

Submission
No 462

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

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Inquiry into the Management of Cat Populations

I support humane treatment of all animals, domestic and wild, introduced species and native. I support humane science based solutions for cat welfare and wild life protection for NSW. Killing cats to protect wildlife has not worked historically and is senseless to continue using a method that is not effective and is cruel.

Community cat programs with the focus on rehoming, desexing, community education and TNR have proven to be highly effective in reducing the numbers of stray cat populations.

Initiatives such as these ease the burden on local councils, shelters and animal rescue groups. These initiatives also support the well being of the initiative participants, vets, nurses and volunteers.

A NSW Government commissioned report supports large scale desexing programs instead of ineffective, cruel killing programs.

The recent NSW Pound Inquiry recommends a proactive solution of providing grants to councils and rescue organisations to fund large scale desexing programs state wide including within the community, especially lower demographic, in areas of large homeless cat populations. This type of program provides long term solutions that effectively reduce stray cat numbers without cruelty or demonising cats.

The Community Cat Program provides a successful solution by helping owners and semi owners in disadvantaged areas with free desexing and microchipping. Proactive community programs have been scientifically proven to reduce stray cat numbers, decrease nuisance complaints and prevent wildlife cat predators.

The Rand myth of domestic cats and urban wildlife provides a helpful summary of some of the misconceptions and effective solutions for managing cat populations with desexing reducing stray cat numbers.

It is essential to consider the ecological principle of the vacuum effect of removing animals from an area results in new animals filling the space. Identifying the base cause of the population growth and addressing this assists in effective population control.

Cat Containment and Curfews

Mandatory 24 hour curfews often target stray and semi owned cats resulting in low success rates as no one owns these cats. Some people abandon their cats to avoid fines. Rental properties often specify that no animals are allowed on the premise otherwise there is the risk of breach of lease and this results in cats being left outside. Mandatory 24/7 cat containment has shown an increase in impoundments and higher euthanasia rates without solving the issue of cat roaming. Cat containment laws have not shown a reduction in complaints about roaming cats. The RSPCA's report of councils with cat containment laws have not shown a reduction in cat roaming or cat complaints. The Yarra and Hobson's Bay, Victoria are examples of unsuccessful mandatory cat containment programs.

Educating Pet Owners About Responsible Care

Encouraging people to keep their cats within the boundaries of their property and indoors helps to reduce the threat to wildlife and ensures cat safety.

Community outreach, media campaigns and school programs educating in desexing animals to reduce population growth and supporting indoor environments keep cat numbers down and lessen the impact cats have on the environment and wildlife.

Local initiatives that rehome, foster and target desexing are successful in reducing stray cat populations.

Wildlife

Humans have a far greater impact on environmental problems and removal of native habitat such as land clearing, deforestation and urban development that wipe out entire populations of native wildlife and their essential environment. Cats do not create this issue. Cats can adapt to survive in altered environments. Projects that assist in restoring native habitats and biodiversity alleviate the negative impact human development and industry have on native habitat and wildlife.

Wildlife rescue data show that cats are not the significant threat to threatened species. The key threat is habitat loss, vehicle collisions, dog attacks followed by cat incidents.

At risk wildlife should be protected with humane approaches that show scientific success rates with the focus on habitat preservation, reducing vehicle collisions and manmade habitat destruction.

In summary sustainable, humane management of cat populations involving community education and engagement with responsible ownership and supportive rental/housing for domestic cat ownership allowing indoor pets is key to successfully achieving reductions in cat populations, domestic and stray. Government backed funded desexing programs reduces cat populations for people who cannot financially afford to have their animals desex and microchipped. These methods have been proven to be effective, are humane and show a proactive duty of care for both the cat and wildlife populations.