

Cat Management in Tasmania

Discussion Paper

March 2026



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Minister's Foreword

Since 2017, the Tasmanian Liberal Government and stakeholders have been delivering the outcomes of the first Tasmanian Cat Management Plan. These efforts have achieved positive results and led to meaningful improvements in cat management across the state.

However, challenges in managing cats remain and continue to pose risks to public health, agriculture, and Tasmania's unique environment. I am committed to improving cat management and cat welfare in Tasmania by addressing these ongoing challenges.

I believe this Discussion Paper is an important step in that process, and I encourage everyone to have their say.

Feedback received will inform the development of a detailed policy response and a new five-year Tasmanian Cat Management Plan, reflecting the views of stakeholders and the broader Tasmanian community.

Public consultation on this Discussion Paper will be open for ten weeks.



The Hon Gavin Pearce MP
Minister for Primary Industries and Water

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1 Introduction

Cats are valued companion animals and popular pets for many Tasmanians. They are also seen as useful animals that control vermin; nuisance animals that disturb public amenity, and pest animals that spread disease and negatively impact native wildlife and agriculture. The polarised view of cats in the community makes cat management a difficult and often emotive issue.

The first [Tasmanian Cat Management Plan \(2017-2022\)](#) provides an important framework for improving how cats are managed to protect the environment, agriculture, and human health, with cat welfare as the central and guiding priority for all actions.

The Plan recognises that addressing the impacts of domestic, stray and feral cats is a shared responsibility and requires long-term commitment and coordinated action by the Tasmanian government, key stakeholders and the community. While significant progress has been made since the Plan's implementation, ongoing challenges highlight the need to consider opportunities for improvement.

A key aim of this discussion paper is to identify key areas for improvement and present potential options that build on the achievements and outcomes of the existing Tasmanian Cat Management Plan.

This discussion paper is the first stage in developing the new Tasmanian Cat Management Plan, which will provide the framework for collaborative cat management action in Tasmania over the next five years.

This discussion paper seeks feedback from stakeholders and the community. Responses to the questions posed in this discussion paper will be analysed and used to inform the development of a new Tasmanian Cat Management Plan.

2 Background

2.1 LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK

The regulatory management of cats in Tasmania occurs through a legislative framework that includes both the [Cat Management Act 2009](#) and the [Biosecurity Act 2019](#) (for feral cats). The purpose of the *Cat Management Act 2009* is to provide for the control and management of cats, in particular:

- promote the responsible ownership and welfare of cats, including the desexing and microchipping of domestic cats
- provide for the effective management of cats, in particular allowing for the humane handling and management of unidentified, stray and feral cats
- reduce the negative effects of cats on the environment.

The biosecurity risk and biosecurity impacts of feral cats can also be managed through biosecurity programs under the *Biosecurity Act 2019*.

Both Acts are administered by the Tasmanian Government and are enforced by authorised officers. Local government officers may be authorised under both the *Cat Management Act 2009* and the *Biosecurity Act 2019* to undertake compliance and enforcement activity.

Other current Tasmanian legislation that relates to cat management activities includes the [Firearms Act 1996](#) regarding the discharge of a firearm for control or euthanasia of an animal on private property, and the [Animal Welfare Act 1993](#) in relation to the welfare and ethical treatment of cats in wild, captive or domestic circumstances.

2.2 CATEGORIES OF CATS

While all cats are the same species (*Felis catus*), this paper adopts the definitions in the *Cat Management Act 2009* to categorise cats as **domestic**, **stray**, or **feral**, recognising that individual cats may move between these categories over their lifetime.

- **Domestic cat** means a cat that a person may, on reasonable grounds, believe to be currently owned.

- **Stray cat** means a cat that is not a domestic cat but lives in close proximity to humans and may receive from them some food, water, or shelter and be accustomed to their presence.
- **Feral cat** means a cat that lives largely or entirely removed from humans in the wild and does not depend for its survival on humans intentionally providing food, water, or shelter.

2.3 ROLE OF CAT MANAGEMENT FACILITIES

The [Cat Management Act 2009](#) and the [Cat Management Regulations 2022](#) provide for the establishment of cat management facilities in Tasmania for the handling and holding of cats.

Cat management facilities in Tasmania are key, non-government, not-for-profit community resources dedicated to the welfare of unwanted cats and kittens. They offer a wide range of services, including accepting surrendered stray or unwanted cats; facilitating adoption and re-homing of cats; reuniting identifiable cats with their owners; cat boarding facilities and crisis accommodation; and promoting responsible ownership of cats. They also provide veterinary treatment for sick and injured cats, as well as services such as vaccination, desexing and microchipping for cats in their care. They may also offer low-cost desexing and microchipping of pet cats to members of the public.

Cat management facilities also play a fundamental role in enabling the community to comply with the *Cat Management Act 2009*, as a person who traps a cat is required to take the cat to a cat management facility, or a nominee of a cat management facility, or return the cat to its owner. As it is not an offence for a cat to roam beyond its owner's property, this requirement to take a trapped cat to a cat management facility is in place to safeguard the welfare of a trapped cat. Any cat that enters a cat management facility must be desexed and microchipped before it is reclaimed by its owner or rehomed by the facility. The Act permits the facility to charge the owner of a cat for the reasonable costs associated with microchipping, desexing and care of their cat.

Cat management facilities only accept a trapped or surrendered cat by appointment, thereby ensuring that they have the appropriate staff and capacity to care for the cat.

A cat taken to a cat management facility is scanned for a microchip as soon as practicable, if safe to do so. If the cat is identifiable, the owner is contacted to reclaim the cat. If the cat is not reclaimed within the holding period (3 to 5 days, depending on whether the cat is microchipped), the facility may rehome or euthanise the cat.

Cat management facilities focus on preventive strategies to reduce the number of cats entering their facilities. They contribute significantly to community education, offering resources and information on responsible cat ownership; provide low-cost cat desexing and microchipping services to the community; and underpin many council-led cat management initiatives.

Cat management facilities do not euthanise cats to manage capacity or reduce costs. These practices do not align with their values or objectives. Decisions about the outcomes of individual cats are made by the operators of the cat management facilities, based on the specific circumstances of each cat and in accordance with evidence-based practice, to ensure the best outcome for the cat. Euthanising socialised, healthy (or treatable) cats is not an effective long-term strategy for controlling the number of cats in our communities or for mitigating the negative impacts of free-roaming cats. Research also shows it can cause serious impacts on the mental health of staff and volunteers in cat management facilities/shelters, and the community^{1 2}.

Cat management facilities rely on public donations and fundraising to help cover the costs of their services. They may also request a donation from a person surrendering a cat and charge a service fee for accepting trapped stray and feral cats.

There are two cat management facilities in Tasmania - [Ten Lives](#) in the south and [Just Cats](#) in the north. Just Cats has recently received State Government funding to establish a new cat management facility in the north-west.

The *Cat Management Act 2009* also recognises a council facility designed for handling and holding cats as a cat management facility, but few councils in Tasmania have the dedicated infrastructure and resources to operate such a facility, including access to a vet and/or transfer of cats to one of the larger dedicated cat management facilities for assessment and rehoming of any cats.

With only two currently operational facilities for the whole State (and one more under development), access to a facility for many people and also to municipal councils is challenging, particularly in rural and remote regions, including King and Flinders Islands.

3 Building on the first Tasmanian Cat Management Plan

Since the implementation of the Tasmanian Cat Management Plan in 2017, the collective efforts of stakeholders have delivered significant progress toward the Plan's objectives. Over the past eight years, coordinated action across Tasmania has resulted in meaningful improvements in responsible cat ownership, reduced impacts of feral cats, community awareness, and education. These achievements are detailed in the [Tasmanian Cat Management Plan Achievements 2017-2022 report](#).

Despite these achievements, managing cats remains a complex and ongoing challenge. Uncontrolled breeding of stray cats has led to the establishment of large colonies in every municipal council area. These cats often experience poor welfare, create a nuisance, and pose a risk to native wildlife and public health. The majority of the cats entering cat management facilities and rehoming organisations are classified as strays, placing significant pressure on these organisations. Gaps in responsible ownership must be addressed to improve cat welfare, public amenity, and to stamp out illegal breeding and selling practices. More practical, humane, and sustainable approaches to managing feral cats in agricultural and natural environments are also required.

This discussion paper outlines opportunities to build on the achievements and outcomes of the first Tasmanian Cat Management Plan, while also addressing remaining gaps. The discussion is organised into three sections: domestic, stray, and feral cats. Each section has dedicated subsections that discuss specific challenges and management options.

This paper may summarise and paraphrase the legislation to provide an easy-to-understand explanation. The full legislation should be referred to for completeness and any specific details. The [Cat Management Act 2009](#) and the [Cat Management](#)

[Regulations 2022](#) can be accessed from www.legislation.tas.gov.au, along with the [Biosecurity Act 2019](#).

4 Domestic Cats

4.1 COMPULSORY MICROCHIPPING AND DESEXING OF CATS

In Tasmania, the *Cat Management Act 2009* requires cat owners to have their cats microchipped and desexed by the age of 4 months (exceptions may apply). These requirements are key components of responsible cat ownership. Desexing helps prevent unwanted litters of kittens; and microchipping ensures a lost cat can be returned to its owner as microchip details are recorded in a database with the cat owner's contact details. In 2022, amendments to the *Cat Management Act 2009* lowered the compulsory age for desexing and microchipping from 6 months to 4 months, as cats can start breeding as young as 4 months.

To increase the rates of desexing and microchipping of cats, the State Government has worked closely with local government, veterinarians, and animal welfare groups across Tasmania to spread awareness of responsible cat ownership and to promote low-cost desexing and microchipping initiatives in communities where they are needed most.

4.2 REGISTRATION OF CATS

Across Australia, registration of pet dogs has long been a requirement by local councils to support effective animal management and to help reunite lost pets with their owners. Registration requirements for cats, however, remain inconsistent at the state/territory and municipal level (see Appendix, Table 1). Where implemented, councils register cats by associating the owner and pet details with the cat's microchip number.

When active compliance with registration requirements and regular renewals are required, registration helps authorities maintain accurate cat-owner contact information. This ensures that the owner of a lost cat can be quickly and effectively found. It also enables a municipal council to track the number of pet cats within its local government area which helps to enforce animal management laws such as desexing, containment, and the number of cats per household³.

In Tasmania, there is no requirement under the [Cat Management Act 2009](#) for owners to register a cat, although all cats must be microchipped by the age of 4 months. It was noted in the second reading speech when the Act was being introduced into Parliament that “*The evidence suggests that registration for cats has low compliance rates and high administrative costs.*”

The Tasmanian Government did not propose compulsory cat registration as a legislative amendment to the Act in 2020 as the Act already allowed a municipal council to introduce registration of cats through by-laws, if desired. Kingborough Council, for example, introduced compulsory registration of cats under the [Bruny Island Cat By-law 2018](#), but does not charge a fee.

Councils are permitted to set their own fees for registration of animals under the *Local Government Act 1993*. Because councils have different operational costs and offer specific services, registration fees are likely to vary across the state, as they do for dogs. Some councils may also offer discounts for multiple-year registrations, and whether the animal is desexed, microchipped, or both.

Revenue from the registration of cats has been used by some municipal councils in other jurisdictions to fund key community facilities and services. For example, local councils in Victoria use dog and cat registration fees to fund pounds and shelter facilities, animal management staff, and incentive schemes; and a state government levy is also included to support research into dog and cat welfare.

However, municipal councils in other jurisdictions have reported that the costs of managing cats are estimated to be 7 to 10 times greater than the revenue generated from registration fees ^{1 4}. In Queensland, the requirement for cats to be registered with local government was removed in 2013, five years after its introduction, to reduce the regulatory burden on local governments ([Agriculture and Forestry Legislation Amendment Act 2013 \(QLD\)](#)).

Although the registration of cats is required in two-thirds of local government areas across Australia, it is estimated that only a third of pet cats are registered ³. Low compliance is likely due to limited enforcement measures. Additionally, while most councils offer reduced registration fees to pensioners or concession card holders, the combined costs of microchipping and desexing can be financially burdensome for low-income households.

A summary of domestic animal legislation supporting key management actions for cats in each state/territory of Australia is provided in the Appendix at Figure 1.

Questions

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

2. Do you think cat owners should be required to register their cat, like dog registration? **Yes or No**

If you answered "No," skip to Question 5.

3. If yes, should there be a fee/levy charged for registration of a cat? **Yes or No**

If you answered "No," skip to Question 5.

4. If yes, what should the fee be used for? (For example: registering cats, research into cat welfare, the costs of managing cats)

4.3 BREEDING AND SELLING OF CATS

Cat breeding in Tasmania is regulated under the *Cat Management Act 2009*. A person may only breed a cat if they are a registered cat breeder or hold a valid Cat Breeding Permit.

To be recognised as a registered cat breeder, a person must be a member of an approved cat organisation. Registered breeders must comply with the requirements of the *Cat Management Act 2009* as well as their organisation's code of ethics, rules, and regulations. Approved cat organisations issue their members who breed cats with a unique breeder identification number, which is included in advertisements. Members of the public may contact the relevant organisation to verify a breeder's legitimacy and confirm that the cats being sold are purebred.

A person who is not a registered breeder and wishes to breed a cat may apply to the State Government or their municipal council for a Cat Breeding Permit. Each permit is issued with a unique number, for one specific cat only, is time-limited, and is subject to strict conditions. These conditions include the requirement for the breeding cat to be desexed after breeding, for any kittens to be desexed and microchipped, and for evidence to be provided to demonstrate compliance.

Despite this regulatory framework, illegal cat breeding practices continue in Tasmania. Education and support are key factors in improving compliance. Some owners lack access to or the financial means to desex their cat. The Tasmanian Government and stakeholders have delivered several low-cost desexing and microchipping initiatives in at-need communities. In addition, desexing programs delivered by cat management facilities, such as ‘last litter’ programs, seek to address this issue. Under these programs, a pregnant cat is desexed after giving birth on the condition that the owner surrenders the kittens to the facility, helping to disrupt the ongoing cycle of unintended breeding and reduce abandonment of unwanted kittens.

Sale of cats

A person is not required to be a registered breeder or hold a cat breeding permit to sell, give away, or rehome a cat in Tasmania. However, the *Cat Management Act 2009* requires that any cat sold, given away, or rehomed is to be:

- desexed
- microchipped
- at least eight weeks of age
- free from external parasites
- treated for internal worms at least once
- vaccinated.

For the purposes of this section, a person who sells, gives away, rehomes, or otherwise transfers ownership of a cat is referred to as a *seller*. A person who buys a cat, acquires or obtains ownership of a cat, is referred to as a *buyer*.

There is no requirement under the Act for sellers to include information such as a cat’s microchip number, desexing status, or vaccination history in an advertisement selling a cat. The seller is also not required to provide supporting documentation to the buyer on purchase of the cat. Further, many cats that don’t meet the requirements of sale are advertised and sold through online platforms, making enforcement challenging due to the anonymity of sellers on online platforms.

There is no legal obligation for the buyer of a cat to ensure the seller is selling a cat that meets the requirements for sale upon transfer of ownership. Therefore, buyers may be enticed to buy cats from illegal sellers or breeders because they appear

cheaper than those obtained from reputable sources. While some buyers may believe they are helping cats by providing responsible ownership after purchase, this approach supports illegal breeding practices, as it continues to reward people who breed and sell cats unlawfully. In addition, the buyer will also inherit responsibility for the costs of compulsory microchipping and desexing the cat if these requirements haven't been met on transfer of ownership of the cat.

In Victoria, cats and kittens may only be sold or given away on the [Pet Exchange Register](#). A person or business that wants to sell a cat must enrol on the register and is issued with a unique source number. The unique source number, as well as each animal's microchip number, must be in all advertisements. A source number is also required when implanting a microchip in a cat to ensure traceability.

Questions:

5. What could help ensure that people who breed and sell cats are doing so lawfully?
6. 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?

4.4 CONTAINMENT OF A CAT TO AN OWNER'S PROPERTY

Cat containment refers to keeping a cat within the boundaries of its owner's property, either indoors or outdoors, through controlled access such as enclosures, cat runs, or cat-proof fencing ⁵.

From an animal welfare perspective, keeping cats contained protects them from injuries caused by fights, road accidents, attacks by other animals, and exposure to harmful diseases ^{5 6 7}. At the same time, containment limits nuisance behaviours, improves public amenity, and reduces the impacts of cats on native wildlife ^{8 9}. These combined benefits have positioned containment as a central concept in responsible cat ownership and cat management.

In Tasmania, there is no requirement under the *Cat Management Act 2009* for a cat owner to contain their cat to their property. In 2020, when amendments to the Act were being debated, the Greens and an independent proposed amendments to

introduce compulsory containment, but they were not supported by Parliament at the time.

Under the current legislative framework, cat containment can be required through tools such as multiple cat permits, cat breeding permits, municipal council by-laws.

Powers under the Act for municipal councils to enact by-laws for local containment of cats enable decisions to be made at a local level and ensure effective compliance and enforcement. The Kingborough Council, for example, enacted the [Bruny Island Cat By-Law 2018](#), which aims to improve outcomes for native wildlife, livestock, cats and the community and to reduce the number of unwanted and stray cats. The by-law requires, amongst other things, that Bruny Island residents contain their cats 24 hours a day.

Across Australia, municipal councils are responding to the impacts of roaming pet cats by introducing containment measures. Different models of cat containment have been implemented, including night-time curfews, location-specific requirements and 24-hour containment. In Victoria, more than half of municipal councils have introduced cat containment, most commonly overnight curfews⁴. While night-time curfews may help to reduce predation on nocturnal animals, they provide little protection for species that are active during the day, such as birds and reptiles^{6 9}. Cats not contained during the day also remain at risk of injury and exposed to disease, and cause nuisance on other properties. These limitations have led some jurisdictions to consider more comprehensive approaches.

The Australian Capital Territory is the only jurisdiction in Australia to implement territory-wide cat containment, legally requiring owners to contain their cats at all times ([Domestic Animals Legislation Amendment Act 2022](#)). However, a grandfathering clause allows pet cats born before 1 July 2022 to continue roaming outside a declared cat containment area.

Where containment laws are in effect, enforcement is typically driven by public complaints, with authorities responding to reports of roaming cats by undertaking trapping and impounding measures where practical¹. Unlike the capture of dogs, which generally occurs in person by an authorised officer, the capture of cats typically relies on traps being set and left in place. Some councils provide a cat trap hire service for residents to manage cats trespassing on their property (e.g., [Moir](#)

[Shire Council, 2025](#); [South Gippsland Shire Council, 2025](#)), with residents generally responsible for delivering a trapped cat to a council pound or animal management facility^{1 2}. If the cat is not reclaimed within the legal holding period (i.e., 3 - 8 days, depending on the jurisdiction), it may be rehomed or euthanised.

Authorities face several challenges when enforcing containment laws. These include difficulty capturing cats that are not contained; unrealistic community expectations regarding enforcement¹⁰ and management; and the challenge of verifying whether a cat was trapped during a nighttime curfew. In addition, over half of the cats in shelters and pounds have no traceable owner (i.e., no microchip, collar, or tag) and enforcement actions such as the issuing fines cannot take place¹.

Even in jurisdictions with mandatory containment laws, effective outcomes rely heavily on voluntary compliance by cat owners. A range of factors can influence a cat owner's compliance with containment laws¹¹ (see Appendix, Table 2). These include the cost of cat enclosures or cat-proof fencing, rental tenancy agreements that restrict modifications to prevent the escape of cats^{1 10}, social norms, and owner beliefs about their ability to contain their cat, and owner views about the needs of their cats^{5 6 11}. In addition, containment measures do not ensure that 'door-dasher' cats won't escape through open doors, windows or garages¹.

While the adoption of legislation has become a popular strategy to reduce the impacts of roaming cats and improve cat welfare, there have been no evidence-based studies measuring its effectiveness in Australia^{1 10}. Further research is needed to address these knowledge gaps.

Questions

7. What role, if any, should cat owners play in reducing impacts on wildlife, neighbours, and the broader community?
8. What practical challenges would households face if stronger cat management measures were considered in the future?
9. Are there alternative approaches that could achieve responsible cat ownership outcomes without requiring containment?

10. If additional cat management approaches were ever introduced, what monitoring or compliance methods would be workable and fair?
11. Under what circumstances, if any, would stronger cat management measures be considered reasonable?

5 Stray cats

5.1 FEEDING STRAY CATS AND CAT COLONIES

Stray cats are prevalent in most Australian cities and towns¹². Feeding stray cats is reported to be relatively common in Australia, with research surveys indicating that 9 - 22% respondents daily fed a stray cat or cat they did not perceive to own^{13 14 15}

Providing food increases resource availability in the environment, enabling higher densities of stray cats to be sustained and reproductive successfully¹². As a result, stray cats may congregate in large numbers, forming colonies. In Tasmania, cat management facilities have reported colonies of up to 150–200 cats in some locations. Cat colonies exist in every local government area; however, there is no one authority, agency or organisation responsible for managing these colonies.

Stray cats can have poor welfare from the lack of safe shelter, regular food, and necessary veterinary care, leaving them vulnerable to diseases, injuries, and hunger^{16 17}. This population of cats can negatively impact native wildlife through predation and competition, transmit diseases to animals and humans, and create nuisance in the community¹⁴. Cats are opportunistic and instinctive hunters, so feeding them does not stop them predated on wildlife¹⁸.

The *Cat Management Act 2009* does not prohibit the feeding of stray cats. However, municipal councils may address issues relating to health and nuisance in their local government areas under the *Local Government Act 1993* or prohibit feeding of stray cats through municipal by-laws. The Kingborough Council for example introduced a prohibition on the feeding of stray and feral cats under the [Bruny Island Cat By-Law 2018](#) to reduce the feral cat population, the suffering of cats, and impact on native wildlife; and the [Glenorchy City Council Animal Management By-Law 2025](#) requires that a person must not feed, encourage or harbour pest animals, including unowned cats.

While feeding of stray cats is common and widespread in Australia, Queensland is the only jurisdiction where there is statewide legislation prohibiting feeding of feral cats (under the [Biosecurity Act 2014](#)). Where feeding of stray cats is prohibited, enforcement activity by regulators, particularly at the city or local level, is challenging because of the number of individuals feeding stray cats. For example, in Brisbane it is estimated that 60,000 residents fed an average of 1.5 cats they do not own, totalling 90,000 cats ^{1 15}.

Enforcement can be more effective at the colony level because feeding is concentrated in one location, making it easier to monitor and collect evidence ^{1 15}. However, experience in Queensland shows that some individuals receive multiple convictions for feeding stray cats, suggesting that fines alone are not a strong deterrent ¹. People will continue to feed stray cats for reasons including emotional satisfaction, companionship, a sense of responsibility, pity and sympathy, and a lack of confidence in animal management by authorities ^{1 19}.

While penalties aim to deter people from providing food, it does not address the issue of management of the cats themselves. The presence of the cats generally persists - especially if the feeding has occurred for a long period - unless they are trapped and removed from a property or area. Where stray cats are being fed on private property, the responsibility of trapping and surrender should be with the person feeding them. However, in practice many people feeding cats are unwilling to take on the responsibility, either due to the cost, emotional difficulty in surrendering the cats, or because they believe that is not their responsibility to manage the situation.

Some agencies report repeatedly attending the same property to remove large numbers of stray cats that have been attracted by ongoing feeding, creating a cycle that is costly, resource intensive and difficult to sustain without cooperation from the individual feeding the cats. Effective, long-term management of stray populations requires strategic, coordinated, and sustained efforts from multiple organisations and agencies.

Questions

12. Do you think feeding of stray cats should be prohibited? Yes or No

13. What do you consider are the main challenges or barriers to a prohibition on feeding stray cats?
14. What are some solutions to these challenges or barriers?
15. How do you think colony cats should be managed?

6 Feral cats

6.1 FERAL CAT MANAGEMENT

Feral cats are those that live and reproduce in the wild, largely or entirely removed from humans, and do not depend on humans intentionally providing food, water or shelter for their survival. Feral cats are difficult to detect, and mostly nocturnal – humans are more likely to see evidence of the presence of feral cats rather than the cats themselves.

Feral cats are widespread in Tasmania and their eradication from mainland Tasmania is not considered to be feasible at this time. Consequently, the Tasmanian Government has taken a targeted approach and, with funding from the Australian Government, is focusing activity on offshore islands, such as Three Hummock Island, King Island, Maria Island, Bruny Island and Little Dog Island, where feral cat control can be most effective and where eradication may be possible in the future.

Feral cat projects on these offshore islands are centred around the use of Felixer grooming traps which are cutting-edge technology in feral cat control. Felixer grooming traps are portable, artificial intelligence-equipped field devices that use lasers and cameras to identify target species. If an animal passing in front of the device is identified as a cat, the unit will be triggered to deliver a lethal dose of toxic gel to the animal's flank. The feral cat subsequently dies when it ingests the gel during grooming. Felixer devices are currently only permitted for use on Tasmanian offshore islands where there are no non-target species, such as Tasmanian devils, spotted-tailed quolls and wombats, that could be mistaken for a cat. As the artificial intelligence of these devices improves, it will more accurately identify target species, potentially allowing use of the devices in a broader range of situations.

6.2 PARTICIPATION IN NATIONAL APPROACH TO MANAGEMENT OF FERAL CATS

Biosecurity Tasmania represents Tasmania on the National Feral Cat Taskforce which is administered by the Office of the Threatened Species Commissioner and provides an important avenue to share feral cat information, research, and management outcomes with colleagues across the country and overseas.

The Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania also provided input and feedback to the Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water on the recently made joint Australian Government - State and Territory [Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats 2024](#). The Threat Abatement Plan establishes a national framework to guide and coordinate Australia's response to the impacts of feral cats on biodiversity. It identifies the research, management and other actions needed to ensure the long-term survival of native species and ecological communities affected by predation by feral cats.

6.3 HUMANE DESTRUCTION OF FERAL CATS

Feral cat management and control must be justified, humane, and targeted to specific cat populations, while minimising the risk to non-target animals.

In Tasmania, the *Cat Management Act 2009* permits the humane destruction of cats on:

- primary production land and production premises by persons managing or occupying the land or premises, or persons acting on their behalf; and
- private premises if the location at which the cat is found is more than 1 km from any structure or building used as a place of residence. A cat cannot be trapped and relocated to meet the 1 km distance requirement for humane destruction on private property.

The 1 km distance from a residence requirement for the humane destruction of a cat on private land reflects a balance between addressing the threat posed by feral cats and protecting the welfare of roaming pet cats. Cat owners are not required to contain their cat to their property, and while pet cats have variable home ranges,

research shows they typically do not roam more than 1 km from home^{9 20}. Reducing the distance may increase the likelihood that pet cats are mistakenly destroyed.

The threat posed by cats has been recognised by the Tasmanian Government with cats being prohibited in a number of areas in Tasmania including National Parks, Conservation Areas, State Forest, private property with a conservation covenant under the [Nature Conservation Act 2002](#) and areas declared prohibited under the [Cat Management Act 2009](#). Cats found in these areas may be trapped, seized or humanely destroyed by persons authorised to do so.

Municipal councils can also declare prohibited areas and cat management areas where cat management actions can also be undertaken by persons authorised to do so.

Questions

16. How can rural landowners/managers be supported to better manage feral cats in areas with important conservation values and agricultural assets?
17. Should the distance from the nearest residence for humane euthanasia of cats on private property be reduced to less than 1 km? **Yes or No**
If you answered "No," skip to Question 19.
18. If **yes**, what is an appropriate distance?

7 Other

Question

19. What types of education, incentives, or support programs would encourage responsible cat ownership?
20. Should cat management approaches differ between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas? If so, how?
21. Are there any other matters which you would like to raise in relation to improving cat management in Tasmania?

8 Next Steps

This discussion paper is the first stage in developing the new Tasmanian Cat Management Plan.

Feedback may be submitted in three ways:

- Via the [online response form](#)
- Email response to discussion questions: catmanagement@nre.tas.gov.au
- Mail written responses to discussion questions to:

Biosecurity Tasmania
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
GPO Box 44
Hobart TAS 7001

Attn: Cat Management Discussion Paper

Full details are available on the Department of Natural Environment and Resources Tasmania's website www.nre.tas.gov.au.

Submissions must be received by **5.00 pm on Friday 15 May 2026**.

9 References

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10 Appendix

The Discussion Paper includes the following questions for your feedback:

Domestic cats

1. What do you consider are the advantages and/or disadvantages of compulsory registration of cats compared to microchipping?
2. Do you think cat owners should be required to register their cat, like dog registration? **Yes or No.**

If you answered “No,” skip to Question 5.

3. If yes, should there be a fee/levy charged for registration of a cat? **Yes or No.**

If you answered “No,” skip to Question 5.

4. If yes, what should the fee be used for? (For example: registering cats, research into cat welfare, the costs of managing cats)
5. What could help ensure that people who breed and sell cats are doing so lawfully?
6. Do you think a seller should be required to state that the cat meets the legal requirements of sale in advertisements?
7. What role, if any, should cat owners play in reducing impacts on wildlife, neighbours, and the broader community?
8. What practical challenges would households face if stronger cat management measures were considered in the future?
9. Are there alternative approaches that could achieve responsible cat ownership outcomes without requiring containment?
10. If additional cat management approaches were ever introduced, what monitoring or compliance methods would be workable and fair?
11. Under what circumstances, if any, would stronger cat management measures be considered reasonable?

Stray cats

12. Do you think feeding of stray cats should be prohibited? **Yes or No**

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

14. What are some solutions to these challenges or barriers?

15. How do you think colony cats should be managed?

Feral cats

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

17. Should the distance from the nearest residence for humane euthanasia of cats on private property be reduced to less than 1 km? **Yes or No.**

If you answered “No,” skip to Question 19.

18. If yes, what is an appropriate distance?

Other

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

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

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

Table 1 Summary of domestic animal legislation supporting key management actions for cats in each state/territory of Australia

Jurisdiction	Compulsory desexing	Compulsory microchipping	Compulsory registration	Compulsory Containment	Prohibition of feeding stray or feral cats	Legislation
Tasmania	Yes - by the age of 4 months or before the cat is sold	Yes - by the age of 4 months or before the cat is sold	No	No	No ban	<u>Cat Management Act 2009</u> <u>Cat Management Regulations 2022</u>
Victoria	No	Yes – by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	Yes – by the age of 3 months	No	No ban	<u>Domestic Animals Act 1994</u> <u>Domestic Animals Regulations 2015</u>
New South Wales	Yes - by the age of 4 months	Yes - by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	Yes - by the age of 3 months	No	No ban	<u>Companion Animals Act 1998</u> <u>Companion Animals Regulation 2018</u>

Jurisdiction	Compulsory desexing	Compulsory microchipping	Compulsory registration	Compulsory Containment	Prohibition of feeding stray or feral cats	Legislation
Australian Capital Territory	Yes – by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	Yes - by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	Yes – by the age of 2 months	Yes	No	Domestic Animals Act 2000 Domestic Animals Regulation 2001
Queensland	No	Yes - by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	No	No	Yes, under the <i>Biosecurity Act 2014</i>	Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Act 2008 Animal Management (Cats and Dogs) Regulation 2019
Western Australia	Yes - by the age of 6 months or before the cat is sold	Yes - by the age of 6 months or before the cat is sold	Yes – by the 6 age of 6 months	No	No	Cat Act 2011 Cat Regulations 2012

Jurisdiction	Compulsory desexing	Compulsory microchipping	Compulsory registration	Compulsory Containment	Prohibition of feeding stray or feral cats	Legislation
South Australia	Yes - by the age of 6 months or within 28 days after being sold	Yes – by the age of 3 months or before the cat is sold	No	No	No	Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017

NB. In the Northern Territory, companion animal legislation and management rests with local government, so is not included in the table above



Figure 1 Summary of domestic animal legislation supporting key management actions for cats in each state/territory of Australia

Table 2 Identified barriers to cat containment: categories, sub-categories, and their descriptions.

Barrier	Description
Ability	
Physical	Preventing cat roaming is too difficult.
Psychological	Cat is perceived to be a dominant personality so the cat gets their own way.
External barriers	
Time	Too busy, no time to organise
Cost	Too costly to contain cat/build enclosure
Resource	Lack of resources to contain their cat
Social norms	
History	Historical precedence for letting cats wander
Current norm	Other people do not contain their cats so why should I
Regulation	Not law/not compulsory
Beliefs	
Cat nature	Cats need to wander to be happy/for exercise/natural behaviour and perceived as cruel to lock them up
Roaming	Not necessary as cat does not roam far anyway

Barrier	Description
Beliefs	
Issue	Pet/urban cats not the issue, feral cats cause the problems
Locality	Not important in rural areas as opposed to urban areas
Pest control	Roaming cats are important for controlling rodents
Predation	My cat does not hunt/predate on wildlife
Awareness	
How to	No knowledge as to how to contain a cat
Consequence	Perceived not a threat or problem (wildlife, welfare or disease)
Motivation	
Enthusiasm	Lack of interest/cannot be bothered
Convenience	Inconvenient to clean up litter trays or other mess
Emotional detachment	Lack of emotional attachment to animal, do not care.

Source: McLeod, L.J., Hine, D.W., & Bengsen, A.J. (2015). Born to roam? Surveying cat owners in Tasmania, Australia, to identify the drivers and barriers to cat containment. *Preventative Veterinary Medicine*, 122,





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