

# Blue Mountains Conservation Society Inc

ABN 38 686 119 087

PO Box 29 Wentworth Falls NSW 2782

Phone: 0490 419 779 E-Mail: [bmcs@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:bmcs@bluemountains.org.au)

Web Site: [www.bluemountains.org.au](http://www.bluemountains.org.au)

**Nature Conservation Saves for Tomorrow**



The Hon. Penny Sharpe  
Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy, Minister for the Environment and  
Minister for Heritage

Cc Trish Doyle MP  
Blue Mountains City Council

13 July 2023

Dear Minister,

## **Action required to address the threat to biodiversity posed by feral, stray and domestic cats**

The Blue Mountains Conservation Society (the Society) is a community-based volunteer organisation with 900 members. Our mission is to help protect, conserve and advocate for the natural environment of the Greater Blue Mountains. In fulfilling its mission the Society advocates protection of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area (GBMWA).

We are writing to request that the NSW Government take urgent steps in recognition of the threat posed by feral, stray and domestic cats to Australia's biodiversity. This threat was recognised by the Commonwealth's Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy's (the **Committee**) inquiry: *Tackling the feral cat pandemic: a plan to save Australian wildlife*. The Committee's 2020 report found that the approximate 6.5 million cats now present across around 99.3% of the Australian landmass 'have been responsible for the rapid and catastrophic loss of wildlife, causing some species to become threatened, endangered, and even extinct.'

This is a particularly important issue in the Blue Mountains Local Government Area, which features urban populations in close proximity to urban bushland, national parks and World Heritage Areas. In the Blue Mountains, pet cats are a direct threat to wildlife, including birds, lizards and frogs.

A recent study undertaken as part of the RSPCA NSW Keeping Cats Safe at Home Project found that there are approximately 361 free-roaming cats in the 1604ha of residential land in the Blue Mountains local government area\*

## **The Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW)**

The *Companion Animals Act 1998* (NSW) (the **Act**) currently operates as a barrier to local councils in NSW taking appropriate action to respond to the threats posed by feral, stray and domestic cats and to promote responsible cat ownership.

Under the Act, cats are only prohibited in the following areas:

- Food preparation and consumption areas
- Areas set aside by the local council as 'wildlife protection areas'. [s 30]

These provisions are manifestly inadequate to protect birds, lizards, frogs and other small mammals that reside in areas of urban bushland, in gardens and parks. Given the difficulty of policing the movements of cats that are not confined, it seems very likely that these provisions do not adequately protect biodiversity within wildlife protection areas as well.

The best way to protect native animals from predatory behaviour of cats is to keep cats under effective control, for example by requiring cats to be confined inside dwellings, or with controlled access to the outdoors (for example through a cat run, cat-proof fencing, a harness or leash).

### **Law reform to allow local councils to prevent cats roaming**

For these reasons, we echo calls made by others (including the Invasive Species Council and the Local Government Association of NSW) for urgent amendments to the Act and associated regulations to give local councils powers to make orders to prevent pet cats from roaming, including the power to order that cats be contained and/or subject to curfews in their entire local government area, or parts thereof.

We also encourage the Government to develop complementary policies to address the threat posed by cats, for example with funding, resources and guidance for local councils, and encouraging local councils to develop companion animal management plans. We note in this respect the Committee's recommendation that local governments should be 'resourced appropriately to deal with cats, including requiring all local governments to develop and implement domestic cat management plans consistent with relevant state and territory laws' (Recommendation 6).

If you have any queries in regard to this letter, please contact me on [president@bluemountains.org.au](mailto:president@bluemountains.org.au) or mobile [REDACTED]

We thank you for considering our request, and we look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

Annette Cam  
President  
Blue Mountains Conservation Society

\* Davey, I.J. et al. (2023) 'Spatial and temporal movements of free-roaming cats and wildlife in two local government areas in Greater Sydney, Australia', *Animals*, 13(10), p. 1711. doi:10.3390/ani13101711.