

Invasive Species Branch
Department of Natural Resources and Environment Tasmania
GPO Box 44
Hobart, Tasmania 7001
Via email: catmanagement@nre.tas.gov.au

19 May 2026

Dear Invasive Species Branch,

RE: Submission on Cat Management in Tasmania – Have Your Say Consultation

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance (ALCA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the approach to cat management in Tasmania via the ‘Have Your Say’ consultation process.

ALCA is Australia’s peak body that represents organisations that work to conserve, manage, and restore nature on privately managed land. The conservation efforts of our 23 member organisations have influenced over 9.3% of Australia with more than 4,000 landholders; we have over 70,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$400 million.

Cats, whether domestic, stray or feral, play a significant role in the ongoing declines of over 230 threatened native species, as well as the many mammal extinctions since 1788¹. The loss of these animals degrades our ecosystems and diminishes the character of our important and highly valued natural places. Cats have always been a popular pet in Australia, but since COVID their numbers have climbed significantly, and this is reflected in Tasmania too. This makes effective cat management even more critical for the ongoing health of our native species and ecosystems.

As such, ALCA are pleased to see the Government’s focus on improving cat management in Tasmania. It will be important to ensure the learnings from implementation of the *Tasmanian Cat Management Plan 2017-2022* are utilised to inform improvements to the approach going forward. Alongside this, ALCA recommends the following:

- 1) A transition from advisory policy and reliance on community behaviour change to a stronger, consistent, and enforceable approach, including a supported transition to mandatory containment laws.
- 2) An increased level of dedicated and long-term resourcing commitments.
- 3) Clear, statewide control targets and monitoring to better understand progress over time.

¹ Tida Nou, Sarah Legge, John Woinarski, and Jaana Dielenberg - Threatened Species Recovery Hub (2023). The impact of roaming pet cats on Australian wildlife, [Factsheet](#) June 2023

- 4) Prioritisation of cat management for areas of conservation significance.
- 5) Integration of the cat management approach with other relevant strategies and frameworks (e.g., Tasmania’s broader invasive species framework, Tasmanian Threatened Species Strategy) and with adaptive pest management principles would also increase efficiencies and effectiveness.

Without these shifts, Tasmania risks continuing biodiversity decline despite strong policy intent.

Our responses to select questions from the discussion paper are as below. We are happy for our submission to be published. We also note that some of our members may also make individual submissions which may include more specific, place-based or technical recommendations.

Responses to the Discussion Paper Questions

Part 1: Domestic cats

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

Compulsory registration provides additional, complementary benefits when used alongside (or integrated into) compulsory microchipping. Advantages of registration include:

- creation of a centralised, enforceable ownership record that can assist governments and councils to communicate with cat owners and improve accountability beyond passive identification
- enabling policy instruments (fees, compliance tracking, enforcement triggers) that are not possible through microchipping alone
- provision of a revenue stream to support management (including to offset the registration program itself), as well as other high priority aspects of cat management, such as targeted conservation programs.

Registration schemes can be costly to implement and administratively complex – and as such the costs should be clearly defined and resourced upfront, and linked with the compliance system (e.g., staged cat containment) to ensure the maximum benefits are realised.

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.

Yes. Mandatory registration is necessary to move from voluntary behavioural change to enforceable responsibility, which was a key limitation under the 2017–2022 Plan. Microchipping is necessary but demonstrably insufficient on its own.

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.

Yes. A modest, structured fee is appropriate to fund system sustainability and avoid reliance on fragmented or short-term funding models. The fee structures should incentivise desexing of cats, and disincentivise keeping cats that are not desexed.

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

At a high level, the fee should be directed back into the Tasmanian cat management program to help address the historical under-resourcing of implementation despite strategic intent. As identified in Q1, the fee could be used to offset the registration program. If there is extra revenue, funds could go to other key aspects of the cat management approach (ideally identified through a robust, evidence-based risk management approach). That said, we suggest the following are worth further consideration in this regard:

- targeted biodiversity protection initiatives (including priority control zones)
- regional compliance and enforcement capacity, including dedicated resourcing for regional cat management officers who can work with multiple councils towards consistent management of pet cats. They can also work on measures to help address complex issues as they arise (hoarding, ‘backyard’ breeding)
- monitoring, research, and data systems to address current knowledge gaps and support emerging technologies (e.g., use of Felixer systems and collar detection devices).

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

We acknowledge the challenges associated with monitoring and compliance for breeding and selling cats, however, given this is an identified contributor to the cat management issues in Tasmania it warrants increased regulation (and associated resourcing). We propose the following would be appropriate in this regard:

- mandatory breeder registration and licensing
- unique breeder identification or permit numbers linked to all advertisements
- requirement for pre-sale microchipping and desexing (or conditional permits) as well as a requirement for sellers to provide this documentation at point of sale
- integration with online platform compliance (e.g. verified listings)
- public education regarding the above to help shift demand away from cats bred/sold outside the regulatory framework.

6. Do you think a seller should be required to state that the cat meets the legal requirements of sale in advertisements?

Yes. A mandatory statement confirming compliance with legal sale requirements should be required, with penalties for false or misleading claims. This would help prospective owners make

informed decisions, reinforce the importance of meeting legal obligations such as microchipping and desexing, and assist in the compliance process.

7. What role, if any, should cat owners play in reducing impacts on wildlife, neighbours, and the broader community?

Cat owners should be recognised as primary agents of impact mitigation, with responsibilities to prevent roaming and hunting behaviour, ensure desexing and identification, minimise nuisance impacts and support community-wide conservation outcomes. This is essential given that unmanaged domestic cats contribute materially to wildlife predation and to cat management issues more broadly.

Preventing roaming and hunting will require effective cat containment. Australian evidence consistently shows that roaming cats kill large numbers of wildlife (hundreds of native animals per cat per year), with the majority (approx. 78 percent) of roaming cats being found to hunt². By contrast, cats that are fully contained 24 hours per day are effectively ‘safe for wildlife’. Partial containment (e.g., night curfew only) still allows daytime hunting, which remains ecologically significant (see also Q9).

It is also relevant to note there is strong evidence both nationally and internationally that shows that pet cats are generally healthier, safer, live longer, and are happier when kept contained³. Containment also reduces risks to neighbours, public health, and community amenity.

As such, consideration of a supported transition to cat containment is warranted. A transition period may strongly encourage or incentivise containment of cats, with a clear end point for when containment becomes mandatory. While cat containment will be most effective if implemented broadly across the state, priority areas for containment could also be considered as part of a staged approach, which should include areas in which the wildlife and biodiversity values are most at risk.

Consideration of the introduction of cat-free areas (especially for new suburbs) should also be included in Tasmania’s cat management approach going forward, and is an increasingly common practice in other jurisdictions in Australia.

8. What practical challenges would households face if stronger cat management measures were considered in the future?

The following may be challenges for stronger cat management measures:

- cost of containment infrastructure (e.g. cat enclosures)
- behavioural transition for previously free-roaming cats

² Tida Nou, Sarah Legge, John Woinarski, and Jaana Dielenberg - Threatened Species Recovery Hub (2023). The impact of roaming pet cats on Australian wildlife, [Factsheet](#) June 2023

³ Michael C. Calver, Heather M. Crawford, Christopher A. Lepczyk, Duncan E. Farrow, Patricia A. Fleming (2026). Imperilled paws: How conservation biologists can use pet cats’ health and welfare rather than their impacts on wildlife to argue for their containment. *Global Ecology and Conservation* v66 2026.

- housing constraints (particularly renters)
- regional differences in expectations (urban vs rural)

However, these challenges should not be seen as a reason not to progress strong measures. Instead, they highlight the need for phased implementation and appropriate support mechanisms.

9. Are there alternative approaches that could achieve responsible cat ownership outcomes without requiring containment?

There are a variety of partial alternatives that could be used, including night-time curfews, cat-free zones in high conservation areas, and incentivised rather than mandatory containment.

However, Australian and international evidence^{4, 5} suggests these are significantly less effective than full containment, particularly in reducing cumulative wildlife impacts. This evidence shows that most roaming pet cats hunt wildlife regardless of feeding and that predation occurs across both day and night periods. The restriction of unconstrained outdoor access is identified as the only consistently effective means of reducing predation risk⁶. As such, the partial alternatives above are likely only suitable as transitional measures.

10. If additional cat management approaches were ever introduced, what monitoring or compliance methods would be workable and fair?

We suggest that ensuring the learnings from cat management approaches in other jurisdictions are used to inform the monitoring and compliance approach in Tasmania. As a starting point, ensuring a centralised registration database linked to microchips (as aligned with Q1 and Q2), as well as a risk-based enforcement prioritising repeat non-compliance and ecologically sensitive areas (for example).

Other standard compliance approaches such as council-authorized officers with consistent powers and use of graduated penalties (education, then warnings, then fines) would likely be appropriate/required. Finally, there should be integration with veterinary and shelter data.

11. Under what circumstances, if any, would stronger cat management measures be considered reasonable?

As above, we recommend that stronger, enforceable cat management measures are required immediately. Tasmania has significant biodiversity values with clear evidence of ongoing wildlife predation that poses a critical risk to these values. Voluntary measures have demonstrably failed

⁴ Tida Nou, Sarah Legge, John Woinarski, and Jaana Dielenberg - Threatened Species Recovery Hub (2023). The impact of roaming pet cats on Australian wildlife, [Factsheet](#) June 2023.

⁵ *What Outdoor Cats Eat – Global Impacts*. *Nature Communications*. 2023-10-23. DOI:10.1038/s41467-023-42766-6

⁶ Cecchetti, M., Crowley, S. L., Wilson-Aggarwal, J., Nelli, L., & McDonald, R. A. (2021). Spatial behavior of domestic cats and the effects of outdoor access restrictions and interventions to reduce predation of wildlife. *Conservation Science and Practice*, e597. <https://doi.org/10.1111/csp2.597>

to achieve outcomes that are sustained and at the scale and depth required. That said, we recognise there will be challenges and costs associated, and as such we also recommend that adequate transition periods, education, and support are provided.

Part 2: Stray Cats

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

Yes - unregulated feeding sustains and expands stray populations. It needs to be communicated to the public that this leads to greater welfare issues with cats in the long run.

More generally, we note the approach to categorising cats as either pets, stray, or feral. We note the benefit of having consistency across jurisdictions in defining types of cats. As such we suggest there would be benefit in aligning with the national approach set out in the Australian *Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats (2024)*⁷, which identifies two categories (pets and ferals). This may also help reduce confusion about what category a cat falls into (e.g., a free-roaming cat could be either a pet or a stray, or even a feral).

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

We suggest challenges are likely to include:

- public resistance based on animal welfare concerns
- risk of unintended starvation or dispersal
- difficulty of enforcement
- lack of accessible surrender or management options

These challenges do not necessarily mean the stance should change; however, they should be taken into account in determining the details of how this is implemented.

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

Pair prohibition with accessible surrender pathways and subsidised desexing programs (as above) and undertake sustained public education emphasising long-term welfare outcomes.

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

In general, ALCA suggests that colony maintenance without reduction targets is inconsistent with biodiversity protection. Our advice regarding management of colony cats is to transition away from unmanaged colonies, implement managed programs where necessary (e.g., trap–remove or desex–rehome where feasible). In high conservation areas, removal should be prioritised rather than maintenance.

⁷ Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2024). [Threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats](#) 2024.

All unowned cats (strays and ferals) that cannot be rehomed should be humanely euthanised. Because euthanasia makes some people feel uncomfortable, some alternative proposals have been circulating online, but they are not backed by science. One of these is to trap unowned cats, then desex them and release them back to the wild – also called Trap Neuter Release or TNR. It is illegal to ever release a cat to the wild in Australia, which includes local streets and parks, so Trap Neuter Release programs are illegal in Australia, and rightly so.

Where Trap Neuter Release has been trialled overseas it has been a very expensive and ineffective, and did not reduce cat populations or stop cats from harming and killing wildlife. It also supports the spread of cat-borne diseases, and provides very poor welfare for the desexed and released cats who typically live hard lives, with frequent infections, abscesses and injuries⁸.

Part 3: Feral Cats

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

There should be increased funding for coordinated landscape-scale control, including integration with regional and national invasive species programs. In addition, providing rural landowners/managers with access to trapping programs, humane control tools, and professional pest control services, along with clear legal guidance and simplified processes to maximise uptake and alignment with intended outcomes.

In addition and more specifically, landholders with conservation covenants (or similar) should have permission to control (i.e. kill) feral cats on their property, analogous to public protected areas. Providing permission, clarity, and support for this will enable these landholders to undertake humane control of feral cats on their high-conservation value properties in alignment with the conservation intent and obligations of these covenants or similar (e.g., stewardship) arrangements.

Part 4: Other

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

Positive actions such as education, incentives, and support programs are an important, complementary measure alongside regulatory approaches. In line with Q4 above, we suggest the specific details of these positive measures should draw on learnings to date from the Tasmanian Cat Management Program as well as from other relevant jurisdictions. Education and guidance (particularly on new requirements etc that may be introduced in the new cat management plan), as well as financial subsidies/rebates will likely be required.

We have identified several areas in our submission for which education of the community would be beneficial. Another topic for which this would be so is around euthanasia of unowned cats (strays and ferals). How councils manage unowned cats in their region can attract strong opinions. Across Australia the main approach to managing unowned cats in urban areas is to trap

⁸ Jaana Dielenberg (2026). [Balancing the care of cats and wildlife in SEQ](#), Redland Bayside News February 2026

them. Councils and shelters like the RSPCA rehome as many suitable cats as possible. The remainder are humanely put down. Euthanasia is a very important part of a responsible strategy for dealing with unowned cats – and education of the community in this regard would be beneficial.

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

ALCA recognises that different types of areas will have different risks and pressures, and recognising this allows a spatially differentiated approach to address these. We propose the following focus for each area:

- urban areas: strong focus on containment and nuisance reduction
- peri-urban areas: highest priority for containment due to wildlife interface
- rural areas: expanded control options and support for landholders to utilise these, emphasis on feral control and cross-property, integrated pest management, and targeted controls near conservation assets.

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

In order to be effective, the approach to cat management in Tasmania needs to shift significantly. Greater enforceability, including through registration of pet cats and staged rollout of mandatory cat containment, is needed. This must be accompanied by increased, appropriate funding to ensure effective compliance over the long term is needed. Ensuring that Tasmania’s wildlife and important conservation areas are prioritised as part of the cat management approach, and that landholders are supported to undertake cat management in these areas, will also be a critical component of the approach.

Thank you again for the opportunity to provide feedback on the approach to cat management in Tasmania via the ‘Have Your Say’ consultation process.

Australian Land Conservation Alliance

About the Australian Land Conservation Alliance

The Australian Land Conservation Alliance is the peak national body representing organisations that work to conserve, manage, and restore nature on privately managed land. We represent our members and supporters to grow the impact, capacity, and influence of private land conservation to achieve a healthy and resilient Australia.

Our twenty-three member organisations are:

- Arid Recovery
- Australian Wildlife Conservancy
- Biodiversity Conservation Trust NSW
- Biodiversity Legacy
- Bush Heritage Australia
- EcoGipps
- GreenCollar
- Greening Australia
- Landcare Australia
- Nari Nari Tribal Council
- National Landcare Network
- Nature Foundation
- North Australian Indigenous Land and Sea Management Alliance
- NRM Regions Australia
- Odonata
- Queensland Trust for Nature
- Rainforest Rescue
- South Endeavour Trust
- Tasmanian Land Conservancy
- The Nature Conservancy Australia
- Trust for Nature (Victoria)
- Wildlife Bank
- World Wildlife Fund - Australia

ALCA member land conservation efforts have influenced over 9.3% of Australia with more than 4,000 landholders. We have over 70,000 supporters and our combined annual turnover exceeds \$400 million. Together ALCA and its members address some of the most pressing conservation issues across the country, including restoring endangered ecosystems, building the protected area estate, tackling invasive species, expanding private conservation finance, and funding and using nature-based solutions to tackle climate change.

Through their active land management, ALCA member organisations are deeply embedded in rural communities and economies, providing jobs, securing significant regional investment, and safeguarding remaining native habitat, with its many positive spill-over effects for community, wellbeing, and food security. We seek to demonstrate the role and value of private land conservation as a cornerstone of the Australian economy.

Some ALCA members are statutory entities; the views expressed in this submission do not necessarily represent the views of the Government administering those statutory entities.