

Enquiries: Jane O'Malley
Our Ref: 076_2019



4 August 2019

Cat and Dog Statutory Review
Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
PO Box 8349, Perth Business Centre WA 6849
Emailed: catanddogreview@dlgsc.wa.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Submission on Review of Dog and Cat Laws

The Peel-Harvey Catchment Council (PHCC) is pleased to contribute to the review of these two pieces of legislation, in particular the Cat Act 2011.

PHCC, as an independent regional community-based group supporting landcare and natural resource management in the Peel-Harvey Catchment, is very interested in the management of all cats.

Cats, whether domestic, semi-domestic or feral, have been shown conclusively to have a significant impact on Australia's unique wildlife. This social media post by Australia's Threatened Species Commissioner, Sally Box, illustrates the extent of the issue.



Threatened Species Commissioner Hi Natasha and Luke, the latest estimates are that feral cat numbers across Australia fluctuate between 2.1 million and 6.3 million. While feral cats are of greatest concern, roaming domestic cats also take their toll on our wildlife. Roaming domestic cats are estimated to kill more than 60 million birds a year and 53 million reptiles a year! Cheers, Sally

We note that the objects of the Cat Act 2011 are to:

- *provide for the control and management of cats; and*
- *promote and encourage the responsible ownership of cats, and for related matters.*

These objects are supported, but should be complemented by a third object (at least) which is to reduce the impact of cats on the environment. Alternatively, this objective can be stated as an aim to reduce the number of cats for which there is no owner.

One of the limitations of the current Act is its presumption that most cat owners register their pets. Once a pet is registered, sterilised and microchipped the Act can effectively meet its two stated objectives. In contrast, where a cat is unregistered, it is almost impossible for the Act to be enforced as it is very difficult for an owner to be proven where the animal has not been registered.

Anecdotal evidence from local government officers in the Peel-Harvey Catchment indicates that most owners do not register their pet cats. For example, the City of Mandurah has calculated that only 3000 of the estimated 15,000 cats in the City are registered (less than 20% registration rate).

Under a new Act, registrations need to be made easier and cheaper for owners so as to encourage a greater proportion of owners to register their cats. Subsidised or free registrations/sterilisations should be offered to pensioners and low-income earners.

Any loss in income to regulators should be replaced by fines that are created for owners whose pets enter cat-prohibited areas, roam outside the owner's property, or repeatedly cause a nuisance to others.

The declaration of conservation areas as cat-prohibited areas should be made easier. In the first instance, all Crown Land reserves that have a vested purpose of Conservation, or similar (conservation only, or with another vested purpose) and all land managed by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions, should automatically be designated cat-prohibited areas under the Act. It should follow that it is an offense for an owner of a cat to allow them to roam in a cat-prohibited area or outside of their owner's property.

As per the Dog Act, the Cat Act should also place a limit on the number of cats that can be owned by an individual. This is to discourage people from adopting stray cats. Registered breeders would still be able to keep a greater number of cats under licence conditions.

So as to reduce the impact of cats on wildlife, the Act should establish mandatory requirements on owners to require all cats to wear at least two bells where the cat is not contained within a cat run or within specialised cat fencing around the property.

In addition to legislative reform, PHCC requests that government increase its efforts on raising the community's awareness of responsible pet ownership and the need for owners to register their cats and dogs.

Should you require further information, please do not hesitate to contact Jane O'Malley on

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Yours sincerely



(Andrew Del Marco, Program Manager Land Conservation)

For
Jane O'Malley
Chief Executive Officer