

## **Submission to the inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia**

**Allan Benson B.Sc. MBA**

Central Coast Group, Birding NSW

Central Coast Representative, National Regent Honeyeater Recovery Team

Member of the Companion Animals Advisory Committee Central Coast Council

In July 2019, four critically endangered Regent Honeyeaters were found at a constructed wetland at Blue Haven on the Central Coast NSW. This attracted lot of attention from both local and visiting birdwatchers and photographers.



They observed two cats persistently stalking and attacking bird life in this wetland



This event was the start of my interest in addressing the problem of domestic cats being allowed to roam and their impact on wildlife

### **How many domestic cats are there on the Central Coast?**

Based on “We need to worry about Bella and Charlie: the impacts of pet cats on Australian wildlife”: Legge, S, et al Australian Wildlife 2020 - found that 27% of households own 1.4 cats

◆ Number of cats in CC LGA	57,000
◆ Registered and microchipped	26,705 (47%)
◆ Unregistered but microchipped	21669 (38%)
◆ Unregistered and unmicrochipped	8,626 (15%)

**Note** the conclusion from Legge et al was that although domestic cats destroy only 25%5 of wildlife per cat compared to feral cats, the predation rate of pets per square kilometre in residential areas is 28–52 times larger than predation rates by feral cats in natural environments and 1.3–2.3 times greater than predation rates per km<sup>2</sup> by feral cats living in urban areas. These rates may be even higher on the Central Coast where there significant urban/bushland interface

## NSW Companion Animal Act (1998)

- ◆ Allows cats to roam
- ◆ Provides fines
- ◆ Cat not microchipped \$180
- ◆ Cat not registered \$330
- ◆ Local councils are tasked with enforcing the policy

**BUT- there is no mechanism for local councils to enforce the policy as cats are allowed to roam and can't be trapped**

**70% of cats are allowed to roam killing 3.8 million native animals on the Central Coast every year**

## Why Confined Cats?

- ◆ Win for Neighbours- Noise and fouling gardens etc
  - ◆ Win for Wildlife
  - ◆ Win for Cats
- Confined Cats- Life expectancy up to 18 years  
Cats allowed to roam- Life expectancy 2-5 years

### ◆ Roaming Cats

Hit by cars  
Attacked by dogs  
More likely to get disease- Cat flu, Feline HIV, Feline Leukemia Virus, Ringworm

**Attitudinal Change of cat owners required though both education and disincentives**

## Actions required

- NSW Companion Animals act (1998) needs to be amended to provide local government the power to at least enforce that all domestic cats are registered and micro-chipped,
- At a minimum a night curfew on cats be imposed in NSW. Central Coast Council passed a resolution that a cat curfew should be imposed but under the present legislation this is impossible to enforce.

- Make grants available at least on a pilot study basis to provide resources for local council to assess the effectiveness of reducing both feral cat numbers in urban/bushland environment and enforce night curfews(if legislation) is amended, This program will raise some revenue from fines imposed on non-registered and non-micro-chipped domestic cats or by cats breaking curfew.
- There are excellent education resources already available but the information needs to be more widely disseminated