

Submission
No 96

INQUIRY INTO PREVALENCE, CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF LONELINESS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Cat Protection Society of NSW

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Submission from the Cat Protection Society of NSW

NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into the prevalence, causes and impacts of loneliness in New South Wales

The significance of loneliness as a public health and safety concern is gaining increased attention from governments, academics, health professionals, social scientists, and public policy experts the world over.

The Cat Protection Society of NSW cares about cats and the people who love them. We've made submissions to many inquiries and policy reviews, and we've consistently called for governments at all levels to adopt a One Health/One Welfare approach to public policy.

The concept of One Welfare is an extension of One Health, recognising mental health and wellbeing as well as physical health. Applying a One Welfare framework to public policy would mean considering matters holistically, so, for example, considering whether a decision might contribute to loneliness.

Human health and wellbeing are inextricably linked with the health and wellbeing of non-human animals and the environment. We all need clean air, clean water, and disease mitigation for good health. Our ecosystems are shared. The global health crisis of antimicrobial resistance powerfully illustrates our interconnectedness.

One Welfare recognises that good welfare is fundamental to good health. Whether we are human or non-human animals, our physical health is compromised when we experience poor welfare states, such as loneliness, fear, anxiety, and stress.

Good social, mental and physical health provide the foundations for people's positive wellbeing, education, social and economic participation.

Companion animals are of great significance to the health and welfare of many people – studies of the human-animal bond provide a wealth of evidence to support this, with a recent study showing fostering a cat could ease loneliness among older adults <https://publichealth.uga.edu/fostering-a-cat-can-ease-loneliness/>

Research and evidence that we and others have referenced in submissions to other inquiries and consultations point to the urgent need to provide greater access to genuinely pet-friendly accommodation options [CPS-NSW-feedback-to-Improving-NSW-rental-laws-consultation-paper-July-2023-110823.pdf](#)

The recent changes to the Residential Tenancies Act will not provide security and freedom from ongoing stress for pet owners; the changes don't provide assurance

for the reasonable keeping of pets. The changes don't give certainty of pet-friendly accommodation for people seeking to leave domestic violence.

If governments took a One Welfare approach to policy, they would recognise the harm to public health and safety caused by pet-unfriendly housing policies and practices.

An important strategy to reduce loneliness is to have policies that support pet ownership; such policies have been recommended by other inquiries, including recommendations made in the report of Portfolio Committee No. 8 – Customer Service inquiry into Pounds in New South Wales: [Report](#)

Cat Protection discussed One Welfare and loneliness in information we provided to the Portfolio Committee No. 4 – Regional NSW inquiry into the veterinary workforce shortage in New South Wales
[Cat Protection Society - 30 August hearing.pdf](#)

In the UK, the Society for Companion Animal Studies submission to the Jo Cox Commission on Loneliness provides a great insight into the benefits of companion animals in mitigating loneliness:
<http://www.scas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/SCAS-Submission-to-the-Jo-Cox-Commission-on-Loneliness-February-2017.pdf>

The impacts of loneliness on individuals and communities are profound, with many contributing causes. There are many strategies that could be adopted to protect against loneliness, among them policies that genuinely support the bond between people and animals.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment.

Kristina Vesk OAM
Chief Executive Officer
Cat Protection Society of NSW

www.catprotection.org.au
www.catcare.org.au

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