

SUBMISSION ON FERAL AND DOMESTIC CATS

AUSTRALIA'S CATASTROPHE

I set out below a few comments for your consideration

Feral Cats

When I first came to Australia I never knew that **cats** were a **predatory species** devastating native wildlife. I am saddened that not enough has been done to protect unique native wildlife from this invasive species.

There are now an estimated to be over 2 million domestic cats and over 20 million feral cats in Australia.

Feral cats have been have been an ecological disaster. They have been linked to the decline and extinction of a number of unique native animals including marsupial and placental mammals specie. Feral cats in particularly have caused the loss of nesting birds and small mammals.

Feral cats have even hampered attempts to re-introduce threatened native species back into areas where they have become extinct.

It has also been identified that domesticated cats prey on native animals. The lack of owner control of domestic cats allows free roaming and is a feedstock for feral cats.

Biological Control

A highly contagious cat virus not seen in Sydney for 40 years resurfaced in a western Sydney pound. Blacktown Council's Animal Holding Facility. The facility closed its doors after the outbreak of feline panleukopenia virus, often referred to as feline enteritis.

I question why the use of a virus such as the above enteritis has not been developed to be very specific to cats, in order to rid Australia of the scourge of the “European” feral cats.

This question is especially puzzling considering the myxomatosis virus was intentionally introduced in the 1950s to control wild “European” rabbit populations.

Legislation

The NSW Department of Primary Industry has not declared CATS as being PEST ANIMALS under the Local Land Services Act 2013. Therefore Local Governments have not power to eradicate domestic or feral cats

The NSW COMPANION PETS ACT to has no effective constraints on domestic cats that are allowed to freely roam and prey on wildlife without control under this Act.

Australian Government Legislation

The Australian Government has no legislative responsibility for animal welfare but coordinates the development and implementation of an Australian Animal Welfare Strategy.

This strategy appears to be limited in scope, otherwise the welfare of native wildlife would be paramount in dealing with the threat of feral cats. State legislation would appear to have failed to provide the necessary protection of native wildlife against feral cats.

The Australian Government's Biosecurity Act 2013 states, "This Act is about managing diseases and pests that may cause harm to human, animal or plant health or the environment." Surely feral cats are pests that harm animal health and the environment.

The Biosecurity Act 2013 provides for the Governor General to declare biosecurity emergencies. Part 1 gives the Agriculture Minister special powers to deal with biosecurity emergencies.

I suggest that Australian Government legislation is needed to protect native wildlife from the predations of invasive pests such as feral cats. At the very least the existing State legislation should be amended to provide much greater control over domestic and feral cats.

Threat Abatement Plans

No doubt our political leaders and their departments have convinced themselves that they have effectively dealt with Australia's Catastrophe by issuing lengthy abatement plans, which have been fully researched by scientists and public servants. In typical fashion the conclusions of new plans are similar to previous abatement plans issued.

However the abatement plans contain more obfuscation and lack of effective action that needs funding to reduce significantly the 20 million feral cats in my lifetime.

I suggest that a in the words of "Sir Humphrey" someone in government makes a "Courageous Decision" and a biological control is funded, developed and used to deal with this wildlife catastrophe.