# INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

**Name:** Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I am writing to share my thoughts on the important issue of balancing cat welfare with wildlife conservation in NSW. As someone who cares about both animals and the environment, I believe there are better ways to address these issues than the ineffective and inhumane approaches being considered.

A Better Way to Manage Stray Cats

The idea of culling cats as a solution to protect wildlife is deeply flawed. It's not only cruel but also ineffective, as it fails to address the root causes of cat overpopulation. Research shows that removing cats from an area often leads to more cats moving in—this is known as the Vacuum Effect.

Community cat programs offer a far more effective alternative. These programs focus on desexing, rehoming, and returning cats to managed colonies where they can no longer breed. This approach has been successful in reducing stray cat populations while fostering collaboration between communities, councils, and rescue organisations.

The NSW Pound Inquiry recently highlighted the importance of proactive strategies, recommending grants for large-scale desexing initiatives in areas with high stray cat populations. These kinds of programs address the issue at its source and help create long-term solutions without resorting to cruelty.

The Problems with Cat Containment Laws

Mandatory 24-hour containment laws might sound like a solution on paper, but in practice, they often cause more harm than good. These rules disproportionately target stray or semi-owned cats—animals that don't have owners to enforce containment. As a result, these laws can lead to higher abandonment rates, an increase in impounded cats, and more euthanasia.

In Victoria, councils that have implemented strict cat containment policies, like Yarra Ranges and City of Casey, have seen complaints and impoundments rise dramatically. These policies fail to address the real issue and instead create new problems for shelters, rescue groups, and communities.

A better approach would be to educate cat owners about containment options, such as building secure enclosures or "catios." Making these solutions more accessible and affordable would help keep both cats and wildlife safe.

Understanding the Real Threats to Wildlife

While cats are often blamed for declines in native wildlife, the primary threats come from human activities such as habitat destruction, urbanisation, and vehicle collisions. Data from

the NSW Wildlife Rehabilitation Dashboard 2022–23 clearly shows that habitat changes, motor vehicle incidents, and dog attacks far outweigh cat-related incidents.

To truly protect our wildlife, we need to focus on habitat restoration and conservation projects that address these larger issues. Blaming cats alone oversimplifies a complex problem and ignores the role we all play in preserving biodiversity.

Education and Community Engagement Are Key

To address these challenges effectively, education and community involvement must be a priority. Teaching people about responsible cat ownership—including desexing, microchipping, and safe ways to contain their pets—can help reduce roaming cats and protect wildlife.

Public awareness campaigns, school education programs, and local outreach can play a huge role in fostering a culture of responsibility. Additionally, providing funding for desexing and rehoming initiatives ensures that stray and semi-owned cats are managed compassionately and effectively.

A Balanced Approach

The challenges of cat welfare and wildlife protection cannot be solved with one-size-fits-all solutions. Humane and evidence-based approaches, such as community cat programs and habitat conservation efforts, offer a way forward that benefits both animals and the environment.

I encourage the NSW Government to focus on these proactive strategies, which are grounded in science and compassion. This is the best way to achieve meaningful and lasting outcomes for cats, wildlife, and our communities.

Thank you for considering my submission.