



Birds Queensland

A business of
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Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia

This submission is made on behalf of Birds Queensland. Birds Queensland has around 850 members who have an interest in the conservation of birds and their habitat.

This submission is focussed on the development and implementation of national strategies to better control cats with a resultant reduction in the adverse impact of cats on Australian biodiversity.

There are now numerous current papers and reports on the prevalence of cats and their impact on our wildlife with a review being recently published in the scientific literature (CSIRO Publishing, Wildlife Research, <https://doi.org/10.1071/WR19174>) and in a summary published in The Conversation (<https://theconversation.com/one-cat-one-year-110-native-animals-lock-up-your-pet-its-a-killing-machine-138412>). It is important to recognise that the problem does not just lie with feral cats and that domestic cats are as great, if not a greater problem as outlined in the above reference.

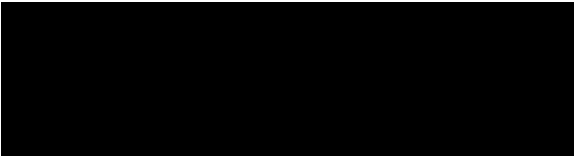
Given the extent of this information, our submission will primarily be focussed on points (g) and (h) in the terms of reference.

Cats will clearly continue to be common pets and important companion animals for humans. We recognise the important benefits of cat and pet ownership. Indeed, many of our members own cats. It is also clearly possible for cats, humans and wildlife to co-exist without the high toll on native wildlife. There are numerous articles and websites that outline how this can be achieved <https://theconversation.com/dont-let-them-out-15-ways-to-keep-your-indoor-cat-happy-138716> <https://theconversation.com/ferals-strays-pets-how-to-control-the-cats-that-are-eating-our-wildlife-31182>. However, current research shows that 70% of pet cats are allowed to roam, confirming there is still significant work to be done on changing public perceptions and behaviour relating to free-roaming pet cats in Australia. Hence there is scope to better disseminate and target information on the benefits of cat containment, for cats, people and wildlife.

We strongly urge the Commonwealth, State Governments and Councils to develop and implement a national cat management strategy, working with groups such as the Australian Veterinary Association, the RSPCA and cat protection groups. Such a strategy need not be expensive to implement but requires commitment at all levels. The implementation of such a strategy must not be seen as anti-cat. This has the potential to make a significant difference to biodiversity loss in Australia.

The strategy should include but not be limited to:

- A public education Program that explains the benefits and reasons to keep cats contained at all times, not just at night. This could include articles in Council and Cat Protection Society and similar newsletters, in local papers and in wildlife protection newsletters, and through websites and social media.
- Working with the Australian Veterinary Association (<https://www.vetvoice.com.au/articles/safe-cat-safe-wildlife/>), RSPCA (<https://safeandhappycats.com.au/>) and Cat Protection groups (<https://catprotection.org.au/responsible-cat-ownership/>) to help further develop and disseminate their cat management policies.
- The development of brochures and flyers that can be given to people who purchase cats from breeders and pet shops, and who visit veterinary clinics. Such a brochure has been produced and distributed by Birds Queensland (https://birdsqueensland.org.au/cat_safety_brochure.php).
- Mandatory Australia wide registration of domestic cats in a similar manner to the registration of dogs. This is already mandatory in some jurisdictions.
- Mandatory Australia wide microchips for all domestic cats with possible subsidisation. This is already mandatory in some jurisdictions.
- Mandatory neutering or spaying with possible subsidisation. This is already mandatory in some jurisdictions.
- Support for cat free neighbourhoods through the development of principles and guidelines.
- Support for the collection of stray cats and cats that roam out of their yards in a similar manner to which dogs are controlled.
- Strengthening protection for registered and microchipped cats through support for a single National pet microchip database (<https://petchipregistry-au.info/>).



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