Local Government Association Tasmania

Our Ref: BM | DJL

15 May 2026

Rae Burrows
General Manager
Biosecurity Tasmania
Department of Natural Resources and Environment
Via email: catmanagement@nre.tas.gov.au

Dear Rae,

Cat management in Tasmania – discussion paper

Thank you for the opportunity to submit a response to the Cat management in Tasmania discussion paper. This submission has been prepared by the Local Government Association of Tasmania (LGAT) on behalf of Tasmanian local government in collaboration with our members; all 29 councils.

LGAT is incorporated under the *Local Government Act 1993* and is the representative body and advocate for local government in Tasmania. Where a council has made a direct submission to this process, any omission of specific comments made by that council in this submission should not be viewed as a lack of support by LGAT for that specific issue.

Councils support the State Government's review of cat management, recognising that a change in approach is needed to address issues with cats in our communities. These issues require close partnership between local government, the State Government, cat management organisations, and Natural Resource Management bodies. To be effective, this requires ongoing funding and coordination from the State Government for on-ground actions, such as de-sexing programs and humane management of feral and colony cats. More broadly, effort is needed to build a shared understanding across communities of what it means to be a responsible cat owner, supported by legislative change.

Please contact Ben Morris, Policy Director, if you have any questions or would like further information, at ben.morris@lgat.tas.gov.au or 6146 3743.

Yours sincerely,

Dion Lester
Chief Executive Officer

LGAT Submission: Cat management in Tasmania – Discussion Paper

Domestic cats

Registration of cats

What do you consider are the advantages and/or disadvantages of compulsory registration of cats compared to microchipping?

Councils noted that both microchipping and registration face challenges.

Microchipping allows a cat to be traced back to an owner. However, when a cat is at large scanning cannot be done from a distance and attempting to catch a cat without a cage poses health and safety risks for an officer.

Cat registration provides a legal owner for a cat, particularly when used in tandem with microchipping. However, in other states, compliance has been low, in part because, unlike dogs, domestic cats are kept indoors.

Do you think cat owners should be required to register their cat, like dog registration?

Councils provided support for cat registration, noting the limitations above. It was noted that registration not only creates a legal point of contact but also helps establish a social contract between the cat owner and the council/community. Bruny Island (Kingborough Council) is cited as an example where registration has opened conversations with cat owners and is seen as a normal part of being a resident of Bruny Island. Introducing cat registration would also align with the requirement for dog registration.

While councils are generally supportive of registration, they are wary of the resourcing requirements that many do not have. Cat registration should be a statewide system that provides the lowest overall cost, allows for easy transfers between areas, and, importantly, avoids placing a resourcing burden on councils.

Should there be a fee/levy charged for registration of a cat?

Yes, a fee can help fund cat management. The fee itself should not be a barrier, so the State Government should provide concessions to those in need, as it does for a range of services.

What should the fee be used for?

Registration fees could be applied to management services, such as cat desexing or microchipping, for low-income households and vulnerable people, as well as for stray cat management.

Breeding and selling of cats

What could help ensure that people who breed and sell cats are doing so lawfully?

There was limited experience with problems in formal cat breeding, with some support for registration for large or commercial breeders.

Councils noted that a more pressing issue is containing cats and feeding stray cats, which enables them to breed and potentially form colonies.

There was a clear view that any breeding registration system and its compliance need to be managed by the State Government, as councils do not have the resources.

Do you think a seller should be required to state in advertisements for the sale or rehoming of a cat that the cat meets the legal requirements of sale?

Yes. However, such a requirement is limited by the difficulty of enforcement.

Containment of a cat to an owner's property

Councils identified containment and roaming as critical issues to be addressed.

The discussion paper cites a council's ability to use a by-law as evidence of sufficient legislation. Bruny Island is an example where a by-law has worked. However, this is not readily transferable, as the Bruny Island community shares a view of protecting natural values. Further, the development of a by-law is resource-intensive for individual councils, risks creating inconsistency across boundaries and is an inefficient means to address this issue. A more effective approach would be to amend the *Cat Management Act 2009* to set community expectations and reinforce that cats are not to roam outside a property.

What role, if any, should cat owners play in reducing impacts on wildlife, neighbours, and the broader community?

There was strong support for cat owners to take responsibility for their cats and ensure they don't impact wildlife or cause issues in neighbourhoods. It was noted that no other pet is allowed to roam at will outside a property's boundary. At the same time, councils recognise that people's circumstances or property type may preclude enclosures that allow cats to have contained outdoor time.

Are there alternative approaches that could achieve responsible cat ownership outcomes without requiring containment?

Education is often cited as an alternative to containment. It does not work on its own. Councils, in partnership with cat welfare bodies, have incorporated education as part of a broader program, but containment remains a critical need.

If additional cat management approaches were ever introduced, what monitoring or compliance methods would be workable and fair?

Councils noted the current system's constraints when dealing with roaming or stray cats. While councils may be able to trap or contain a cat, there are too few cat management centres, and they are often at capacity. This needs to be directly addressed.

Additional options are needed in the legislation to help manage cats that are clearly feral or part of a colony. For example, this could be through agreements with veterinary practices to assess the cat and humanely euthanise them.

Stray cats

Feeding stray cats and cat colonies

Do you think feeding of stray cats should be prohibited?

Yes, councils were generally supportive of prohibiting the feeding of stray cats. Councils noted that feeding strays often increased their numbers and led to poorer welfare outcomes.

What do you consider are the main challenges or barriers to a prohibition on feeding stray cats?

Enforcement is the main barrier. Councils noted that it is very challenging to identify people undertaking feeding, as it is often done surreptitiously. Where a person is suspected, gathering the evidence to link the feeding behaviour to them can be time-consuming and resource intensive. Nevertheless, a legislated ban sends a clear message to the community that feeding is unacceptable. If a ban is introduced, council officers need to be able to issue infringement notices.

What are some solutions to these challenges or barriers?

The State Government needs to play an important role through a communication and education campaign that highlights the problems associated with feeding. This should be backed by research and engagement with people who undertake feeding to better understand their motivations (as noted in the paper) and to target messaging.

The State Government can also support enforcement by partnering with local government through targeted educational materials and by funding technology and other tools.

The best response to stray cats is to prevent them from becoming strays in the first place. This means there needs to be support for measures such as desexing and microchipping, and accessible pathways for cat surrender, noting that many cat management facilities are already at capacity. In parallel, there needs to be appropriate powers for council officers to manage roaming or stray cats.

How do you think colony cats should be managed?

A colony of cats is often easier to identify than individual cats. To ensure the welfare of the cats and prevent the growth of the colony, councils need greater powers to capture them and provide them to authorised veterinarians for assessment and humane euthanasia.

Feral cats

Councils noted that the number of cat management facilities is limited. Councils supported greater ability for veterinarians to assess whether a cat is feral when there is no registration or microchip, along with powers for trained council officers to make an initial assessment. This would complement stronger controls on roaming, registration and microchipping.

How can rural landowners/managers be supported to better manage feral cats in areas with important conservation values and agricultural assets?

Councils supported the declared areas' powers under the current legislation, although cited implementation issues regarding the jurisdiction of council officers in relation to cat management facilities. The State Government should provide direct support for the costs associated with trapping, assessment, and euthanasia of feral cats within a declared area.

Should the distance from the nearest residence for humane euthanasia of cats on private property be reduced to less than 1 km?

The 1 km threshold was noted as having limited practicality and usefulness, given that only large landholdings may meet the criteria. The risks that cats can pose to livestock can be significant, so these landholders should have a greater ability to manage cats on their property. A requirement to contain cats within a property would support better management, along with a feral criterion to provide a threshold for direct management by the landholder.

Other

What types of education, incentives, or support programs would encourage responsible cat ownership?

There is strong support for a cultural shift around cats and responsible cat ownership. It is no longer acceptable for cats to roam, given the impacts they can have on wildlife, neighbours and people's health, particularly pregnant women. As with dogs, the norm needs to be that they are contained, microchipped, registered and desexed unless they are for breeding. Such a cultural shift, when supported by the State Government, requires education within the community backed by incentives for positive behaviours and fines for those who do the wrong thing.

Councils and other partners have demonstrated success with community-based programs that provide targeted education, community engagement, free desexing and focused management of feral cats. These approaches need greater support from the State Government through direct funding and resourcing. The greatest success has been where there has been a partnership between the council and other key agencies and bodies.

Should cat management approaches differ between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas? If so, how?

The view was that a straying cat is unacceptable wherever it is. But protection measures should be tailored for different land uses, for example, livestock or threatened species.

Are there any other matters which you would like to raise in relation to improving cat management in Tasmania?

Cat management requires shared responsibility from cat owners right through to the State Government. An ongoing commitment to cultural shift and funding from the State Government is critical to success in Tasmania.