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BirdLife Shoalhaven is a branch of BirdLife Australia Limited ABN 75 149 124 774

Shoalhaven City Council
36 Bridge Road
Nowra NSW 2541
Attn. All Councillors

C.c. Mr. Dunshea, CEO

10 July 2023

Dear Councillors,

Birdlife Australia is Australia's largest bird conservation organisation with over 250,000 members and supporters. For over a century its members have protected birds and their habitats through practical conservation and advocacy based on the best available science.

BirdLife Shoalhaven (BLS) is a branch of BLA, which itself has 1,200 members and supporters. Our charter is to help our members and the wider community enjoy and learn more about birds and to advocate for the conservation of birdlife across the Shoalhaven.

BLS draws your attention to the imperative to control domestic cats, to prevent the loss of birds and native wildlife in the Shoalhaven and across NSW.

NSW and Western Australia are the only States that have no provisions on cat curfews or their containment indoors. This is directly impacting on the loss of birds and native animals across the State.

In 1996, the NSW Companion Animals Act combined cats and dogs within the one Policy. This means that Local Governments are unable to act to control the containment of domestic cats and so help protect native animals.

This problem is well documented. Most recently on 9 June 2023 the Sydney Morning Herald released the findings of research by Australian National University for the Biodiversity Council, Invasive Species Council and Birdlife Australia, entitled "*The staggering death toll of roaming pet cats finally revealed*" - reference below.

The research found that domestic cats kill 6,000 to 11,000 native animals per sq. km. each year in urban areas. However, local governments in NSW are powerless to implement pet management restrictions, such as containment of cats indoors, to stop this. The research identified 14 Councils in NSW, including Wollongong City Council, who have supported the introduction of stricter regulations since 2018. Furthermore, there has been strong community support for them taking this position.

BLS acknowledges there have been good community awareness programs to make pet owners aware of the issue, including NSW RSPCA's aim to '*Encourage cat owners to keep their cats safe at home and reduce cat predation on wildlife*' and their '*Keeping Cats Safe at Home Indoors*' project.

Under this project, Councils across NSW applied for \$92,000 to implement actions for local residents to keep their pet cat safe from harm by keeping them indoors. However, there was only enough funding to support ten Councils, though this included Shoalhaven City Council.

BLS congratulates Council's use of this funding to implement several effective programs, such as working with local veterinarians to explain the benefits to both cats and wildlife if pets are kept indoors and running a program of targeted desexing of cats.

While these actions all help, they are inadequate if we are to address the problem properly. This can only happen if Councils are given adequate powers to control the containment of domestic cats. For this to happen the NSW Companions Act must be reviewed.

To this end, we ask Council to write to the NSW Government, seeking their support to conduct an urgent review of the NSW Companion Animals Act to legislate for the containment of domestic cats indoors at all times.

Birdlife Shoalhaven request your urgent attention to this issue.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely



Rob Dunn

President

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Reference:

- Research by Australian National University - [Domestic cat wildlife killings to surge unless tougher regulation introduced: ANU study \(smh.com.au\)](#)