

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.

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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;**
 - **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.**

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.

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

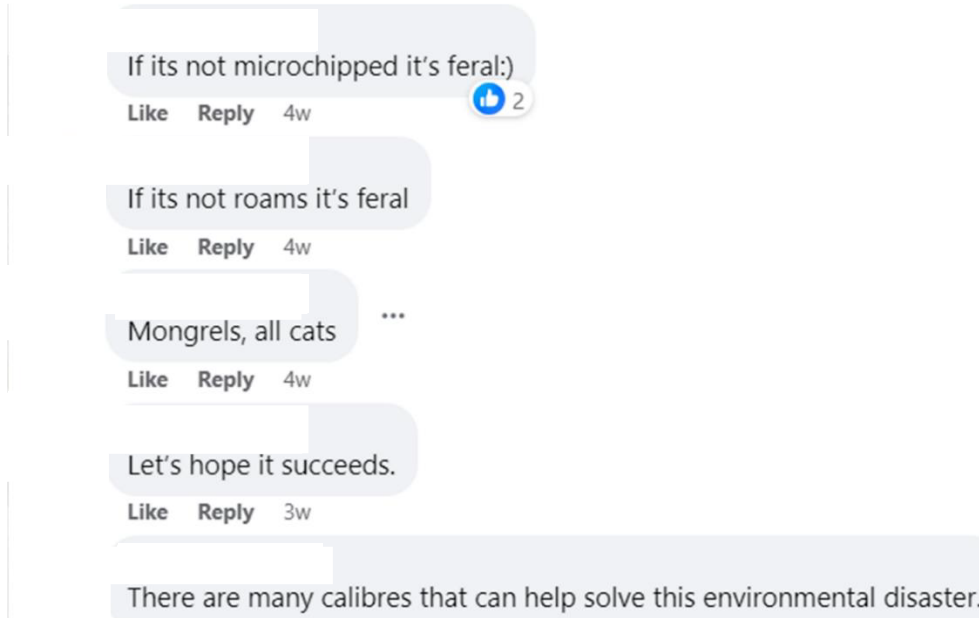
¹⁴ Banyule Council desexing program <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-2615/14/11/1615>

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.

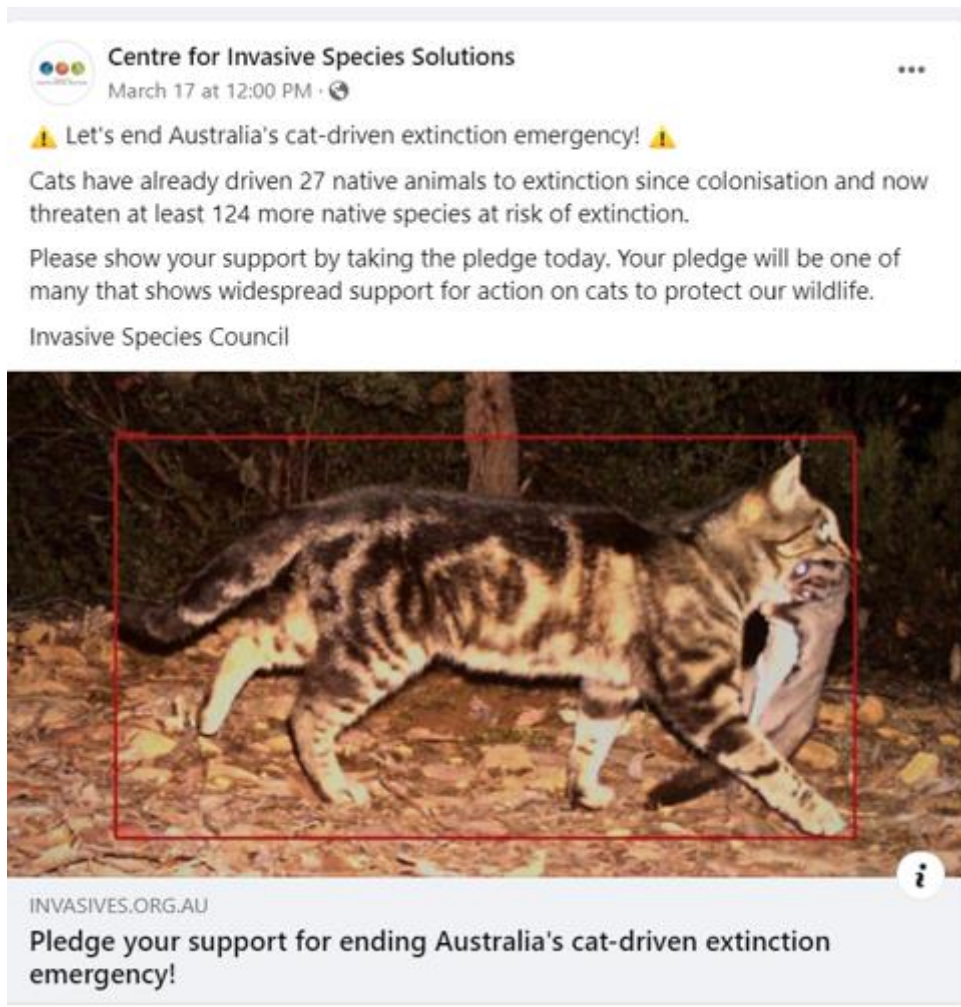
This social media post attracted cat haters and their comments.



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.



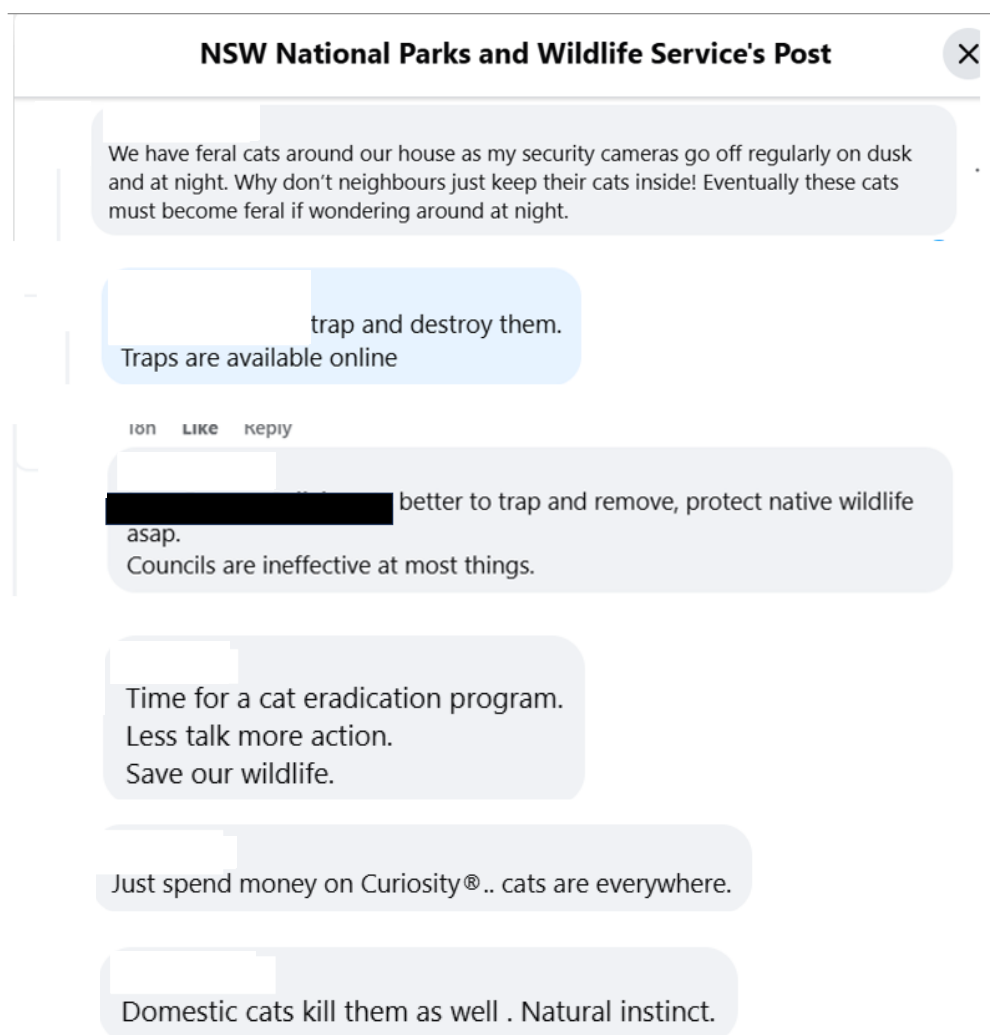
This post includes the following comments from cat haters which include physical cruelty and often against all cats. These are not moderated, i.e. IS admin do not explain that the item is about feral cats and not domestic cats, and neither are any threats or worse of violence about cruelty addressed.





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

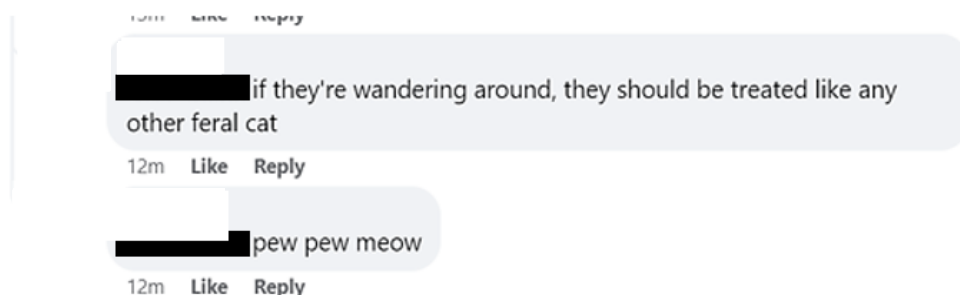
This is just a small selection of the type of comments seen often on social media. Again, the cat haters are busy against all cats, not just feral cats and blurring the lines.

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 🙄🙄

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

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>

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.

⁴⁸ <https://aiam.org.au/About-us>

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 socio-economic 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.

“...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.

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

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.

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

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

HELP needed pls - TNR required

This is a feral colony located on [REDACTED] of 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



[REDACTED]
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 💕

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 🙏



#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.



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 ageⁱ,
 - 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 researchⁱⁱ including the financial case for change initiated several years ago indicate a

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;
 - 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”⁷³ includes relevant information, including:

1. 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>

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.**”*

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

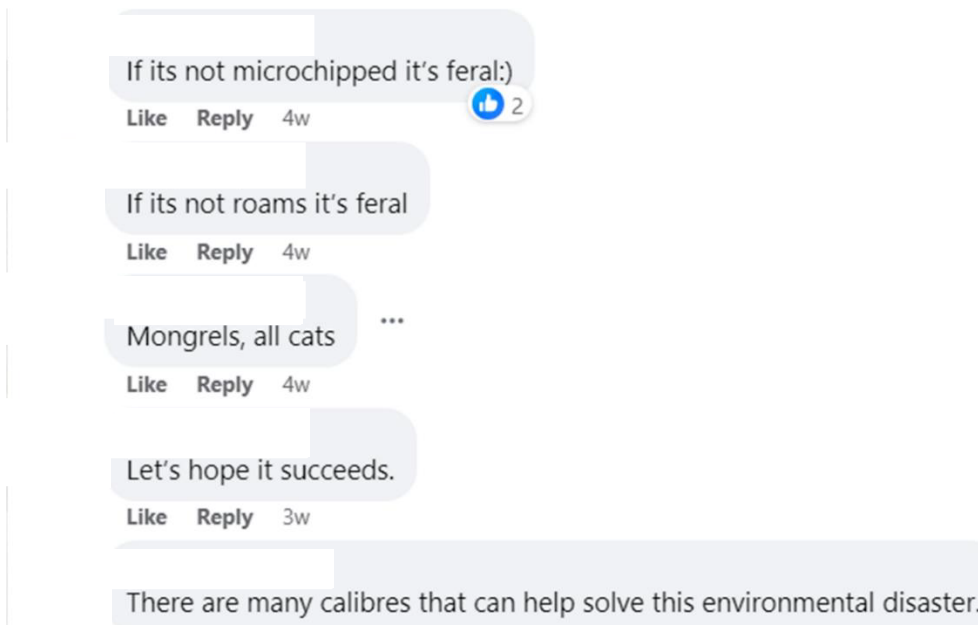
"An objective of this plan is to improve the welfare of domestic cats in our community. This includes ensuring that the development and implementation of management practices arising from this plan always gives due consideration to the welfare impacts of cats."

Recommendations

Please refer to section



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.

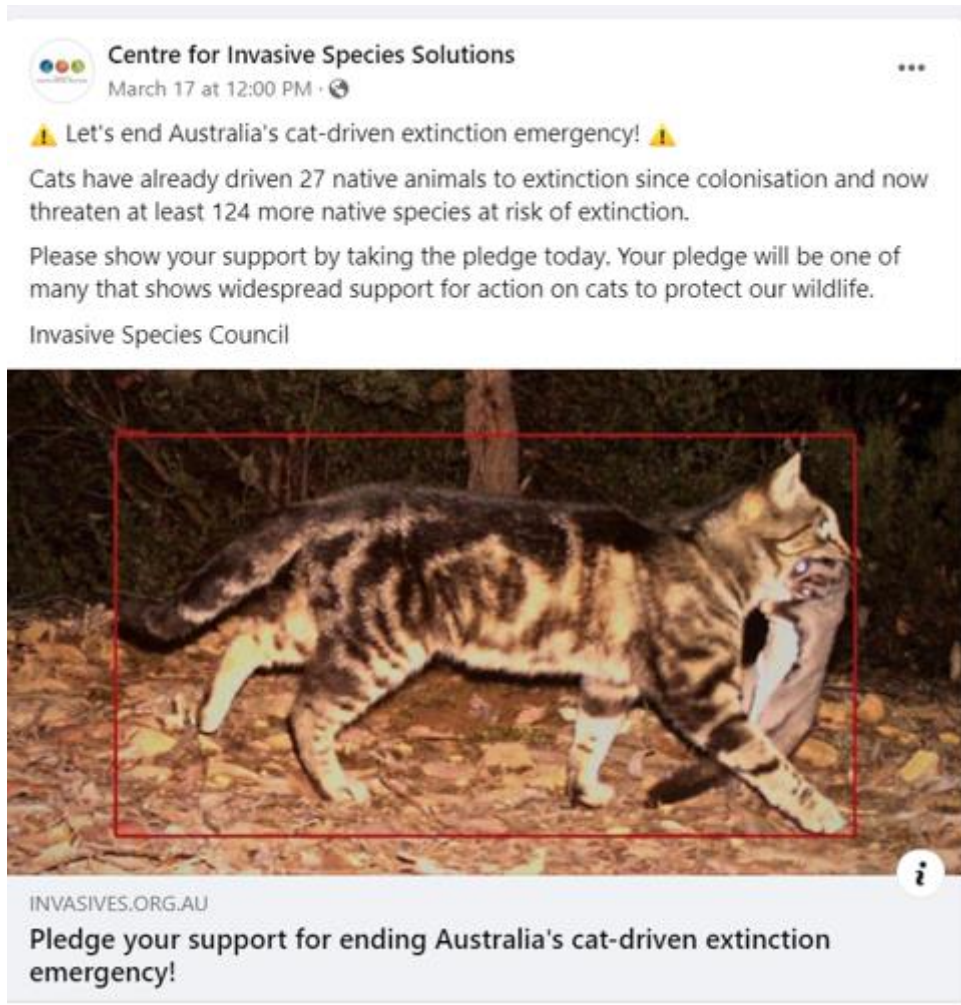
This social media post attracted cat haters and their comments.



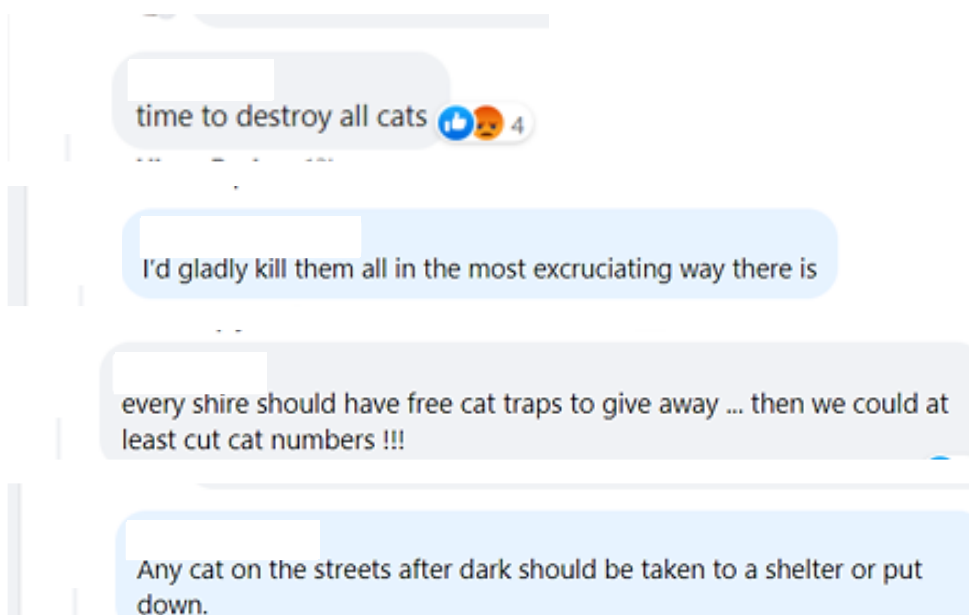
Invasive Species continued War on Cats encourages cat haters

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.



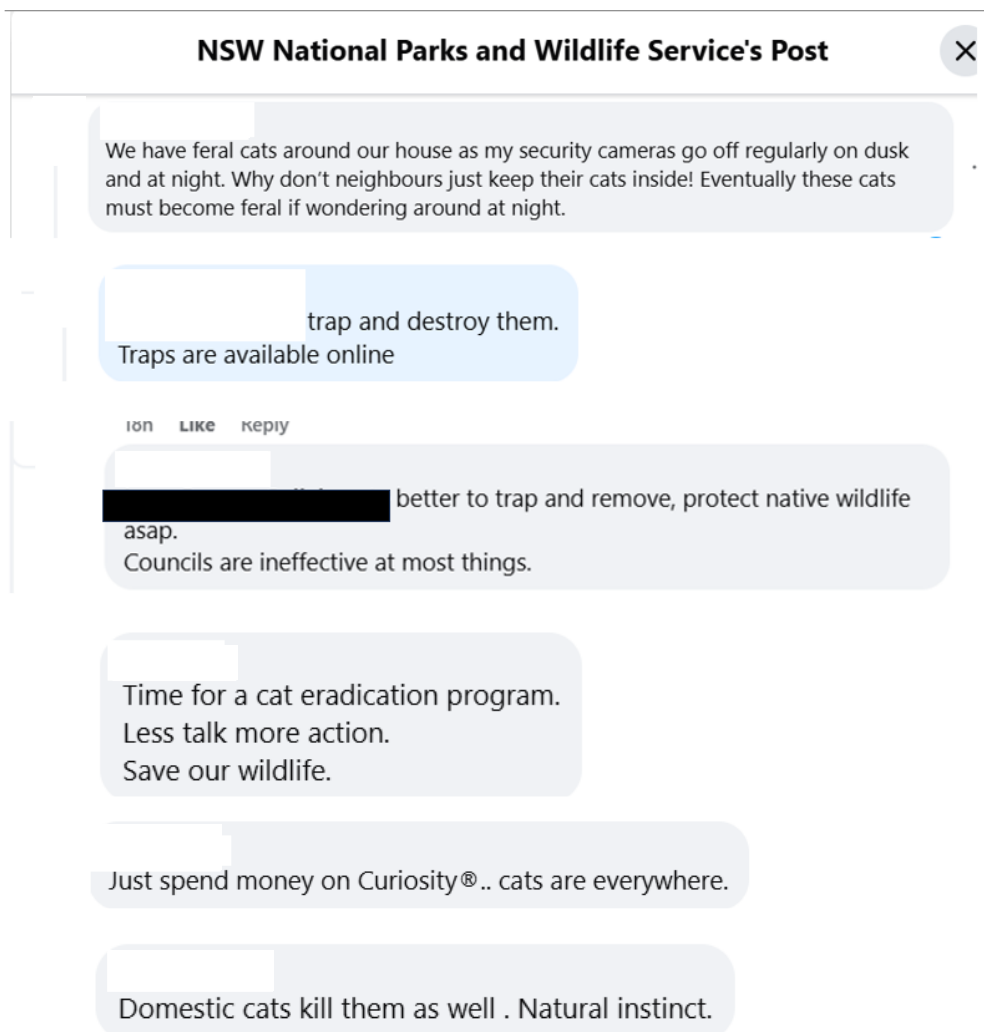
This post includes the following comments from cat haters which include physical cruelty and often against all cats. These are not moderated, i.e. IS admin do not explain that the item is about feral cats and not domestic cats, and neither are any threats or worse of violence about cruelty addressed.





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

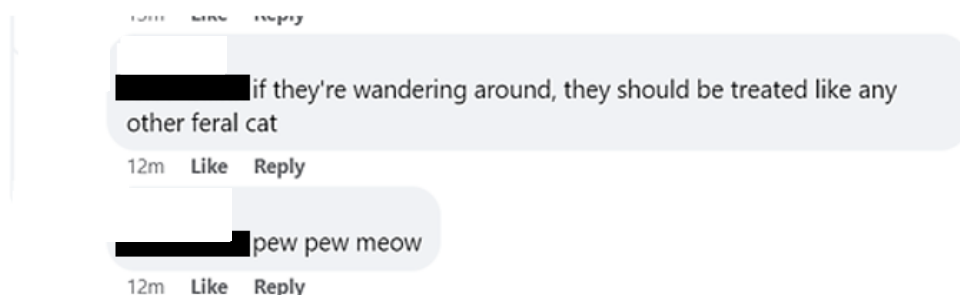
This is just a small selection of the type of comments seen often on social media. Again, the cat haters are busy against all cats, not just feral cats and blurring the lines.

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.



"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-vanishing-wildlife-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 suppressing feral cat breeding is supported

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

ⁱ <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>

ⁱⁱ 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]

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-vanishing-wildlife-and-the-unexpected-culprits-143268>