

Submission
No 435

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

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Killing cats to protect wildlife hasn't worked before and it won't work now. It is cruel and doesn't solve the problem. Community cat programs that focus on rehoming, targeted de-sexing, trap-neuter-release, and community education have proven highly effective at reducing stray cat populations. These initiatives also ease the burden on councils, shelters and rescue groups.

A NSW Government-commissioned report supports large-scale de-sexing programs instead, showing that killing programs are ineffective.

The recent NSW Pound Inquiry has recommended a proactive solution: providing grants to councils and rescue organisations to fund large-scale, targeted de-sexing programs across the state, including community cat de-sexing in areas with large homeless cat populations, especially disadvantaged communities. In disadvantaged communities, the best solution is helping semi-owners and owners by providing free de-sexing and microchipping through programs like the Community Cat Program. These kinds of programs are a long-term, compassionate solution that reduces stray cat populations without demonising cats. Proactive community cat programs have been scientifically proven to reduce stray cat populations, decrease nuisance complaints and prevent wildlife predation.

When creating policies for reducing wild and community cat populations, it's essential to consider the Vacuum Effect, an ecological principle demonstrating that removing animals from an area only results in new animals filling the space. Without addressing the root causes of population growth, removal efforts are unsustainable and ultimately ineffective.

An approach that advocates mass-killing is cruel and barbaric. De-sexing, and trap-neuter-release programs are not only humane, but will be highly effective in reducing wild cat populations in the long run, by reducing the number of cats in the wild who are capable of breeding.

Finally, it needs to be recognised that humans are a much bigger problem for wildlife than cats. Land clearing, deforestation, and rampant urbanisation destroy wildlife habitats on a large scale, and the focus should be on protecting and restoring wildlife habitats.