

Submission to the Inquiry into the Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy into the problem of Feral and Domestic Cats in Australia.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this Submission.

I have never made a Submission before so please excuse me if it is not up to the standard required or normally received.

While I believe that it will be almost impossible to eliminate both domestic and feral cats from Australia, we need to be very determined to manage both issues very firmly with measurable actions and outcomes.

I would like to start out by saying that I was a cat owner for 20 years when I lived in suburban Perth. My cats were always in the house, especially at night, and very close to home in our secure garden the rest of the time. I love cats but the damage they do to our native birds and small marsupials is absolutely devastating.

For the past 5 years, I have been living in an area which is designated as special residential, blocks are a minimum of 1 acre, and is within a designated Conservation Area, on 1.7 acres of established trees and native plants. Unfortunately I have found so many "bits" of beautiful birds killed by local cats. It makes me very sad and angry, and who knows how many small marsupials are being killed, we don't know because we never see them unless they are found inside a cat that has been trapped.

My neighbours have lived here for 37 years, since the land was cleared for housing, it was originally virgin bush. They say that they used to see so many marsupials and lizards, ring tail possums and brush tails at that time. We still have a few Brushtails around but most of the smaller marsupials and lizards have disappeared. We also find Bobtail Lizards which have been attacked by cats sadly.

Obviously as blocks were sold and people moved, it changed the environment but mainly people have still got lots of bush and old trees on their blocks, providing good habitat. However, we non cat owning neighbours, see cats roaming around all the time, some with collars, some without, at all times of the day and night. Very frustrating.

Domestic Cats

In my experience, most cat owners don't actually believe or don't care about the damage cats do, out of sight is out of mind. So leaving things to choice, education and conscience won't work.

I regularly see "lost loved cat" adverts on local social media where people say their cat went out and hasn't come home...so what is that cat doing...it may have been injured, been run over, been poisoned, surely the owners think about this and would keep their cat safe.....no they don't and that is why we have feral cats and domestic cats killing local wildlife.

We need a very strong structured program throughout local Shires that is actually enforced. Shires need financial assistance from the Federal and State Governments to fund these

Programs, working alongside environmental organisations and NGO's and Catchment Councils. It needs to be a joint effort as this is too big a problem to tackle individually.

These are my suggestions for consideration:

- All cats must be registered with local Shires
- All cats must have sterilisation certificates unless registered breeders.
- All cat owners must have approved Cat runs which are registered and checked by local shire rangers as to being secure
- Cats bought from breeders must be registered prior to sale and follow up done to confirm sterilization at appropriate age.
- Cats bought from rescue shelters and other organisations : Organisations must ask for proof that the new owner has a cat run for the cat, which is registered with the Shire.
- Central sterilization registers kept by Shires and shared between Shires
- Cats only to be allowed outside into secure cat runs in both the urban and rural areas
- Cat traps should be used extensively by shires to catch both domestic and feral animals.
- Private residents should be allowed to use a their own cat trap and notify Ranger if they catch a cat
- Shires could run a volunteer program through rate payers and NGO and Environmental organisations to assist with daily food baiting and checking of the traps so that there is not too much stress on the local Ranger Service.
- If a cat is found in the trap then the Ranger is notified so the cat can be dealt with.
- If trapped and not registered will be euthanized
- If trapped and registered, owner is heavily fined for allowing cat out of secure cat run or house. Told that if their cat is caught in a trap again it will be euthanised immediately.
- Restricted areas, no cats allowed on property titles in semi urban and bushland areas designated as having high native fauna values.

Cat traps: On checking with the Shire re the hiring and use of a cat trap from them, I have been told this:

You must inform your neighbours if you are putting out a cat trap...!

You can only have it for a week free of charge then there is a weekly cost which is not that small and should not actually be the ratepayer's responsibility.

Feral Cats

I totally agree with the programs being run around Western Australia, in particular in the Shark Bay region, where large areas of land are being fenced and baited. The answer is not that complicated, it's simple, we need to do this all over Australia.

However, the environmental organisations running these programs need to be supported financially instead of being dependent on membership and donor subscriptions to fund this massive responsibility of trying to protect and preserve our biodiversity of species.