their deaths. Terrible acts of cruelty are on the rise with reports to RSPCA and Police being ignored due "lack of evidence".

The media spurred on by Invasive Species Councils makes a lot of claims about the amount of native animals killed per year. Not only do those figures incorporate introduced species like rabbits mice and rats - but the numbers themselves are incorrect. The numbers that still get thrown around by the media (as a result of the ISC) indicate they kill in excess of 75 million animals a day. This is a figure guesstimated on what 18-20million feral cats could theoretically do if they killed the max possible amount of prey a day. There aren't 20 million. These are outdated biased stats.

The Australian Justice Party Australia states "claims of 2 billion animals killed by cats is exaggerated as it is not based on sound counting methodologies"

https://assets.nationbuilder.com/ajp/pages/1123/attachments/original/1705880836/Threat_abatement_plan_for_predation_by_feral_cats- AJP_Submission.pdf?

"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>

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