

Submission
No 468

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Submission on Cat Welfare and Wildlife Protection in NSW

I am writing to share my concerns and hopes for the future of cat welfare and wildlife protection in NSW. As someone who deeply values both the wellbeing of animals and the preservation of our native ecosystems, I believe we must adopt humane, science-based approaches to address these challenges effectively.

Addressing Stray Cat Populations

The idea of culling cats to protect wildlife is not only inhumane but also ineffective. Historically, such measures have failed to achieve lasting results, as they ignore the root causes of the problem. The Vacuum Effect, where new animals fill the void left by removed populations, ensures that these efforts are unsustainable.

Instead, proactive community cat programs have consistently demonstrated their ability to reduce stray cat populations over time. These programs, which include targeted desexing, Trap-Neuter-Return (TNR), rehoming, and community education, provide a compassionate and effective solution. They also reduce the strain on councils, shelters, and rescue groups, while supporting the mental health of those working with animals.

The NSW Government's commissioned report and the recent Pound Inquiry recommendations both emphasise large-scale desexing programs as the most effective path forward. Providing grants to councils and rescue organisations to fund these initiatives—particularly in disadvantaged communities—will not only reduce the number of homeless cats but also promote responsible pet ownership and community engagement.

Concerns About Cat Containment Laws

While I understand the need to minimise the impact of cats on wildlife, mandatory 24-hour containment policies often do more harm than good. These laws primarily target semi-owned or stray cats, which lack owners to enforce confinement. Such measures can lead to higher abandonment rates and increase impoundments and euthanasia without addressing the underlying issues.

Examples from councils like Yarra Ranges and City of Casey in Victoria show that containment policies can backfire, with rising complaints, impoundments, and euthanasia rates. Instead of punitive measures, resources should be directed towards education and support for responsible pet ownership, including affordable desexing and safe containment options like cat patios.

Protecting Wildlife with Holistic Solutions

It's easy to place blame on cats for the decline in wildlife populations, but the reality is far more complex. Human activities such as habitat destruction, urban sprawl, and vehicle collisions are far more significant contributors to wildlife loss. Wildlife rescue data, such as the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard 2022–23, highlights that cats are responsible for only a small fraction of incidents compared to other factors.

To protect at-risk wildlife, we need to focus on habitat restoration, creating green corridors, and addressing threats like habitat loss and vehicle collisions. These measures tackle the root causes of the problem and ensure a balanced, sustainable approach to conservation.

Educating and Empowering Communities

Education is a cornerstone of effective change. Teaching pet owners how to care for their cats responsibly, keep them safely contained, and understand the importance of desexing can make a significant difference. Community outreach programs, media campaigns, and partnerships with schools can foster a culture of responsible pet ownership and wildlife stewardship.

Local initiatives like rehoming programs, fostering networks, and targeted desexing campaigns are already making an impact. By supporting and expanding these efforts, we can build a compassionate and sustainable framework for managing cat populations while protecting native wildlife.

In Conclusion

The welfare of cats and the protection of wildlife in NSW are deeply interconnected issues that require thoughtful, evidence-based solutions. By prioritising humane and proactive approaches, we can create a future where both cats and wildlife can coexist in harmony. I urge the NSW Government to focus on proven strategies like community cat programs, large-scale desexing, habitat conservation, and education to address these challenges effectively.

Thank you for considering my submission. I hope compassionate and effective policies can be implemented for the benefit of all animals and our environment.