

Submission
No 475

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

Name: Mr Reece Luxton
Date Received: 22 November 2024

22 November 2024

Animal Welfare Committee

NSW Legislative Council

Parliament House, Macquarie Street

Sydney NSW 2000

On behalf of Clarence Valley Council – Natural Resource Management section, I would like to take the opportunity to provide a submission into Legislative Council *Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales*.

Council is actively involved in management of cats through the implementation of the *Companion Animals Act* and the recently endorsed *Keeping Animals Policy*.

This submission however will be focusing on the impact of cats to our biodiversity values in the Clarence Valley. Information for this submission has been compiled with advice from the Council's Biodiversity Advisory Committee which has had a keen interest in improving the level of management of cat predation on native fauna. Please refer to item (j) for further details.

In summary, there should be a focus on the change of culture in how cats are managed; and that a national approach for cat containment should be put in place.

Yours faithfully

Reece Luxton

Coordinator NRM and Projects

The following comments are offered in response to the terms of reference:

(a) the impact of cats on threatened native animals in metropolitan and regional settings,

- There is a significant amount of data that confirms that the welfare of our native fauna is impacted by cats.
- Note information provided by the Invasive Species Council as an example.
- Council offers support to landholders with cat trapping.
- Monitoring via Feral Scan has revealed populations of cats in our peri-urban areas that previously showed very few sightings.
- However, the lack of reliable data has restricted the identification of impacts of cats – generally has been only anecdotal evidence.
- This is coupled with the need for support and associated funding from State government to aid Council in the dealing with cat populations.

(b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers

- There is no comment on this terms of reference at this time

(c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions,

- There is no comment on this terms of reference at this time

(d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives,

- Council has been involved with Lions Club of Clarence – Environmental with advocacy of ‘*Care for your cat – keep it safe at home*’ – through leaflets produced and distributed in villages across the LGA.
- Council as yet has not offered landholder incentives to keep cats indoors on private land, but note that neighbouring Councils such as Tweed and Kyogle have offered these incentives in conjunction with RSPCA (Keeping Cats Safe At Home program)
- Responsible cat ownership will require significant behaviour change – one way to achieve this is to promote the social norm for cat enclosures to be constructed and used for effective cat containment.

(e) implications for local councils implementing large scale cat desexing programs

- The current situation from our Regulatory Services section suggests that Councils are not funded effectively – it will become a financial burden on ratepayers, whereas cat management should be seen as a Federal or State initiative
- Further suggestions include a change to rehoming aspects of NSW *Companion Animals Act* – amendments required.

(f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs

- There is no comment on this terms of reference at this time (apart from the fact that the increased desexing of cats means that the our Regulatory Services staff are likely to see an increase in cost to Council)

(g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system

- There is no comment on this terms of reference at this time

(h) the outcomes of similar policies on cat containment in other Australian states or territories

- There is no comment on this terms of reference at this time

(i) options for reducing the feral cat population

- There is a growing need to increase control of existing feral cat populations to assist in protecting threatened species in the Clarence Valley.

(j) any other related matters.

Clarence Valley Council has received motions from the Biodiversity Advisory Committee – April 2023 meeting.

Motion 1:

That any present or future DAs / submissions there is a clause stating:

1. no cats allowed on properties if the development is next to a National Park, crown land, nature reserve or koala habitat.
2. or cats to be fully contained within the owner's property i.e. a built Catio, or kept inside 24/7
3. If any species under *Biodiversity Conservation Act* identified on the ecological study, then it becomes an automatic cat exclusion Development Application.

Motion 2:

That Council introduce Wildlife Protection Zones to prohibit cats and dogs from public lands (under the *NSW Companion Animals Act 1998*, Wildlife Protection Areas can be declared as one of two categories:

1. Category 1 lands prohibit both cats and dogs as per S.30 c.1(b) and S14c1(h) of the *NSW Companion Animals Act 1998*.
2. Category 2 lands prohibit cats as per S.30c.1(b) of the *NSW Companion Animals Act 1998*. Dogs that are on a leash will be permitted on formed tracks, pathways or roads in Category 2 lands.

The motions were presented to a Councillor workshop in May 2023, but it was determined that it is difficult to act under the current framework of the NSW *Companion Animals Act*.

At its June 2023 meeting, the Biodiversity Advisory Committee questioned whether cats should be fully contained regardless of state legislation, as other Council areas have areas that have cats contained but generally next to National Parks. It was noted that in Queensland, cats were required to be microchipped and 24/7 containment.

It was noted that the motions be put to the Local government Conference in November 2023. Further, that the committee should note the recent scientific evidence to support cats impacting on native fauna.

END