

Submission
No 505

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

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

I have been a resident of Willoughby for 40 years. I am lucky to live in an LGA with considerable areas of native and regenerated bushland. I am a member of 3 bushcare groups and as such I am very concerned about the impact roaming cats have on our native wildlife. I am pleased that the NSW government is holding an inquiry into cat containment and management as I have seen first-hand the prevalence and effect of roaming cats.

I have planted a small native garden with plenty of clean drinking water to encourage birds and small animals, such as lizards. I have also had a family of ringtail possums who enter along the fence. Although the garden has a high fence and gate, I have been alerted to the presence of neighbourhood cats by birds (mostly noisy miners). This has also happened at night. I have approached my neighbours to ask them to at least keep the cats inside at night, to be told "we can't keep him/her in".

I have also been privileged to see nocturnal animals on Council infrared cameras which have been setup up in bushland areas. Although it is wonderful to see bandicoots, wallabies and smaller animals, it is shocking to see prowling cats and even to see them with native prey in their mouths.

I was personally brought up with a family cat and not being aware of the implications, remember her catching small lizards and sparrows, even though she wore a bell and was always locked up at night. I can attest to their value as a family pet and as companion animals, but it is well documented that they are also natural and deadly predators. There is evidence that in NSW, approximately 96 million native mammals, birds and reptiles are killed by roaming pet cats every year – with about 110 native animals killed by each roaming, hunting pet cat. Unfortunately, about 70% of cat owners still allow their pets to roam.

I understand that we can't change the predatory nature of cats, but NSW decision-makers can act to protect our vulnerable wildlife, by ensuring that our cat owners are informed about this issue and have an obligation to act responsibly. We urgently need responsible pet ownership, and this starts with clear rules to ensure pet owners keep cats contained to their property to save our native wildlife. Obviously, this reform should be accompanied by funding for education, compliance and to make desexing and registration easier. This would also make it easier and less confrontational to talk to neighbours etc about their cats.

I therefore support sensible amendments to the law to enable local governments to enforce anti-roaming laws for pet cats, bringing NSW into line with almost every other state. I am calling on the NSW Government and the Animal Welfare committee to support:

- Amendments to the NSW Companion Animals Act to enable local Government to enforce anti-roaming laws.
- Requirement that local councils develop companion animal management plans to protect wildlife, supported by the development of a state-wide online resource for responsible pet ownership.

- Mandatory state-wide desexing by 4 months of age.
- Funding to support compliance, education, desexing, identification and registration programs.

With one of the highest cat populations in Australia, NSW has a responsibility and urgent obligation to create clear, ecologically informed and easily enforceable legislation that will compel cat owners to comply with 24/7 cat containment across the state.

Thank you for your consideration.