

Submission
No 481

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

Name: Mr Ian Dunwoodie

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Dear Members,

I submit that the damage caused by feral cats is immense and effective humane control measures need to be implemented immediately.

I further submit that once implemented those measures must be supported, prosecuted, funded and scientifically monitored. Otherwise the whole process will lapse into a useless and expensive farce as did the NSW Government attempt during the Bob Carr years where sensible initiatives to licence cats and require their confinement, to be supported by a scheme of fines administered by councils was simply neglected and abandoned by councils.

My general submissions are:

1. Everyone needs to be included in the effort to reduce cat numbers and to keep cats controlled, are confined and are desexed.
2. National parks and other wildlife refuges must be protected by, I submit, a buffer zone should be legislated of 5 kilometres in all directions from their boundaries where free roaming cats are banned, and very substantial fines are enforced for breaches. If breaches are proven, the very substantial costs of clean up of escaped or negligently managed cats are recoverable from offending cat owners in addition to fines and other penalties. If recognised scientific authority is that a buffer zone of more than 5 kms is required, then I submit that the buffer zone should be legislated accordingly.
3. Vets must be required to hold any cat which comes into their surgery which is not desexed until it is desexed or euthanised, and to recover the cost of both outcomes from the owner or a government fund. Funding for vets in this endeavour needs to be ensured on an ongoing basis.
4. A fund should be established, funded inter alia from cat licensing fees, fines and enforcements, to cover all costs of administering and enforcing cat control, confinement, euthanising and other requirements to support the operation of the proposed legislation.
5. Financial and other support should be provided to private conservation organisations, on a merit basis to assist in implementation and prosecution of measures consistent with and in support of the removal of feral cats from the countryside and the removal of threats raised by cats to native wildlife and ecosystems.
6. NSW National Parks and other State administered landholders must be directed to remove feral cats from the land they administer and must be properly funded to do so.
7. I repeat as my own submissions the submissions of PETA as follows:

-The effectiveness and benefits of implementing large-scale cat desexing programmes:

-Any serious strategy to reduce cat numbers and the threat they pose to other animals must start with stemming the flow of new animals into a world where there are not enough homes for them. Humans are responsible for deliberately increasing cat populations as well as the reproduction of unfixed roaming and homeless cats.

-Every animal bought from a breeder costs one in a shelter the chance of a loving home, contributing to the euthanasia of animals in shelters. Council shelters are overflowing, putting pressure on staff and denying new animals in need safe spaces. Australian shelters and pounds must euthanise some 50,000 healthy cats and kittens a year, yet 25% of cats – 1.32 million in 2022 – are still being purchased from breeders directly or via pet stores.

-If the bought animal is not desexed and reproduces, the problem is compounded. A single free-roaming, unfixed cat can give rise to as many as 5,000 cats in seven years. Extensive and readily available desexing programmes made affordable via state government subsidies must therefore be coupled with legislation banning the breeding and sale of animals by breeders, kitten farms, pet stores, and online operators to stem the flow of new animals.

-Desexing also improves the welfare of individual animals. Spaying eliminates female feline stress and discomfort during heat periods, eliminates the uterine cancer risk, and greatly reduces mammary cancer risk. One study found that spaying cats younger than 1 year old was associated with an 86% reduction in the risk of developing mammary gland neoplasia.

-Neutering makes males far less likely to roam or fight, prevents testicular cancer, and reduces the risk of prostate cancer. Altered animals are less likely to contract deadly, contagious diseases, such as feline AIDS and feline leukaemia, which are spread through bodily fluids.

-The effectiveness of cat containment policies and welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions:

-Cats can happily live indoors or in secure outdoor cat runs (or a combination of the two), provided they have access to enrichment, such as toys, a feline companion, puzzle feeders, scratching posts, human-interactive games that encourage exercise, and shelves, levels, and cat trees for climbing. And 92% of Australians support or do not oppose 24/7 at-home cat containment.

-Allowing cats to roam outside the home is dangerous not only for wildlife but also for the cats themselves, who are at risk of disease, being hit by cars, or becoming the victims of cruel people. Cats responsibly contained at home can live up to 10 years longer than those allowed to roam free.

-Options for reducing the feral cat population:

-Cat management strategies must be focused on humane ways of addressing the root cause of overpopulation, not employing cruel, dangerous lethal measures.

-Poisoning as a cat control measure, for example, is counterintuitive to protecting wildlife. Sodium fluoroacetate (colloquially 1080), which is commonly used in cat baits, is an environmental disaster. It is easily ingested by companion animals as well as native species, and its victims endure a slow, agonising death.

-Similarly, shooting cats is cruel. Shooting moving targets, which is usually done at night, can result in inaccurate shots and cause prolonged, painful death.

-In regard to tackling the root causes of overpopulation, it is not enough to rely on reactionary control methods, such as the impounding of animals identified as having homes and the killing of homeless animals. PETA urges the New South Wales government to consider the following preventive measures to reduce cat populations:

-A ban on the sale of animals by breeders, in pet stores, and online

-A ban on kitten farms

-The enforcement of 24/7 cat confinement laws

-Continuation of mandatory microchipping

-Increased public education about the importance of cat desexing, at-home confinement (including environmental enrichment), fostering, and adoption

-Increased state government funding of adoption groups and shelters to better house impounded animals and enhance rehoming efforts

-Government funding of desexing programmes

-In cases where it is necessary, euthanasia – and an end to cruel, inaccurate lethal methods such as shooting and poisoning

8. The confinement, removal and desexing of cats in NSW will allow natural systems to renew themselves more rapidly. Enhanced natural environments increase contributions to greenhouse gas reduction, cooling of the local environment. The increase in native species going forward will increasingly allow the natural environment to improve on its own, helping to meet environmental targets and offsetting the need for government funding in the future.

9. Regulating cats is not just a good idea, it makes financial and environmental sense.

Please give close attention to my submissions and those of other concerned citizens who require the Parliament to implement sensible and practical measures to control or remove the cats which cause so much damage to the native environment of our State.

Yours faithfully

Ian Dunwoodie