



CRADLE COAST  
A U T H O R I T Y

Natural Resource Management

# **CRADLE COAST REGIONAL CAT MANAGEMENT STRATEGY (2021-2026)**

# INTRODUCTION

## The purpose of the Strategy

Cats are an important part of the lives of many people. They are affectionate pets that provide love and companionship and owning a cat can have substantial health benefits. However, if cats are not managed responsibly their welfare will suffer and they can have significant adverse effects on the community, wildlife and agriculture.

Having a strategy for the management of cats in the Cradle Coast region helps all the stakeholders to focus on a common vision and identify the activities that contribute to achieving that vision.

The Cradle Coast Regional Cat Management Strategy 2021-2026 (the Strategy) has been developed through a comprehensive consultation process with key cat management stakeholders in the region including Burnie City Council, Central Coast Council, Circular Head Council, Devonport City Council, Kentish Council, King Island Council, Latrobe Council, Waratah-Wynyard Council, West Coast Council, Cradle Coast Authority (CCA), RSPCA Tasmania, Australian Veterinary Association and the Tasmanian Government (Biosecurity Tasmania and Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service). The actions in the Strategy are developed to align with the requirements of the *Cat Management Act 2009*.

The Strategy aims to balance cat welfare, social, environmental and economic objectives and encourage valuable partnerships between State Government, Councils, cat management facilities, vets and the wider community.

## Background

In 2012 the State Government proclaimed the *Cat Management Act 2009* (the Act) which is the principal legislation for managing domestic and stray cats in Tasmania. The Act aims to promote the welfare and responsible ownership of cats, provide for the effective management of cats and reduce the negative effect of cats on the environment. The Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment (DPIPWE) has primary responsibility for administration of the Act and undertakes enforcement. Under the Act, Councils are not required to conduct cat management but may participate to a degree that they consider necessary or relevant and can resource.

In 2017 DPIPWE with the support of the Cat Management Reference Group developed the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan 2017-2022, which outlines a comprehensive and collaborative statewide approach to managing cats. It is built around seven objectives, including increasing the level of responsible cat ownership and community awareness around cat management, use of best practice techniques in relation to cat management and minimising the impact of cats on important conservation and agricultural assets. The Tasmanian Cat Management

Plan 2017-2022 recognises that the management of cats is a shared responsibility and that the community plays a key role. Without community support and participation, the problems caused by domestic and stray cats will remain significant.

In 2018 the State Government funded three Regional Cat Management Coordinators to help progress the objectives of the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan 2017-2022. The North-West Regional Cat Management Coordinator is based at the Cradle Coast Authority and works with State Government, the nine Councils of the Cradle Coast region and other stakeholders to improve the levels of responsible cat ownership in the community and create and implement effective cat management initiatives.

The Cradle Coast Cat Management Working Group was formed in 2018 and comprises representatives of the nine Councils, the Regional Cat Management Coordinator, RSPCA Tasmania, a regional vet clinic, Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service and Biosecurity Tasmania. The Working Group was established to identify shared cat management challenges, possible solutions and priorities across the region. Information and discussions from the working group meetings have informed the development of the Strategy.

## OUR VISION

To see the Cradle Coast community enjoy the benefits of cat ownership whilst collectively and responsibly managing cats for the benefit of cat welfare, human health and well-being, native wildlife and agriculture.

### Why we need to improve cat management

Roaming domestic and stray cats can create nuisance in the community. Many property owners feel frustrated that cats are allowed to come onto their property uninvited, intimidate their pets, defecate and spray in the yard and predate on the wildlife they are trying to entice onto their property. On average an Australian roaming domestic cat has a home-range of 2 ha, but it can be as large as 31 ha (Roetman *et al.* 2017). This means that the behaviour of one roaming domestic cat can impact multiple households.

A 2020 study estimated that domestic cats kill 390 million animals a year in Australia, of which 241 million are native (Legge *et al.* 2020). A single roaming domestic cat kills an average of 186 animals a year, of which 115 are native, and because of their unnaturally high densities in urban areas, they exert a predation pressure that is 30-50 times higher per square kilometre than that of feral cats. The same study estimated that a single stray cat kills approximately 449 animals a year, of which 257

are native. The result is that millions of native animals are killed in Tasmania each year by domestic and stray cats, in addition to the impacts of feral cats.

These numbers do not include the death of native animals through the transmission of toxoplasmosis, a disease for which cats are the primary host. The disease can be fatal to several Australian marsupials such as bandicoots, wombats and wallabies. Toxoplasmosis also impacts livestock and can cause miscarriage and stillbirths, particularly in sheep. The cost of toxoplasmosis to the agricultural industry in Tasmania is estimated to be \$1.7 million annually (Department of Primary Industries, Parks, Water and Environment unpublished data). Humans can also contract toxoplasmosis and while most will not show any symptoms, the disease can be very serious for pregnant women, potentially causing miscarriage or life-long congenital defects. Long-term infection with toxoplasmosis has been associated with higher incidences of mental health issues including depression, bipolar disorder and schizophrenia. It is estimated that around 50-62% of Tasmanians have been infected with the parasite (Munday 1970, Milstein and Goldsmid 1997) and that 40% of domestic cats carry toxoplasmosis (Sumner and Ackland 1999). A roaming domestic cat is much more likely to contract and spread the disease than a cat that is contained to their owner's property.

## **The costs of cat management**

There are substantial costs associated with cat management for Councils and cat management facilities, including dealing with cat-related complaints, control programs and the care of trapped and surrendered cats. Councils do not receive financial support to undertake cat management and they are required to resource any actions they implement from their current budget. The employment of a single compliance officer undertaking cat management will cost the Councils an estimated \$200,000 annually, including staff wages, administration, transport and maintenance, along with an up-front investment in equipment of approximately \$43,000. Costs will vary between the Councils as Councils that are further removed from a cat management facility will experience increased transportation costs. Due to the substantial associated costs Councils currently have a limited capacity for cat management.

All three cat management facilities in Tasmania are operated by not-for-profit organisations that depend on fees, donations, fund raising and many dedicated volunteers to cover their operating costs. In 2019, a total of 6,250 cats were taken to the cat management facilities and shelters across Tasmania (Tasmanian Cat Management Project unpublished data). Under the *Cat Management Act 2009* cat management facilities are required to microchip and desex every cat that they rehome or reunite with their owner. The RSPCA estimates their average cost to rehome a cat to be approximately \$700. This includes veterinary care, boarding and microchipping and desexing procedures. In general, stray cats are more expensive to process as they require more medical procedures than domestic cats and may

require more boarding time to settle into their new environment. The costs associated with the processing and euthanasia of a trapped feral cat is approximately \$75.

A more detailed breakdown of the costs associated with cat management for both Councils and cat management facilities can be found in Appendix 1.

## **The challenges moving forward**

The success of many cat management initiatives relies on easy access to a cat management facility. Cat management facilities take in stray, lost and surrendered domestic cats and strive to find them all a suitable home. They provide essential health care, vaccinate, microchip and desex all cats and kittens before placing them for adoption. In addition to rehoming cats, they also provide valuable community education on responsible cat ownership, discounted microchipping and desexing programs and assist in cat management initiatives organised by Councils.

At present, the RSPCA is the only cat management facility in the Cradle Coast region. The RSPCA is based in Spreyton, which is on the eastern boundary of the region, and more than two hours away from residents of the West Coast and Circular Head Councils.

Cat management in the Cradle Coast region is a complex issue due to limited resources, a single cat management facility at the limit of the region, a highly dispersed population and long distances. For cat management to be successful actions need to be affordable and sustainable over the long term. The key initiatives in the Strategy include education and awareness raising on responsible cat ownership, enhancing current knowledge of cat ownership practices and cat impacts in the Cradle Coast region and improving access to cat management services.

The Tasmanian community is the main stakeholder in cat management and cat management can only be successful if there is community support and participation. Education on the legislation and the benefits of desexing, microchipping and containment will lead to an increase in responsible cat ownership, and consequently, improvements in cat welfare, a reduction of nuisance complaints and a reduction in the domestic and stray cat population. Increased knowledge on cat management issues in the region will identify priority issues and hotspot problem areas and will allow for the development of affordable and sustainable cat management actions with the greatest impact. Improved access to a cat management facility will allow more residents to access services such as the surrender of unwanted cats and kittens, adoptions and discounted desexing and microchipping.

Cat management is a shared responsibility across all parts of the community including individual cat owners, breeders, State and Local Government, veterinarians, cat management facilities and shelters. All partner organisations are looking forward to working with the community to achieve the goal of responsible cat ownership and successful cat management.

## OBJECTIVES

The Strategy aims to provide clear direction and identify actions stakeholders could take to improve the welfare of domestic cats and reduce the impacts of domestic and stray cats in the Cradle Coast region. The Strategy also provides mechanisms to improve the knowledge on the number and impacts of domestic and stray cats to better inform cat management and create baseline data for future revisions of the Strategy.

### Desired outcomes

- Increase the number of cat owners practicing responsible cat ownership across the region.
- Improved knowledge of cat management issues across the region.
- Minimise the impacts of domestic and stray cats on the community and local wildlife.

## SCOPE

### Region

The Cradle Coast region consists of nine Councils, Burnie City, Central Coast, Circular Head, Devonport City, Kentish, King Island, Latrobe, West Coast and Waratah-Wynyard. The region covers 23,000 square kilometres and has an estimated population of 112,700 residents. There are currently no reliable data available on the number of domestic cats in the Cradle Coast region, but based on national data from Animal Medicines Australia (2019) approximately one in four households owns a cat (27%), with an average of 1.4 cats per household. With 52,500 households, it is estimated that the Cradle Coast region is home to approximately 19,800 domestic cats. There are currently no reliable estimates for the number of stray cats in the region.

### Categories of cats

All cats in Tasmania belong to one species (*Felis catus*), but from a management perspective they are often categorised as domestic, stray and feral based on their

lifestyle and ownership status. The definitions used in the Strategy are consistent with the definitions in the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan 2017-2022:

- **Feral cats** are those that live and reproduce in the wild, largely or entirely removed from humans, and survive by hunting or scavenging; none of their needs are satisfied intentionally by humans.
- **Stray cats** are those found in and around cities, towns and rural properties; they may depend on some resources provided by humans but have no identifiable owner.
- **Domestic cats** are those which are identifiable as owned; most of their needs are supplied by their owners. They may roam beyond their owner's property, including into bush and park land, but they spend most of their time with a specific person/family/property.

Cats are able to move between categories within their lifetimes. Most commonly, domestic cats enter the stray population either on their own accord, after getting lost or when they are abandoned by their owners. Stray cats can be brought into a cat management facility and if they are social animals they can be rehomed and enter the domestic cat population. There is also bidirectional movement between stray cat and feral cat populations, with cats either becoming more or less socialised and dependent on humans, and domestic cats may occasionally join the feral cat population if they are abandoned in remote locations. Feral cats rarely become domestic cats.

The Strategy recognises the significant interactions between domestic and stray cat populations and provides an integrated management approach for these two populations of cats to ensure successful management outcomes. Feral cat management is dealt with under the *Biosecurity Act 2019* and sits outside the scope of this Strategy.

## IMPLEMENTATION

### Implementation principles

The Strategy recognises that the Councils and other key stakeholders in the Cradle Coast region have different priorities, capabilities and resources for cat management and that implementation roles need to be voluntary and flexible at the local level. The Strategy adopts an opt-in approach which will allow every stakeholder to participate in cat management actions to the extent that they require and are able to resource, while keeping them aligned with the actions of the other partner organisations in the region.

## Two approaches

The implementation of the Strategy will consist of two approaches:

1. Initiatives which individual stakeholders can implement.

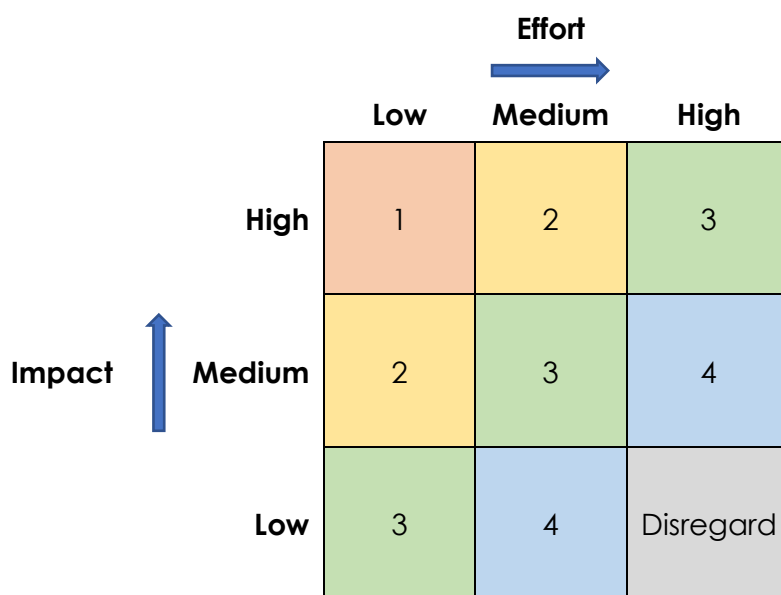
The first approach will allow stakeholders to implement cat management initiatives that are a priority for their organisation or municipality, can be commenced straight away and require no regional cooperation.

2. Initiatives which CCA will help the stakeholders to progress as a region.

The second approach will see CCA help the stakeholders to explore and progress cat management initiatives that would benefit from a regional approach to prevent duplication, improve efficiency and reduce costs. These initiatives are highlighted in bold in the action plans.

## Prioritisation

A priority matrix is used to assign priorities to the possible cat management actions.



**Effort** – Assessment of how much effort would be required, including time, money and other resources.

**Impact** – How much the action would contribute to improving the level of responsible cat ownership or successful cat management within the municipality or the region.



Every initiative has been assigned a priority value of one to four based on the impact the initiative will have on improving responsible cat ownership and management and the effort it will take to implement. High impact initiatives that are easy to implement should receive priority over initiatives that are difficult to implement or would have less of an impact. Priority 1 actions will provide quick wins for stakeholders and will build the trust and confidence to pursue further action. While certain initiatives are classified as high effort/high impact they have received a higher priority level as they are fundamental to additional cat management actions. These actions are indicated with an \*.

## Areas of focus

The Strategy sets out eight areas of focus for cat management actions in the Cradle Coast region. Each area of focus contains essential background information and an action plan that indicates priorities, timelines and identifies the stakeholders that could deliver the action. Performance indicators are identified to measure the success of the Strategy.

### 1. Education and awareness of responsible cat ownership

A vital part of successful cat management relies on community support and participation. When cats are managed responsibly (desexed, microchipped and contained) there will be less nuisance experienced by the community, less predation of wildlife and fewer domestic cats will be able to contribute to the stray cat population.

A priority of the Strategy is to help people understand their responsibilities under the *Cat Management Act 2009*, but also inform them how they can improve the welfare of their cat.

The key principles of responsible cat ownership are:

- Making sure your cat is microchipped and desexed by four months of age.
- Keeping your cat contained to your property to ensure their safety and reduce nuisance and predation.
- Making sure your cat is healthy and happy by providing a balanced diet, parasite treatment, regular vet visits and suitable entertainment and stimulation.
- Not keeping more than four cats on your property without a permit.
- Planning for your cat in the event of an emergency.
- Surrendering unwanted cats and kittens to cat management facilities and not abandoning them.
- Not feeding stray cats or making food available to them.

Owners are not required to contain their cat to their property under the *Cat Management Act 2009* and many owners let their cats roam freely. The main reasons that cat owners do not practice containment centre around the ideas that cats

need to roam to be healthy, that they do not travel very far and that it is too difficult to contain a cat. However, cat owners have a moral obligation to make sure their cat does not become a nuisance to other people. Vets and cat behaviourists agree that roaming increases the risk of injuries and disease transmission and that cats can live happily at home if their needs are provided for. Community education on the benefits of containment for cat welfare is essential to successfully generate an attitude change and increase the level of cat containment in the community.

| 1. Education and awareness of responsible cat ownership  |        |        |          |             |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants   |
| Provide educational information and promote responsible cat ownership to the public, using consistent messaging, via: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Website</li> <li>• Social media</li> <li>• Booklets</li> <li>• Newsletter</li> <li>• Presentations</li> </ul> | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Promote legislation changes and educate cat owners about their obligations under the <i>Cat Management Act 2009</i> .  | Low    | High   | 1        | 2021/2022   | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Promote school-based education programs on responsible cat ownership such as EduCat by Ten Lives and AWARE by RSPCA.   | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Cat management facilities  |
| Support and promote stakeholder and community initiatives to deliver affordable responsible cat ownership programs for the community.  | Low    | Medium | 2        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Educate the community about how to plan for their cat in the event of an emergency   | Low    | Low    | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics        |
| Work with local organisations to establish a process for handling the care of cats in emergency situations.  | Medium | Low    | 4        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>Cat management facilities                              |

Performance indicators:

- Increase in responsible cat ownership behaviours by cat owners.
- Number of views on participants' and TassieCat website.
- Number of resources distributed.
- Number of community initiatives supported.
- Number of Councils with processes in place for managing pet cats in case of emergency.

## 2. Data collection

One of the key initiatives of the Strategy is to improve the knowledge on cat management issues in the Cradle Coast region. Comprehensive knowledge on the population levels of domestic and stray cats, levels of responsible cat ownership practices, distribution of stray cats and nuisance hotspots is essential to design effective cat management programs, prioritise actions and achieve responsible cat ownership across the community.

There is a significant knowledge gap about cat ownership and management for the Cradle Coast region. Recent research projects have focussed on Tasmania as a whole or have been specific to defined geographic areas and cannot be reliably applied to the Cradle Coast region.

Standardised data collection across the region can be used to identify barriers to responsible cat ownership, understand the scale of existing cat issues, identify nuisance and stray cat hotspots, and will be an important first step to better understand the scale of existing problems and to identify practical long-term solutions.

| 2. Data collection  |             |             |           |                   |  |
|---|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|--|
| Action  | Effort      | Impact      | Priority  | Timeline          | Participants   |
| Collect annual data on the characteristics of surrendered cats in the region.   | Low         | High        | 1         | Annually          | Cat management facilities  |
| Keep abreast of statewide and national developments in cat management.  | Low         | High        | 1         | As required       | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities           |
| <b>Maintain a cat related enquiry register, that collects standard data across the region, to track the number and nature of enquiries and complaints.</b>    | <b>High</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>2*</b> | <b>Short term</b> | <b>State Government<br/>Councils<br/>CCA<br/>Cat management facilities</b> |
| Disseminate information and case studies about cat management activities that have been undertaken in the region to share effective approaches and learnings. | Medium      | High        | 2         | As required       | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities           |

| 2. Data collection   |        |        |          |             |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants   |
| Improve knowledge on levels of domestic cat ownership in the region, nuisance experienced, stray cat feeding and community expectations via a local community survey.                          | High   | High   | 3        | Medium term | Councils<br>CCA  |
| Where possible identify and implement monitoring strategies before, during and after cat management interventions to measure impact and effectiveness (e.g. educational and control measures). | High   | High   | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities |
| Promote and participate in scientific research projects (including citizen science projects) concerning cat ecology, behaviour and management.   | Medium | Medium | 3        | As required | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities |

\* The action has received a higher priority level as it is fundamental to additional cat management actions.

Performance indicators:

- Number of cat management stakeholders using consistent data collection processes.
- Adequacy of information for evidence-based decision making.
- Number of case studies disseminated.

### 3. Improving access to cat management facilities

Cat management facilities take in stray, lost and surrendered domestic cats and strive to find them all a suitable home. They provide essential health care, vaccinate, microchip and desex all cats and kittens before placing them for adoption. In addition to rehoming cats, they also provide valuable community education on responsible cat ownership, discounted microchipping and desexing programs and assist in cat management initiatives organised by Councils. Having access to a cat management facility enables residents to safely surrender unwanted cats or kittens thereby reducing the number of abandoned and consequently stray cats in the community.

Currently the RSPCA is the only cat management facility in the Cradle Coast region and is located in Spreyton on the eastern boundary of the region. Several of the Cradle Coast Councils are over one hour's drive from the RSPCA, which makes movement of unwanted or unowned cats and kittens challenging for the public, veterinary clinics and Councils.

The *Cat Management Act 2009* allows cat management facilities to nominate a person, business or organisation to hold and care for cats on their behalf. The

establishment of a network between a cat management facility, participating veterinarians, volunteer carers and transporters could be a viable approach to improve the access of rural and remote communities to cat management services.

| 3. Access to cat management facilities   |        |        |          |            |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline   | Participants   |
| Collaborate with cat management facilities in the establishment of a volunteer cat transport network across the Cradle Coast region. | High   | High   | 2*       | Short term | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |

\* The action has received a higher priority level as it is fundamental to additional cat management actions.

Performance indicators:

- Establishment of a regional network of nominees and volunteers to hold and transport surrendered cats for a cat management facility.
- Number of cats surrendered to cat management facility from western Councils.

#### 4. Desexing and microchipping

Under the *Cat Management Act 2009*, from 01 March 2022 every cat must be microchipped and desexed by four months of age unless a veterinarian considers it to be a health or welfare issue for the cat. Cats owned for the purpose of breeding are not required to be desexed.

Currently, only 5% of cats in cat management facilities are successfully reunited with their owners (RSPCA Australia 2019). This is either because cats are not microchipped or because owners have not kept their contact details up to date on the microchipping registry. Microchipping provides cats with a permanent means of identification and increases the chance that a lost cat can be reunited with their owner. Microchipping will ultimately reduce the number of cats that have to be rehomed by cat management facilities and it will also reduce the risk of accidentally rehoming a cat that already has an owner.

Mandatory desexing of cats at four months of age is important to reduce the number of unwanted litters of kittens. These kittens are either surrendered to a cat management facility or abandoned and are contributing to the overpopulation of both domestic and stray cats.

| 4. Desexing and microchipping  |        |        |          |             |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants   |
| Promote the requirements and benefits of desexing and microchipping.                               | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Advertise the importance of keeping contact details current on microchipping registers.            | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Explore the possibility of subsidised desexing and microchipping projects in targeted areas.       | Medium | High   | 2        | Short term  | State Government<br>Councils<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics        |
| Identify barriers to desexing and microchipping and explore strategies to overcome these barriers. | High   | High   | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>Cat management facilities                              |

Performance indicators:

- Decrease in the number of kittens surrendered to cat management facilities.
- Increase in number of surrendered cats returned to their owner.
- Number of microchipping days conducted.

## 5. Nuisance and stray cats

Roaming domestic and stray cats can cause significant nuisance in the community by interfering with other pets, spraying and defecating in the yard, cat fights, and predation of wildlife, potentially resulting in neighbourhood disputes which can be difficult to resolve. Roaming domestic and stray cats can also carry infectious diseases such as toxoplasmosis which can affect human health, cause miscarriages in livestock and potential death in susceptible species of wildlife such as Tasmanian marsupials.

There is no requirement under the *Cat Management Act 2009* for owners to keep their cat contained to their property. However, cat owners have a moral obligation to make sure their cat does not become a nuisance to other people. The Australian Veterinary Association and all Tasmanian cat management facilities strongly encourage cat owners to keep their cats safe at home for the wellbeing of their cat as well as for the protection of our community and wildlife. Cats that are kept safe at home live longer and healthier lives as it reduces the risk of car accidents, cat and/or dog attacks, contracting diseases and getting lost.

The *Cat Management Act 2009* allows for the protection of private property and permits a person to trap a cat on their private property provided any cat trapped is returned to its owner or taken to a cat management facility.

A cat found on private land that is more than 1 km from a place of residence, or on land used for primary production or a production premises such as an abattoir or aquaculture business, may be returned to its owner, taken to a cat management facility or humanely destroyed.

A stray cat is an unowned cat that relies on humans for at least some its needs. This can be indirectly through scavenging in bins and waste management facilities or directly by intentional feeding. Stray cats that have access to a reliable food source have a higher pregnancy rate and can produce larger litters. By providing a food source for one or more stray cats, people are directly causing an increase in the stray cat population and compounding their impact on wildlife and the community. Increasing the level of cat containment in the community and reducing food sources for stray cats will reduce the roaming and stray cat population and subsequently reduce the nuisance experienced by the community.

| 5. Nuisance and stray cats   |        |        |          |          |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|----------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline | Participants   |
| Advocate to keep cats safe and happy at home and promote the benefits of cat containment for cat welfare and the benefits to local wildlife and the community. | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing  | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Destigmatise and encourage surrendering unwanted cats and kittens to cat management facilities and inform the public about the illegality of abandoning a cat. | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing  | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Provide education around the issue of deliberately and unintentionally feeding stray cats.   | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing  | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Provide consistent humane trapping advice to members of the public who are considering trapping on private property.   | Low    | Medium | 2        | Ongoing  | State Government<br>Councils<br>Cat management facilities                              |

| 5. Nuisance and stray cats  |        |        |          |             |   |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------------|---|
| Action  | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants  |
| Investigate sources of unintended feeding of stray cats at council operated facilities and limiting access to these resources (e.g. waste management facilities, food service or processing sites, public areas). | Medium | High   | 2        | Short term  | Councils  |
| Review and potentially amend local planning laws if they present a barrier to the construction of cat enclosures.   | Medium | Medium | 3        | Short term  | Councils  |
| Promote cost effective containment options and explore partnerships with community organisations for affordable and local construction.   | Medium | Medium | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities                                    |
| Participate in collaborative cat management programs (Council, community and cat management facility) at stray cat hotspots in the community.   | High   | High   | 3        | As required | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics<br>Community |

Performance indicators:

- Number of roaming cat complaints reported.
- Number of stray cat feeding complaints.
- Review and modification of local planning laws.
- Number of cat management programs undertaken by Strategy participants.
- Reduction in stray cat issues in areas where cat management programs have been conducted.

## 6. Protecting significant conservation, agricultural and community assets

Certain areas are more vulnerable to impacts of stray and roaming domestic cats and may require dedicated cat management effort to maintain their agricultural and/or conservation value. These areas can include:

- Areas of high conservation value that are home to native animals that are vulnerable to predation by cats or susceptible to toxoplasmosis.
- Agricultural assets such as primary production land, production premises for aquaculture, horticulture etc., or premises used for the preparation and/or storage of food for humans or animals, that are susceptible to the transmission of cat-borne diseases or may experience hygiene issues.
- Community assets such as shopping and entertainment precincts, tourist attractions and council parklands that can be impacted by nuisance, disease transmission and hygiene issues.



The *Cat Management Act 2009* allows for cat management actions to be undertaken by an authorised officer in a prohibited area which includes:

- Any area of land that is managed by a public authority, or Agency within the meaning of the *State Service Act 2000*, and is reserved land<sup>1</sup>.
- Private land that is reserved land.

A cat trapped in a prohibited area by an authorised person may be returned to its owner, taken to a cat management facility or humanely destroyed.

In consultation with the community Councils can declare an area of council-controlled land an area prohibited for cats, or they can declare an area of land within the municipality a cat management area.

Identifying vulnerable assets, developing suitable cat management initiatives and educating the community about the importance of cat management are important steps in mitigating the impacts of cats on the significant conservation, agricultural and community assets in the Cradle Coast region.

| 6. Protecting significant conservation, agricultural and community assets  |             |             |           |                   |  |
|--|-------------|-------------|-----------|-------------------|--|
| Action   | Effort      | Impact      | Priority  | Timeline          | Participants   |
| Provide educational material on the impacts of roaming and stray cats on local wildlife, human health and agriculture.   | Low         | High        | 1         | Ongoing           | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities                       |
| Advocate to keep cats safe and happy at home and promote the benefits of cat containment for cat welfare and the benefits to local wildlife and the community.   | Low         | High        | 1         | Ongoing           | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Advertise the locations of areas prohibited for cats and the reason for their designation.   | Low         | Medium      | 2         | Annually          | Councils   |
| <b>Undertake strategic asset protection planning using regionally consistent criteria for the classification of significant conservation and agricultural assets that are susceptible to impacts of stray and domestic cats.</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>High</b> | <b>2*</b> | <b>Short term</b> | <b>Councils<br/>CCA</b>  |

<sup>1</sup> Reserved land includes reserved land under the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*; land subject to a conservation covenant under part 5 of the *Nature Conservation Act 2002*; public reserves under the *Crown Lands Act 1976*; permanent timber production zone land under the *Forest Management Act 2013*; and private timber reserves under the *Forestry Practices Act 1985*.

| 6. Protecting significant conservation, agricultural and community assets   |        |        |          |             |   |
|---|--------|--------|----------|-------------|---|
| Action  | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants  |
| Identify proactive cat management activities that can benefit these priority areas and implement when possible.                                       | High   | High   | 3        | Medium term | Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities  |
| Establish temporary cat management areas, outside significant conservation and agricultural assets, when public health and/or wildlife is threatened. | High   | High   | 3        | As required | Councils  |
| Explore the option of collaborative cat management programs around significant conservation assets.   | High   | High   | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facility<br>Veterinary clinics<br>Community |

\* The action has received a higher priority level as it is fundamental to additional cat management actions.

Performance indicators:

- Completed maps of significant conservation and agricultural assets.
- Number of cat management programs undertaken in significant conservation assets by Strategy participants.

## 7. Uncontrolled cat breeding and welfare concerns

Uncontrolled cat breeding creates an excess of domestic cats and puts enormous pressure on the cat management facilities to find them all a suitable home. In 2019 a total of 6,250 cats were handed in to cat management facilities and shelters across Tasmania (Tasmanian Cat Management Project unpublished data). To reduce the overpopulation of domestic cats, from 01 March 2022 only registered breeders are permitted to breed cats under the *Cat Management Act 2009*. A registered breeder must be a member of a recognised cat organisation. Additionally, a person can apply for a conditional permit to breed a cat.

To ensure the welfare of domestic cats and to reduce cat nuisance issues, a limit will be introduced to the number of cats that are allowed to be kept on a single property. Under the *Cat Management Act 2009*, from 01 March 2022 people are allowed to keep a maximum of four cats over the age of four months on their property. Exceptions apply for a person who holds a multiple cat permit, registered cat breeders, people that hold a cat breeding permit, or people that are fostering cats for a cat management facility, cat boarding facilities and veterinary establishments and a person who is minding another person's cat for less than six months.

Restrictions on the number of cats per property may also assist in resolving cases of cat hoarding. Cat hoarding involves a person keeping a large number of cats, in some cases as many as 150 cats, and failing to provide adequate care, while at the same time failing to recognise the suffering of the cats due to the lack of care. Hoarding is a recognised mental disorder and cat hoarding situations need to be managed carefully to ensure the welfare of the cats as well as the owner.

Community education on the new regulations concerning cat breeding and the maximum number of cats will be important to ensure voluntary compliance with the regulations and raise awareness on the issues of cat overpopulation and welfare.

| 7. Uncontrolled cat breeding and welfare concerns  |        |        |          |             |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants   |
| Promote the requirements of desexing cats at four months of age.   | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Advertise that only registered cat breeders are allowed to breed cats.   | Low    | High   | 1        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Promote that the <i>Cat Management Act 2009</i> limits the number of cats kept on a property to four individuals without a permit. | Low    | Medium | 2        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Establish a protocol and liaise with RSPCA on suspected cases of animal cruelty and hoarding.                                      | Medium | Medium | 3        | Medium term | State Government<br>Councils<br>RSPCA<br>Cat management facility                       |

Performance indicators:

- Number of complaints on illegal breeding of cats.
- Number of permits for multiple cats applied for.
- Number of Strategy participants that have established processes in relation to cat hoarding situations.

## 8. Governance, resourcing and legislation

The Strategy recognises that the Councils of the Cradle Coast region and other key stakeholders will have different priorities, capabilities and resources for cat management. The Strategy adopts an opt-in approach which enables all Councils

and other stakeholders to participate in cat management to the extent that they require and are able to resource.

Councils do not receive financial support to undertake cat management and they are required to resource any actions they implement from their current budget. Due to the substantial associated costs Councils currently have a limited capacity for cat management. Investigating additional grant funding opportunities will be required to increase the potential for long-term cat management actions in the region.

The Cradle Coast Regional Cat Management Coordinator will work with the Cradle Coast Cat Management Working Group to deliver the Strategy. However, if the Coordinator or Working Group are not operating it is recommended that a Cat Management Advisory Group, consisting of representatives of all key stakeholders, will be established. While the majority of the cat management initiatives can be implemented by individual Councils and stakeholders the Cat Management Advisory Group will provide a valuable platform to guide the delivery of regional initiatives, discuss future commitments to cat management in the region and liaise with State Government on possible future amendments to the *Cat Management Act 2009*.

A comprehensive review of the Strategy is to be undertaken every five years, when amendments to the cat management legislation have been proclaimed and/or additional funding has become available enabling new cat management initiatives.

| 8. Governance and resourcing   |        |        |          |             |  |
|--|--------|--------|----------|-------------|--|
| Action   | Effort | Impact | Priority | Timeline    | Participants   |
| Establish a Cat Management Advisory Group with representatives of all partner organisations. | Low    | High   | 1        | As required | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Participate in the potential review of the <i>Cat Management Amendment Act 2020</i> .        | Low    | High   | 1        | As required | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |
| Investigate grant funding opportunities for cat management.                                  | Medium | High   | 2        | Ongoing     | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities                       |

| 8. Governance and resourcing   |        |      |   |             |  |
|--|--------|------|---|-------------|--|
| Review Cradle Coast Cat Management Strategy (2021-2026) in 2026 and on an as needed basis to ensure compliance with updated legislation. | Medium | High | 2 | As required | State Government<br>Councils<br>CCA<br>Cat management facilities<br>Veterinary clinics |

Performance indicators:

- Continuation of the Cradle Coast Cat Management Working Group or establishment of a Cat Management Advisory Group.
- Number of funding opportunities applied for.
- Comments provided to review of the *Cat Management Amendment Act 2020* (See Appendix 2 for currently identified limits to the *Cat Management Act 2009*).
- Review and modification of the Strategy.

## REFERENCES

Animal Medicines Australia. 2019. Pets in Australia: A National Survey of Pets and People. Animal Medicines Australia: Canberra, ACT, Australia.

Legge, S., Woinarski, J.C.Z., Dickman, C.R., Murphy, B.P., Woolley, L.-A. and Carver, M.C. 2020. We need to worry about Bella and Charlie: the impacts of pet cats on Australian wildlife. *Wildlife Research* 47: 523-539.

Milstein, T. C. and Goldsmid, J. M. 1997. Parasites of feral cats from southern Tasmania and their potential significance. *Australian Veterinary Journal* 75: 218-219.

Munday, B. L. 1970. The epidemiology of Toxoplasmosis with particular reference to the Tasmanian environment. M.V.Sc. Thesis, University of Melbourne.

Roetman, P., Tindle, H., Litchfield, C., Chiera, B., Quinton, G., Kikillus, H., Bruce, D. and Kays, R. 2017. Cat Tracker South Australia: understanding pet cats through citizen science. Discovery Circle initiative, University of South Australia, Adelaide; DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.4226/78/5892ce70b245a>

RSPCA Australia. 2019. RSPCA Australia National Statistics 2018-2019. (<https://www.rspca.org.au/what-we-do/our-role-caring-animals/annual-statistics>)

Sumner, B. and Ackland, M.L. 1999. *Toxoplasma gondii* antibody in domestic cats in Melbourne. *Australian Veterinary Journal* 77: 447-449.

Woinarski, J.C.Z., Legge, S.M. and Dickman, C.R. 2019. Cats in Australia: Companion and killer. CSIRO Publishing, Clayton South, Victoria.

# APPENDIX 1

## Detailed costs of cat management

Detailed costs of cat management for the RSPCA. In 2019 the RSPCA received 877 cats.

| <b>Total expenses of cat management</b>                     |                 |
|---|-----------------|
| Average number of days cats require boarding until adoption | 19.15 days      |
| Shelter costs/cat/day                                       | \$31.29         |
| Shelter costs/cat   | \$599.29        |
| Vet costs per cat   | \$88.80         |
| <b>Total cost/cat</b>                                       | <b>\$688.09</b> |
| <b>Costs of single procedures</b>                           |                 |
| Desexing male cat   | \$33.36         |
| Desexing female cat   | \$72.96         |
| Microchipping   | \$17.45         |
| Vaccinations  | \$18.85         |
| Euthanasia  | \$75.00         |
| <b>Income per cat</b>                                       |                 |
| Surrender fee domestic cat                                  | \$75.00         |
| Surrender fee stray cat                                     | Donation        |
| Adoption fee adult cat                                      | \$250           |
| Adoption fee kitten   | \$300           |

Detailed costs of cat management for a Council.

These costs represent the minimum costs associated with employing one full-time cat compliance officer and do not include additional costs of equipment maintenance, community engagement or specific cat trapping projects. Costs vary per Council and are based on Circular Head Council.

| <b>Minimum expenses for cat management</b>                                |                    |
|---|--------------------|
| <b>Personnel costs</b>  |                    |
| Wages and on-costs of a cat compliance officer                            | \$100,000 annually |
| Wages administration staff  | \$15,000 annually  |
| Out of hours call out – minimal fee                                       | \$332              |
| Training  | \$400              |
| <b>Equipment</b>  |                    |
| Vehicle – purchase  | \$40,000           |
| 4 x Traps   | \$640              |
| 4 x Cat carriers  | \$648              |
| 2 x Nets  | \$480              |
| 3 x Gloves  | \$585              |
| <b>Travel</b>   |                    |
| Motor vehicle expenses - ATO rates  | 72 cents/km        |
| Kilometres round trip<br>Circular Head Council office – RSPCA<br>Spreyton | 280 km             |
| Travel costs/trip   | \$200              |



## APPENDIX 2

### Currently identified limits to the *Cat Management Act 2009*.

- **The omission of mandatory cat containment.**

Containment to the property is a requirement for all other pet animals and cats should not be an exception.

The majority of complaints reported to Councils and cat management facilities concern nuisance caused by roaming cats. Complaints include cats defecating in the yard, destroying property and physically attacking pets occasionally leaving distraught pet owners with considerable veterinary bills or dead animals.

Because the cat owner is not required to keep the cat on their property, the effort to deter the cat and reduce the nuisance experienced is the responsibility of the person experiencing the nuisance. Instead of owners incurring a cost to contain the cat to their property, the neighbours are now incurring the costs of trying to deter the cat from entering their property.

- **There are no regulations regarding nuisance caused by cats or cats attacking other animals.**

Many owners of small pets, like chickens and guinea pigs have experienced the death/attack of a pet by a cat. Because there are no regulations regarding containment or domestic cats killing/attacking other animals the owners of the small pets are not supported by the Act if they want to take action against the owner of the cat.

A person experiencing nuisance now has the option to trap the cat and take it to a cat management facility. However, if the cat is microchipped it will be returned to the owner and is free to roam the neighbourhood again causing more nuisance. It is feared some people might get frustrated and will see no other solution than the destruction of the cat. This can result in the owner of the cat starting legal proceedings against the person that experienced the nuisance and destroyed the cat.

- **Loophole in current Act regarding the need to desex a cat reclaimed from a cat management facility by a breeder.**

The current legislation (Section 24 (4)(b)) states that: An owner must not reclaim a cat that is not desexed, unless the owner is a registered breeder.

However, many registered breeders also own cats that they do not use for breeding. These cats should be desexed by the cat management facility before the owner

can reclaim them. The section should be amended to include the statement: 'and the cat is used for breeding'.