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**Re Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy Inquiry into the
problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia**

Dear Mr Ted O'Brien MP and Committee Members

The Glebe Society welcomes the National Inquiry into feral and domestic cats, and the representation of members from urban and rural areas. The Glebe Society has a 50+ year history of focus on three pillars; environment, community and heritage. This Inquiry concerns all three.

The role of both feral and domestic cats in the destruction of native wildlife in Australia, in mammal extinction and in reduced populations of other threatened native species has already been well documented. *

Whilst it has been estimated that feral cats kill more than three billion animals per year, pet cat studies have shown that each roaming pet cat is responsible for killing 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year. Thus, in urban settings such as Glebe the problem of native wildlife destruction due to pet cats needs particular attention.

Research has shown that while each pet cat kills fewer animals than a feral cat, their high urban density means the toll is still very high. Per square kilometre per year, pet cats kill 30-50 times more animals than feral cats in the bush (<https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/WR19174>). In cities such as Sydney, where there is limited open green space due to high population density, it is even more important that natural areas and reconstructed bush sites are maintained and urban biodiversity appreciated and valued.

Urban parks (some pocket-sized) and habitat corridors are often small and unconnected resulting in habitat fragmentation. This means that our urban native habitat species are more vulnerable due to restricted range, isolated populations and reduced genetic diversity. We do not discount arguments advanced by bodies such as the Cat Protection Society that the environment is threatened by habitat loss, land clearing, climate change and extreme weather events including bushfire and drought. This inquiry places a welcome forensic focus on one aspect of a multifaceted issue. We do agree with cat protection advocates that cats do not belong in all environments.

Locally, with our bushcare groups and during annual bird surveys conducted by the *Blue Wren Sub-committee* of The Glebe Society, we have noted little increase in native wildlife including small reptiles or small ground foraging birds such as Superb fairy-wrens, despite revegetation works. In our area we have the largest bush restoration site in the City of Sydney, the Orphan School Creek Reserve in Forest

Lodge. However, with residential neighbours along several boundaries, rather than providing habitat for native wildlife, it is usual to see several pet cats enjoying this 'habitat' with remains of ring-tailed possums, evidence of their unfettered access.

It is clear that only by keeping pet cats indoors or securely contained can they be prevented from killing wildlife. Australian cities can be rich in urban biodiversity, if not compromised by the high levels of cat predation, as documented above.

Although in Sydney under New South Wales legislation, cats are prohibited in places set aside to protect wildlife and Local Government can make local by-laws relating to curfews, in practice, unrestrained pet cats are adept at day-and-night hunting in urban parks and wildlife areas. In new developments next to sensitive wildlife, Development Approval (DA) consent conditions may include no resident cats, but again in practice local councils are limited in the resources that they can apply to enforcing these conditions.

In the broader urban community, pet cats are perceived primarily as popular *companion animals* alone rather than also as hunters. Their impact on native wildlife is not well known.

Accordingly, we would make the following recommendations to the National Inquiry that:

1. a National education campaign be launched to promote the protection of Australia's unique native birds and animals and "To Make Every Cat an Indoor Cat"
2. Commonwealth funds be provided to all Local Councils to promote education campaigns specifically targeted to their local areas, "To Make Every Cat an Indoor Cat", to encourage cat curfews and to enforce more responsible companion animal ownership
3. a National Competition be organised to encourage Australian artists and schoolchildren to create artworks illustrating the impact cats have on our native wildlife, with a view to the development of a nationally consistent Logo to "Make Every Cat an Indoor Cat".

Yours sincerely



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* <https://theconversation.com/a-hidden-toll-australias-cats-kill-almost-650-million-reptiles-a-year-98854>

<https://theconversation.com/one-cat-one-year-110-native-animals-lock-up-your-pet-its-a-killing-machine-138412>