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The Hon. Matt Kean, MP
52 Martin Place
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13th August 2019

Dear Minister Kean,

Seeking Amendments to the *Companion Animals Act 1998*(NSW) and New Regulations For Cats

The Mammal Society of New South Wales is seeking your assistance in pursuing amendments to the *Companion Animals Act 1998* (NSW) s 30 as well as drafting a new management plan for domestic cats in NSW. In section 30 of the act, it outlines prohibited areas from which cats are not allowed to enter – specifically wildlife protected areas and food preparation or consumption areas. The Mammal Society of New South Wales seeks to see this section repealed and redrafted to place stronger controls on the rights of free roaming domestic cats. We wish to see provisions in place that restrict cats to secured structures within the owner's property such as dwellings or cat runs. By increasing regulation on cats there will be net benefits for native wildlife as well as the welfare of pet cats.

Recent analysis of cat predation estimates that 1,144 million mammals are killed each year within Australia due to both feral and domestic cats (Murphy et al. 2019). Of this number, 180 million mammal deaths are due to free roaming pet cats in human modified landscapes. Whilst there is minor uncertainty in estimates of native and introduced rodents killed by these cats, the authors provide evidence to suggest that the majority would likely be native species. Further to this it suggests that along the NSW coast there is a high proportion of native mammal predation as compared to introduced mammal predation by cats.

Previous research also estimates that pet cats kill 53 million reptiles a year (Woinarski et al. 2018), and 61 million birds (Woinarski et al. 2017). Combined with the new mammal estimates, this indicates that approximately 294 million vertebrates (not including fish or amphibians) are killed Australia wide due to free roaming pet cats (not feral cats).

The precautionary principle and the potential harm that may be caused by species is widely used in the regulation of native animals as pets. Given that there is widespread empirical evidence about the impact caused to our native wildlife by cats we are seeking a commitment by your office to increase regulation on domestic cats within NSW. The ACT government has recently released the *Draft ACT Cat Plan 2019-2029* where the government indicates increased education, regulation and compliance will be executed over the next ten-year period. We wish NSW to investigate and adopt a similar management plan. Increased regulation and enforcement will result in more positive outcomes for native wildlife as well as less stress placed on the state's wildlife care organisations that are already overburdened.

Given this is a multifaceted issue, we have also written to Minister for Local Government who oversees the Act as well as the Minister for Agriculture and Western New South Wales who oversees animal welfare regulation in NSW.

Regards,

Mitchell Hodgson
President
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References:

- Murphy BP, Woolley LA, Geyle HM, et al (2019) Introduced cats (*Felis catus*) eating a continental fauna: The number of mammals killed in Australia. *Biol Conserv* 237:28–40. doi: 10.1016/j.biocon.2019.06.013
- Woinarski JCZ, Murphy BP, Legge SM, et al (2017) How many birds are killed by cats in Australia? *Biol Conserv* 214:76–87. doi: 10.1016/j.biocon.2017.08.006
- Woinarski JCZ, Murphy BP, Palmer R, et al (2018) How many reptiles are killed by cats in Australia? *Wildl Res* 45:247. doi: 10.1071/wr17160