

PE6 – Responsible Cat Ownership

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TRIM 562-2

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- This report is submitted in response to Council Resolution 253/2016 dated 21 November 2016 which stated:

"that as Wollondilly has conservation areas and areas of significance containing threatened species, a report come back to Council outlining an education and information program for cat containment measures including the feasibility of night curfews for domestic cats and a Responsible Cat Care Brochure, to encourage owners to keep their cat inside at night".

- The Companion Animals Act 1998 provides no legal notion of a stray cat, therefore there is no offence in a cat straying and no requirement for cats to be kept inside.
- Cats are prohibited in Wildlife Protection Areas. Wollondilly currently has no defined Wildlife Protection areas.
- It is recommended that:
 - Council consider whether it should establish Wildlife Protection areas within threatened vegetation and fauna ecological communities. If so that a further report be submitted to Council with recommendations as to areas to be established.
 - A Public Education and Information Program be established for Responsible Cat Ownership and a Responsible Cat Care Brochure be published for the community, encouraging owners to keep their cats contained at night (attached).

REPORT

This report is submitted in response to Council Resolution 253/2016 dated 21 November 2016 which stated:

"that as Wollondilly has conservation areas and areas of significance containing threatened species, a report come back to Council outlining an education and information program for cat containment measures including the feasibility of night curfews for domestic cats and a Responsible Cat Care Brochure, to encourage owners to keep their cat inside at night".

The Companion Animals Act 1998 provides no legal notion of a stray cat, therefore there is no offence in a cat straying and no requirement for cats to be kept inside.

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Owners of premises which cats roam onto may encourage the cat to leave the property but this must not involve any cruelty.

Under the Companion Animals Act 1998, cats are prohibited in some public places. These are:

- within 10 metres of a Food Preparation / Consumption area (but not if the place is a public thoroughfare such as a road, footpath or pathway), and
- a Wildlife Protection Area.

The NSW Companion Animals Act 1998 enables Council to prohibit dogs and/or cats from public places, or part thereof, where they have been set aside by the local authority (the Council) for the protection of wildlife. The Act refers to these lands as **Wildlife Protection Areas**. Council can declare a Wildlife Protection Area in any public place, which may include a pathway, road, bridge, jetty, wharf, road-ferry, reserve, park, beach, garden or any other area declared by Council, where the declaration may protect wildlife.

Wollondilly currently has no defined Wildlife Protection areas.

A number of NSW Councils were contacted with regards to cat laws. No other Council contacted has a night time cat curfew however a number such as Pittwater Council and Blue Mountains City Council have established Wildlife Protection Areas.

In response to reported issues with cats, Wollondilly Council may consider establishing Wildlife Protection Areas within areas of significant threatened ecological value which provide vital habitat for a large number of native vegetation and fauna.

Examples (only) of threatened EEC areas for further consideration are:

- Douglas Park Oval
- Lyn Gordon Thirlmere
- Scotcheys Reserve – Silverdale
- Tahmoor Sportsground – Tahmoor.

Wildlife Protection Areas can only be declared as one of two categories following a period of community consultation and exhibition of proposed areas:

- Category 1 lands will prohibit both cats and dogs as per S.30 c.1(b) and S.14 c. 1(h) of the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998.
- Category 2 lands will prohibit cats as per S.30 c.1(b) of the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998. Dogs that are on a leash will be permitted on formed tracks, pathways or roads in Category 2 lands.

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The ongoing issues that may arise from the establishment of these Wildlife Protection Areas are:

- Resourcing to carry out the trapping, assessing, impounding, re-homing and euthanasia of companion animal cats or feral cats
- lack of facilities at the shelter to house cats during the above process (currently there are 6 cat cages and no quarantine area)
- increased euthanasia rates at the animal shelter.

The establishment of a Responsible Cat Care Brochure and an ongoing Public Education and Information Program regarding cat ownership may assist in advising and encouraging the community to be responsible cat owners and in particular, encouraging to keep domestic cats inside at night. (See Attachment 2)

CONSULTATION

Consultation has been undertaken with Environmental Services staff and advice sought from RSPCA, WIRES and other NSW Councils regarding their approach to Responsible Cat Ownership.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Costs associated with implementing the declaration including those associated with exhibition, education, monitoring, signage and on-going compliance are yet to be established.

This is not being budgeted for and is not included in Council's Operational Plan.

ATTACHMENTS INCLUDED IN A SEPARATE BOOKLET

1. Draft Communication Plan.
2. Responsible Cat Care Brochure.

RECOMMENDATION

1. That Council consider whether it should establish Wildlife Protection areas within threatened ecological (vegetation and fauna) communities, if so, that a further report be submitted to Council with recommendations as to areas to be established.
2. That a Public Education and Information Program be established for Responsible Cat Ownership and a Responsible Cat Care Brochure be published for the community, encouraging owners to keep their cats contained at night (attached).