

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

**Organisation:** Knox AdvoCats  
**Date Received:** 22 November 2024

---

## **Knox AdvoCats to Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales**

In 2021 Knox City Council enacted a cat lifetime lockdown. Local Councillors refused to consult the community on 24-hrs, refused to produce statistics, or any evidence. Residents learnt only from external news reports. Council counted night-curfew supporters as 24-hr supporters. Meetings were kept closed to the public. 143 Knox AdvoCats applied to the Victorian Ombudsman for consultation adhering to the Local Government Act 2020. The Victorian Ombudsman then altered fact, figure, and date, for Council. The Victorian Ombudsman has effectively hidden the 143 applicants from public report and media.

AdvoCats support the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation's 'One Welfare' approach - '*which recognises the interconnectedness of people and pets, which in turn benefits the environment*'. Cat curfews raise the suicide-risk to rescuers higher than to Australian police and firefighters. Curfews fail to save wildlife, and cost Australians six times more - with higher trapping and killing - particularly of kittens. Community Cat Programs' intensive targeted desexing, is highly-effective, low-cost, and saves many lives - animals and humans.

### **That the Animal Welfare Committee inquire into and report on the management of cat populations in New South Wales, and in particular:**

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

*'there is actually no scientific evidence that domestic cats living in the vicinity of people, impact Australian native wildlife populations. In fact, population studies have not found a measurable effect of domestic cats on native birds and mammals (Barratt 1998, Grayson 2007, Lilith 2010, MacLagan 2018). In addition, there is no evidence that cat restrictions in urban areas benefit native wildlife populations.'*

*An ongoing issue is that impacts of feral cats on wildlife are often wrongly attributed to domestic cats.* <https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Data-to-Support-Position-Statement-on-Domestic-cats-and-native-wildlife.10jn.n-t.pdf>

Why is flawed data on cats and wildlife continually published in Australian media, without correction, without fines, without responsibility for the harm it causes?

#### **(b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers 24-hr**

90percent of impounded cats are homeless, strays, lost, many young kittens - which then receive no chance.

Knox states on its website: '*We're real dog lovers in the city of Knox*'.

Knox has an off-leash dog Order where dogs can run free in over 290 reserves, parks and playing fields\* Cat registrations also pay for the additional dog parks, and the annual dogs' party '*Pets in the Park*' - with no benefit for registered cat-owners.

Knox listed cat cat complaints on its website, but not the three times greater dog complaints. Knox Council stated it would hide the identity of a cat complainant, and not require a written statement against a cat-owner; unlike a dog complaint. (Agenda, June 2021)

Knox's cat-and-dog survey asked "*Do you need help choosing the right pet?*"

(\*over 300 parks, reserves and playing fields in the City of Knox.' Only '9 bushland reserves need a dog to be on a lead')

24-hr curfews make greater inequality between neighbour dog and cat owners.

Knox residents are often too scared to report the many dog attacks experienced.

Many off-leash dogs enter private yards. Are cats and owners attacked in their own yards '*asking for it*'? Is a species, or gender, or fertility, a reason to hate?

A Knox elderly man set-up low cameras along their housing units, causing the elderly female residents with cats to live in fear, as they cannot run to chase their cats, are anxious at the possible fines, and the threat of harm to their fur-family.

Renters said landlords refused flywire-screens on windows - '*how can we keep our cat inside?*' 24-hr cat curfews make rentals harder to find. Also the cost of enclosures, installation, and removal upon moving.

Home-owners note that cage enclosures de-value property, and are troubled by the loss of gardens planted for wildlife, and being forced to reduce canopy trees for installation.

Mothers ask how can they stop the cat following out the dog and their children?

A local mum with two special needs daughters with therapy cats, wrote of the removal of joy:

Two Knox Councillors, who pushed loudly for 24-hr cat curfew, are residential landlords.

Knox Council denied residents consultation on 24-hrs, during the pandemic, '*costing* (less than) \$10 per cat-owner.' (Cr Pearce 2021). Meetings were kept closed to the public, during the enactment of the curfew. Knox Council has no effective complaints process.

Councillors deleted questions and blocked residents from their Councillor Facebook pages.

Councillors called themselves '*proud community leaders*' that the '*community are lucky to have making decisions for them*'. Councillors refused cat-owner questions and publicly stated in closed meetings '*If you need mental help...*'

Breaches of the Councillor Code of Conduct have no effective government integrity '*watchdog*'.

24-hr cat curfews incite hate-speech, and hide greater cruelty towards felines - as not being able to be seen, heard, or to have a right to exist.

Cats are denied dogs' trips to the shops, cafes, public social outings, as being deemed lesser than canines, which also impacts carers' health, mobility, living well, and equality.

Even the RSPCA '*does not recommend*' leashing a cat.

Homes can become prisons for both cat and owner, socially isolating and stressful.

Cat-owner residents who had planted '*Gardens for Wildlife*', and protect native birds, lizards, habitat and canopy trees - feel betrayed by Council's determination.

**Is it 'good governance' to refuse community consultation, to falsify 'report', to enact without evidence?**

**How is public '*education*', '*responsible*' - when science shows the method '*designed to save*' - actually kills more animals?**

**The establishment of an Independent Animal Authority** with jurisdiction over Local Councils could prevent Local Councils making uneducated laws which kill more wildlife, kittens, and make greater inequality. If residents could apply directly to an Independent Animal Authority, then hopefully many animal, and human, lives could be saved. Cat curfews are costly failures, dealing more deaths for kittens, wildlife, and placing rescuers at high suicide-risk.

### **(c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions**

We have been advised by veterinarians of contained cats' higher risk of Feline Lower Urinary Tract Disease (FLUTD) - which can be fatal.

Knox's website advised locking your cat '*in a shed or garage*' - ignoring that cats have physical and mental needs, and have died in garages from the cold.

Local vets have advised residents to '*let your cat out*', to value their '*mental health*' and to not resort to veterinary stress drugs.

More cats face greater homelessness, and less desirability to be adopted - with many who '*cannot afford*' mandated containment's punishments.

A young student pleaded that the 24-hr curfew meant that she would '*have to give up my cat*'. '*He's my life*'.

Inappropriate toileting, scratching, howling, desperate clawing to go out - being denied following-around the garden sun, and denied public socialisation.

Residents cannot cope with the stress of cats stuck inside as permanent window-watchers, or caged in enclosures. Of families not being able to enjoy their backyards with their children, dog and cat all playing together.

Elderly residents told of now owning cats because they can no longer walk dogs.

A resident without legs wrote of her desperation to Council, and did not even receive reply.

For many residents, homes become prisons for both cat and owner, with the cruelty of trapped window-watchers, and fear of neighbours - who do not even have to make a written complaint. Cat-carer renters are effectively further disadvantaged.

Curfews target the elderly, the disabled, renters, and the poorest, for high fines - forcefully denying feline companionship, and community health. Loss of neighbourliness, isolation; and a punishing re'education' - is contrary to science and facts.

Hidden cats are more at harm in domestic violence. Making a species undeserving to live, hands 'easy meat' targets for hunters, for trapping, torture, lack of care, and cruelty acts.

All responsible owners lock-in their cats at night, although times can vary, and being in a bushfire zone sometimes needs consideration.

Please read the comments in our petitions. <https://www.change.org/p/knox-advocats>  
<https://www.change.org/p/knox-council-review-knox-council-s-plans-for-24hr-cat-curfew>

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

Where is Local Council's expertise or scientific knowledge, to 'educate'?

How is it 'responsible' to 'mandate cat containment' - when science shows it raises costs approximately six times more than scientific Community Cat Programs, fails to save wildlife, and places rescuers lives at high suicide risk?

Knox Council's *Knox News* cited as 'expert' the CEO of its pound who has no qualifications.

Claims of 'Safe Cat, Safe Wildlife', cited by Councils, are disproven by science.

**Why is government 'making a killing' of more native animals, and kittens, and decimating habitat homes?**

#### **Where is any effective integrity 'watchdog' over irresponsible Councils?**

143 Knox AdvoCats took their case to the Victorian Ombudsman asking for community consultation on 24-hrs - in adherence to the Local Government Act 2020.

The Ombudsman then altered fact, figure and date for Council - again preventing consultation.

The Victorian Ombudsman has also hidden Knox AdvoCats 143 complainants from public report and media.

[https://www.academia.edu/79098963/Knox\\_AdvoCats\\_Victorian\\_Ombudsman\\_Outcomes](https://www.academia.edu/79098963/Knox_AdvoCats_Victorian_Ombudsman_Outcomes)

#### **(e) implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies**

Are 'responsible' decisions based on local councillors' opinions, or scientific evidence?

Is enforcing 'education' on felines, and females, good governance?

Being marked as unequal - not to be seen, locked-in, denied dogs' play-parks, barred dogs' off-leash roaming, prevented from knowing the identity of neighbour complainants, 'keeping safe' - hidden from public view, raising trapping, killing, and unseen abuse.

Knox Council already has a court record of killing cat Mytzle in a trap.

<https://www.heraldsun.com.au/leader/outer-east/cat-traps-that-led-to-mytzles-death-still-available-from-knox-council/news-story/a1b651d68ca6e97a2e3046ff2e3dd373>

The Port the Newcastle culled community cats, causing permanent injury to residents.

[https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/2/271?](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/2/271?fbclid=IwAR2GgLTaULJoaBhVuVsRPIG59S5dV54OhoPQexarznCH57fjzWuojhw3xs)

[fbclid=IwAR2GgLTaULJoaBhVuVsRPIG59S5dV54OhoPQexarznCH57fjzWuojhw3xs](https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/2/271?fbclid=IwAR2GgLTaULJoaBhVuVsRPIG59S5dV54OhoPQexarznCH57fjzWuojhw3xs)

Cat curfews are proven costly failures - consider Yarra Ranges and Casey Council's 24-hr cat curfews. <https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/>

Why raise costs to all residents to implement greater killing and trapping and never-ending deaths of more kittens, more wildlife, and risking more human rescuers lives?

Why make greater inequality between cat and dog owners, between minority groups, between neighbours?

Why target renters, the elderly, the disabled, children with therapy-cats for high fines, stress, and health impacts?

Cat registrations of contained cats give no return to cat owners. All cats are already desexed before registration. Cat registrations also pay for dog parks, and the annual 'Pets in the Park' dogs' party.

24-hr cat curfews are making cats illegal to be seen, and inciting more hate-speech and violence towards felines and females. Are cat curfews conscienceless law?

Kittens born with a disability are particularly vulnerable. Justice for Kevin:

As Knox stated, extra enforcement also adds to greater expense needed - more officers, more 'free traps', more euthanasia.

### **All wild animals need habitat homes.**

Over a 'wildlife corridor', Knox Council removed the fenceline from plans - so residents did not know that Council's Permit was for a developer's commercial carpark over the public trail. Many native rosellas, king parrots, cockatoos, owls etc. fed from this site. Council ignored its own traffic experts of endangering residents' lives, demonstrated during bushfires. Disregarding the safety of many schoolchildren and bike-riders. The developer then decimated all on-site canopy trees, including the sole tree to be retained, breaching his permit. Knox said they would take no action. Residents of decades who had restored their 1940s railway heritage home, had to sell, after Council hid their objection and many others, including *Save the Dandenongs League*, refusing community consultation. <https://www.gofundme.com/f/SaveDandenongFoothills>

### **Why do governments prevent community consultation - causing greater animal deaths?**

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

Free rural desexing vans. Free desexing for all farmers' working-cats.

Community Cat Programs intensive desexing costs one-sixth of the cost of Australia's trapping and killing curfews. CCP also brings neighbours, and dog and cat owners, together to save wildlife, and community animals.

*Impact of a Local Government Funded Free Cat Sterilization Program for Owned and Semi-Owned Cats* <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615>

G2Z2019 Dr Jacqui Rand - Community cat program in Australia

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PQbK3R36Xjg>

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

*Stray and Owner-Relinquished Cats in Australia—Estimation of Numbers Entering Municipal Pounds, Shelters and Rescue Groups and Their Outcomes*

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/11/1771>

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

*Situational Analysis of Cat Ownership and Cat Caring Behaviors in a Community with High Shelter Admissions of Cats*

<https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/19/2849#:~:text=3.1.,had%203%20or%204%20cats>

*Outcomes of a Community Cat Program Based on Sterilization of Owned, Semi-Owned and Unowned Cats in a Small Rural Town* <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/21/3058>

#### **(i) options for reducing the feral cat population**

**Feral cats do not live in the vicinity of people. No feral cats enter Australian Local Council pounds. Urban domestic cats are not feral cats.** Mis-naming strays as feral enables hate-speech, fear, and greater danger. Verbal abuse precedes violence to felines, and females. Mis-naming invites cruelty, disrespect, human hunters, and abusers. If the Australian Draft Threat Abatement Plan re-classifies all stray cats as feral - to poison, shoot, trap and kill - this halts rescuers.

**Cat Definitions:** <https://petwelfare.org.au/2023/07/17/australian-pet-welfare-foundation-position-statement-on-cat-definitions/>

**Community Cat Programs, with targeted intensive desexing are needed across Australia.**

## **(j) any other related matters**

Cat rescuers are not recognised and desperately need funds - for care and necessary veterinary treatment. The RSPCA profits from euthanasia, and Council payments. Whereas local rescuers fight for lives, trying to raise enough to feed, foster; and to heal the worsening harm which humans do to animals.

In Victoria a Local Council Domestic Animal Manager stated that '*the RSPCA kills any cat with attitude within 24-hrs*' and that he would not use them again. Attitude means hissing, the terror of being trapped, high anxiety. Cat rescuers find that there are only themselves to save lives, and they are on a bare thread's breath themselves.

The Invasive Species Council mention politicians believing it is '*electorally popular*' to kill cats.

Felines are historically associated with females, and the feminine. Canines are seen as masculine.

With rising violence towards women, why are politicians enabling hate-speech and cruelty by shutting-in, removing the ability to be seen, removing equality, and dividing neighbours?

Man-dates of Councils proclaim masculine dogs as desirable, and feminine cats to be '*protected*', '*safe*', '*locked-in*', '*mental*', to be '*man-aged*' - by being owned or dead. Complicit in a '*manosphere*', of '*misinformation*' and '*misogynist*' cruelty. Where felines, and females, cannot walk without fear. After Vance's taunt of '*Childless Cat Lady*', Taylor Swift, signing herself as CCL was then Xed by Elon Musk: '*I will give you a child and guard your cats with my life*'.

### **Please consider:**

Running Respect for Felines programs, to change attitudes.

Enforcing truth-telling upon mass-media, by making fines on news stories calling urban cats '*feral*', attributing false predation figures, and fanning hatred.

Encourage equality - Councils could fund cat-parties - perhaps an annual city hotel event too - as celebrations of cats and individuality.

Council-funded Cat Cafes, could help offset the permanent dog-play-parks.

Tax deductions for farmers' working-cats - just like working-dogs get.

Recognition for therapy-cats - like assistance-dogs get.

Recognise the benefits of less poisons used for rodent control.

Hire advertising companies to change perceptions: *It's Uncool to be Cruel to Cats; Choose Lives - Curfews Kill and Cost All Australians; Respect Felines and Females; Save Kittens - Save Wildlife; Wild-born Kittens are Waiting for Homes; Love Community Cats*

Heroes/Heroines/CatStars - Greater Western Sydney players proved their heart, to homeless cats.  
<https://www.afl.com.au/news/1090324/mission-im-puss-ible-the-club-wide-cat-rescue-at-giants-hq>

*'The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated.'*  
Mahatma Gandhi

**AdvoCats**

**Community Cat Programs - Save Cats, Save Wildlife, Save Carers**

*Freedom to Walk Without Fear*

<https://www.change.org/p/knox-advocats>

<https://www.change.org/p/knox-council-review-knox-council-s-plans-for-24hr-cat-curfew>