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Response to questions on notice: Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales

10 January 2025

Submitted to:
The Hon Emma Hurst MLC
Chair, Animal Welfare Committee

Phone: (02) 9230 3462

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About WIRES

WIRES is Australia's largest wildlife rescue organisation, and operates a dedicated Wildlife Rescue Office assisting wildlife and the community across Australia 24-hours a day, 365 days a year, providing rescue advice and assistance for around 150,000 animals annually — including 862 koalas in 2023. We have around 4,000 dedicated volunteers as well as a fleet of Wildlife Ambulances operated by full-time, professional Emergency Responders across NSW, South-East Queensland and Tasmania. These ambulances travel, on average, 43,000 kms per year and have responded to more than 17,000 rescues since October 2020.

In addition, WIRES trains hundreds of rescuers and carers annually, are dedicated to the ongoing recruitment of new volunteers and the continued training of existing volunteers. This growing network is critical for the rescue and rehabilitation of our unique native wildlife. WIRES has responded to more than 60% of all animals needing rescuing in NSW over the last 8 years. Across NSW the volunteer contribution is estimated to save the government more than $27 million per annum and is growing.[1]

WIRES has developed partnerships and programs and provides forward-thinking national support to hundreds of projects which aim to see listed species' populations increase though protection efforts. Since the 2019-2020 summer bushfires, we have had an increasing focus on supporting projects that protect and restore threatened habitats and provide for the long-term recovery of wildlife habitat and the preservation of native species in the wild.

[1] Department of Planning, Industry and Environment (2020). *NSW Volunteer Wildlife Rehabilitation Sector Strategy 2020-2023*, NSW Government.

Introduction

NSW Wildlife Information and Rescue Service Inc (WIRES) welcomes the opportunity to respond to questions on notice emerging from the 16 December hearing as a part of the *Inquiry into the management of cat populations in New South Wales* (the Inquiry), and to provide further explanatory detail about the evidence provided.

During the hearing and evidence by Dr Colin Salter, direct questions were taken on notice from the Hon. Abigail Boyd and Hon. Peter Primrose, with intersecting themes raised by other members of the committee.

The Hon. Abigail Boyd asked about TDARS style programs in other states of Australia, particularly whether they allow the return (release) of free roaming cats back into the community/the location where they trapped and subsequently supported, and the evidence basis for such an approach. The Hon. Aileen MacDonald also asked about the success of welfare-based TDARS style programs in reducing euthanasia rates. The Hon. Peter Primrose sought comment on the recommendations included in Local Government NSW's submission to the Inquiry, in relation to amendments to the *Companion Animals Act 1988*. The Hon. Bob Nanva enquired as to whether there should be a flexible approach, allowing Local Governments to adopt programs and services which best service their areas.

As stated by Emeritus Professor Helen Swarbrick (President, Campus Cats NSW), during the hearing on Monday 16 December, referring to the TDARS style program at UNSW Kensington campus:

> *The bottom line is that wildlife will be safer with fewer cats. If we can control the population—and we found a very effective way of doing it—then overall that's going to have less impact on the wildlife.*

Reducing the population of free-living, free-roaming and uncontained housed cats is central to the recommendations WIRES provided in our original submission to the Inquiry, and the evidence provided at the hearing. A supportive approach to preventing prevent additional births via accessible desexing, formal TDARS programs, an effective transition to cat containment, reducing purposeful breeding and a refocus on adoptions are a suite of effective measures which are both welfare-based and will reduce the impacts of cats on our unique and precious wildlife.

This document provides some further details and context of the evidence-base for this suite of approaches, reported outcomes, and their potential reduce the impacts on wildlife in our communities — directly responding to the questions on notice asked during the hearing on 16 December.

Terminology

Definitions which accurately reflect the different situations cats are living in and with were specifically raised during the 16 December hearing, by members of the Committee and those invited to give evidence.

Clear and accurate definitions are essential for engaging with communities, providing clear guidance on roles and responsibilities, and outlining measures which local governments can take to protect wildlife and improve welfare outcomes for cats.

Reproduced here is the terminology outlined in WIRES original submission,

- Housed cats — cats who are kept and fed at a person's home and are directly cared for by a single person or family.
- Uncontained housed cats — housed cats who are allowed and enabled to roam relatively freely in their community.
- Free-roaming cats — cats who are unhoused and may be fed by one or more persons in the community, primarily in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Free-living cats — cats who live freely in and outside peri-urban areas, primarily away from and unconstrained by people and communities.

Cats living in the community who are fed by one or more persons, and cared for under Trap, Desex, Adopt or Return and Support (TDARS) style programs — for example, those supporting at the University of New South Wales by Campus Cats NSW, fall under the above definition of free-roaming cats. Support was specifically left off the definition, as not all free-roaming cats receive such additional support and care.

An update to these definitions, in the context of the Hon. Peter Primrose's question on notice regarding Recommendation 3 of Local Government NSW (LGNSW), are provided towards the end of this document under *LGNSW proposed amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1988: Terminology: parts (a) and (c)*.

Urban wildlife

During the hearing, references were made to lower numbers and reduced diversity of wildlife in urbanised areas — in the context of the potential impacts of free-roaming and uncontained housed cats. It is important for the Committee to note that wildlife continue to survive and thrive around and amongst us — including in urbanised areas and cities.

Whilst it is very clear than habitat destruction and fragmentation has directly changed the composition of wildlife in urbanised and similarly disturbed areas, wildlife remain a key feature of these landscapes.

> *Some wildlife actively choose to live amongst us, even if we deem them as out of place.*

Other animals and species illustrate their resilience and adaptability by migrating to live amongst us, after we have disturbed, fragmented and destroyed their habitat. Such species and animals are often termed as synanthropic and liminal animals.

Synanthropic animals are defined as those 'living in urban, suburban, industrial and agricultural areas. Living close to humans.'[2] The definition of liminal animals is often linked more directly to the human impacts. They are 'defined through a relationship to human constructed territory and the relationships that are articulated within these territories.'[3] They live amongst us, in our garages, backyards, and local parks with some thriving in the face of human indifference.

Animals living in urbanised areas, in this *human constructed territory*, include many types of birds, (small and larger) mammals, reptiles and amphibians — species which WIRES members actively rescue and take into care every day, some after a suspected encounter with or predation by cats.

> *Cities and other urbanised areas are not a purely human place, or a place set apart from nature and wildlife. Cats continue to have an impact there.*

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[2] Horta, O., & Teran, D. (2023). Reducing Wild Animal Suffering Effectively: Why Impracticability and Normative Objections Fail Against the Most Promising Ways of Helping Wild Animals. *Ethics, Policy & Environment*, 26(2), 217–230. https://doi.org/10.1080/21550085.2023.2200726

[3] Wadiwel, D. (2013). Zoopolis: Challenging our Conceptualisation of Political Sovereignty Through Animal Sovereignties. *Dialogue: Canadian Philosophical Review / Revue Canadienne De Philosophie*, 52(4), 749-758. https://doi.org/10.1017/S001221731300084X .
Donaldson S., & Kymlicka, W. (2011). *Zoopolis: A Political Theory of Animal Rights*. Oxford University press.

Wildlife will continue to live amongst us. Whereas — more-so in urbanised areas — wildlife can be seen as being out-of-place, urban and inner-city dwellers appreciate the animals they share the environment with. Wherever wildlife live, whether it be in 'the bush' or urbanised landscapes, they can and are impacted by free-living, free-roaming and uncontained housed cats.

As noted in WIRES original submission, uncontained housed cats and free-roaming cats in urban areas, peri-urban areas, and around farm buildings impact more wildlife than free-living cats in the bush — areas where WIRES rescues, rehabilitates, and releases wildlife every day.

Trap, Desex, Adopt or Return and Support (TDARS)

WIRES original submission provided details of Independent MP the Hon. Alex Greenwich's lapsed *Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill 2014*. The overarching aim of the Bill is evident in the long title: *An Act to facilitate programs for controlling the population of stray, abandoned or wild cats or other non-native animals by providing immunity from civil liability and exemptions from licensing and other requirements; and for other purposes*. Passage of the Bill would have enabled local government authorities and other sponsoring agencies to legally implement TDARS style programs. More specifically, the Bill would remove the legal grey area where the release of a free-roaming cat back into the community can be considered animal abandonment under Part 2 of the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (POCTA).

The Hon. Abigail Boyd asked if cats can be legally released in other states. The ACT provides a specific example, albeit on that the future of is unclear.

Strategy 3 *Reduce number of semi-owned and unowned domestic cats* of the ACT Cat Plan 2021-2031 includes Action 8: "Work with animal care and rescue organisations to manage semi-owned and unowned cats in public places, through trap, de-sex and adopt activities." Whereas release is not mentioned in the document, a TDARS style program formally commenced in Canberra (Fyshwick, Hume and Mitchell) in 2014, overseen by the volunteer *Canberra Street Cat Alliance*.[4]

Under the ACT Cat Plan, cats born after 1 July 2022 must be contained. The implications for the TDARS style program overseen by the Canberra Street Cat Alliance is uncertain. A 5-year exemption was applied for by the Alliance.[5]

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[4] Radford, A. (2022) ACT the only Australian jurisdiction where cat management program trap, neuter, return is legal, *ABC News*, 21 January. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-01-21/cats-released-in-canberra-at-odds-with-cat-ent/100754100

[5] See the Canberra Street Cat Alliance website, including their submission to Chris Steele & Rebecca Vassarotti, members of the Legislative Assembly. https://canberrastreetcatalliance.org/act-cat-plan-20212031

The managed program at UNSW, overseen by Campus Cats NSW, is an outlier in NSW as a legally recognised TDARS style program — details of which were presented by Emeritus Professor Helen Swarbrick during the 16 December hearing for the Inquiry.[6]

Despite the legal grey area around abandonment, central to the Hon. Alex Greenwich's lapsed private members Bill, members of the community (in NSW and other states), including registered charities, continue to run their own TDARS style programs. Some of these operate in the open and advertise their services. Others are more clandestine, either unknown to local authorities or unofficially allowed to continue.[7]

To reduce the impacts of free-living, free-roaming and uncontained housed cats on wildlife, TDARS style programs — operated in conjunction with a transition to cat containment to reduce immigration rates from uncontained housed cats — are critical to reduce the populations of free-roaming and free-living cats, and their impacts on wildlife. This is the evidence-based foundation for Recommendation 5 of WIRES original submission, which the Hon. Aileen MacDonald enquired about:

> *Empower local government and other organisations to develop TDARS programs, including necessary changes to the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW) and other legislation, drawing on Mr Greenwich's lapsed private members bill — the Animal Welfare (Population Control Programs) Bill 2014.*

The status quo, with a high rate of euthanasia for healthy and treatable cats is leading to more non-desexed free-roaming cats in the community, increasing populations and furthering the associated impacts on wildlife.

In addition, accessible desexing reduces the number of uncontained housed cats and those released to be free-roaming, and their immigration into colonies in the community. Accessible desexing reduces the potential for increased populations in the community and their associated impacts on wildlife.

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[6] The Glebe Cat Management Program, referred to the submission by Local Government NSW, is another example of a government supported TDARS style program.

[7] Dr Gemma Ma (RSPCA), in their evidence to the hearing — representing the RSPCA, stated that "Those [who look after free-roaming cats in the community], once they get wind that people are trying to trap and kill them, they start to hide them and they start to sabotage your trapping attempts. They'll let the cats out of traps." This example further highlights the need for supported TDARS style programs to reduce clandestine activities and associated reduced desexing rates — directly linked to the distrust that lethal-based programs generate in communities.

Effectiveness of TDARS in contrast to lethal-based programs

TDARS style programs, alongside being a welfare centred approach, are also more effective and require less effort than lethal measures to reduce populations and their associated impacts on wildlife. A study by Schmidt *et al* found that between 50% and 75% of a colony must be euthanised to prevent population growth, as part of an ongoing lethal-based program. The figure of 50% assumes no immigration (additional uncontained and free-roaming cats added to, or breeding in the community), and 75% or more where immigration exceeds 25% of the population.

The results of a 25-year program in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand (referred to as a Trap-Asses-Resolve approach), with a primary author who is supportive of lethal methods, found that it was very effective in dramatically reducing the number of free-roaming cats:

> As of 2019, of 14,611 unowned cats trapped, 64.2% were adopted, 22.2% were euthanized if unsocialised or in grave ill-health, 5.7% were neutered and returned to the site, and 7.9% had other outcomes, such as being transferred to other shelters. Adoption rates increased over this time, exceeding 80.0% in 2018 and 2019.[8]

With an adoption rate exceeding 80%, the outcomes encompass a welfare-centred approach and are clearly indicative of the potential to substantially reduce impacts on wildlife — illustrating the evidence base and improved welfare outcomes which the Hon. Aileen MacDonald enquired about.[9] TDARS style programs also significantly reduce the burden on local government facilities. For example, evaluation of an Alachua County (north-central Florida, USA) program found a 3.5-fold decrease in shelter intake and a 17.5-fold increase in adoption.[10]

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[8] Calver, M.C., Crawford, H.M., Scarff, F.R., Bradley, J.S., Dormon, P., Boston, S., & Fleming, P.A. (2022) Intensive Adoption as a Management Strategy for Unowned, Urban Cats: A Case Study of 25 Years of Trap–Assess–Resolve (TAR) in Auckland, New Zealand. *Animals* 12, 2301. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani12172301

[9] Adoption and cat containment are critical to the effectiveness of TDARS style programs. For example, a 12-year study of a trap-neuter-return (TNR) focussed approach found that to effectively facilitate population decline, a whole-of-city approach was required (to prevent immigration), with a continuing program desexing rate above 70% required. See Gunther, I., Hawlena, H., Azriel, L. , Gibor, D. , Berke, O. , & Klement E. (2022). Reduction of free-roaming cat population requires high-intensity neutering in spatial contiguity to mitigate compensatory effects, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 119 (15) e2119000119. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2119000119
See also, Junqueira, A.N.N., & Galera, P.D. (2024). Evaluation of Population Management Based on Trap–Neuter–Return and Trap–Neuter–Adoption Practices in a Free-Roaming Cat Colony in the Federal District, Brazil. *Animals* 14(17), 2478. https://doi.org/10.3390/ani14172478

[10] Levy, J.K., Isaza, N.M., & Scott, K.C. (2014). Effect of high-impact targeted trap-neuter-return and adoption of community cats on cat intake to a shelter, *The Veterinary Journal* 201(3), 269-274. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tvjl.2014.05.001.

The evidence presented by Dr Gemma Ma, representing the RSPCA at the hearing on 16 December, in response to a question by the Hon. Abigail Boyd and in reference to the RSPCA submission, referred to the ineffectiveness and logistical difficulty of lethal-based programs:

> the population rebounded much quicker. The population was fitter and bred more effectively after you'd done that culling. The modelling shows that you need to do a really high rate of culling. You need to kill about 70 per cent of the cats, and you need to do that year on year for about 10 years or something before you start to get the population under control, which is just a huge amount of euthanasia and logistically difficult to do.

Read in conjunction with the findings of the Calver *et al* and Schmidt *et al* research papers, it is clear that TDARS style programs are more effective than lethal-based programs[11] — for wildlife, the community, and the welfare of cats.

Cat Containment

Whereas TDARS style programs provide a welfare-centred approach and reduce impacts of cats in the community, without an effective transition to cat containment (and accessible desexing), there is a high likelihood of immigration leading to population rebound in colonies. A direct outcome is ongoing — rather than a reduction in — impacts on wildlife.[12]

During the 16 December hearing, Professor Jacquie Rand's evidence included that "even with good containment, cats escape":

> The research we've just published showed that of people who contained their cats 24/7, 5 per cent of those cats escaped off their property in the last two weeks. Other research shows that 41 per cent of cats that were lost, the owners described as "indoor only"... You can have a really nice—one of my

[11] The effectiveness of a TDARS style program over lethal-based programs, is also outlined in McCarthy, R.J., Levine, S.H., & Reed, J.M. (2013) Estimation of effectiveness of three methods of feral cat population control by use of a simulation model, *Journal of the American Veterinary Medical Association* 243(4). https://doi.org/10.2460/javma.243.4.502

[12] Schmidt, P.M., Swannack T.M., Lopez R.R. & Slater M.R. (2009) Evaluation of euthanasia and trap–neuter–return (TNR) programs in managing free-roaming cat populations. *Wildlife Research* 36, 117-125. https://doi.org/10.1071/WR08018

> colleagues had a $6,000 cat containment system, and her cat still escaped. That's the reality.

Professor Rand's evidence, and the research underpinning it, emphasise that accessible desexing and support for TDARS style programs are a key component of reducing the impacts of cats on wildlife — be they (mostly) contained housed cats, uncontained housed cats, free-roaming cats and free-living cats.

A transition to cat containment must be part of a suite of measures aimed at effectively reducing the populations of uncontained housed cats, free-roaming cats and free-living cats. The first five recommendations in WIRES original submission encompass each of these.

Recommendation 6 in WIRES original submission referred to Victoria's leadership on reducing purposeful breeding, in part to address devastatingly high euthanasia rates of healthy and treatable cats:

> *Make necessary legislative changes to bring NSW into line with Victoria and their implementation of s63AAB 'Offences as to sale or giving away of animals by pet shops' of the Domestic Animals Act 1994 to regulate purposeful breeding to reduce population numbers and the risk to wildlife.*

Implicit is a recognition that highs rate of euthanasia for healthy and treatable cats is fermenting distrust of local government in the community, leading to increased numbers of cats in the community — especially free-roaming and uncontained housed cats not being desexed. These include large numbers of cats which could be rehomed — as illustrated in the findings of the Calver study of the 25-year TDARS style program in Auckland, Aotearoa New Zealand where more than 80% are adopted.

In the evidence provide by Dr Gemma Ma, they noted that

> We're already having trouble rehoming the really friendly, healthy young—even the kittens are sitting in our shelters for months looking for homes. There just aren't the homes for all those cats. If more cats are coming in, then it's inevitable that the euthanasia rates are going to go up.

Whereas cost of living pressures are in-part responsible, the purposeful breeding of cats is directly contributing to these high rates of euthanasia for healthy and treatable cats — a substantive source of additional births and a reduction the number of cats adopted in NSW.

As noted in WIRES original submission, implementing similar legislative changes in NSW (to Victoria) to reduce purposeful breeding will directly reduce the risk of harm to wildlife, and improve the welfare and wellbeing of cats.

A flexible approach to cat containment?

The Hon. Bob Nanva posed the following question to Dr Salter during the hearing:

> So, for example, if the Blue Mountains council wanted a domestic animal management plan that had cat containment within that, whereas it didn't suit the Inner West Council because it didn't suit their needs, there should be that flexibility for councils to adopt programs and services that best suit their areas.

This question was contextualised with mention of the approach in Victoria, specifically "whether [WIRES] are supportive of less of a sledgehammer approach and more of a piecemeal approach that allows latitude to local governments to do what they think is best for their areas" and Recommendation 2 of WIRES original submission:

> *Encourage and support local governments to develop their own companion animal management plans, working towards a consistent model across the state.*

Evidence was presented during the 16 December hearing about different circumstances and approaches across local government areas. For example, Dr Gemma Ma responded to a question from the Hon. Sue Higginson about 'localised controls and provisions because of those equity issues':

> We have seen, through Keeping Cats Safe at Home, that there are really diverse situations with cat management among different councils

Situations and context in which cats live, and the impacts they have on wildlife, vary across the state. As noted above under *Urban wildlife*, irrespective of location, uncontained housed cats and free-roaming cats do impact wildlife. A suite of measures including accessible desexing, TDARS style programs and an effective transition to cat containment are needed to reduce these impacts. Exactly how these measured are implemented across difference local government areas can vary to meet local conditions and still be effective.

To ensure their effectiveness, a strong and clear underpinning and messaging, alongside working towards these common goals, is required to ensure programs are not undermined by inconsistent applications across local government boundaries.

LGNSW proposed amendments to the Companion Animals Act 1988

The Hon. Peter Primrose sought comment on the recommendations included in Local Government NSW's submission to the Inquiry, in relation to amendments to the *Companion Animals Act 1988*, from most of those giving evidence at the 16 December hearing of the Inquiry.

Recommendation 3 of the Local Government NSW (LGNSW) Submission stated

> Amend the Companion Animals Act 1998 to:
>
> a) define when a cat is considered to be owned, or what cat ownership entails;
>
> b) clarify the application of section 32 (powers for seizing a cat)
>
> c) define cats as domestic, infant or feral.
>
> d) enable councils to introduce enforceable cat containment or curfew policies in their local government areas.
>
> e) enable feral cats without any reasonable prospect of rehoming to be euthanised in accordance with animal welfare ethics and the policy adopted by the relevant council;
>
> f) Add an opt-in provision for councils to issue orders and fines for individuals who repeatedly fail to identify and register kittens or for incidences of animal hoarding.

WIRES response to the Hon Peter Primrose's question, focusses in on parts (a), (c) and (d).

Briefly commenting on part (f), WIRES recommends a supportive and education-focussed approach, rather than punitive measures, consistence with *Cat containment: part (*d) below.

Terminology: parts (a) and (c)

WIRES original submission and this response to questions on notice has included different terminology to that outlined in part (a) of LGNSW Recommendation 3, with a focus on whether a cat is housed or not rather than defined by a deference to property status. For example, contained and uncontained housed cats, which are solely-primarily cared for by a single person or family in or around the family home, can be considered the legal responsibility of an individual or family.

Part (c) is interlinked to the call for definitions mentioned in part (a), with WIRES terminology more directly referencing their living circumstances.

For example, Free-roaming cats are unhoused cats who may be fed and cared for by one or more person in the community, predominately in urban and peri-urban areas. In a small number of TDARS style programs — such as the managed program at UNSW, overseen by Campus Cats NSW — legal responsibility can be attributed to an individual, persons, or a group.

Free-living cats are those living away from, and largely unconstrained by, people and communities. Legal responsibility is not attributed to any person or persons.

In light the Hon. Peter Primrose's question and the definitions provided in the LGNSW Recommendation 3, the terminology provided in WIRES original submission have been updated to

- Housed cats — cats who are kept and fed at a person's home, are directly cared for and the legal responsibility of a single person or family.
- Uncontained housed cats — housed cats who are allowed and enabled to roam relatively freely in their community.
- Free-roaming cats — cats who are unhoused and may be fed by one or more persons in the community, primarily in urban and peri-urban areas. Legal responsibility can be assigned to an individual, persons, or a group through a TDARS style program.
- Free-living cats — cats who live freely in and outside peri-urban areas, primarily away from and unconstrained by people and communities.

Cat containment: part (d)

Recommendation 1 of WIRES original submission closely aligns with part (d) of the LGNSW Recommendation 3 to amend the Companion Animals Act to enable local government to pass cat containment laws.

WIRES supports an education-based and supportive transition to cat containment, reflected in the evidence provided to the hearing, rather than a punitive enforcement-based approach. Evidence presented to the Inquiry across numerous submissions and during the 16 December hearing identified the impacts of punitive measures, including an increase in the numbers of free-roaming and associated increases in colony populations — which additional impacts on wildlife.

Changes to the Companion Animals Act which allow a punitive enforcement-based approach by local government will worsen the situation for wildlife, communities, those who care for cats, and the welfare of cats, contrary to the overarching aims of an effective transition to cat containment.

WIRES supports 24/7 cat containment as the end goal, rather than a curfew. Wildlife live around and amongst us at all hours of the day and night, and are thus at risk from uncontained housed cats.

WIRES recommends that provisions be included — where appropriate — in the Companion Animals Act and associated regulations to allow for exemptions to cat containment to enable and support managed TDARS style programs.

Conclusion

Underpinning WIRES original submission, the evidence presented at the hearing and this response to questions on notice are approaches which have been shown to be effective in reducing the impacts of cats on wildlife. Preventing additional births, including purposeful breeding, is critical. As is an effective transition to cat containment.

Detailed in this response to questions on notice, providing further context for WIRES recommendations and evidence to the Inquiry, is the effectiveness of TDARS style programs to reduce populations of free-roaming cats. TDARS style programs are less effective without cat containment and accessible desexing — without which immigration into colonies increases, driving population growth.

This document responds to the Hon. Abigail Boyd's question about TDARS style programs in other states, the Hon. Aileen MacDonald's question about the evidence base and welfare outcomes of TDARS style programs, the Hon. Peter Primrose's question about the recommendations included in Local Government NSW's submission to amend the Companion Animals Act, and the Hon. Bob Nanva's question about allowing Local Governments to adopt programs and services which best serve their circumstances, communities and the wildlife they live with and amongst.

At the core of this inquiry are questions regarding what are the most effective programs to reduce the impacts cats have on wildlife. Such programs are supported by the community, support the community — especially those caring for cats to assist them in reducing the associated impacts on wildlife, are accessible and avoid punitive measures. Reflecting the Hon, Bob Nanva's question, an effective suite of measures are flexible and tailored to suit community needs and at the same time consistent with the overall aims of reducing the impacts of uncontained housed cats, free-living and free-roaming cats on wildlife across NSW.

An effective suite of programs to reduce the impacts of cats on wildlife are education-based and support communities, rather than based on punitive enforcement measures.

The evidence included here, additional to that presented at the Inquiry to date, further illustrates that punitive measures have and do foster distrust and lead to more clandestine approaches in the community. Punitive approaches lead to increased populations of free-roaming and free-living cats, and further impacts on wildlife.

Supportive measures — with local government assisting their communities to prevent additional cat births with accessible desexing, through supported TDARS style programs, and an effective transition to cat containment, alongside reducing purposeful breeding and a refocus on adoptions — will lead to better welfare outcomes for cats, communities and, importantly, our unique and precious wildlife.

Yours sincerely,

Leanne Taylor CEO

Contact
Dr Colin Salter
Policy Lead
NSW Wildlife Information Rescue and Education Service Ltd (WIRES)
colin.salter@wires.org.au