INQUIRY INTO MANAGEMENT OF CAT POPULATIONS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Love Rescue Collaborate

Date Received: 22 November 2024



To: the New South Wales (NSW) Animal Welfare Committee

Please consider this submission for the inquiry for the management of cat populations in NSW. Please note: this submission has been developed without AI – it is "warts and all" human developed. It also is heavily reliant on quoted information from trusted sources, to assure the views and recommendations are sound and valid.

Contents

Introduction	3
Background	3
Draft Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for predation by feral cats	3
Community cat rescuers bring ignored by governments	3
Commence a blitz of cat desexing programs	4
TOR (j) any other related matters	5
Embrace RSPCA Australia 2018 cat terms & Definitions	5
Significant concerns for the potential impact of the draft Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for predation by feral cats	5
Establish a NSW domestic cat committee & develop a cat management strategy /plan	6
Embrace & support community cat rescuers / carers, including vet practices	7
War on Cats - unethical approaches to encouraging violence towards all cats	9
NSW Legislation needs improvements & rapid exemptions to enable high intensity desexing programs & support with community cat rescuers	15
TOR (a) the impact of cats on threatened native animals in metropolitan and regional settings .	15
Questionable / shaky science spread globally	15
Evidence from relevant evidence-based research	17
Recommendation for evidence-based research in each LGA	18
TOR (b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers	18
Barriers for cat containment	18
Significant negative impacts of mandated cat containment on stray cats and community cat rescuers & carers	19
Lack of evidence that cat containment policies achieve results	20
Recommendation	20
TOR (c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions	20
Animal welfare Five Domains and Quality of Life	21
RSPCA Australia	21
APWF	21
Independent research	22
Jackson Galaxy	22
Recommendation	22
TOR (d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives	22
Council teams, Mayor and Councillor Approaches	23



A poor versus good examples of advice on stray / roaming cats	23
AIAM – a key stakeholder	25
Our NSW councils need to transform to proactive engagement	25
It is now widely acknowledged that One Welfare solutions achieve better results in out than punitive actions	
Recommendations	
TOR (e) implications for local councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment p	olicies . 27
Mandatory cat containment is very difficult to enforce	27
Additional activities and effort if mandatory cat containment is implemented	28
Devastating impact on Community Cat Rescuers when community cats are cruelly cull-	ed29
TOR (f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing progran	ıs29
Australian Pet Welfare Foundation Community Cat Programs for owned and semi owned	ed cats . 30
Banyule Victoria desexing program over several years	30
NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home with RSPCA, councils, vet clinics, and community cat	
Examples of Community Cat Rescuers who need support from their councils	
A very simple financial case for funding desexing for community cat rescuers	35
RSPCA SA TDAR	36
TNR/ TNVR/ RTF/ SNR	36
Recommendations	38
TOR (g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system	39
"As Is" research on council pounds, animal welfare organisations and rescue groups	39
Research Recommendations	42
Impacts to council pounds where mandatory cat containment was implemented	42
Assessing an animal's behaviour in a busy shelter is far from appropriate and will nee	
Recommendations	
TOR (h) the outcomes of similar policies on cat containment in other Australian states o territories	r
Lack of evidence that mandatory cat containment is effective where implemented in A	
Need for national and a NSW state domestic cat management plans/ strategies	
RSPCA SA and AWL SA Recommendations relevant for managing cat populations	
Recommendations	
TOR (i) options for reducing the feral cat population	
Related sections of this submission	
Review position of 2014 bill for TNR for feral cats given new data is available	
Culling feral cats has yet to be proven effective & there are worse impacts from other	
The use of 1080 poison needs to cease	
Conservation fencing areas and "training" zones are supported	
Gene technology for supressing feral cat breeding is supported	
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	



Introduction

Background

Please note, this submission commences with general concerns and recommendations, as these impact the inquiry Terms of Reference (TOR) sections (a) through (i) topics.

My career is in professional project and program management across a range of industries, having gained a Bachelor of Science with honours. For the last two decades I have been volunteering for animal welfare organisations, designated rehoming organisations and assisting community-based rescue groups for companion animals and more.

Draft Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for predation by feral cats

In relation to this NSW inquiry, I strongly object to the intentions of the draft Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for predation by feral cats for stray cats to be a subclass of the feral cat category, for which the implications have not been clearly explained and it may be implied that stray cats are to be treated exactly the same as feral cats. Stray cats are domestic semi owned or unowned cats, most likely recently abandoned due to a range of reasons such as post Covid return to work or travel, and exacerbated by the cost-of-living crisis, and rental and housing crisis. Stray cats are not feral cats, and a recently abandoned cat does not instantly become a feral cat, nor do their kittens. Different management strategies and plans should be developed separately for feral cats versus domestic cats.

In the draft TAP it appears the governments are looking to community members (cat haters) to trap and eradicate stray cats without the ability to monitor nor enforce these activities to ensure animal cruelty is not used in some form. This is strongly objected against. There is enough cruelty towards roaming pet cats, stray cats and community cat rescuers already.

Community cat rescuers bring ignored by governments

It is of great concern that community-based rescuers are not recognised by all levels of government and have not been recognised in the Terms of Reference topics, for their efforts and ability to carry out cat management activities for tens of thousands of abandoned stray cats across our nation.

While some government authorities appear to demonise not just stray and feral cats, they also tend to demonise the people in the communities who take care of these cats. Many of these cats are being desexed, health checked, fed, and where possible rehomed to new families by community cat rescuers.

The situations in urban environments are becoming worse every day with a very limited level of government assisting or addressing the issues in a proactive way. I see inaction at local, state and now the federal level, holding back in investing in proactive approaches, which contributes to the situations becoming worse... so that the killing of stray cats may commence?

There is an urgent and critical need for action and funding for issues with abandoned domestic cats related to different cultures in our society, that no level of government appears to be assisting with. Community cat rescuers are on the ground in such areas, and inundated with the abandoned or undesexed free-to-roam cats and kittens – these conditions are considered the worst and likened to a third world country in the Sydney metropolitan areas.

It is strongly recommend that the federal, state and all local council government authorities be willing to work with community-based carers and rescuers on all cat management issues, planning, and implementation of improvements.



Commence a blitz of cat desexing programs

This is the top priority of recommendations in this submission directly addressing significantly minimising cat populations.

It is strongly recommended that a "blitz", a rapid approach of concurrent desexing programs is immediately initiated to significantly minimise domestic cat populations. For too long there has been inaction and lack of funding, which has contributed to the cat crisis across NSW. It is feared that many councils were supporting the draft TAP approach to enable community members to take matters into their own hands, and trap and destroy roaming cats without any controls, could this be true? Instead of those cruel approaches which would put pet cats at risk too, the following actions are recommended:

- for an immediate rapid and intense response across NSW to be implemented in parallel methods desexing programs for owned, semi owned and unowned cats, which have already been proven:
 - APWF Community Cat Programs;
 - o RSPCA NSW supported programs across councils; and
 - o Council/Vet/Community Cat Rescuers collaborative efforts,
- that funded intense and high-volume desexing programs should be offered free for those on low incomes, carers and rescuers of semi owned cats (community cat rescuers), and areas of high intensity cat populations,
- that targeted desex and vaccinate programs are also implemented in areas with high cat impoundment rates i.e. 'hot spots'",
- that free desexing programs for semi owned and unowned cats be coordinated by council AMOs and community cat rescuers who have the existing closest face to face relationships with communities,
- to improve the training, obligations and processes for behaviour assessments in council pound facilities to stop euthanasing cats who have not had adequate time to decompress and are likely scared domestic cats rather than feral cats, to request assistance from approved rehoming organisations and community cat rescuers with assessments and rehoming,
- to improve and be transparent with the council policies and processes for the range of illnesses / health concerns and appropriately fund facilities and staff to care for cats who may then be available for adoption,
- accept the TNR and associated terms for use with desexing programs where community cat rescuers and carers will continue management of semi owned cats and unowned cats.



TOR (j) any other related matters

Embrace RSPCA Australia 2018 cat terms & Definitions

It is strongly recommended that the New South Wales (NSW) government should embrace the cat terms: feral and domestic classes, and the latter has subclasses owned, semi owned or unowned, that were published for the Threatened Species Commissioner in 2018 by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Australia. Stray cats are NOT feral cats.

The 2020 federal report Tackling the feral cat pandemic: a plan to save Australian wildlife² included three categories: feral cats, stray cats and domestic cats. It is also noted that this report included the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and RSPCA recommended definitions including "semi owned and unowned" instead of the "stray" cat term, and included that the "RSPCA's proposed definition was supported by a range of inquiry contributors".

The terms and definitions feral and domestic classes, and the latter has subclasses owned, semi owned or unowned, have been evolved for a number of years by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF), their research and evolution of cat terms and definitions is strongly supported.³

The RSPCA South Australia and AWL Cat Management Plan 2019⁴ includes the terms feral and domestic, with subclasses owned, semi owned and unowned. And the RSPCA SA is still encouraging "Separating feral from domestic cat management" in a recent email titled "Take Action in Animal Welfare!"

Significant concerns for the potential impact of the draft Threat Abatement Plan (TAP) for predation by feral cats

It is of great concern that the 2023 draft TAP⁵ appears to only include poisoning, shooting or trapping for destroying feral cats, and it appears this is proposed for stray cats, given there are no separate approaches for stray cats.

It is of great concern that the scope creep and significant change for domestic stray cats is not included in this document title nor the very first Summary section of the draft TAP, nor the Introduction section. The document is not transparent that the feral cat term in the draft TAP refers to both feral cats and the intended stray cat subclass as included in a note in the Definition section. The proposal for stray cats to be a subclass of feral cats is a significant change from the 2015 TAP⁶ and should have been explicitly stated.

It is of great concern that the draft TAP cat term definitions are not clearly mutually exclusive and therefore are confusing to distinguish one category of cats from another. For example, the draft TAP refers to a pet cat who may be owned, but roam outside the home and not be fed by their owner. In cases such as these, how is the distinction made as to whether a cat is a pet or stray or a feral cat? As all of these may roam and find their own food at times or more frequently.

 $^{{}^1 \,} https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Identifying-Best-Practice-Domestic-Cat-Management-in-Australia-RSPCA-Research-Report-May-2018.pdf$

Australian Pet Welfare Foundation Position Statement on Cat Definitions – Australian Pet Welfare Foundation https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Evidence-to-support-Position-Statement-on-Cat-Definitions.-amended.01.pdf

 $https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Former_Committees/Environment_and_Energy/Feral and domestic cats/Report$

 $^{^3}$ https://petwelfare.org.au/2023/07/17/australian-pet-welfare-foundation-position-statement-on-cat-definitions/

⁴ https://www.rspcasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RSPCA-AWL-Cat-Management-Plan-for-South-Australia.pdf

⁵ https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats

 $^{^6 \} https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/biodiversity/threatened/publications/tap/threat-abatement-plan-feral-cats$



The RSPCA Australia concerns with the draft TAP are fully supported, including "This means that thousands of domestic cats will be classed as feral, meaning at best it will add a greater burden to organisations that are seen as responsible for managing stray cats, and at worst, more cats will be killed — not to mention putting up an additional barrier to these cats being adopted or rehomed..."

"Vilifying cats and declaring 'war' on them shifts the focus away from what should be the key objective — to protect and conserve vulnerable native species — to instead promoting the killing of as many cats as possible."

The APWF concerns are fully supported, including the drat TAP "has started off on the wrong foot by classing stray cats as feral cats. These populations are very different and the solutions are very different... Feral pest species are to be destroyed (not rescued and rehomed). Throughout the draft TAP, wherever the feral cat term is used, the same responses and actions would then appear to apply to stray cats."⁸

The RSPCA SA and AWL Cat Management Plan 2019⁹ includes concerns on the public trapping and destroying cats, which is implied by "concerned citizens" (as Invasive Species term people) being enabled with traps in the draft TAP:

"...council Animal Management Officers need to be provided with training, equipment & facilities for the correct care and handling of cats. New cat management legislation and council by-laws are of no value if they are not policed and enforced, and councils must be resourced to undertake that function. Trained Animal Cat Management Officers must also be responsible for any use of traps in management programmes. It is not acceptable on animal welfare grounds for traps to be provided to members of the public."

It is strongly recommended that the stray cat term and definition is <u>not</u> made a subclass of feral cats.

Establish a NSW domestic cat committee & develop a cat management strategy /plan

It is strongly recommended the NSW government establishes a domestic cat committee and develop a cat management strategy¹⁰ with domestic cat expert stakeholders, including

- the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) both Australia and NSW representatives,
- the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF),
- Australian Veterinary Association (AVA),
- Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM), and
- approved rehoming organisations and community cat rescuers.

It is recommended that a NSW cat management strategy / plan includes

- separate management strategies for each of the cat sub-classes as though "the populations overlap to varying extents, each requires a distinct management strategy"¹¹, and
- proven targeted desexing programs e.g. APWF Community Cat Programs¹², NSW
 Keeping Cats Safe at Home (refer AIAM copy of KCSH presentation noting pages 12-14

Page 6 of 56

⁷ https://www.rspca.org.au/latest-news/media-centre/feral-cat-plan-targets-the-wrong-cats/

⁸ https://petwelfare.org.au/response-to-draft-tap/

 $^{^9\} https://www.rspcasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RSPCA-AWL-Cat-Management-Plan-for-South-Australia.pdf$

¹⁰ https://engage.vic.gov.au/cat-management-strategy

https://www.ava.com.au/policy-advocacy/policies/companion-animals-management-and-welfare/management-of-cats-in-australia/

¹² https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-news-2/



for targeted desexing including semi owned cats and semi owners (community cat rescuers and carers)¹³, and Banyule council funded desexing programs offered free for rapid results¹⁴.

It is strongly recommended that domestic cat management is assigned to an ethical department, that an independent office for animal welfare is established, and that domestic cat management is managed and published independently of feral cat management.

Embrace & support community cat rescuers / carers, including vet practices

Please refer to section TOR (g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system, subsection "As Is" research page 39 of this submission for researched information gathered on "rescue groups" that was primarily derived from the PetRescue system. Many other individuals and groups operate just on social media.

Please also refer to section TOR (d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives, subsection Examples of Community Cat Rescuers who need support from their councils page 31 of this submission, for information on just a small selection of community based rescuers who are not approved rehoming organisations.

It is strongly recommended that community cat rescuers / carers across the state of NSW be included for their scope of abandoned (stray) cats saved, desexed and rehomed for estimating resources and funding under the NSW state government and local councils.

It is strongly recommended that community cat rescuers are recognised as:

- 1) their collective efforts save thousands of cats each year across NSW;
- 2) they complement and relieve the council pound systems, and should receive government funding support e.g. for desexing and vaccinations; and
- 3) any future pound assessments for capacity and funding and the management of cat populations must take into account the numbers of cats and kittens for which these volunteers and Good Samaritans are unfairly burdened, and provide care, desexing and rehoming solutions.

The following diagram has been provided to the Office of Local Government a number of times, and to the Minister of Local Government.

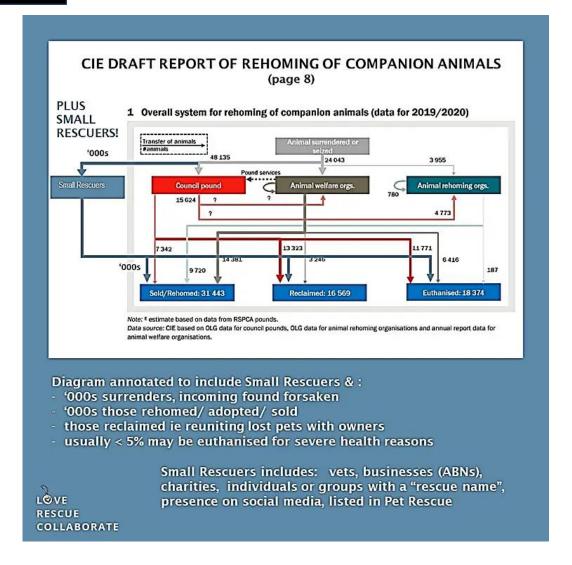
Page 7 of 56

November 2024 V1

¹³ AIAM Presentations from Panel Members, RSPCA NSW The Keeping Cats Safe at Home experience https://aiam.org.au/page-18158

¹⁴ Banyule Council desexing program https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615





These rescues may be vet practices, and/or registered charities (with Australian Charities and Notfor-profits Commission) and registered businesses (with Australian Business Numbers under the Australian Taxation Office). Many are small-home based volunteers. These rescuers take in animals from "the streets", or as surrenders from the public.

The AVA raised the need for "formal provisions for veterinary practices reimbursement when receiving stray cats" plus more in their AVA Rehoming Review submissions.¹⁵

Recently a number of Green Cross vets in the Sydney metropolitan area have been offering reduced desexing services to community cat rescuers.¹⁶

It is strongly recommended that community cat rescuers are offered support for free desexing and vaccinations through initiatives such as:

- a) the NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home under RSPCA NSW for Weddin, Campbelltown, Parramatta and Hornsby councils' initiatives; and
- b) with grants for councils and vets who have historically and directly rescued abandoned animals and may then help rescuers with reduced vet charges.

Page 8 of 56 November 2024 V1

¹⁵ www.ava.com.au/member-updates/nsw/ava-submission-to-nsw-rehoming-practices-review/

https://www.greencrossvets.com.au/



It is strongly recommended that the federal, state and all local council government authorities be willing to work with community-based carers and rescuers on all cat management issues, planning, and implementation of improvements.

War on Cats - unethical approaches to encouraging violence towards all cats

Some abandoned cats unfortunately are in hostile environments where cat haters abuse or harm roaming cats. These cats may go through a form of primary trauma and then suffer post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), similar to people in war zones. These cats may still be under the care of individuals or groups, the latter known as community-based cat rescuers or carers.

It is recommended that as part of the NSW government and local council engagement responsibilities that the environment of social media is addressed. Business organisations involved in saving our wildlife need to be taken to task for ethical standards and social licencing expectations and obligations in not spreading cat hate across all cats.

Community cat haters on social media and physical on the ground

It is of great concern that due to the "loose" cat terms and definitions in each state/ territory, cat haters will label any roaming cat as a feral cat and then harm or kill these cats. We see this often in threats or boast of past "dirty deeds" or other comments on social media, and community cat rescuers themselves experience abuse from community members on social media and in the streets.

There is evidence of many cat hater statements on social media including the following, which indicates the intentions for all cats to be attacked and potentially killed with inhumane acts of cruelty.

It appears many of these comments are fuelled with the "War on Cats" as initiated under the LNP, such comments originally appearing on the **Threatened Species Commissioner's** Facebook social media, and not being moderated or removed.

"Any cat out of it's yard- feral!" "Dead right"

"Any cat outside is a feral killing machine and should be dealt with accordingly"

"I feed cats to my Lace Monitors. They come in my yard. They are fair game" "got a mate who does the same"

"My scrub pythons dont mind a cat hear (sic) and there you just got to remember to take the bell of them first"

"If I seen a cat tussling with a snake I would stomp the cats head in and crack its skull with my boots f*ckem all get rid of them!"

"They should be used i n crayfish pots"

"A complete cat kill is the only answer"

"A good cat is a dead cat"

"Any cat outside not on a lead should be culled"

"Used to be a cat problem... Ran out of cats..."

"Feral cat definition 'cat is off the veranda"

Re the poisoned baits: "Can you lay these baits in urban areas for #domesticferals as well?"

Invasive Species social media posts appear to attract cat haters

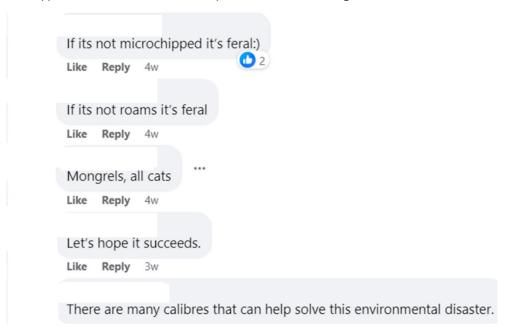


This is an example from 2023. This occurs regularly on the Invasive Species social media.

This photo, is it of the cat eating an already dead wallaby/roo rather than the cat killed the animal. It still attracted cat hater comments.



The types of comments for that post include blurring of feral cats and domestic cats:



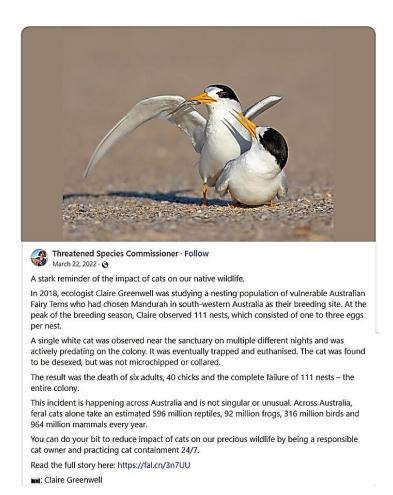
Mandurah Tern Study that was often used by Invasive Species with misleading interpretations

The Mandurah Fairy Tern study was often quoted for the potential impact of cats on wildlife and the appropriateness of TNR approaches, neither of which were part of the original research study.

The study titled Cat Gets Its Tern: A Case Study of Predation on a Threatened Coastal Seabird [https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/9/7/445] has been often cited for the impacts of cats on wildlife and for a view that TNR is not effective by Invasive Species.

However, the actual underlying research includes: the research did not involve properly monitoring cats and certainly it did not involve assessing any Trap Neuter Return (TNR) activity; there were two cats sighted not just one, and the grey cat did not hunt; the nesting sites failed even the sites where cats did not visit; and a number of other factors which impacted the nesting sites mainly to do with human activity. These factors are never mentioned by Invasive Species posts nor representations.

This social media post attracted cat haters and their comments.

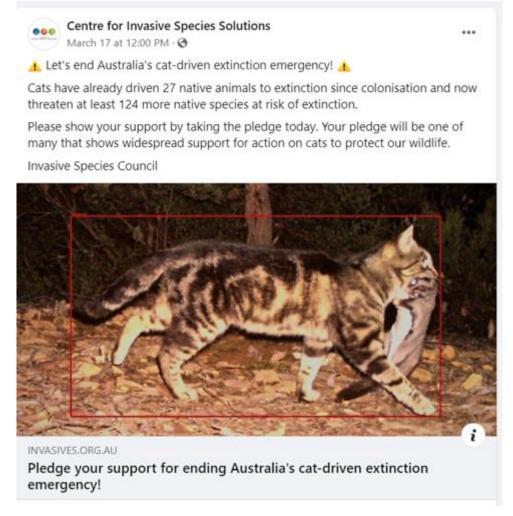


Invasive Species continued War on Cats encourages cat haters

Another example of Invasive Species who do not moderate cat hater comments on their posts, which uses emotions to ramp up their supporters for both donations and signatures to petitions. This tactic is not considered ethical and certainly not in line with social licensing expectations.

The following post, and posts like it have been circulating for months.





This post includes the following comments from cat haters which include physical cruelty and often against all cats. These are not moderated, i.e. IS admin do not explain that the item is about feral cats and not domestic cats, and neither are any threats or worse of violence about cruelty addressed.

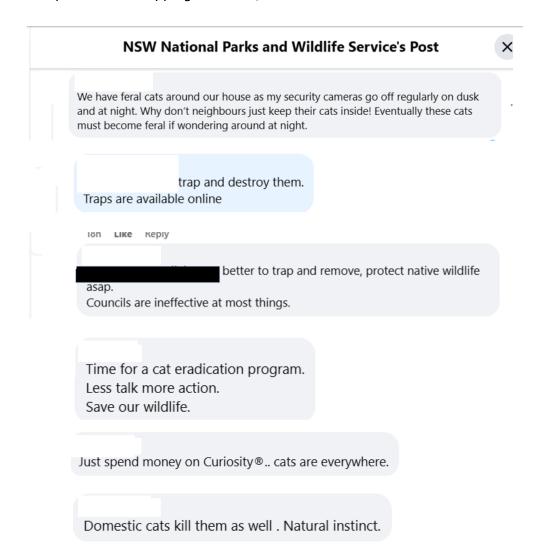






NSW National Parks and Wildlife

The post was on trapping feral cats, the comments on domestic cats were not moderated.





From the ABC Rural Facebook page

This page often has cat hater comments of the following type. Never moderated.

"Cats are vermin but make excellent crab pot bait"

"Good croc bait too"

"Neighbors cats make good hats"

"I have grown up on farms since I was young and understand the need to cull wild animals and don't have a problem with it. But when our neighbour hung our domestic cat on the fence to celebrate his catch... that was a whole different feeling! She had a cat collar on too!"

Social media examples from other social pages such as community or pet pages

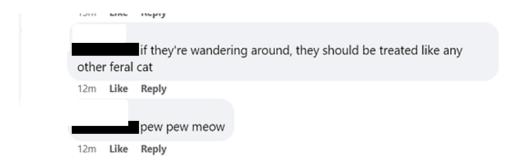
This is just a small selection of the type of comments seen often on social media. Again, the cat haters are busy against all cats, not just feral cats and blurring the lines.

It is not uncommon to see posts without many details which appear to be raised just to have cat hater comments added, given that this is repeated in a number of local community pages and the same comments raised by the same people it appears organised and premeditated.

This example post on a community page was understood to be posted to taunt cat owners. It was removed by the page admins but over 70 comments were posted, and a number by cat haters.



These comments are not moderated by administrators.





Unfortunately these cats that are unknown and unowned, are therefor feral cats. These need to be euthanised immediately to protect our natural wild life. As harsh as it sounds, I doubt anyone can defend its welfare legitimately.

Follow

Do u want to borrow my dogs gigi rips cats to shreds n she is free to borrow. Just quietly your problem would be solved although sometimes she leaves a mess a same same.

Sorry (not sorry)..... That cat would've gone into a sealed plastic bag.

I have a crossbow u can use

NSW Legislation needs improvements & rapid exemptions to enable high intensity desexing programs & support with community cat rescuers

It is strongly recommended that both the NSW Companion Animal Act¹⁷ and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act¹⁸ require improvements to ensure desexing programs and the efforts of community cat rescuers can proceed without impediments or constraints, e.g. threats of abandoning cats, biodiversity risks not being adequately assessed to specific areas, and CAA clause 32 where a cat may be seized for harming any single animal (other than vermin) which includes pest animals, other introduced animals or native animals where the population is not at risk.

Clause 32 provides a very questionable right to seize a cat when the situation may not be fair nor reasonable, for example a cat attacking an introduced pigeon who are considered near vermin by many people.

Impacts of having unclear, confusing and not mutually exclusive cat terms and definitions being misinterpreted by community cat haters are impacting councils' interpretations, and interpretations by the public / community members.

In the worst cases, cat haters are taking advantage of these unclear interpretations and providing advice on social media to others to trap and harm / kill roaming cats with little physical evidence to justify these actions.

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

Questionable / shaky science spread globally

The widely used and often quoted generalised extreme numbers of wildlife impacts should be considered misinformation as based on inappropriate studies with flawed numbers and wildlife

Page 15 of 56 November 2024 V1

¹⁷ https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1998-087

¹⁸ https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1979-200



populations effects implied rather than investigated. 19

"...there is no scientific evidence that domestic cats... have any viability or conservation impacts at a population level on native wildlife. Australian population studies have not found a measurable effect"²⁰

In relation to the statement in the draft TAP that "Mammals tend to be the dominant prey item when available", this statement fails to clarify that for domestic urban cats it is rats and mice that are more preferred over other animals/mammals.

It is of concern that the statement that cats occur across 99.9% of Australia is often and widely published. Yet this percentage has not been scientifically proven based on evidence with measurements across the nation, having starting with an assumption of 100%.

It is noted that the draft TAP Background document²¹ includes an explanation that feral cats occur in 99.9% of Australia was calculated by subtracting the percentage of the limited known areas of cat free locations from 100% for the whole nation. That feral cats are prevalent is agreed, however, it is highly questionable without evidence-based proof, so why is this misinformation spread far and widely?

"Based on the total areas of enclosures and the maximum number of islands without cats, the total extent of areas in Australia without feral cats is less than 8681 km2, meaning that feral cats occur in 99.9% of Australia"

It is noted that this estimated figure is most likely provided or at least published by the Threatened Species Recovery Hub, and they choose to present in in their material labelled "Science" and "fact". They also incorrectly include "the simplest categorisation is 'pet cat' for cats that live in a household and are owned and cared for by people and 'feral cat' for everything else. Feral cats can live in our towns and cities as well as in remote areas of the Australian bush." ²²

It is of great concern that the draft TAP includes "Cats have caused profound species loss in Australia" when there is only one situation on Macquarie Island where cats were able to be identified as the cause of intinction of one species. In other publications it is noted that the impacts of cats is a contributing factor, however, the contributing factor of cats appears to be often misquoted by many across the internet and social media. Further, with cat impacts to wildlife, it is generally not acknowledged the fact from the Department of Environment, that humans have caused the extinction of 62 species since colonisation mainly through land clearing and habitat loss:

"Habitat loss and clearing has caused the extinction of 62 Australian terrestrial species since European colonisation... The state of the environment in Australia is deteriorating as a result of cumulative and increasing pressures from climate change, habitat loss, invasive species, pollution and resource extraction. The massive scale of impacts, for example from the 2019-20 bushfires that burnt more than 8 million hectares of native vegetation, may leave ecosystems susceptible to collapse. We can expect many ecosystems to undergo sudden, unpredictable and often irreversible transitions to new states leading to biodiversity decline, erosion, loss of soil fertility and an increase in greenhouse gas emissions." ²³

Habitat loss is across rural and urban areas, the first mainly through agriculture and mining activities, and the latter for "concrete jungles" for housing and major infrastructure.

Page 16 of 56

 $^{^{19}\} https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/11/Rand-Myth-cats-Wildlife-2023.pdf$

https://petwelfare.org.au/2023/07/10/position-statement-on-domestic-cats-and-australian-native-wildlife-populations/

²¹ https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats

 $^{^{22}\} https://www.nespthreatenedspecies.edu.au/media/eeufmpqx/112-the-impact-of-cats-in-australia-findings-factsheetweb.pdf$

²³ https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/6.%20DCCEEW-SOE_factsheet_Habitat%20and%20Natural%20Capital.pdf



Evidence from relevant evidence-based research

There are many researched findings that are evidence-based that have been ignored when these show that the impact of cats, especially domestic cats in urban areas is not as drastic nor significant as claimed. Just a small number of examples of other research which appears not to be acknowledged are included for consideration.

A recent news item from Victorian emergency wildlife services included "While vehicles are the leading cause of animal injuries"... climate change was "the real long-term risk for our wildlife" "They are at risk from habitat loss, habitat fragmentation, urbanisaton and the extreme weather events we're having as a result of climate change" ²⁴

"This research adds to a growing body of work from northern Australia that indicates that across most of these landscapes, managing herbivores and fire rather than culling cats, is likely a more effective way of protecting small mammals." ²⁵

Maggie Lilith, Michael Calver, Mark Garkaklis "It appears that pet cats are not the major influence on the species diversity or abundance of small and medium-sized mammals at these sites and that vegetation characteristics may be more important." ²⁶

Jacky Grayson, Michael Calver, Alan Lymbery "While cat predation might be significant adjacent to remnant bushland or other areas of conservation significance, blaming cats for bird conservation issues in long-established suburbs may be a scapegoat for high residential densities, inappropriate landscaping at a range of scales or poor conservation of remnant bushland." ²⁷

The Domestic cat stomach content analysis study (Brisbane, Qld) includes that the stomach contents analysis provided evidence of introduced black rats. "The preliminary findings from a recent UQ study show that pet cats overwhelmingly catch mice followed by rats and small lizards, and only infrequently native birds, which are common species such as Noisy Mynahs (Franklin & Rand unpublished data). These findings are consistent with data from many studies which report the main component of feral cats' diet consists of mice, rats and rabbits (Dickman 2009). ²⁸

An example from New Zealand urban areas includes "Rodents were the main prey brought in by domestic cats in the urban/forest fringe habitat, whereas invertebrates were the main prey in the fully urban habitat."²⁹

It is noted that science involving Woinarski included findings: "Small rodents were the dominant prey category, followed by birds and soricomorphs [shrews, moles etc]. Anthropogenic [originating in human activity] food was found to be an important part of urban cats' diet, but its significance decreased with a decrease in urbanisation level. Both predation rate and prey diversity were highest in rural areas."³⁰

Sarah J. Maclagan, Terry Coates, Euan G. Ritchie "...bandicoot abundance was higher at novel than remnant sites, with the highest abundance at the novel site with the most urbanised surroundings ...The majority of bandicoots at novel sites were resident, and breeding activity, recruitment of first-year adults, and survival of mature adults were observed at all novel sites.

²⁴ "Australian animals under record threat from climate, cars, illegal pet-keeping" https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-01-28/australian-wildlife-threatened-illegal-pets-record-harm/103384664

https://www.katherinetimes.com.au/story/6857221/ferals-cats-not-the-menace-to-top-ends-native-mammals-as-once-thought/? With

https://www.publish.csiro.au/PC/PC100162

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/43980504_A_Species_richness_and_community_composition_of_passerine_bir_ds_in_suburban_Perth_is_predation_by_pet_cats_the_most_important_factor

²⁸ https://petwelfare.org.au/2017/07/06/managing-cats-humanely-scientifically-reduce-cat-numbers-wildlife-predation-costs ²⁹ https://zslpublications.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1017/S095283690200328X

³⁰ https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11252-020-01017-y



Our results demonstrate the potential significance of novel habitats for conserving threatened species within heavily-modified landscapes, and encourage us not to judge the quality of habitats on their novelty alone."³¹

Other related research on the impact of cats on wildlife include the following:

Barratt DG (1998) Predation by house cats, Felis catus (L.), in Canberra, Australia. II. Factors affecting the amount of prey caught and estimates of the impact on wildlife, Wildlife Research, 1998, 25, 475-487.

Lazenby B.T., Mooney N.J. and Dickman C.R. (2015) "Effects of low-level culling of feral cats in open populations: a case study from the forests of southern Tasmania", Wildlife Research, 41(5), 407.

Leis L (2021) What effect does diet have on body condition of unowned cats in the Southern Downs Region, Queensland? A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Science (Honours) Submitted: November 2021

Lilith M, Calver M, Styles I, Garkaklis M (2006) Protecting wildlife from predation by owned domestic cats: Application of a precautionary approach to the acceptability of proposed cat regulations Austral Ecology 31 (2), 176-189.

Matthews A., Dickman C.R. and Major R.E. (1999) "The influence of fragment size and edge on nest predation in urban bushland", Ecography, 22(4), 349-356.

Miller, P.S., Boone, J.D., Briggs, J.R., Lawler, D.F., Levy, J.K., Nutter, F.B., Slater, M. and Zawistowski, S. (2014) "Simulating free-roaming cat population management options in open demographic environments", PLoS ONE, 9, e113553.

Møller, A., Erritzøe, J. Predation against birds with low immunocompetence. Oecologia 122, 500-504 (2000).

Collectively these findings indicate different strategies and priorities should be established for domestic urban cats versus feral cats and domestic cats in regional or non-urban areas.

Recommendation for evidence-based research in each LGA

It is strongly recommended that evidence-based research is needed to justify mandated cat containment i.e. that it can achieve objectives for cats and wildlife and if introduced, then effective monitoring provides evidence that the potential negative impacts are eliminated or mitigated.³²

TOR (b) the effectiveness of cat containment policies including potential barriers

Barriers for cat containment

Stray cats (semi owned and unowned cats) are likely the most common roaming cat and also found to have been abandoned in the most recent 12 months. However, mandated containment usually

Page 18 of 56 November 2024 V1

³¹ https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0006320717321262e

https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf



cannot be achieved, and the causes and problems with abandoned cats are not addressed, which means the "supply chain" of new abandoned cats continues.

Mandated containment with punitive enforcement involving and high intensity euthanasia gives a false sense of actions for roaming stray cats, and high intensity euthanasia is not an effective response nor cost effective.

There are a number of physical and financial reasons that for many cat owners they are unable to contain their cats including:

- housing limitations on leased properties by landlords, body corporate in strata managed apartments, and complaints from neighbours,
- homes do not have air conditioning, nor are owners able to afford air con operating throughout the very long and more humid summers (increasing due to climate change),
- not being able to afford outdoor cat enclosures,
- the lack of acceptance of cat enclosures by neighbours putting owned cats at risk in their own backyards,
- concerns about the welfare of cats as not all accept being in small enclosures.

"Even for cats with an owner, containment is sometimes not achievable due to factors such as housing limitations (e.g., rental properties), lack of financial resources and concerns about the welfare of confined cats.

Mandatory cat containment actively prevents resolution of the longstanding free-roaming stray cat issue because it creates a major barrier to cat semi-owners adopting the stray cat they are feeding."33

Mandated cat containment will definitely put cat owners in low socio-economic circumstances at a disadvantage and will likely lead to more cats being dumped / abandoned.

APWF re mandated cat containment:

"Criminalises cat ownership for low-income households and people with 'door-dasher' cats. Mandated 24/7 cat containment ignores social justice of legislation and the inability of low-income households and those with difficult to contain door-dasher cats to comply. Even an expensive containment enclosure does not prevent door-dasher cats from escaping. "

"Increases cat relinquishment and abandonment due to the imposition of an added responsibility and potential penalty to cat ownership (RSPCA SA 2022a)."³⁴

Significant negative impacts of mandated cat containment on stray cats and community cat rescuers & carers

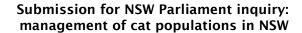
Many community cat rescuers and carers have experienced being harassed or physically being pushed/ hurt by cat haters in their communities. Anecdotally, another incident was shared in the last week of a well-known cat rescuer being stalked and harassed by a community member including tail gating her car for a distance.

Further, legislating mandated cat containment becomes a barrier to those assisting to rehome stray cats: the abandoned domestic cats who are semi owned or unowned. Under mandated cat containment rules it will be interpreted by cat haters in the community that all roaming cats are "illegal", which may also mean the community members and specifically community cat rescuers are

Page 19 of 56 November 2024 V1

³³ https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Inquiry-into-pounds-in-NSW-APWF-submission-final.pdf

³⁴ https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/





also seen to be "illegally" assisting. This can halt all efforts to save, desex and rehome/ adopt abandoned cats.

Lack of evidence that cat containment policies achieve results

The views, research and findings of the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation are supported that mandatory cat containment in forms of curfews, 24/7 or banning cats from selected suburbs or Local Government Areas (LGAs) is not effective, nor will achieve value for money in terms of outcomes for the costs. The APWF findings are based on review of a number of Australian councils which indicates complaints and costs rise under mandatory cat containment, and research from Australia and other countries.

The findings from a number of Australia councils which show it does not achieve aims and is not cost effective / value for money and there are alternatives such as fully funded desexing programs which do achieve positive results.³⁵

Studies on information from Hobson Bay, Hume, Casey and Yarra Ranges councils has been assessed. It is also recognised that mandated containment also contributes to risks for increased cruelty to cats for stray and pet cats. "...high level culling is cost prohibitive for local governments and unacceptable to the majority of the community (Rand 2019) and there are no published reports of high-level culling at the suburb or city level being successful (Boone 2019)."

Mandated containment: "Increases risks of cruelty towards cats, increasing animal pain and suffering." ³⁶

A number of councils in ACT, WA, SA, Vic, Qld have mandated cat containment, but where is the evidence of measured impacts and improvements on wildlife?

Halls Gap has totally banned cats for 30 years, but they have no measurements and it has not stopped feral cats impacting wildlife "...in the 30 years since the Halls Gap cat ban was introduced, there has yet to be any sort of survey conducted by local or state government bodies to determine whether or not the ban has actually been a success"

"The ban on domestic cats has done little to dissuade feral cats from hunting"³⁷

It appears the number of cats being abandoned is not decreasing, and there still remains a need for community cat rescuers who take on the burden of abandoned cats.

Recommendation

Due to the number of barriers for cats and their owners, and the significant negative impacts to cats and community cat rescuers and carers, it is recommended that promoting cat containment should be "ramped up", however mandatory containment should not be implemented.

TOR (c) welfare outcomes for cats under contained conditions

Similar to council pounds and animal welfare shelters, contained housing for owned cats is often limited by financial budgets, resources, space / capacity of properties, and legal obligations for owned or leased properties in urban or other zoned areas. **The issue and needs are not just about**

Page 20 of 56 November 2024 V1

³⁶ https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/

³⁷ https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-15/mayor-says-halls-gap-cat-ban-success-native-wildlife/102337372



the physical containment, it is critical that cats who are confined will still have a stimulating and enriched environment.

While a number of animal welfare organisations (e.g. RSPCA), experts (AVA, APWF, Jackson Galaxy) and cat rescue groups provide advice on keeping a cat happy and healthy being contained, only a proportion of cat owners can achieve these steps, and some cats, especially cats who have been free roaming will not instantly take to being contained.

Animal welfare Five Domains and Quality of Life

Cats who do not have quality of life, are likely to have health issues mentally, emotionally and physically. Both the five (or six) domains and quality of life terms have been evolving for many years for shelters, zoos, sanctuaries etc. However, not many people apply these to their own pets at home.

The Five or 5 Domains include: Nutrition, Environment, Health, Behaviour, and Mental state.

"The Five Domains explores the mental state of an animal in detail and acknowledges that for every physical aspect that is affected, there may be an accompanying emotion or subjective experience that may also affect welfare. This is useful in terms of reinforcing the message that mental experiences are equally important as physical vitality for animals to thrive."38

Quality of Life for animal welfare is a complex subject and related to the Five Freedoms (FF), and Five Domains (FD)³⁹. However, it has been considered for companion animals for health care "Quality of life (QoL) assessment in companion animals is an essential aspect of veterinary medicine that helps guide treatment decisions and ensures optimal animal welfare. Veterinarians and pet owners can use disease-specific or generic QoL assessment tools to evaluate an individual animal's QoL" ⁴⁰

RSPCA Australia

The RSPCA Australia includes that some cats will not cope with containment and that mandatory containment may increase negative animal welfare impacts. "There are some circumstances under which a cat's physical and mental needs will not be successfully met in containment due to a range of factors including the presence of other animals, space available, human factors, and ability to modify the property. There are also some cats who are unable to cope with containment...

Mandatory 24/7 containment may increase the potential for negative impacts on animal welfare and the community, compared to voluntary implementation of 24/7 containment on an individual basis, by imposing it on people and cats who are not suited or capable of implementing it appropriately."

APWF

APWF includes mandatory containment negatively impacts "the welfare, quality of life, and health of some contained cats which can include obesity, immobility, lower urinary tract disease and behaviour problems increasing risk of relinquishment or abandonment (RSPCA Australia 2018, Palmer & Sandoe 2014)"

³⁸ https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-are-the-five-domains-of-animal-welfare/

³⁹ https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC4929415/

⁴⁰ https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC8833627/

⁴¹ https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf



"Negatively impacts the welfare, quality of life, and health of some contained cats which can include obesity, immobility, lower urinary tract disease and behaviour problems increasing risk of relinquishment or abandonment (RSPCA Australia 2018, Palmer & Sandoe 2014).™²

Independent research

Research exists which shows concerns for the materials in houses and furniture, this is similar to concerns for humans' health.

"...there is growing evidence of environmental contamination from home furnishings and dust affecting cat health... Keeping cats indoors can cause frustration and unwanted behavioral challenges leading to stress and compromised health, especially in multi-cat homes" 43

Jackson Galaxy

Jackson Galaxy, a world-wide respected cat behaviourist, acknowledges that cats who do not have adequate stimulation and enrichment within homes and house, and even in cat enclosures built into small enclosed gardens may show symptoms of behavioural issues - the cats just aren't happy!

"You want to create spaces that really satisfy your cat's primal instinct and challenge them the way being outdoors does... chances are you need to create additional spaces for them to do this... If your cat is showing signs of aggression or behavioral issue, it might be because one (or several) of their primal needs aren't being met."44

Recommendation

It is strongly recommended that these welfare concerns are taken into consideration and mandatory cat containment implementations include exemptions where it is more than difficult for cats and/or their owners to easily achieve containment.

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

Education and obligations for responsible pet ownership on webpages, brochures, and social media is fairly static and low on engagement levels. This may be due to the predominant "serious" nature preferred by many government and animal welfare organisations. Jackson Galaxy has identified that the use of humour and charm (including realistic love for cats) draws people to his advice and his guidance.

It appears our state government and local councils have a punitive and minimalistic approach to animal welfare, including companion animals / pets of all kinds. When a council can approve paying \$400k for a single adult palm tree for landscaping in one area where \$millions are spent, it is questionable why it is so difficult to prioritise to spend \$100k/year on funding free and subsidies desexing and vaccinations, free registration to help reduce the populations of both cats and dogs.

Page 22 of 56 November 2024 V1

⁴² https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/

⁴³ https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC7829302/

⁴⁴ https://www.jacksongalaxy.com/blogs/news/what-is-catification



Council teams, Mayor and Councillor Approaches

It appears that council teams avoid residents with face-to-face engagement on animal welfare issues for dogs and cats in their Local Government Areas (LGAs).

Are Mayors and Councillors more concerned about losing voters over following animal welfare standards for best practices?

It appears some Councillors and council teams are supporting the Invasive Species Council with their punitive approaches to eradicate all stray cats, but without proper consultation with communities? Refer the Background document for the draft TAP⁴⁵

"A recent survey of local governments canvassed their views on cat management practices, barriers, and needs, and made a number of recommendations for improving pet cat management in ways that would reduce the predation burden of pets on native animals, improve welfare outcomes for cats, and reduce the risk of pathogen transmission (Nou et al. 2021). They included:

- 1) Strong, enabling legislation to mandate responsible pet cat management set at the state/territory level, that is harmonised across jurisdictions. The legislative frameworks should include household limits to the number of pet cats; mandatory registration, identification, desexing and containment to the owner's property (or equivalent control); and provisions to enable local governments to designate some residential areas as mandatory cat prohibition zones.
- 2) The legislative reform and its local implementation to be accompanied by community awareness and education programs.
- 3) Coordinated incentive programs to encourage uptake of responsible pet cat ownership.
- 4) Enhanced monitoring, collating and reporting of activity information, including key data on registrations, desexing statistics, identification details, impoundments, **and numbers of feral cats killed**.
- 5) Enhanced monitoring of outcomes, especially the number of free-roaming cats and the consequences for local wildlife."

A poor versus good examples of advice on stray / roaming cats

Examples that are considered good advice on stray cats has been provided by:

- the Cat Protect Society NSW⁴⁶ which includes information on if the cat is friendly or not, checking if the cat is owned, and cat friendly deterrents.
- RSPCA NSW⁴⁷ which includes "Only after you have tried all of the above strategies and if you
 cannot keep them or find them another home should you consider surrendering the cat to a
 shelter or rescue group with a good rehoming record"

The Canterbury Bankstown brochure for residents on Roaming cats is considered an example of poor advice. Unfortunately, this is not available online, images follow. There is some information that is questionable or outright poor in regard to animal welfare for cats, including:

• the suggestion to adopt a dog - just to scare off roaming cats, rather than actually wanting a cat

⁴⁵ https://consult.dcceew.gov.au/draft-updated-threat-abatement-plan-for-predation-by-feral-cats

⁴⁶ https://catprotection.org.au/cat-care-factsheets/factsheet-stray-cats/

⁴⁷ https://www.rspcansw.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/DL_brochure_if-you-find-a-cat_WEB.pdf



- refraining from feeding and removing food APWF offers findings that feeding stray cats will keep the cats healthy and reduce risks to wildlife
- and in that same sentence referring to "stray and feral cats" which blurs lines considering this is a dense LGA with few wildlife and it is doubtful there are feral cats, who certainly would not be in areas of human residences.
- in the last section titled "Spread the Word" again the confusion with feral cats who are mentioned three times, including in relation to yards and neighbours.

Both electronic and hard copy advice from councils need to be a much higher quality without misleading information.

ROAMING

Under the NSW Government's Companion Animals Act, cats are considered to have no boundaries and are free to roam outside of places prohibited under the Act. While the Act allows cats to roam freely, the City of Canterbury Bankstown wishes to remind residents the importance of being responsible for their pet.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (Section 11) states a person cannot abandon an animal and, if a pet owner who can no longer care for it, must surrender the pet to an appropriate pound or shelter.

Under the Companion Animals Act (Section 8 and 9), all cats are required to be microchipped by 12 weeks of age, or prior to sale, and be lifetime registered at six months of age.

All cat owners are legally required to microchip and register their cat and put a collar with a tag on it. Council also encourages owners to put a bell on its collar, desex it and keep it inside at night.

Our advice

Currently there are no specific laws relating to stray and feral cats in urban areas, other than a set number of provisions of the Companion Animals Act that Council enforces. Please also note that the City of Canterbury Bankstown DOES NOT trap or cull stray and feral cats.

The Companion Animals Act establishes the circumstances under which cats may be seized, they are:

- Where a cat is in a public place prohibited under, such as Food preparation and consumption areas, or wildlife protection areas (Section 30); or
- · Where it is necessary for the protection of any person or animal (Section 32).

What do to with stray or feral cats?

Remove food: The most important thing is to refrain from feeding stray and feral cats. Cats will stay in any area where food is plentiful. Avoid feeding your own pets outdoors and cover rubbish securely to keep from giving unwelcome cats an easy meal. Do not add any meat scraps to a compost pile. Keep grills clean to avoid enticing smells and minimise access to spaces where cats can breed.

- Reduce shelter: All wild animals need a place to sleep and to raise their young. Board up holes in old sheds or garages, under decks or porches, and areas such as woodpiles or window wells to avoid providing shelter to cats.
- Make life 'uncomfortable': Cats are well known for their love of relaxation, and making a yard uncomfortable can discourage stray and feral visitors. Fill flower beds and areas where cats lounge with sharp pebbles, eggshell shards or a layer of chicken wire, so the ground will be uncomfortable.
 - Repellents: Cats have very keen senses of small and taste, and commercial repellents are available to discourage unwanted cats. Natural repellents to sprinkle on flowerbeds or gardens include: moth
- balls; ammonia soaked rags; ground mustard; cayenne pepper; and citrus-based sprays.
 - The 'scare tactic': Old-fashioned 'scare tactics' can discourage cats from visiting a yard regularly. Ultrasonic sirens, motion-activated sprinklers and motion-activated lights can be useful. If cats are
- jumping on a fence, a sensitive bell or a can of beans/marbles that will fall when the cats jump can be effective to scare them.
 - Adopt a dog: If you are financially able and have time to care for a pet, perhaps you could welcome a dog to the household. Dogs can be adopted from
- Canterbury-Bankstown Animal Shelter. For details, call 0437 637 849 or visit cb.city/animalshelter
 - Spread the word: A stray and feral cat's territory extends well beyond a single yard. Talk to neighbours
- about the problems with stray and feral cats and encourage them to take similar steps to discourage unwelcome cats. Neighbourhoods that work together generally have fewer problems with feral cats.

For more information, call Council on 9707 9000 or visit cb.city/problempets







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AIAM - a key stakeholder

Considering that council teams and AMOs and other council staff will need to progress to a proactive role than punitive, the Australian Institute of Animal Management will be of benefit.

"Local Government professionals working in animal management (AMOs) throughout Australia are engaged daily in community animal control and regulation work. Their job is to maximise community health, safety and amenity by minimising the negative social, environmental and financial impacts of inappropriately managed animals.

The provision of community animal control and regulatory services is an important and often difficult task.

The Institute seeks to support those engaged in the business of animal management by promoting:

- Animal Management Officer training
- Consistency of legislation
- Recognition of the value of the Animal Management Officer's role to society
- Support for Animal Management Officer's from employers and community
- Consultation in the creation and development of legislation and workplace processes
- Resource and network availability and access
- Professionally operated Council shelter facilities with best practice animal care
- Strong healthy relationships with external stakeholders"48

Our NSW councils need to transform to proactive engagement

The current scope of animal management and pound services appear to have become minimal and enforcement oriented, for which the value to residents and community is questionable.

It is clear from either low socio economic and/or multi-cultural areas (different cultural backgrounds) that there is low regard for an animal's welfare and/or lack of financial ability to afford the high costs for desexing and containing pets. This is obvious from the community and pet pages on social media, for which council teams rarely officially will engage (one exception appears to be ParraPets on Facebook).

It is acknowledged that pets are considered of great value to people, especially to those alone, vulnerable or with physical or mental challenges. It appears that few councils do more than the very minimal with a focus on warnings or enforcement of legal obligations.

- Yet some of our councils have outsourced their pet days with the community, instead of ramping up their involvement, many councils do not operate activities of engagement with their communities.
- In contrast, there has been two councils in Western Australia (WA) Bunbury and Bayswater to encourage cat containment which included market days with cat enclosure suppliers and installers, and smaller \$100 to \$200 subsidies towards cat enclosures for many residents. These approaches appear much more successful over the NSW KCSAH \$1k subsidies for just ten residents with conditions and without active physical engagement.

Page 25 of 56 November 2024 V1

⁴⁸ https://aiam.org.au/About-us



• The highly successful Vic Banyule Council desexing program⁴⁹ was critically dependent on the AMO roles being active in the community and assisting owners and unowned cats in achieving desexing procedures. The NSW KCSAH programs that were most successful in Campbelltown, Hornsby and Parramatta were dependent on working with AMOs and community cat rescuers. The Qld APWF Community Cat Programs were critically dependent on working with cat care givers (community cat rescuers where cats were successfully rehomed to the public). [Refer section TOR (f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs, page 29 of this submission]

It is now widely acknowledged that One Welfare solutions achieve better results in outcomes than punitive actions

Examples supported by reputable sources include the following.

"Introduce NSW pound and shelter initiatives to support vulnerable or at-risk animal owners or caregivers during periods of intense need, in order to keep animals in homes and ensure the welfare and wellbeing of both humans and animals" 50

"Person-centered and culturally competent policies and programs that focus resources on addressing root causes of pet health and welfare issues as opposed to an emphasis on code enforcement can create more positive, scalable, and sustainable improvements in human, other animal, and environmental health and welfare outcomes. This shift from punishment-oriented approaches to support-based models of animal control aligns the animal welfare field with the modern human social justice movement."

"There are substantial barriers to implementing animal control policies that promote One Health and One Welfare, including inherent biases regarding how and why individuals living in poverty may require additional support resources (e.g., they are just "lazy" and need to get a job so they can pay for their pet's care on their own, rather than relying on government handouts); the animal welfare field's historic commitment to a specific definition of "responsible pet ownership" that is driven by racism, classism, and the White dominant culture; an absence of strategies for engaging with marginalized populations in a culturally competent manner; over-policing in communities of color; lack of transparency and oversight in data regarding enforcement; lack of a concerted effort to address structural barriers to accessing pet support services; lack of animal control officer training to perform basic animal handling and zoonoses prevention tasks or in de-escalation strategies; and limited funding opportunities for projects aimed at achieving One Health and One Welfare outcomes [4,5,25,26,27,28,29,30]. Without identifying specific strategies for overcoming each of these barriers, the implicit bias that is present in animal control policy will continue, resulting in disproportionately negative impacts on the pet owners of color and their pets that live in low-income communities." Punishment to Support: The Need to Align Animal Control Enforcement with the Human Social Justice Movement⁵¹

Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that all councillors and council teams are transparent with their communities on the data collected and processes used for decision making for the welfare of

Page 26 of 56

⁴⁹ Banyule Council desexing program https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615

⁵⁰ www .al.org.au/nsw-pound-shelter-reform/

⁵¹ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/10/10/1902



cats in their local government areas (LGAs). This includes submissions and completing surveys for other parties such as Invasive Species Council.

It is strongly recommended that all council staff involved with decision making for cat welfare become familiar with the research and advice from trusted domestic cat experts as included in this submission. Anecdotally, it has been found that many staff in many councils in the Sydney metropolitan area are ignorant of such and/or are not motivated to learn more, or worse, staff who are aware of the latest information feel pressured to leave a council.

It is strongly recommended that advice on cats in every council is created by the NSW state government, and strongly aligned with the animal welfare organisation advice, instead of risking poor quality information which is the used by communities or misused by cat haters within the community.

It is strongly recommended that the Australian Institute of Animal Management (AIAM) become a formal key influencer for improvements in our 128 councils.

It is recommended that new face to face engagement activities in the community parks etc be funded to achieve better outcomes than in the past. Working groups involving Animal Management Officers (AMOs) and community cat rescuers should be established under the One Welfare approach for providing solutions in collaborations with community stakeholders. The community cat rescuers have established relationships with the community members and with roaming and stray cats. However, they need recognition from the state government and councils, and support dealing with the cat haters.

It is recommended that funding from the state and local governments should be invested in transforming council services to assist pet owners, and offer solutions when individual pet ownership problems arise. This aligns with the One Welfare approach in providing solutions over punitive enforcements. This will be most beneficial to the vulnerable, and those in the low socioeconomic bracket who are financially constrained when seeking help/ options.

It is recommended that the NSW government lead, and each council delivers face-to-face cultural education and change management programs to respect and care for companion animals. The councils and their animal management officers (AMOs) may work collaboratively with community cat rescuers and community leaders on solutions for the vulnerable / low incomes and for cultural groups where respect for animals is currently not a priority nor meeting our NSW legal obligations.

Refer to section TOR (j) any other related matters, subsection War on Cats – unethical approaches to encouraging violence towards all cats page 9 which urgently needs attention by all levels of government.

It is also recommended that as part of the NSW government and local council engagement responsibilities that the environment of social media is addressed. Business organisations involved in saving our wildlife need to be taken to task for ethical standards and social licencing expectations and obligations in not spreading cat hate across all cats.

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

Mandatory cat containment is very difficult to enforce

"Based on the evidence in Australia and internationally, mandated 24/7 cat containment is essentially unenforceable, rendering mandated 24/7 cat containment impractical and unfeasible.



Hume City Council in Melbourne Victoria stated in 2018 that 'cat impoundment statistics and learnings from other councils demonstrate that a cat curfew would be largely unenforceable' (Hume Council 2018). The City of Hobsons Bay (Victoria) also acknowledged in 2014 that introduction of mandated cat containment would lead to community expectations about enforcement that cannot be delivered (RSPCA Australia 2018, Hobsons Bay 2014). This is consistent with findings from USA (Smithfield Virginia USA 2003, Edmonds City Council Washington USA 2012, Greta City Council LA USA 2014, Police Chief Rowland Payson City Council Utah USA 2003, Alley Cat Allies 2022)."52

Additional activities and effort if mandatory cat containment is implemented

Implications for councils in implementing and enforcing cat containment policies include the following (these summary points are supported by 16 evidence-based points from the APWF under the same document in the section headed "What are the negative consequences of mandated 24/7 cat containment?"):

- Managing and responding to escalating cat nuisance and new roaming cat complaints,
- additional costs, effort and resources to manage a higher number of captured roaming cats,
- additional monitoring and reporting to be able to measure results, which to date have not provided value for money in several councils who have just basic information,
- additional resources and funding for escalating euthanasia rates (due to the limit of rehoming by each council based on their funding/ budgets and facilities),
- additional effort and resources to minimise and treat traumatic impacts to council and pound staff due to very high rates of euthanasing healthy adoptable animals,
- additional effort and resources to minimise and treat traumatic impacts to the communities, community cat rescuers, also care givers, and feeders seeing their cats in colonies decimated by either authorities or cat haters (which can happen now, but certainly will escalate under any mandated containment obligations to any roaming or semi owned or unowned cat (stray)
- proactively and taking responsibility for, and managing cat haters falsely interpreting cat containment legislation and regulations to empower themselves to trap and harm/ cull cats with inhuman methods all state and council communications (and the Companion Animal Act⁵³ with focus on clause 32 where "Any person may lawfully seize a cat if that action is reasonable and necessary for the protection of any person or animal (other than vermin) from injury or death", and Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act⁵⁴) need to be improved and provide clear interpretation of clauses to enable community cat rescuers and carers can assist abandoned cats.

It is strongly recommended that the NSW state government and all NSW councils adequately plan and fund these increased responsibilities from the implications of implementing mandatory cat containment policies.

The RSPCA SA and AWL Cat Management Plan 2019⁵⁵ includes concerns on the public trapping and destroying cats, which is implied by "concerned citizens" (as Invasive Species term people) being enabled with traps in the draft TAP:

Page 28 of 56 November 2024 V1

⁵² https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/

⁵³ NSW Companion Animal Act https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1998-087

⁵⁴ https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1979-200

 $^{^{55}\} https://www.rspcasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RSPCA-AWL-Cat-Management-Plan-for-South-Australia.pdf$



"...council Animal Management Officers need to be provided with training, equipment & facilities for the correct care and handling of cats. New cat management legislation and council by-laws are of no value if they are not policed and enforced, and councils must be resourced to undertake that function. Trained Animal Cat Management Officers must also be responsible for any use of traps in management programmes. It is not acceptable on animal welfare grounds for traps to be provided to members of the public."

It is strongly recommended that all NSW councils ramp up the skills and responsibilities of AMOs to ensure all trapping and handling of cats does not risk the welfare of cats and involve any animal cruelty in inhumane methods. Domestic stray cats are not feral cats, and the NSW prevention of cruelty legislation should apply.

Devastating impact on Community Cat Rescuers when community cats are cruelly culled

The trap and culling/killing approach not only may be seen to be cruel to community cats, it also raises a significant likelihood of having a devastating impact to the community members or community cat rescuers who have been taking care of these cats/kittens.

It is strongly recommended that the Australian research into the Newcastle breakwater cats culling is taken into consideration for the advice that authorities considering potential legal ramifications based on the devastating impacts to the community cat rescuers which were considered worse than the negative impacts of the cats.

"...the severity of the adverse psychological impacts, and the morbidity rate amongst the cat caregivers we interviewed, was far greater than would be expected as a risk to the community if the cats had remained at the site. We therefore suggest that potential legal ramifications should be considered before authorities intentionally choose a method of management that is likely to inflict substantial harm on community members."

"It is strongly recommended that a care-centred management approach be taken, whereby authorities identify and assist caregivers to implement neutering and, if possible, adoption."

The Impact of Lethal, Enforcement-Centred Cat Management on Human Wellbeing: Exploring Lived Experiences of Cat Carers Affected by Cat Culling at the Port of Newcastle⁵⁶

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

By significantly limiting the breeding of cats at a pace that exceeds the breeding rate, large scale (mass / high intensity) desexing programs for owned, semi owned and unowned cats are supported for their effectiveness in minimising cat populations. Desexing also benefits each cat and the communities. There are benefits to councils in terms of reduced complaints, intakes to pounds, euthanasia numbers, less stress on staff.

Key Australian examples include: Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) Community Cat programs in Queensland; Banyule council Victoria; and the NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home (KCSAH) councils where desexing was the focus.

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⁵⁶ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/2/271



Australian Pet Welfare Foundation Community Cat Programs for owned and semi owned cats

The Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF) Community Cat programs in Queensland⁵⁷ in a number of Ipswich suburbs have been operating since 2021 targeting stray cats, including:

"...desexing of urban stray cats... provided with other veterinary care, such as vaccinations and microchipping... if they are healthy and have been thriving outdoors, the cats are returned to where they live in their home territories... will also desex pet cats if their owners cannot afford to do so themselves... [and] adopting friendly cats and kittens found outdoors, increasing responsible pet cat ownership, decreasing abandonment and mediating resident conflicts involving outdoor cats", "desexed over 2750 cats... achieved >30% reduction in cat intake & >50% less euthanasia", and

provided several evidence-based findings for research papers, international conference papers, a number of Australian submissions.

The highly successful Community Cat Programs operated over several years by the APWF which provide evidence with managing cat populations are supported:

"Community Cat Programs involve high-intensity free desexing, microchipping and registration of owned, semi-owned and unowned cats targeted to areas of high cat intake and complaints. CCPs are proven to be very effective at reducing stray cat numbers, pound intake and euthanasia, complaints and costs. CCPs are also very effective at assisting semi-owners to desex and adopt the stray cat they are feeding and continue to feed and care for their cat, significantly reducing the number of unwanted kittens born. Semi-owners represent a large pool of potential cat adopters, particularly for shy and timid cats, and are integral to resolving the stray cat issue and associated high intake and high euthanasia rates of cats in pounds and shelters. Community Cat Programs proactively manage stray cats in the community keeping cats with their owners, and because they are non-lethal they do not cause devastating mental health impacts to staff or community members, consistent with a One Welfare approach which optimises the well-being of people, animals and their environment." ⁵⁸

Banyule Victoria desexing program over several years

The highly successful desexing program operated over several years in Banyule that provided evidence with managing cat populations is supported.

"Completely free cat desexing

- The implantation of a microchip so the cats could be traced back to an owner
- Free council registration for the first year
- A transport service provided by council AMOs for those that had none".

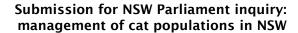
Submission #141 Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia⁵⁹

"The program proposed and approved by the city of Banyule was that **sterilization**, **microchipping**, **and the first year of registration would be funded by the council**. The purpose of this program was to increase ownership responsibilities for owned and stray cats being fed by residents (semi-owned cats) and to reduce unwanted kittens being born and,

Page 30 of 56

⁵⁷ https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-faq/, https://petwelfare.org.au/community-cat-program-news-2/https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/Aust-Community-Cat-Program-2024-Report.pdf

https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/lcdocs/submissions/81381/0132%20Australian%20Pet%20Welfare%20Foundation.pdf





therefore, the number of cats and kittens killed in the council-contracted facility (CPS). **This** was provided at no cost for all owned cats and semi-owned cats in the target areas."

"When the medium-intensity targeted program resumed in 2017/18, and the trapping process changed from enforcement-orientated to assistive, cats impounded city-wide decreased by 51% over four years, from 284 in 2016/17 to 134 in 2020/21".

"...the traditional methods of trapping wandering and nuisance cats have not resulted in long-term reductions in cat-related calls to councils. However, following the implementation of a microtargeted free sterilization program for owned and semiowned cats, marked reductions in cat-related calls, impoundments, euthanasia, and costs were realized, similar to that reported in US programs. It is recommended that urban cat management policies and programs are revised and, instead of being focused on a traditional compliance-based approach, are focused on being assistive, helping owners and semi-owners have their cats sterilized and identified with a microchip."

Impact of a Local Government Funded Free Cat Sterilization Program for Owned and Semi-Owned Cats⁶⁰;

NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home with RSPCA, councils, vet clinics, and community cat rescuers

The **Keeping Cats Safe at Home** (KCSAH) in NSW included key desexing programs where approaches under specific councils achieved high results with managing cat populations.

The **Weddin Council** KCSAH desexing program offered free microchipping and desexing which included: collaboratively working to achieve results for over 100 cats, the view this approach "represents the future of local cat management, it is the answer to reducing cat euthanasia rates and keeping cats out of pounds and shelters".⁶¹

The Parramatta Council KCSAH desexing program included: an aim "to locate unowned cat hotspots and engage with overwhelmed cat carers and volunteer cat rescue groups"; and results where cat-related nuisance complaints decreased by 49% and cats arriving at the council pound decreased by 41%. 62

Anecdotally, **Campbelltown** and **Hornsby** KCSAH desexing programs also **critically included local carers and rescuers for semi owned and unowned cats**. With these **community cat rescuers** (volunteers) a high take up of desexing was arranged with cat owners, supported transport and scheduling. These roles are critical to achieve a high number of desexing procedures to minimise cat populations with community engagement.

At the AIAM conference a KCSH presentation was provided by RSPCA NSW – noting pages 12-14 for targeted desexing including semi owned cats and semi owners (community cat rescuers and carers).⁶³

Examples of Community Cat Rescuers who need support from their councils

These are examples of the army of community cat rescuers with whom all councils should be acknowledging and forming healthy relationships to improve management of cat populations, including raising community awareness and individual responsibility of cat ownership.

Page 31 of 56 November 2024 V1

⁶⁰ Banyule Council desexing program https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615

⁶¹ https://weddinlandcare.com.au/milestone-for-keeping-cats-safe-at-home-project

⁶² https://acrobat.adobe.com/id/urn:aaid:sc:AP:4d1d5b58-63b5-4a70-8196-212fded377d1

⁶³ https://aiam.org.au/page-18158



While these desexing efforts may not be seen as high intensity, the collective efforts of hundreds of rescuers across NSW should not be undervalued. This army of volunteers can only achieve more if they are supported with funded desexing and vaccination programs working alongside vet practices as they do now.

This subsection provides information and anecdotal evidence in perhaps some of the worst Local Government Areas for the welfare of cats: Campbelltown, Canterbury Bankstown, Cumberland, Fairfield and Parramatta. These areas, plus many more have community rescuers inundated with abandoned cats on the streets.

Please refer to section Embrace & support community cat rescuers / carers, including vet practices page 7 of this submission for general information on community cat rescuers.

Please refer to section TOR (g) the impact of potential cat containment measures on the pound system, subsection "As Is" research on council pounds, animal welfare organisations and rescue groups, page 39 on relevant research on council pounds and rescue groups (derived from the Pet Rescue system). Two key points from that research⁶⁴ include:

- 1. Based on the information available:
 - council pounds have the highest euthanasia rates for which some were extraordinarily high (around 70 to 100% of all intakes), and
 - rescue groups have the highest rehoming rates (showing how mostly volunteer based organisations manage much better than current government pounds and large animal welfare organisations with predominantly paid staff).
- 2. The urgent need for fully funded (free) desexing and vaccination for cats under community cat rescuers.

"Strategies to provide free or highly subsidized sterilization and microchipping programs in low socio-economic areas for both owned and semi-owned cats will decrease cat intake and likely increase RTO rates, and in turn reduce the number of cats euthanized. These programs should be embraced as a core strategy by municipal councils and welfare organizations to manage urban cats."

Community cat rescuers in each LGA provide a channel for rapidly desexing abandoned cats, which will make significant impact to minimising the cat population. They urgently need assistance with fully funded desexing and vaccination for abandoned cats who will be rehomed, and those remaining temporarily in communities (private properties, business sites, schools, churches etc).

A small number of examples follow of community cat rescuers in the Sydney metropolitan area. These are requests for assistance such as desexing or health issues. Posts on rehoming have not been selected at this time.

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⁶⁴ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/11/1771



HELP needed pls - TNR required

This is a feral colony located on for the inner west of Sydney
If anyone can help with TNR of this colony, pls reach out to me via dm to arrange or
discuss location etc





Peakhurst- Colony of 4 cats, would be easy to trap. Living in a building site but it's nearly complete! Can anyone or any rescues help, even TNR?

Thankyou for everyone that sent me donations towards the 2 kittens, \$250 was raised which covered my bill. The \$250 I have put aside for litter, food and vet attention when the 3rd kitten is caught ...

3rd kitten still has not been caught. He bolts under the house. I have been to the property daily and haven't had any success.

Desexing of the big cats will commence this Saturday. Our goal is to catch 3 big cats each time. We are hoping to catch the last kitten as well so he can be seen by a vet and then reunited with his siblings \heartsuit

Prolapse cat still on the property, we are still looking for a rescue that can start a fundraiser for it so it can get medical attention. Thankyou for your support \bigwedge



#659 And now for something a little different, a tiny kitten was found in a taped paper box a couple of days ago by a local community member. We luckily get the help of Urban Kitten rescue and this little 2 months old boy will move to a carer next week after health assessment. We may be in need of a transporter.



Little mumma #658 a local community member has been trying to catch her and her boy for 6 months and she is finally being desexed tomorrow.





Cats numbering #653, #654, #655,#656



Submission for NSW Parliament inquiry: management of cat populations in NSW

The poor emaciated Ragdolls dumped in a local park are in a bad way at just 2.5 kilos in weight, worst fleas and flea related anaemia. Coughing, one shaking sigh. Backyard breeders again! There is a third one we are trying to find in the park.

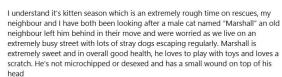
They are 50/50 from neglect, but we will throw everything at them to get them through.

look how thin and fleas. Water red. Both weak, coughing and very



Parramatta

They have had desexing programs with RSPCA.



Please note second photo below is when he was being looked after and cared for over 1 year ago. A lovely lady is willing to sponsor "Marshall" \$300 towards vet care he needs to thrive at a rescue

Located in Western Sydney but happy to transport him wherever he needs to go to receive the love and care he needs





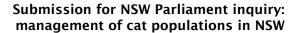
Is anyone able to assist with taking in a pregnant mum cat, kittens and the tnr of adult cats.

An elderly lady in North Parramatta is overwhelmed with cats- not hers but she's been feeding them. There is a vet nearby willing to desex.

If anyone can assist with funds or taking kittens or the pregnant cat please let me

Some are social and can be held others not so much.







This pregnant girl about to give birth is living in a carpark! Can some rescue save her?

We are trying to contain her but unable to keep her or looking after her. Please can anyone of you try to reach out to other rescues? I have tried a few but I am getting no response! Please!



A very simple financial case for funding desexing for community cat rescuers

- 1. The majority of cats and kittens who community cat rescuers save from being abandoned by residents on the streets etc, are over 12 weeks of age. Therefore, the rescuers:
 - a. did not "own" the cat/kitten at a time to be able to complete microchipping/identification and lifetime registration on the NSW Pet Registry, nor desexing before the cat is 4 months of age;
 - b. should not be charged the extra charges for late payments, nor the extra charge for not desexing before 4 months of age and its late payment charges,
 - c. may dispute the extra charges and late payment fees etc with evidence to support when and where the cats were retrieved from, i.e. most likely where the cats were abandoned,
 - d. are doing "the right thing" by microchipping, desexing and ensuring information is on the Pet Registry, they do not need motivating with the potential extra charges etc.
- 2. It is not fair nor reasonable that community cat rescuers across the state, who retrieve abandoned cats, and care for them, microchipping, desexing etc and rehome a number each year, will carry the burden of these pet registration charges which are targeted at the original owners e.g. \$68 lifetime registration, late payment fees, \$85 for not desexing before 4 months of age, and late payment fees, possibly with penalties.
- 3. The lifetime registration fee and extra charges, with the fees for not desexing before 4 months of age and these related late payment charges (potentially \$153 plus), should be waived for community cat rescuers who are providing a service to the community and their pets. If the cats are not saved and rehomed by community cat rescuers, then:
 - a. The council pounds will be responsible for each cat to be given an opportunity to find the original owner, taking in (intake), caring, rehoming, or in worst case euthanasing the cat/kitten. These efforts will require a number of hours from various staff for example administration, customer service representatives, Animal Management Officers (AMOs) / Rangers, vet support staff and vet professionals and managers. These hours of service will incur \$ several hundred or much more in council costs per cat/ kitten. The Banyule research including the financial case for change initiated several years ago indicate a



- minimum of near \$450 council costs / cat, not including the vet team for euthanasia and disposal of pet bodies where a cat is not rehomed.
- b. These intake \$ costs (estimated near or more than \$600) to councils are much greater than the charges for registration etc (\$153 plus) that the community cat rescuers are obliged to pay under legislation, which does not include an exemption for the situation where the community cat rescuers did not acquire a cat before it was 12 weeks of age or 4 months of age for desexing.

Therefore, it is recommended that support should be provided to community cat rescuers to waive registration and related charges as the intake costs to councils and residents is avoided. Further, councils should also consider supporting desexing costs etc. for carers and rescuers which will also similarly be less than using council resources and personnel for intakes.

RSPCA SA TDAR

It is noted that RSPCA SA is aiming to embark on a It is noted that RSPCA SA intends to run a form of TNR⁶⁵ with associated actions:

"In TDAR, unowned or semi-owned cats are trapped, heath checked, desexed, vaccinated and then either rehomed or returned to their original location. Cats who are unsuitable for rehoming, unhealthy and unfit for release are humanely euthanised."

"Action 23: Reduce strays taken to shelters by helping community members understand that sometimes cats are better left where they are. Promote the approach of "leave a healthy cat where they are and monitor" to stray cats.

Action 24: Undertake a 'trap, desex and adopt or return' (TDAR) trial in a selected area of SA, as an attempt to reduce uncontrolled breeding in urban stray cat populations.

Action 25: Educate the public about semi-owned cats as a separate category of cats, helping members of the public who feed stray cats to understand the importance of desexing and microchipping."

TNR/ TNVR/ RTF/ SNR

It is strongly recommended that the NSW government invest funding into more intensive programs of desexing including Trap Neuter Return, Trap Neuter Vaccinate Return, Return To Field, and Shelter Neuter Return which are adequately researched over years. The evidence gathered from NSW, Queensland, and Victorian councils indicated benefits with minimising cat populations including stray cats, and therefore continuing with similar efforts will provide benefits across NSW. It is noted that both the Qld CCPs and NSW KCSAHs involved semi owned and unowned cats under community cat rescuers. The success of TNR, TNVR, RTF, and SNR techniques have also been documented in a number of studies.

Australian community support for TNR

Research on the Public Opinions on Strategies for Managing Stray Cats and Predictors of Opposition to Trap-Neuter and Return in Brisbane, Australia 66 includes

Page 36 of 56

⁶⁵ https://www.rspcasa.org.au/cat-plan-explainer/

⁶⁶ https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30834249/



"After being informed about trap, neuter, and return (TNR) programs for management of urban stray cats, most respondents (79%), chose TNR as their preferred management strategy, while a lesser proportion (18%) expressed a preference to continue the current Brisbane City Council lethal control program (catching and culling ~1,000 cats annually), and 3.4% selected to leave the cats alone. Differences in beliefs and attitudes toward urban stray cats as a function of demographic variables were investigated. Statistical analyses indicated that respondents who were male, older, non-cat owners, those who believed euthanasia of stray cats was humane, and that urban stray cats spread disease to humans were significantly more likely to express a preference for lethal control, as opposed to non-lethal population management. Based on these findings, we recommend that information is disseminated to mitigate these concerns or negative beliefs, where warranted. Ultimately, findings from this study demonstrate that current Queensland legislation does not reflect public views and opinions on stray cat management and should be reviewed. Formal research evaluating the efficacy of TNR programs for urban stray cats in Australia would be in the public interest."

Trap-Neuter-Return Activities in Urban Stray Cat Colonies in Australia

"We conclude that trap, neuter and return associated with high desexing rates in colonies, and adoption of kittens and friendly adults substantially reduces colony size, and improves the welfare of cats and kittens. This model is cost-effective for municipalities, and should be legalized in Australia."67

A Case Study in Citizen Science: The Effectiveness of a Trap-Neuter-Return Program in a Chicago Neighborhood

"Colony populations, when grouped by the number of years enrolled in the program, declined by a mean of 54% from entry and 82% from peak levels. Results from coexistent TNR programs in the Chicago area are consistent with these findings."68

An Examination of an Iconic Trap-Neuter-Return Program: The Newburyport, Massachusetts Case Study

"Available evidence indicates that an estimated 300 free-roaming cats were essentially unmanaged prior to the commencement of the TNR program; a quick reduction of up to one-third of the cats on the waterfront was attributed to the adoption of sociable cats and kittens; **the elimination of the remaining population; over a 17-year period**; was ascribed to attrition." ⁵⁹

The Impact of an Integrated Program of Return-to-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Return on Feline Intake and Euthanasia at a Municipal Animal Shelter

"New approaches, including return-to-field (RTF) and targeted trap-neuter-return (TNR) appear to have transformative potential. ...formal RTF and targeted TNR protocols, collectively referred to as a community cat program (CCP), were added to ongoing community-based TNR efforts and a pilot RTF initiative. As part of the three-year CCP, 11,746 cats were trapped, sterilized, vaccinated and returned or adopted. Feline euthanasia at the Albuquerque Animal Welfare Department (AAWD) declined by 84.1% and feline intake dropped by 37.6%; the live release rate (LRR) increased by 47.7% due primarily to these reductions in both intake and euthanasia. Modest increases in the percentage of cats returned to owner (RTO) and the adoption rate were also observed,

⁶⁷ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/7/6/46

⁶⁸ https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/29346278/

⁶⁹ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/7/11/81



although both metrics decreased on an absolute basis, while the number of calls to the city about dead cats declined."70

Integrated Return-To-Field and Targeted Trap-Neuter-Vaccinate-Return Programs Result in Reductions of Feline Intake and Euthanasia at Six Municipal Animal Shelters

"In the past decade, two new variants of TNVR, return-to-field (RTF) and high-impact targeting, have exhibited the capacity to contribute to significant reductions in shelter intake and euthanasia. The present study examines changes in feline intake and euthanasia, as well as impacts on associated metrics, at municipal shelters located in six diverse U.S. communities after integrated programs of RTF and targeted TNVR (collectively termed "community cat programs," CCPs) were implemented. A total of 72,970 cats were enrolled in six 3-year CCPs, 71,311 of whom (98%) were sterilized, vaccinated, and returned to their location of capture or adopted. A median reduction of 32% in feline intake, as well as a median decline of 83% in feline euthanasia occurred across the six CCPs; median feline live-release rate increased by 53% as a result of these simultaneous declines in cat admissions and euthanasia. The integration of RTF and targeted TNVR protocols appears to result in greater feline intake and euthanasia reductions than programs lacking such an integrated approach." 71

Association between a shelter-neuter-return program and cat health at a large municipal animal shelter

"RESULTS Number of cats admitted to the shelter each year decreased significantly over 8 years; beginning in 2010, duration of stay decreased. Proportion of cats euthanized decreased from 66.6% (28,976/43,517) in the pre-SNR period to 34.9% (11,999/34,380) in the post-SNR period, whereas prevalence of URI increased from 5.5% to 6.8%, and median duration of shelter stay decreased from 6 to 5 days for cats < 4 months of age and from 8 to 6 days for older cats. With implementation of the SNR program and a new treatment policy for cats with URI, more cats received treatment with less medication, yielding cost savings."72

Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that evidence-based research of highly successful programs offering free desexing for owned, semi owned, and unowned cats should be considered an integral part of cat management plans for NSW.

- These desexing programs provide value for money, and return on investment (e.g. Banyul financial metrics), in reducing the number of cats, roaming cats, abandoned stray cats (semi owned or unowned), and impacts to wildlife.
- It is critical that these are implemented in high volume and high intensity, which is understood to mean the number of cats being desexed will exceed the breeding rate in a local area or group or colony of cats. These areas may have several causes behind the high populations i.e. due to human behaviours rather than just free roaming undesexed cats. And these causes need to be addressed in parallel with desexing programs to stem the supply chain.

It is strongly recommended that a "blitz", a rapid approach of concurrent desexing programs is immediately initiated to significantly minimise domestic cat populations. For too long there

Page 38 of 56 November 2024 V1

 $[\]frac{70}{https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/The-Impact-of-an-Integrated-Program-of-and-Targeted-Spehar-Wolf/473bbf487fce3cf6a3743f73e2c1ca7b431d25a1}$

https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2019.00077/full

⁷² https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/26799109/



has been inaction and lack of funding, which has contributed to the cat crisis across NSW. It is feared that many councils were supporting the draft TAP approach to enable community members to take matters into their own hands, and trap and destroy roaming cats without any controls, could this be true? Instead of those cruel approaches which would put pet cats at risk too, the following actions are recommended:

- for an immediate rapid and intense response across NSW to be implemented in parallel methods desexing programs for owned, semi owned and unowned cats, which have already been proven:
 - APWF Community Cat Programs;
 - o RSPCA NSW supported programs across councils; and
 - Council/Vet/Community Cat Rescuers collaborative efforts,
- that funded intense and high-volume desexing programs should be offered free for those on low incomes, carers and rescuers of semi owned cats (community cat rescuers), and areas of high intensity cat populations,
- that targeted desex and vaccinate programs are also implemented in areas with high cat impoundment rates - i.e. 'hot spots'",
- that free desexing programs for semi owned and unowned cats be coordinated by council AMOs and community cat rescuers who have the existing closest face to face relationships with communities,
- to improve the training, obligations and processes for behaviour assessments in council pound facilities to stop euthanasing cats who have not had adequate time to decompress and are likely scared domestic cats rather than feral cats, to request assistance from approved rehoming organisations and community cat rescuers with assessments and rehoming,
- to improve and be transparent with the council policies and processes for the range of illnesses / health concerns and appropriately fund facilities and staff to care for cats who may then be available for adoption,
- accept the TNR and associated terms for use with desexing programs where community cat rescuers and carers will continue management of semi owned cats and unowned cats.

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

"As Is" research on council pounds, animal welfare organisations and rescue groups

Research published in 2023 on "Stray and Owner-Relinquished Cats in Australia—Estimation of Numbers Entering Municipal Pounds, Shelters and Rescue Groups and Their Outcomes" includes relevant information, including:

Many councils and Australian state/ territory governments currently do not gather
adequate information for analysis and decision making on managing cat populations - so
far it may be "guess work" rather than science by government authorities, and this
research is critically important for consideration.

-

⁷³ https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/13/11/1771



"Access to comprehensive municipal pound, animal welfare shelters, and rescue group data for admissions and outcomes for stray and owner-relinquished cats in Australia is currently lacking. This hinders effective assessment of existing management strategies for domestic cats by animal management agencies."

2. Based on the information available:

- council pounds have the highest euthanasia rates for which some were extraordinarily high (around 70 to 100% of all intakes), and
- rescue groups have the highest rehoming rates (showing how mostly volunteer based organisations manage much better than current government pounds and large animal welfare organisations with predominantly paid staff).

"We estimated a total of 179,615 (7.2/1000 human residents) admissions to pounds, shelters, and rescue groups in 2018–2019, with an estimated 5% reclaimed, 65% rehomed, and 28% euthanized. Reclaim rates were low across all the agencies. Councils operating their own pound had nearly double the euthanasia rate (estimated at 46%) compared to animal welfare organizations (25%). Rescue groups rehomed an estimated 35% of the total number of cats rehomed by all agencies. The upper quartiles of councils with intakes of >50 cats in Victoria and New South Wales had estimated euthanasia rates from 73% to 98%, and 67% to 100%, respectively. We recommend that comprehensive municipal pound, shelter, and rescue statistics be routinely calculated using standardized methods and made available publicly in a timely fashion. This would inform management strategies to optimize live outcomes and therefore reduce the negative mental health impacts on staff tasked with euthanizing healthy and treatable cats and kittens."

3. The need (pain points) and benefits of desexing programs for owned and semi owned cats

"Unidentified free-roaming owned cats and semi-owned cats likely comprise the majority of stray cats, and 60% of people bringing a stray cat to RSPCA shelters said they had been feeding it for more than a month [20]. Most semi-owners feed one to two cats at private residences, but multiple cats (often called colonies) also congregate at private residences where there is a food source, and other sites such as aged care facilities, social housing, industrial complexes, and universities [53,54]. Stray cats are brought to shelters and pounds by members of the public because they believe the cats will be better off in the shelter [20] or because they are causing a nuisance. The majority of cats entering shelters and pounds are less than 6 months old, highlighting the need for sterilization programs [33]. Highest intakes are from low socioeconomic areas [19,33,55], where the cost of sterilization and microchipping is often unaffordable, as is cat-proof fencing. At the time of the study, weekly income for 20% of Australian households (average of 2.4 people) was less than AUD\$650, with higher proportions of low-income households in socioeconomically disadvantaged areas [42]. Recent Australian research demonstrated that high-intensity sterilization programs predominantly for owned and semi-owned cats, targeted to areas of high cat admissions, or high call-volume related to found or nuisance cats, were effective in rapidly reducing cat intake and euthanasia from the target area [56,57]."

"Strategies to provide free or highly subsidized sterilization and microchipping programs in low socio-economic areas for both owned and semi-owned cats will decrease cat intake and likely increase RTO rates, and in turn reduce the number of cats euthanized. These programs should be embraced as a core strategy by municipal councils and welfare organizations to manage urban cats."

4. Rescue groups in this study

Please refer to section TOR (d) the effectiveness of community education programs and responsible pet ownership initiatives page 22, for information on examples of community



cat rescuers in some of the worst LGAs in Sydney which shows the efforts and value these individuals and groups provide.

It is noted that the information on "rescue groups" in this study was derived primarily from the PetRescue system. There are many individuals and groups who operate solely on social media, and anecdotally in Sydney, many have been operating for a number of years and are well known in the community cat rescue field and network.

"PetRescue, a national welfare organization advertising animals for adoption on behalf of municipal councils, welfare agencies, and animal rescue groups, provided most of the relevant rescue group data for all states. A total of 41,355 cats were recorded with PetRescue or from NSW data as being available for adoption through 416 animal rescue groups across Australia in 2018–2019, and we used these numbers by state/territory as estimated intakes for that year.

For PetRescue data in 2018–2019, of cats of known sources (69%), 41% were strays (recorded as community cats), 25% owner-relinquished, 25% transferred in from council pounds, and 9% transferred in from animal welfare shelters. Of the of 41,261 cats from the PetRescue website, 93% were recorded as having been rehomed, and 7% of cats were recorded as having been removed from the PetRescue website, and their outcomes would have included being adopted by the foster carer, transferred out to another organization, lost/escaped, died, or euthanized. For our calculations, we assumed that 2% of cats entering rescue groups were euthanized [36]."

"Animal rescue groups intake directly from the general public accounted for 15% (28,753/192,788) of the national total intake, and based on our assumption that they rehomed 98% of their total intake, they accounted for 35% (40,528/115,630) of all the cats rehomed nationally."

"Role of Rescue Groups in Reducing Numbers Euthanized

Rescue groups rehomed 35% of all cats rehomed in Australia, resulting in a very substantial impact on decreasing numbers euthanized, particularly in municipal facilities. Rescue groups play a key role in optimizing live release rates of stray and owner-relinquished cats in pounds and shelters, by reducing their presence in pounds and shelters and enhancing their access to potential adopters [22,74]. Rescue groups operate on a foster care model, which provides a conducive environment for socialization, enrichment, and behavior conditioning, and their euthanasia rate was assumed to be 2% [74]."

It is noted that the data from rescue groups was limited as in our view, many operate independently and are individuals or too small organisations to commit their limited volunteer efforts for the level of administration required to become a charity and registered with ACNC and/or ABN organisation registered with the ATO.

However, our view is that the underestimates in this study were undervaluing the benefits and that many more cats are saved from being abandoned, and then desexed and rehomed collectively across the nation by "rescue groups".

"Our direct requests to rescue groups that did not have data listed with PetRescue or the NSW Office of Local Government were largely unsuccessful in obtaining data, and because the total number of rescue groups in Australia was unknown, we were unable to impute missing data, resulting in an underestimation of cats received directly from the general public by rescue groups."



Research Recommendations

Recommendations from the study which are supported include:

"It is strongly recommended that consistent standards in recording, aggregating, and reporting of data in municipal councils, animal welfare organizations, and rescue groups statistics are established across the Australian states and territories, and the aggregated statistics made publicly available online for all individual agencies. These data should include source (impounded by local government, strays from general public, owner relinquishments, transferred in from other organization), age (adult cat versus kitten), outcomes (RTO, rehomed, transferred, euthanized, other), as well as length of stay. It is recommended that state databases be created and updated annually as has been legislated in Victoria. These should be generated using nationally agreed standard definitions and methods for generating statistics from individual agencies. This in turn would facilitate evaluation of existing management strategies and their impact on numbers of cats admitted and euthanized. Being able to identify agencies and geographic locations with high cat intakes or poor outcomes for cats would inform targeted interventions and better allocation of resources for management strategies known to be effective.

Reducing the number of free-roaming cats and the numbers of healthy and treatable cats and kittens killed would positively impact the mental health of shelter and municipal pound staff and is aligned with the One Welfare philosophy. This is particularly critical given our results show that municipal council intake and euthanized numbers are increasing over time.

In summary, the results of our study set the benchmark to compare over time the impact of animal management policies and practices on agency performance and on the stray and owner-relinquished cat population entering municipal facilities, animal welfare shelters, and rescue groups."

[Please note, we have taken the liberty of "spacing/ungrouping" these recommendations from the Conclusion section of the research]

Impacts to council pounds where mandatory cat containment was implemented

The APWF information "Key issues to consider related to mandated 24 7 cat containment" includes the following.

"RSPCA Australia Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia 2018 report acknowledges: Overall, councils with cat containment regulations have not been able to demonstrate any measurable reduction in cat complaints or cats wandering at large following the introduction of the regulations."

"In the City of Yarra Ranges (Victoria), in the 3rd year after mandating 24/7 cat containment: ...cat-related complaints increased by 143%; ...Yarra Ranges Council acknowledged that the significant increase in cat complaints, is likely to be a result of the introduction of a 24-hour cat curfew in 2014; ...impoundments increased by 68%; [and] ...euthanasia increased by 18% (human population only increased by 2%) (Yarra Ranges 2021).

"In the City of Casey (Victoria), 20 years after introducing mandated 24/7 cat containment: ...the number of cats impounded was still 296% higher than baseline (from 264 cats in 1998 to 1,047 cats in 2019/20), more than double the rate of the human population increase."

"In 2000, Casey received 349 cat nuisance and related complaints which had increased to 376 complaints in 2020/2021 (Casey Council 2001 & 2021"



"Stray cats are usually overlooked when mandated 24/7 cat containment is proposed, even though stray cats represent the majority of wandering cats. Most cats entering animal welfare shelters and council pounds are classed as strays, originate from low socio-economic areas and were born in the preceding 6 to 12 months (Kerr 2018, Alberthsen 2013 & 2016, Miller 2014, Ly 2021, Rinzin 2008, Zito 2016)."

"...high level culling is cost prohibitive for local governments and unacceptable to the majority of the community (Rand 2019) and there are no published reports of high-level culling at the suburb or city level being successful (Boone 2019)."

Mandated containment: "Increases risks of cruelty towards cats, increasing animal pain and suffering."⁷⁷⁴

High euthanasia rates in shelters/ pound will contribute to staff burn out:

"...euthanasia was a common practice in shelters, averaging 869 dogs and cats annually per shelter. In response to performing euthanasia, sadness (83.3%), crying (68.5%), anger (57.4%), and depression (57.4%) were the most commonly reported staff reactions. Most shelter managers (74.0%) agreed that euthanasia contributed to burnout in staff... Shelter managers indicated that support programs were important for staff who perform euthanasia services. The most commonly offered support programs were training and education (offered in 48.1% of shelters), staff rotation (38.9%), informal peer support (38.9%), and breaks after euthanasia (35.1%). The vast majority of managers (74.0%) identified funding as the primary barrier to offering support programs."⁷⁵

Understanding euthanasia in shelters includes two views for consideration:

"At the heart of the ethical debate is the question of when, if ever, euthanasia is justified. On one side of the argument are those who believe that euthanasia can be a compassionate choice, sparing animals from unnecessary suffering. They argue that in cases where an animal is terminally ill or experiencing extreme pain, euthanasia may be the most humane option available.

On the other side of the coin are those who advocate for a more optimistic approach, one that prioritizes finding alternative solutions to euthanasia. They argue that every animal deserves a chance at life, regardless of their medical condition or behavioral issues. Instead of resorting to euthanasia, they believe that shelters should invest in resources such as medical care, behavior training, and adoption programs to give animals the best possible chance at finding a loving home."⁷⁶

Assessing an animal's behaviour in a busy shelter is far from appropriate and will need improvements

"It is critical that behaviour assessments undertaken by council are not conducted immediately. A dog or cat will be stressed by being in an unfamiliar environment or not having basic needs met which may lead for it to be incorrectly classified in the behaviour

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https://www.researchgate.net/publication/272212677_Euthanasia_in_Animal_Shelters_Management's_Perspective_on_Staff_Reactions_and_Support_Programs

⁷⁴ https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/

⁷⁶ https://thewoof.org/animal-welfare/understanding-euthanasia-in-animal-shelters



assessment. Dogs and cats should be provided enough time to acclimatise and recover before an assessment is undertaken. The AVA is supportive of recommendation 5c for council staff to be trained to undertake behaviour assessments if the training provided is robust and conducted on a regular basis. Furthermore, to ensure council staff are suitably skilled to undertake behavioural assessments such training could be linked to an annual certification scheme with ongoing requirements for continued education and training."⁷⁷

"It is virtually impossible for a shelter to assess 'temperament' via a one-time test. Temperament is something that we learn about someone by watching their reactions (or questioning them about them) over a broad range of environments and experiences. Most shelters do not have the time or the resources to do this, and thus they are assessing behavior at a point in time, and not true temperament.

. . .

As much as we try to enrich shelter pet lives, shelters are a stressful place to be. Stress changes a pet's behavior. Some pets will behave more aggressively when stressed, some more fearfully, and some will be quieter and more inhibited. It is important to recognize the role of stress on our behavioral evaluation results. If a dog is aggressive, is it because she is really stressed? If he is NOT aggressive, is it because she is inhibited due to stress?"⁷⁸

It is assumed that similar behaviour and causes will occur with cats in council pounds "...behaviour problems, such as aggression, food guarding and separation-related behaviours, were not reliably predicted by the standardised behaviour assessment. We recommend that dog behaviour assessments in shelters are used only in conjunction with other monitoring tools to assess behaviour over the whole shelter stay, thus facilitating increased safety/welfare standards for dogs, shelters and the wider community." 79

Recommendations

It is strongly recommended that council pound systems and resources will need to be significantly increased based on an assessment of the additional needs from the number of: the estimated un-microchipped yet owned cats allowed to roam and b) the domestic semi owned and unowned cats (strays), including funding:

- to support and increase rehoming, and temporary care,
- additional effort and facility resources to adequately assess behaviours of domestic cats in a fair and reasonable way,
- euthanasia rates and additional resources needed to humanely process higher numbers of unwanted pets, and to ensure council pound staff are supported through compassion fatigue;
- communication with stakeholders and the whole community, including community cat rescuers, care givers, and feeders seeing their cats in colonies decimated who need support through compassion fatigue and potential primary trauma themselves;
- additional effort, information, guidelines and engaging with the community for repressing cat haters trapping and surrendering cats to ensure cats are treated humanely, meeting social licensing and governmental obligations,

Page 44 of 56

⁷⁷ https://www.ava.com.au/globalassets/authors/ava_submission_draft-report-rehoming-of-companion-animals-in-nsw.pdf

⁷⁸ https://www.maddiesfund.org/behavioral-assessment-in-animal-shelters.htm#Behavioral%20Assessment

⁷⁹ https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC7401658/



 increased administrations, customer service representatives, AMO and Ranger roles for the above.

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

Lack of evidence that mandatory cat containment is effective where implemented in Australia

A number of councils in ACT, WA, SA, Vic, Qld have mandated cat containment, but where is the evidence of measured impacts and improvements on wildlife?

APWF findings for several councils show negative outcomes.80

Even the total ban in Halls Gap for 30 years has no evidence, nor any positive impact on the feral cats.⁸¹

RSPCA Australia82 includes:

"Due to the ambiguity surrounding the risks and effectiveness of 24/7 containment, the RSPCA advocates that further research is undertaken to provide evidence of the positive and negative outcomes of cat containment before 24/7 containment can be adequately assessed."

"Support for the introduction of mandatory 24/7 cat containment would need to be based on evidence that it can achieve the stated objectives for cats, wildlife, and the broader community, and that the potential negative consequences can be eliminated or effectively mitigated. The RSPCA supports and encourages such research.

If mandatory 24/7 cat containment is introduced, effective monitoring is needed that will provide evidence of outcomes (positive and negative) and inform a better understanding of potential negative consequences and strategies to eliminate or effectively mitigate these."

In LGAs where cat containment has been implemented it appears the number of cats being abandoned is not decreasing, and there still remains a need for community cat rescuers who take on the burden of abandoned cats assisting desexing and rehoming, without involving current council pounds.

This is understandable as mandatory containment does not address the root causes of cats being abandoned nor breeding.

Need for national and a NSW state domestic cat management plans/ strategies

Please refer to section

Page 45 of 56

 $^{^{80} \ \}underline{\text{https://petwelfare.org.au/2022/09/02/key-issues-to-consider-related-to-mandated-24-7-cat-containment/}$

https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-06-15/mayor-says-halls-gap-cat-ban-success-native-wildlife/102337372

⁸² https://kb.rspca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/PP-A8-Cat-Containment-2024.pdf



TOR (j) any other related matters

Embrace RSPCA Australia 2018 cat terms & Definitions

It is strongly recommended that the New South Wales (NSW) government should embrace the cat terms: feral and domestic classes, and the latter has subclasses owned, semi owned or unowned, that were published for the Threatened Species Commissioner in 2018 by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Australia. Stray cats are NOT feral cats.

The 2020 federal report Tackling the feral cat pandemic: a plan to save Australian wildlife included three categories: feral cats, stray cats and domestic cats. It is also noted that this report included the Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) and RSPCA recommended definitions including "semi owned and unowned" instead of the "stray" cat term, and included that the "RSPCA's proposed definition was supported by a range of inquiry contributors".

The terms and definitions feral and domestic classes, and the latter has subclasses owned, semi owned or unowned, have been evolved for a number of years by the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation (APWF), their research and evolution of cat terms and definitions is strongly supported.

The RSPCA South Australia and AWL Cat Management Plan 2019 includes the terms feral and domestic, with subclasses owned, semi owned and unowned. And the RSPCA SA is still encouraging "Separating feral from domestic cat management" in a recent email titled "Take Action in Animal Welfare!"

, subsection Establish a NSW domestic cat committee & develop a cat management strategy /plan page 6 of this submission.

It is noted that Victoria has commenced a cat management strategy.83

It is noted that South Australia (SA) has commenced a cat management plan. (Refer following subsection).

RSPCA SA and AWL SA Recommendations relevant for managing cat populations

The RSPCA SA and AWL Cat Management Plan 201984 includes:

1. Councils need to take on greater responsibilities for cat management and need to collaborate with other organisations to achieve better outcomes for the cats, including community cat rescuers

"These greater demands and standards will require a paradigm shift in thinking about accountabilities for cat management in this state.

Determining what will happen to cats who are surrendered or seized by a council, for any breach of legislation or by-laws, is a major consideration in any development of improved cat management practices. While some cats will be reclaimed by owners, and others assessed as too unsocialised to be rehomed will be euthanised, the vast majority will need to be rehomed. Rehoming, however, is an increasingly expensive process with all animals requiring extensive advertising and marketing to secure adopters. Currently, costs to each of RSPCA and AWL average over semi and unowned cat population in the state, and this cost is increasing every year."

Page 46 of 56 November 2024 V1

^{83 &}lt;u>https://engage.vic.gov.au/cat-management-strategy</u>

⁸⁴ https://www.rspcasa.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/RSPCA-AWL-Cat-Management-Plan-for-South-Australia.pdf



Noting that many NSW rehoming organisations and community cat rescuers also carry the burden of abandoned cats from our irresponsible citizens.

"This is clearly an unsustainable situation for organisations such as RSPCA and AWL who are relying predominantly on community donations. In the eastern states, where Local Government has primary responsibility for companion animal management, councils are collaborating with each other and/or animal welfare organisations to construct and operate dog and cat detention and rehoming facilities. This must be the future direction for cat management in South Australia, and it is now time for all stakeholders to start preparing for this transition in responsibility."

And increased collaboration with NSW rehoming organisations and community cat rescuers should also occur.

2. The objective for Legislative change to impose consistent cat management accountabilities on councils, appears very relevant to NSW where councils vary on interpretations of the Companion Animals Act and Preventions of Cruelty to Animals Act

"Cat management is a complex, emotional and controversial issue and there has been confused, incorrect and conflicting information available to councils"

And in NSW it appears on a number of occasions our councils provide confused, incorrect and conflicting information to their residents.

"Cat management measures will require additional funding in an environment of tight council budgets and government pressure to not increase council rates. Despite this, vat management needs to be addressed and will need to be adequately and consistently funded."

3. All council management plans need to be aligned for effective cat management

"Alignment of council cat management plans

Due to cat migration, it is essential that a consistent state-wide approach is taken to cat management in South Australia. Currently there are large variations in cat management interest, measures and by-laws between councils. Even where councils have been proactive in taking some measures, these initiatives are somewhat piecemeal and, consequently, unlikely to have any material impact on cat populations."

4. Trained Animal Cat Management Officers & and traps NOT to be used by public

"In line with legislative changes proposed above, council Animal Management Officers need to be provided with training, equipment & facilities for the correct care and handling of cats. New cat management legislation and council by-laws are of no value if they are not policed and enforced, and councils must be resourced to undertake that function. Trained Animal Cat Management Officers must also be responsible for any use of traps in management programmes. It is not acceptable on animal welfare grounds for traps to be provided to members of the public."

5. Develop a code of practice for domestic cats

"An objective of this plan is to improve the welfare of domestic cats in our community. This includes ensuring that the development and implementation of management practices arising from this plan always gives due consideration to the welfare impacts of cats."

Recommendations

Please refer to section



TOR (j) any other related matters

Embrace RSPCA Australia 2018 cat terms & Definitions

It is strongly recommended that the New South Wales (NSW) government should embrace the cat terms: feral and domestic classes, and the latter has subclasses owned, semi owned or unowned, that were published for the Threatened Species Commissioner in 2018 by the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) Australia. Stray cats are NOT feral cats.

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The RSPCA South Australia and AWL Cat Management Plan 2019 includes the terms feral and domestic, with subclasses owned, semi owned and unowned. And the RSPCA SA is still encouraging "Separating feral from domestic cat management" in a recent email titled "Take Action in Animal Welfare!"

, subsection Establish a NSW domestic cat committee & develop a cat management strategy /plan page 6 of this submission for recommendations, including it is strongly recommended that a cat management strategy is developed, with appropriate stakeholders and domestic cat management is assigned to an ethical department, that an independent office for animal welfare is established, and that domestic cat management is managed and published independently of feral cat management.

It is strongly recommended that a code of practice is developed for domestic cats, and that this includes that members of the public are not encouraged nor supported to trap cats themselves as these activities are not monitored nor controlled, and cruelty cases cannot be prevented nor reported. Anecdotally, there appears many cases of cat haters in our communities on social media already trapping and destroying cats in inhumane ways. This is a key area that needs to be responsibly managed with any new implementations of managing cats.

It is strongly recommended that to rapidly and immediately reduce cat populations that low risk, scientifically proved desexing programs are rolled out ASAP in a rapid multi prong approach. Refer to section TOR (f) the effectiveness and benefits to implementing large scale cat desexing programs subsection Recommendations page 38 on the three-prong approach.

TOR (i) options for reducing the feral cat population

Related sections of this submission

Please refer to other sections where confusion may arise to differentiating between feral and domestic cats, including:

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War on Cats - unethical approaches to encouraging violence towards all cats page 9



War on Cats - unethical approaches to encouraging violence towards all cats

Some abandoned cats unfortunately are in hostile environments where cat haters abuse or harm roaming cats. These cats may go through a form of primary trauma and then suffer post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), similar to people in war zones. These cats may still be under the care of individuals or groups, the latter known as community-based cat rescuers or carers.

It is recommended that as part of the NSW government and local council engagement responsibilities that the environment of social media is addressed. Business organisations involved in saving our wildlife need to be taken to task for ethical standards and social licencing expectations and obligations in not spreading cat hate across all cats.

Community cat haters on social media and physical on the ground

It is of great concern that due to the "loose" cat terms and definitions in each state/ territory, cat haters will label any roaming cat as a feral cat and then harm or kill these cats. We see this often in threats or boast of past "dirty deeds" or other comments on social media, and community cat rescuers themselves experience abuse from community members on social media and in the streets.

There is evidence of many cat hater statements on social media including the following, which indicates the intentions for all cats to be attacked and potentially killed with inhumane acts of cruelty.

It appears many of these comments are fuelled with the "War on Cats" as initiated under the LNP, such comments originally appearing on the **Threatened Species Commissioner's** Facebook social media, and not being moderated or removed.

"Any cat out of it's yard-feral!" "Dead right"

"Any cat outside is a feral killing machine and should be dealt with accordingly"

"I feed cats to my Lace Monitors. They come in my yard. They are fair game" "got a mate who does the same"

"My scrub pythons dont mind a cat hear (sic) and there you just got to remember to take the bell of them first"

"If I seen a cat tussling with a snake I would stomp the cats head in and crack its skull with my boots f*ckem all get rid of them!"

"They should be used i n crayfish pots"

"A complete cat kill is the only answer"

"A good cat is a dead cat"

"Any cat outside not on a lead should be culled"

"Used to be a cat problem... Ran out of cats..."

"Feral cat definition 'cat is off the veranda"

Re the poisoned baits: "Can you lay these baits in urban areas for #domesticferals as well?"

Invasive Species social media posts appear to attract cat haters

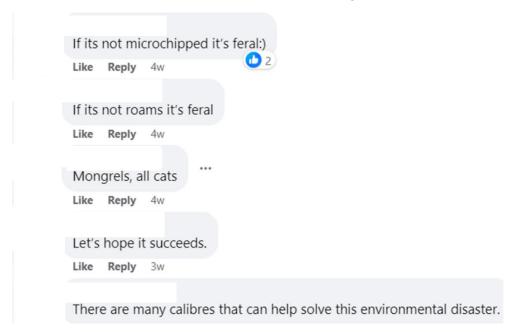
This is an example from 2023. This occurs regularly on the Invasive Species social media.

This photo, is it of the cat eating an already dead wallaby/roo rather than the cat killed the animal. It still attracted cat hater comments.





The types of comments for that post include blurring of feral cats and domestic cats:



Mandurah Tern Study that was often used by Invasive Species with misleading interpretations

The Mandurah Fairy Tern study was often quoted for the potential impact of cats on wildlife and the appropriateness of TNR approaches, neither of which were part of the original research study.

The study titled Cat Gets Its Tern: A Case Study of Predation on a Threatened Coastal Seabird [https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/9/7/445] has been often cited for the impacts of cats on wildlife and for a view that TNR is not effective by Invasive Species.

However, the actual underlying research includes: the research did not involve properly monitoring cats and certainly it did not involve assessing any Trap Neuter Return (TNR) activity; there were two cats sighted not just one, and the grey cat did not hunt; the nesting sites failed even the sites where

Page 50 of 56

November 2024 V1

cats did not visit; and a number of other factors which impacted the nesting sites mainly to do with human activity. These factors are never mentioned by Invasive Species posts nor representations.

This social media post attracted cat haters and their comments.

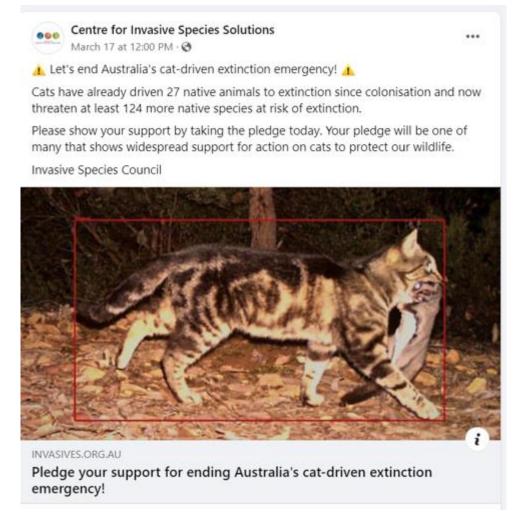


Invasive Species continued War on Cats encourages cat haters

Another example of Invasive Species who do not moderate cat hater comments on their posts, which uses emotions to ramp up their supporters for both donations and signatures to petitions. This tactic is not considered ethical and certainly not in line with social licensing expectations.

The following post, and posts like it have been circulating for months.





This post includes the following comments from cat haters which include physical cruelty and often against all cats. These are not moderated, i.e. IS admin do not explain that the item is about feral cats and not domestic cats, and neither are any threats or worse of violence about cruelty addressed.

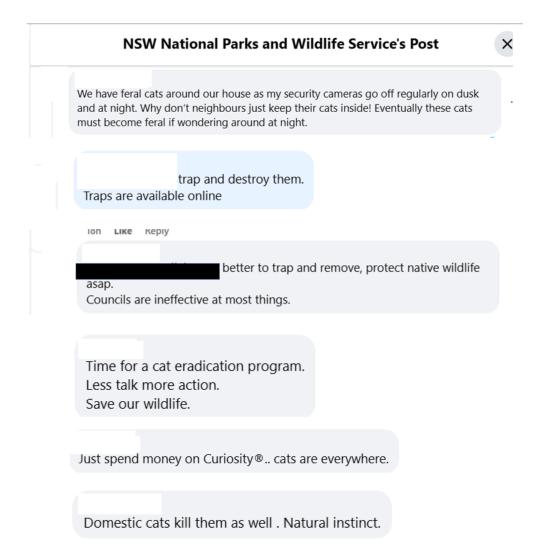






NSW National Parks and Wildlife

The post was on trapping feral cats, the comments on domestic cats were not moderated.





From the ABC Rural Facebook page

This page often has cat hater comments of the following type. Never moderated.

"Cats are vermin but make excellent crab pot bait"

"Good croc bait too"

"Neighbors cats make good hats"

"I have grown up on farms since I was young and understand the need to cull wild animals and don't have a problem with it. But when our neighbour hung our domestic cat on the fence to celebrate his catch... that was a whole different feeling! She had a cat collar on too!"

Social media examples from other social pages such as community or pet pages

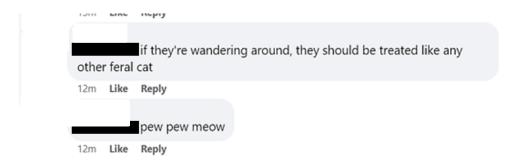
This is just a small selection of the type of comments seen often on social media. Again, the cat haters are busy against all cats, not just feral cats and blurring the lines.

It is not uncommon to see posts without many details which appear to be raised just to have cat hater comments added, given that this is repeated in a number of local community pages and the same comments raised by the same people it appears organised and premeditated.

This example post on a community page was understood to be posted to taunt cat owners. It was removed by the page admins but over 70 comments were posted, and a number by cat haters.



These comments are not moderated by administrators.





Unfortunately these cats that are unknown and unowned, are therefor feral cats. These need to be euthanised immediately to protect our natural wild life. As harsh as it sounds, I doubt anyone can defend its welfare legitimately.

Follow

Do u want to borrow my dogs gigi rips cats to shreds n she is free to borrow. Just quietly your problem would be solved although sometimes she leaves a mess \underline{Q}

Sorry (not sorry)..... That cat would've gone into a sealed plastic bag.

I have a crossbow u can use

NSW Legislation needs improvements & rapid exemptions to enable high intensity desexing programs & support with community cat rescuers page 9

Review position of 2014 bill for TNR for feral cats given new data is available

It recommended it is timely to review the 2014 NSW bill in relation to feral cats:

- a) as cat terms need to be more tightly classed in line with the RSPCA 2018 definitions etc.
- b) new evidence-based science is gathered on feral cats near urban areas (peri-urban areas),
- c) new evidence-based research is gathered on impacts to wildlife in specific LGAs and locations, and d) communities expecting humane methods for feral cats who most recently were domestic cats and it is difficult to assess if they are generation-old feral cats or recent domestic abandoned cats.⁸⁵

Culling feral cats has yet to be proven effective & there are worse impacts from other threats

"Despite culling of cats over many years, there is no evidence that culling has reduced overall numbers of feral cats in Australia, which is difficult in vast, remote landscapes (Stobo-Wilson et al. 2020)."86

"The mystery of the Top End's vanishing wildlife, and the unexpected culprits" includes:

it was "found that the collective influence of feral livestock — such as buffaloes, horses, cattle and donkeys — has been largely underestimated. Even at quite low numbers, feral livestock can have a big impact on our high-value conservation areas and the wildlife they support"

"The isolated areas where mammals are persisting have retained good-quality habitat, with a greater variety of plant species and dense shrubs and grasses."

2020.22.jr_.n-t.pdf

https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/researchpapers/Documents/feral-cats-do-trap-neuter-return-programs-work/Feral%20cats%20do%20trap%20neuter%20return%20programs%20work%20ebrief%2018%202014.pdf
https://petwelfare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/APWF-Submission-to-Inquiry-of-Feral-Domestic-Cats-



"Frequent, intense fires also play a big role."87

The Conversation, Stobo-Wilson A., Murphy B., Gillespie G., Dielenberg J. and Woinarski J. (2020) [https://theconversation.com/the-mystery-of-the-top-ends-vanishingwildlife-and-the-unexpected-culprits-143268]

The use of 1080 poison needs to cease

1080 is not a humane approach to killing any animal (RSPCA, Animal Liberation, APWF, Animal Justice Party) and was banned in other countries decades ago, the impacts of 1080 include convulsions likened by a vet to be electrocuted for up to 2 days, and it kills many non-targeted native animals. https://www.al.org.au/ban-1080 https://kb.rspca.org.au/knowledge-base/what-is-the-rspcas-view-on-using-1080-for-pest-animal-control/

Conservation fencing areas and "training" zones are supported

https://www.australianwildlife.org/conservation-fencing-provides-hope-for-threatened-wildlife/

Gene technology for supressing feral cat breeding is supported

https://www.australianwildlife.org/our-work/feral-cat-and-fox-control

https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/pdf/inforce/2024-07-30/act-1998-087 https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/pdf/inforce/2024-07-04/sl-2018-0441

[&]quot;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 [Banyule Council research]