

Ms Talina Drabsch
Principal Council Officer
NSW Parliament
6 Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: talina.drabsch@parliament.nsw.gov.au

Re Inquiry into the management of cat populations in NSW – Post-hearing responses

Dear Ms Drabsch

Please find enclosed my response to the supplementary questions at the recent hearing into the management of cat populations in NSW.

Should you need to discuss this further, I can be contacted via email

Yours sincerely,

Brett Whitworth
Deputy Secretary
Office of Local Government

Inquiry into the management of cat populations in NSW

Supplementary questions

1 April 2025

Question 1

Has the Government modelled the long-term impact of current low cat registration rates (45.5%) on its ability to regulate roaming or unowned cats effectively?

Answer

In NSW, the management of companion cats is primarily governed by the *Companion Animals Act 1998* and Companion Animals Regulation 2018 (CA Laws). The CA Laws allow cats to roam freely except in certain circumstances.

The NSW Government submission identifies the challenges of applying Companion Animals Act principles of responsible pet ownership where ownership of a cat is not clear (e.g. semi-owned, unowned and feral).

The NSW Government recently announced a review of the CA Laws which, among other things, will include analysis of registration rates over time. This analysis will feed into broader questions around the adequacy of legislative responses available to effectively regulate roaming and unowned cats, of which increasing registration rates may be one of several mechanisms worth pursuing.

A key focus of this analysis will be on microchipping rates and the difference between microchipping and registration rates over time. The owner of a microchipped but unregistered cat can still be subject to regulatory measures such as nuisance orders, which also provides an opportunity to enforce the registration requirement.

Local councils are responsible for enforcing CA Laws and promoting awareness of the legal requirements of companion animal owners, including registration. The NSW Government supports councils in undertaking this role through various measures, including:

- the provision of guidance and educational materials
- financial assistance via registration fees
- a statewide Companion Animal Register that supports compliance and enforcement activities.

Question 2

What is being done to strengthen individual responsibility for pet containment and desexing, rather than relying on government intervention?

Answer

The NSW companion animal management framework is underpinned by the principle of responsible pet ownership and the premise that welfare and management is a whole of community responsibility. Councils and their communities are encouraged to work collaboratively to promote responsible pet ownership and to address specific cat issues in their area. Regulatory intervention generally occurs when owners behave irresponsibly.

The NSW Government's approach to cat containment is through education, such as the 'Keeping Cats Safe at Home' project.

Desexing of cats is not mandatory in NSW but is encouraged through the financial disincentive of an annual permit requirement to keep an entire cat. This complements educational initiatives promoting the benefits of desexing, including the 'Good Neighbour' resources released by the Cat Protection Society of NSW, developed with the support of the NSW Government. This material provides practical advice and support on cat containment and desexing.

As part of their companion animal management responsibilities, some local councils offer free or subsidised microchipping and desexing for low-income owners to assist them to be responsible pet owners.

Views of the committee on alternative strategies would be welcomed.

Question 3

Does the Department support a streamlined State-wide framework that simplifies overlapping laws under the Companion Animals Act, POCTAA, and environmental legislation?

Answer

The NSW Government supports regulatory frameworks that are easy to understand and apply and which encourage compliance. It seeks to remedy issues or problems with existing laws where this is not the case.

The NSW Government is reviewing the CA Laws, which have a primary focus on the management of pet cats. It is also reviewing the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*, which has a primary focus on welfare, including the welfare of pet cats. Cats are also regulated under various environmental protection laws as animals that are a potential source of risk to the natural environment and native wildlife.

While this legislative approach has evolved based on these 3 distinct regulatory needs, part of the review of the CA Laws will include an examination of how these various legislative instruments can operate more seamlessly together.