

Thank you to the government of N.S.W for the opportunity to make comment in relation to the natural resources commission's - Feral cat management - Pest animal management review Draft report - file:///C:/Users/user/Downloads/Fact+sheet+-+Feral+cat+management%20(1).pdf

The commission recommends.-

- The national Feral Cat Threat Abatement Plan aims for reduced stray and feral cat abundances in areas around human habitation.-

In response, I along with many other community members believe that in order to begin to reduce 'feral' and 'urban' cat populations, it necessary that - 'domesticated' cat populations are also managed and considering that the 'feral' cat strategy's chosen methods of culling 'feral' cats - (poisoning, baiting, shooting, dogs etc.) - cannot be applied to urban or peri urban locations, where domesticated cats, animals and human beings reside - 'domesticated' and 'urban' cat populations need be managed via therefore humane methods, applicable to those jurisdictions and focused on deterring owners from continuing to 'abandon' cats to urban and feral cat populations and when addressing 'domesticated' cats it also as important to focus on - deterring owners from abandoning cats to shelters and adding to the current 'intake' and 'euthanasia' statistics of cats in the state of N.S.W.- (here for example is the rspca's intake and euthanasia of cats report for 2014 - 2015 - (not including AWL or councils etc. statistics.) whereby - (9148) - cats in the state of N.S.W were euthanized. -

[http://www.rspca.org.au/sites/default/files/website/The-facts/Statistics/RSPCA\\_Australia-Report\\_on\\_animal\\_outcomes-2014-2015.pdf](http://www.rspca.org.au/sites/default/files/website/The-facts/Statistics/RSPCA_Australia-Report_on_animal_outcomes-2014-2015.pdf) - (the highest rate by far, in Australia) .-

In order to begin to manage cat populations and the current shelter rates for cats in the state of N.S.W, it imperative therefore that a solid - cat management plan for the keeping of 'domesticated' cats be implemented. The government need launch a state-wide campaign focused on supporting (rather than based on penalisation) and educating' owners on the importance of 'safeguarding' = (identifying + desexing) their cats and becoming 'responsible' owners = 'responsible' communities = a 'responsible' state of N.S.W. The government need align with owners, councils, shelters, rescues, vets, pet shops, breeders and the community at large and bring together the state in a collaborative effort - to play their part in paving the way to becoming 'responsible' owners = 'responsible' communities = a 'responsible' state of N.S.W.

The commission recommends - \* NSW lags many Australian jurisdictions that have tightened the management of cats through measures including, limiting numbers, compulsory desexing, breeder registration and confinement.

Here is an outline of what I, along with other community members believe to be 'key' points that need addressing in order to begin to build a solid management plan for the keeping of 'domesticated' cats.- (most of these points can also be applied to companion dogs).

\*\* Cat management Plan \* -

1/. -\* Reducing unnecessary BREEDING – \*Breeder registration and Breeder regulation\*. -

With the implementation of - Breeder registration + regulation – cat populations and current shelter statistics in the state of N.S.W can begin to be addressed. Owners who for example intend on breeding should be required to register as breeders and owners who are breeding and who do not bother to register as breeders, should incur fines and be ordered to either register as breeders or desex their cats. - \*(it is important to note that as the campaign grows and communities become more 'aware' - \*Community Pressure\* will begin to play a 'key' role in promoting - 'responsible' ownership and breeder registration - as awareness grows so too will intolerance within communities for irresponsible ownership and unregistered breeding).

\*'Responsible' ownership + the sale of future generation cats –

With the implementation of breeder registration/regulation owners who 'purchase' (future generation) cats that are not yet - 'safeguarded' - desexed and who do not intend to register as breeders (by a certain date.) should be

expected to provide current i.d. and sign a form that requires them to 'desex' their cats, by a certain date. Once desexed the owner should report a ref. number to the council and if they do not do so by a certain date, should incur fines and be ordered to either register as a breeder or desex their cats. Alternatively cats could also be desexed prior to sale – (depending on the age of the kitten/cat).

\*- Responsible ownership + current owners.-

I am not certain how successful mandatory desexing would go with 'current' owners but with the implementation of breeder registration/regulation (fines for breeding) plus government initiatives focused on ongoing Educating (+ \*growing community pressure\*) – irresponsible owners and unregistered breeders will soon "get the message" – (as 'awareness' grows so too will intolerance within communities for 'irresponsible' ownership and 'unregistered' breeding.)\*

\*- Responsible ownership + vetting cats -"Bridging the gap –

In order for any plan to be successful the necessary foundations need be applied in order to 'enable' owners to become – 'responsible' owners and 'safeguard' their cats – by identifying, desexing and just as importantly -'vetting' - (illness and injury) their cats, where required\*

\*\* Desexing + Identification + general vetting\*\* - \*(Finance.)\*-

In order for owners to become 'responsible' owners and 'safeguard' their cats they need to have the finances to do so – low and average income earners often struggle to budget for or afford the funds for the unstandardized and most often expensive 'upfront' costs of vetting services. – ('responsible' ownership, general and emergency vetting services.).

\*This issue can be resolved through the government offering either - 1.- low cost (high volume) - desexing services - (payment options.) - \*(Key)\* or through offering – a \*Finance\*- service -(low rates)\*- (high turnover) - covering the 'Upfront' costs of vetting services (owners paying back accounts 'overtime' via instalments).- Insurance does exist but does not cover the 'upfront' costs of vetting services and 'Vetpay finance also exists but only caters for accounts above – (\$300.00) and owners expected to pay a deposit –\*Equally important is the fact that owners are also currently unable to access finance for 'General' or 'Emergency' vetting services– (illness + injury etc.) - (This issue impacts significantly on the overall welfare outcomes for cats (companion animals) in the state of N.S.W).

\*\* If the Government were to offer a -\*\*Finance\*\*- service - covering the 'upfront' costs – ('responsible' ownership + 'General' + 'Emergency' vetting - services) - below – (\$300.00) – would make all the difference in 'enabling' owners to become 'responsible' owners and vet their cats.- eg. - Govpay..

\*\*'Govpay'.. - could also be utilized by owners to assist in paying fines and fees to councils and shelters when for eg. reclaiming lost cats. This will in place of deterring owners instead assist and support owners in reclaiming their cats.

\*(Accidental litters – in the meantime whilst owners adjust to the new measures that might be being introduced and considering that the focus of this campaign should be based on 'support' rather than penalisation – owners of accidental litters – should in the meantime feel safe enough to take their unwanted litters of kittens to shelters and rescues in place of them being abandoned to urban and feral cat populations. Shelters and rescues can use this opportunity to furthermore inform owners about the new legislation and measures that have been implemented and the importance of becoming 'responsible owners' and 'safeguarding' – (desexing + identifying) their cats - it also an opportunity to inform owners of the services that are available to assist them in identifying and desexing their cats. However if an owner is a repeat offender they should incur fines and be ordered to register as a breeder or desex their cats – (as awareness grows so too will intolerance in communities for irresponsible ownership + unregistered breeding.).

\*\*Identification.-

In order to reduce the number of cats adding to urban and feral cat populations and/or ending up in shelters as just another statistic it also important that the government educate owners on the importance of 'identifying' their cats – If a lost pet is sighted/found and is identified they can be reunited with their owners rather than being abandoned. In my personal opinion i believe due to the safety (the fact that sometimes microchips do not work) plus potential health risks microchips can pose that owners should have an option of either micro chipping or collaring their cats.

Another reason i believe that micro chipping should not be the only option for identifying cats is because quite often shelter workers etc .are not in fact obliged to check for microchips and are allowed to euthanize cats if he/she shows any signs of aggression. This clearly dangerous for the general welfare of cats considering that nearly all cats show signs of aggression (fear) especially when caught in a trap and according to the rspca's 'euthanasia' stats one of the top reasons for euthanizing cats is for 'behavioural' reasons. – (NS.W) - 2014 – 2015. - [http://www.rspca.org.au/sites/default/files/website/The-facts/Statistics/RSPCA\\_Australia-Report\\_on\\_animal\\_outcomes-2014-2015.pdf](http://www.rspca.org.au/sites/default/files/website/The-facts/Statistics/RSPCA_Australia-Report_on_animal_outcomes-2014-2015.pdf) - (I cannot find the laws relating to scanning microchips in N.S.W but here is Tasmania's laws for eg. relating to scanning microchips as an example. CAT MANAGEMENT ACT 2009 (NO. 89 OF 2009) - SECT 22. Scanning of cats at cat management facilities - [http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol\\_act/cma2009125/s22.html](http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/legis/tas/consol_act/cma2009125/s22.html) - “(2) Despite subsection (1), a person does not have to scan a cat if – (a) the cat behaves aggressively towards the person or any other person;“).

- (This clearly, another reason why it important that owners have an option of either microchipping or collaring their cats.)

**\*\*restrictive cat ownership policy\*\***-

I think for the promotion of – 'Identification' - to be successful at this stage and until such a time cat populations and shelter statistics begin to reduce that the introduction of restrictive cat ownership policy could serve at this stage to hinder rather than assist in reducing the number of cats being abandoned to cat populations and/or shelter statistics in the state of N.S.W - If an owner does for eg. own 4 cats but resides in a council where only a 2 cat policy exists, they might be reluctant to 'microchip' - all of their cats, in fear of being penalised and this effectively therefore putting the welfare of their cats at risk - 'collaring' therefore needing to once again be an option, in order to keep cats protected.

**\*\*Reclaiming pets - Encouragement + \$ Payment options\*\***:

When owners 'reclaim' their unidentified cats from shelters etc. and considering the focus of this campaign should be about support rather than penalisation at this stage and so as not to deter owners from 'reclaiming' their pets from shelters – owners should ideally be given - 'payment options' for - fees and or fines incurred. Payment options or - (Govpay..) will safeguard cats so that if an owner does not have access to funds on the day, they are still able to 'reclaim' their cat.

**\*\*Unclaimed - lost pets\*\*** – In order to reduce the number of 'unclaimed' or 'surrendered' cats from becoming just another statistic it would be ideal if the government also promoted - “don't shop – adopt”.- (2nd chance) - shelters + rescues. - it would also be ideal if the government could assist shelters and rescues more and the rspca need also have their enforcement abilities strengthened and brought into alignment with current and future cat (companion animal) welfare legislation.

- \*(Collaring kittens below 6 or so months of age should not be allowed, in case they get lost and end up outgrowing their collars - owners should therefore have the option of microchipping or keeping their kittens indoors, until old enough to be collared.)

**\*\*Locating lost cats** – Clearly where a cat is lost but is 'identified' - can be reunited with their owner but in cases where a cat is not yet identified or on the off chance a microchip is faulty or out-dated - (Owners should be educated on how important it is keep their cats microchip details updated.) – owners need be able to locate their lost cats.

One central phone line\*\* - In regards to owners 'locating' their - 'Lost' - cats, many owners at this stage do not even know where to begin considering they are not only expected to contact their local councils but the awl, rspca along with their local vets and considering that - "Time is of the essence" and the fact that current shelter systems for reuniting owners with lost cats under resourced - I think it would be more efficient and easier for owners to 'Report' and "Locate" - 'lost' cats if there were only - One central phone-line. It would make it easier and quicker for owners to locate 'lost' cats and also therefore reduce the number of cats at risk in shelters.

- (The central phone line important also because for eg. if a 'unidentified' cats gets lost they could be wandering for weeks or months before being handed into a shelter - by this stage the owners could have lost hope, however if owners 'report' (+ supply photo - on line) of their lost cats and their cats are handed into shelters months later, the owners can be contacted.).

\*\*Social media: - Lost + Found - community based - cat pages - The promotion of community based - Lost and Found (or sighted) cat pages on social media to assist owners in locating lost pets in the community.

-\*Euthanasia policy\* - owners should be informed on 'euthanasia' policy so that they become aware of the 'urgency' to - 'safeguard' - (identify) their cats. Cats in most states can be euthanized within hours or days of being handed into a shelter - this is of great concern to the community who are aware of these policies. The days in which cats are held before being euthanized should be extended and all owners should be informed on shelter policy.

4). -\*Education\* - (when the penny drops) - every successful plan is underpinned by an ongoing - Educational campaign. - A government/state initiative therefore focused on not only 'informing' owners of the changes being made in relation to the keeping of 'domesticated' cats but also focused on 'Educating' owners, en masse, on the importance of becoming - responsible owners = responsible communities = A responsible state of N.S.W. - The messages that need get through to owners - including the negative impacts that cats that are not yet 'safeguarded' are having on our communities and the overall welfare outcomes for cats in the state of N.S.W. - Ongoing education therefore reaching out to the masses through avenues like the media and social media, plus for eg. a television add created to educate the state in relation to the current issues that exist relating to cat populations and shelter stats in the state of N.S.W and an add that demonstrates the 2 very different potential outcomes for 'unidentified' and 'undesexed' cats and 'identified' and 'desexed' cats, in the state of N.S.W.

\*\*Urban cat populations + communities.

In order to begin to reduce 'feral' cat populations, it imperative that 'urban' cat populations are also managed. Urban cats being those populations that were/are abandoned or lost and continue to breed in urban and peri urban locations. Considering the feral cat strategy cannot be applied in urban environments where domesticated cats, animals and human beings reside - alternative measures need once again be applied.

The most humane and effective way to protect communities and manage urban cat populations is through the method known as -TNR. Trap, neuter and return - a method that is utilized to stabilize and reduce and therefore manage cat populations (+ effectively preventing - potentially - dozens/hundreds/thousands of cats from continuing to breed at those locations). The cats are monitored by selected community members and share a common food source - (these cat populations therefore having limited impacts on wildlife) - the cats are trapped, neutered and some homed (- kittens vetted + homed) with some adults returned to the location in order to protect the communities, that reside at those locations. Cats are territorial and prevent other cat colonies from moving into these locations. So, via the process of natural attrition and avoiding the 'vacuum' effect - whereby cat colonies are well known for moving into locations and filling the void (where colonies have been removed) and where food sources exist - the welfare of communities can be protected.

It important to consider the well-being of communities when dealing with 'urban' cat populations, especially considering the fact that communities may not necessarily have the resources to continue trapping for the rest of their lives - methods like Tnr therefore an effective, along with sustainable option designed to manage 'urban'

cat populations and protect communities and should therefore in the community's eyes be an option the government does approve and support.

The alternative method to Tnr in urban locations is trapping and (checking for ownership) +/- getting euthanized. The problem with trapping and getting euthanized is the dangers this process can pose on domesticated cats and especially considering a management plan for the keeping of domesticated cats has not as yet been implemented. So by implementing a solid 'domesticated' cat management plan for the keeping of domesticated cats and managing 'urban' cat populations, will help draw a clear line in the sand in relation to clarifying the differences (rights + obligations) between the feral cat strategy and the management of 'domesticated' and 'urban' cat populations.

The other issues that exist in relation to trapping and getting euthanized include -The process of trapping and getting euthanized does not necessarily protect communities, considering other cat colonies may move into these locations to fill the void and the other issue in relation to trapping + getting euthanized being that councils and the rspca are under-resourced in relation to trapping, meaning that the onus for trapping is therefore left on all the citizens whose chosen method is trap and euthanize - to do all the work in their communities – this not only unfair but also unrealistic considering that not all this crew may necessarily be able or bothered to do all the work in the communities.

-Tnr should for these reasons therefore be an option available to concerned community members, who wish to protect their communities. How can preventing cats from continuing to breed in urban locations - not be a good thing and especially when these cats have minimal impacts on wildlife at these locations. Tnr is not therefore a form of 'abandonment' but rather an effective method that works to protect communities, by preventing cats from continuing to breed at these locations. So by denying the community the opportunity to Tnr and therefore ignoring these populations is in the community's eyes in reality the ultimate form of 'abandonment'. The community asks that Tnr, for the above reasons be approved by the government, as an option available to citizens, who wish to manage urban cat populations and protect their communities

- The plan encourages state and territory governments to provide for effective management of domestic cats through cat confinement regulations -

I personally think that night curfews are a good idea considering cats mostly sleep during the day and that wildlife at minimal risk in urban and peri urban locations considering that domesticated cats are fed by their owners and urban cats also usually have access to regular food sources.

I, along with many other community members are concerned that 24 hr curfews could furthermore exasperate the situation relating to 'abandonment' issues (and the anti-cat sentiment) that currently exist, if the government were to not at the very least offer subsidies for owners to assist them in constructing enclosures and that by mandating confinement without for eg. subsidies, the government risk the mass dump of cats (adding to urban and feral cat populations +/- shelter stats.) - because in reality many owners are either low or average income earners and may not necessarily have the funds or resources (materials or housing) to construct enclosures and may for these reasons be inclined to dump their cats in fear of being penalised. I, along with many other community members believe for these reasons that confinement therefore should only be an 'option', rather than mandatory.

Thank you,

Sincerely,- Terina Kocbek