



CAT MANAGEMENT PLAN

CAMDEN COUNCIL | 2023



Council acknowledge that the Camden LGA is situated on the sacred Traditional Lands and Waterways of the Dharawal peoples.

We also recognise surrounding Dharug and Gundungurra peoples that may have connections to these lands.

We pay our respects to Elders from the past, present, and emerging, and to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on these lands.

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WHY DO WE NEED A PLAN?

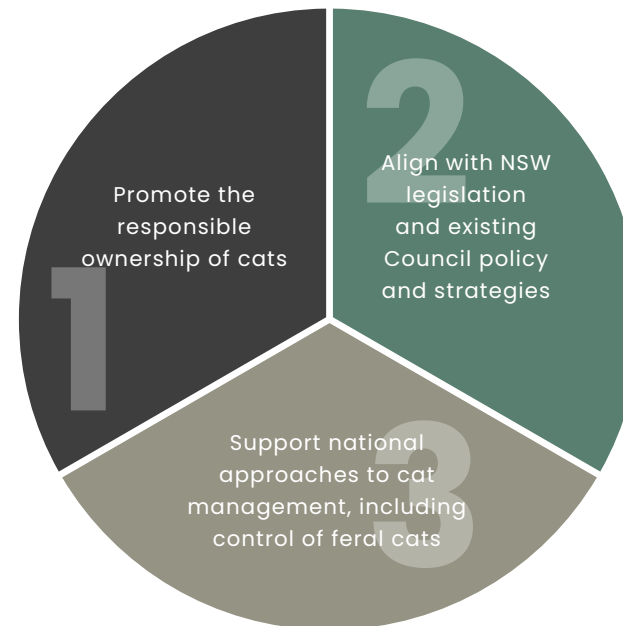
Cats bring positive health and wellbeing benefits to their owners and play an important but complex role in our community.

Unowned, semi-owned and feral cats can breed rapidly and can reproduce quickly if left unmanaged. Cats have an instinct to hunt other animals and feral cats need to hunt for survival.

NSW legislation guides the management of animals and aims to protect the natural environment, this includes the Companion Animal Act 1998 and the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979.

This Cat Plan promotes responsible cat ownership, ensures that the well-being benefits of cats is supported and reduces the impact of cats on the local environment and the community.

The actions in this plan set a clear direction and are designed to:



PURPOSE

The purpose of this Cat Plan is to guide the responsible management of cats in the Camden local government area (LGA).

The Plan recognises the different roles and impacts cats have in the community, ranging from the benefits they provide as much-loved companions to an introduced animal that can pose a risk to wildlife.

All cats are the same species (*Felis catus*) and for the purpose of this Plan are defined as per the definitions from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA).

The RSPCA defines cats as either feral or domestic and further separates domestic cats into three sub-categories (owned, semi-owned and unowned) based on a cat's relationship with humans¹.

¹ *Summary of Findings and Recommendations – Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia (May 2018)*

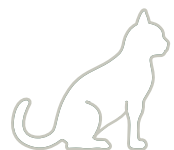


Domestic Cats – all cats with some dependence (direct or indirect) on humans. There are three sub-categories of domestic cats:

Owned – These cats are identified with and cared for by a specific person and are directly dependent on humans. They are usually sociable, although sociability can vary;

Semi-owned – These cats are fed or provided with other care by people who do not consider they own them. They are of varying sociability, with many socialised to humans, and may be associated with one or more households (or business premises); and

Unowned – These cats are indirectly dependent on humans with some having casual and temporary interactions with humans. They are of varying sociability, including some who are unsocialised to humans, and some may live in groups.



Feral Cats – these cats are unowned, unsocialised, have no relationship with or dependence on or contact with humans, and reproduce in the wild.

VISION

This Cat Plan is developed under a framework based on this vision.

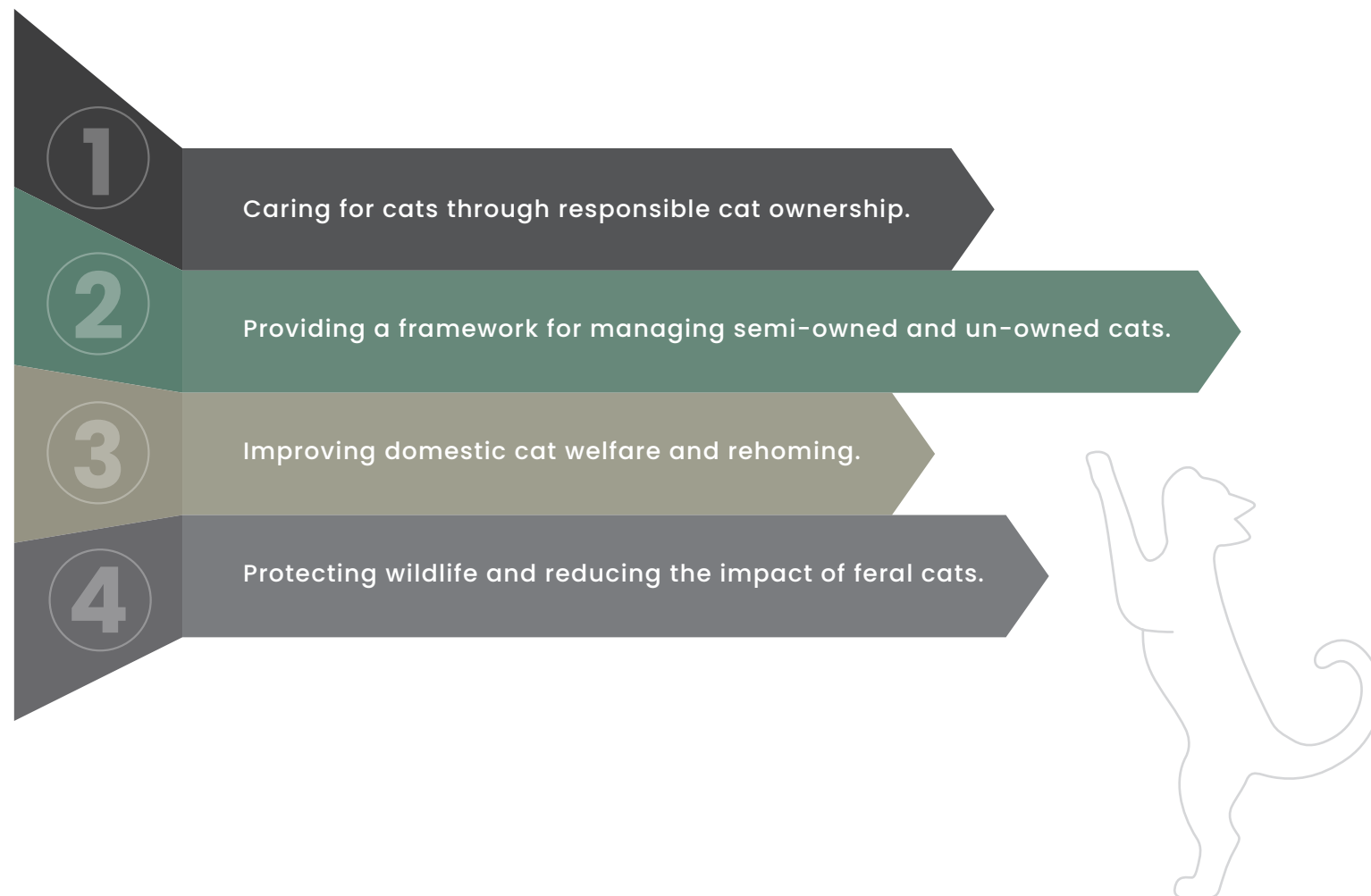
Cats in the Camden LGA are humanely treated, owned, and cared for by responsible owners.

The vision recognises the important role of cats as pets and that people have responsibilities for animal welfare and protecting native wildlife.



OBJECTIVES

The plan has four overarching objectives. Actions have been developed to achieve these objectives.



CATS IN CAMDEN & AUSTRALIA

Camden has a population of approximately 120,000 people and 40,000 dwellings.

There are over 13,000 cats within the Camden LGA identified on the NSW Pet Register. Around 5,500 of these cats have been registered.

There are no accurate records to show the number of households in Camden LGA that have cats as pets but according to the Animal Medicines Australia (2022) *Pets in Australia: A national survey of pets and people*² report 'a third of Australian households have a cat (33%), with the estimated number of pet cats at 5.3 million.

There are also no current accurate records that show the number of semi-owned, unowned or feral cats in the Camden LGA.

The Invasive Species Council³ estimates that throughout Australia, depending on rainfall conditions there are between 1.4 and 5.6 million feral cats in the bush and 0.7 million feral cats in urban areas.

Camden's Biodiversity Strategy 2023 recognises the impact of pest animals upon biodiversity. Camden is home to 35 recorded species of pest animal. Council has identified a number of species that have a significant impact on biodiversity in the Camden LGA, including the Red Fox, European Rabbit, Deer and the Indian Myna Bird.

Invasive animals have significant environmental impacts, including destruction of habitat, land and water degradation, competition with native animals for food and shelter, and disease transmission.

The Biodiversity Strategy 2023 states that it is not only invasive species that impact upon biodiversity. In an urbanised environment such as Camden, predation by domestic animals (including cats) is a considerable threat to native wildlife.

"There are over 13,000 microchipped cats entered into the NSW Pet Register in the Camden LGA."

² *Pets in Australia: A National Survey of Pets and People* by Animal Medicines Australia

³ *Cats in Australia* by Invasive Species Council

CAMDEN'S ANIMAL SHELTER

Since 2017, Council has utilised the services of Rossmore Veterinary Hospital as an animal shelter. Whilst this is a well-established shelter, there are risks, due to the growth of Camden's population, associated with this arrangement as a long-term permanent solution.

To mitigate this risk and to allow for the future growth of the LGA and expected growth in companion animals, Council, in July 2021, endorsed a site for a new animal shelter at Topham Road, Smeaton Grange.

The project to design and build the new Camden Animal Shelter (the CAS) commenced in 2022 and has been supported by funding provided as part of the NSW Government's WestInvest Program.

This project will see the design and construction of a purpose-built animal shelter. The shelter will be an Australian leader in Sustainable Animal Shelter design and a vital community resource centre offering community outreach programs for all ages that support Companion Animal Education.

The shelter will create opportunities for employment, partnerships with local tertiary providers and volunteer involvement.

The building will be an example of best practice sustainable community architecture. The design will embrace shelter medicine principles and smart technology, setting a new standard for shelter design within Australia.



The vision for Camden Council's Animal Shelter (the CAS) is that it will:

- House, care for and support animals in a safe, caring and no-kill environment until they find permanent homes;
- Support Council's Companion Animal Program – ensuring that, wherever possible, lost animals are returned home to their owners and that the welfare of animals in Camden is a community priority;

- Be a sustainable and smart design that acts as an education hub for our local Community; and
- Be an inviting and safe location for animal welfare management.

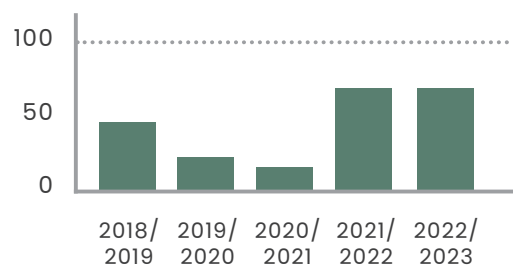
The CAS will be designed to ensure that housing for the temporary accommodation of cats, prior to rehoming and adoption, meets best practice shelter requirements and will allow for the current and predicted future intake of cats in the Camden LGA.



The below chart shows the total number of cats coming into Council's Animal Shelter.

This includes cats that were seized by Council and unable to be returned to their owner, surrendered cats and un-owned cats brought in by members of the public.

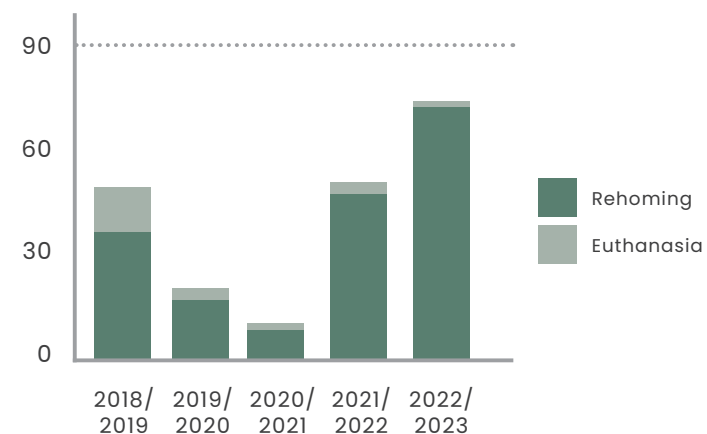
Total Incoming Cats to Council's Animal Shelter



The below chart shows rehoming and euthanasia rates at Council's Animal Shelter. Rehoming rates includes cats that were released to rescue organisations for rehoming.

It should be noted that adjustments are made where a cat has remained in the shelter from one reporting period to the next.

Rehoming Rates from Council's Animal Shelter (and Euthanasia)







COUNCIL RESPONSIBILITIES

In 2016, Council resolved to operate as a 'no kill' animal shelter whereby all attempts are made to re-home or rescue animals considered suitable for rehoming. This is supported by Council's Companion Animal Policy and Program.

Council's Companion Animal Program is overseen by the Companion Animal Advisory Committee and managed by Council's Ranger Services Team.

Council has responsibilities and requirements under the Companion Animals Act in relation to the management of cats. This includes:

- Having an animal shelter (pound) so Council can 'properly discharge' the functions which the Companion Animals Act confers on it;
- In specific circumstances lawfully seizing a cat (for example if it is in a wildlife protection area or if reasonable and necessary to protect a person or animal from injury or death) which then must be delivered to its owner, the pound or other approved premises (for example, an animal welfare organisation);
- Ensuring that the provisions of the Companion Animals Act relating to surrendered cats are met, including responsibilities for rehoming as required by the Act;
- Accepting a cat that was lawfully seized by a member of the public and accepting cats from approved premises if the cat hasn't been claimed after 72 hours;

- Subject to capacity restraints, not refusing to accept surrendered cats at the animal shelter which have not been seized under the Act. This may include cats that have been given up to the pound by their owners or lost or injured cats that have been 'rescued' by the public; and
- Promoting awareness within Council's area of responsibility about the requirements of the Companion Animals Act and the ownership of companion animals.



RESPONSIBILITIES OF CAT OWNERS



MICROCHIPPING



REGISTRATION



DESEXING



CONTAINMENT

Microchipping

The Companion Animals Act requires cats to be microchipped (also known as 'permanently identified') by 12 weeks of age or before being sold or given away, whichever happens first.

Microchips are the size of a grain of rice and are implanted under a cat's skin. Each microchip has a unique number that can be read with a scanner, like a barcode at the supermarket.

Cats can be microchipped by a vet or through Council's free microchipping program. This

program is open to all residents who are not breeders or a part of a rescue organisation.

Cats microchip details are uploaded onto the NSW Companion Animal Register by a local vet or Council, and the cat's owner is provided with a Certificate of Identification.

Microchipping is the most effective way to help ensure cats can be returned home by Council Rangers, if they become lost.

Updating Microchip Details

It is essential to keep microchip details are kept-up-to-date, as this will increase the chances of a cat being returned home if they go missing.

The Companion Animal Act requires the owner of a cat to update the microchip details within 14 days of any changes being made. This could include change of contact information, address or the cat has been sold/rehomed.

Ensuring a cat's microchip details are kept up to date is

just one part of keeping cats safe. Cats should also wear a collar with an identification tag and a be kept indoors or in an enclosure where possible.

Owners can update the details on their cat's microchip by creating an account on the NSW Pet Registry or by contacting Council.

Registration and Desexing

All cats, other than exempt cats, must be registered by six months of age. If a cat is not desexed by four months of age an annual permit is required until the cat is desexed in addition to the lifetime registration. The registration fee is a once-only payment, which covers the cat for its lifetime in NSW, regardless of any changes in ownership.

Council encourages cat desexing. Having a cat desexed prior to registration reduces straying, fighting, aggression and antisocial behaviors such

as spraying to mark territory as well as reducing the number of unwanted cats born each year.

If a cat is not registered the owner may be issued with a fine.

Further information about microchipping and how to register cats is available by visiting Camden Council's website and the Office of Local Government NSW website.

Subsidised Cat Desexing Program

Eligible cat owners in the Camden LGA are offered subsidised desexing through Council's desexing program. All cats must be microchipped to be eligible for the desexing program.

To access the subsidised program the applicant must:

- Be a resident of the Camden LGA;

- Have a pension, concession or health care card issued by Centrelink; or
- Be taking responsibility for and providing ongoing care for a semi-owned or unowned cat that will be microchipped in their name.

Cat Containment

Under the Companion Animals Act, cats are allowed to roam, except in prohibited places, such as protected wildlife areas and where food is prepared or consumed.

Council encourages cat owners to keep their pets inside or in an outdoor enclosure to minimise the opportunity for injury to the animal, protect wildlife and reduce instances of nuisance behaviour.

Further information for cat owners or nuisance cats can be found by visiting Camden Council's website.



SEMI-OWNED & UNOWNED CATS

CASE STUDY

Camden has known locations in residential, commercial and industrial areas where semi-owned and unowned cats live.

These cats rely indirectly on humans for food and shelter to survive and are often directly fed and provided with other care by specific people or groups.

Strategies for the effective care and management of semi-owned and unowned cats can be polarising with different approaches used throughout Australia.

The following are examples of programs that have been developed to support the welfare of, reduce the numbers, and address issues associated with, semi-owned and unowned cats. Council's actions to semi-owned and unowned cats are detailed in the actions section of this plan.

Community Cat Programs and Trap, Neuter (Desex), Adopt or Return Programs

The RSPCA research report *Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia RSPCA-Research Report May 2018*⁴ (RSPCA Report) discusses Trap-neuter-return (TNR) as one method for managing and reducing populations of unowned and semi-owned cats.

The report states that in a TNR program, unowned and semi-owned cats in urban areas are trapped, desexed, and then returned to their original location. Caretakers typically provide food and shelter and monitor the cats. Often when foster or permanent homes are available, young kittens and friendly adults are removed and placed for adoption.

The RSPCA states that there are four major concerns in

relation to the implementation of TNR programs in Australia: its potential effectiveness, the welfare of cats subject to TNR, the cost of implementation, and the impact of cats on wildlife.

The main factors which contribute to successful TNR programs that have been identified in the RSPCA report include a high level of desexing in a targeted area, removal of kittens and socialised adults for adoption, monitoring and rapid desexing of immigrant cats, strong community engagement, support from the community, and ongoing data collection and evaluation.

The RSPCA states that data on the impact on wildlife has not been collected or reported in association with successful TNR programs.

According to the RSPCA, concern over the use of TNR could be mitigated by

⁴*Identifying Best Practice Domestic Cat Management in Australia by RSPCA (May 2018)*

specifying conditions on its use, ensuring adoption of cats as an integral part of the program (this approach is termed trap, desex, adopt or return and support or TDARS) and assessing the effect on wildlife predation.

According to the Australian Pet Welfare Foundation⁵ (APWF) and as a similar concept to TNR, a Community Cat Program is another way of managing urban semi-owned cats to reduce their numbers and impacts and improve their well-being. Participating organisations (such as Council or a local vet) work directly with the community to desex, microchip and vaccinate semi-owned cats (at a subsidised or zero fee). Friendly adults and young kittens are adopted out whenever possible, and healthy,

unsocialized cats are desexed, microchipped and returned to their home location.

The APWF states that if enough cats in any area are desexed, the size of their population reduces over time as attrition outpaces new births. The APWF also reports that desexing can eliminate behaviour considered a nuisance like yowling at night, fighting over mates, spraying to mark territory and roaming.

The APWF also believes that euthanasing semi-owned and unowned cats that cannot be adopted fails to achieve these results. Cats that are removed, are soon replaced by new cats and the problems continue unabated.

Trapping Programs

In a trapping program, semi-owned and unowned cats are trapped and then euthanised.

According to the RSPCA trapping programs in urban areas are very difficult to effectively implement and can result in a failure to reduce cat numbers in the long term and therefore there is no significant improvement for issues of concern such as wildlife predation. Such programs are generally opposed to by the community nor supported by community groups.

⁵Australian Pet Welfare Foundation – Community Cat Program General FAQ's

Considerations for the Management of Programs to Support Semi-owned and Unowned Cats

Whilst there is extensive national and international research about the effectiveness of different programs for the management of semi-owned and unowned cats, consideration also needs to be given to the legalities, particularly in relation to TNR programs.

The Companion Animals Act does not provide any guidance for TNR, however the NSW Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act (POCTA) states Animals not to be abandoned – A person shall not abandon an animal (POCTA Part 2, Section 11).

Consideration must be given to the 'Return' part of TNR and whether this constitutes 'abandonment'. If a cat is trapped, desexed and returned without microchipping or registration, this may be considered as 'abandonment' and would therefore be unlawful and unethical. If, as part of such a program, cats are appropriately microchipped (and registered) with the commitment to provide a level of ongoing care and management by their 'owner' this would not be considered 'abandonment'.




KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Improving cat management in the Camden LGA requires a shared commitment by Council and the community.

The vision, objectives and actions in this plan will be implemented by the Council, in collaboration with key stakeholders, over the next five years.

KEY STAKEHOLDER	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Camden Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coordinate development and periodic review of the Cat Plan and relevant legislation;• Monitor compliance and enforce relevant legislation;• Coordinate education activities to raise awareness within the community of cat management;• Ensure Council's obligations under the Companion Animal Act are met;• Advocate for change in legislation to improve welfare of cats; and• Where possible provide financial support.
Camden Council Animal Advisory Committee	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Monitor effectiveness of the Cat Plan;• Act as an advisory body to Council and in make recommendations to Council;• Assist with the development of strategic policies, programs, services and plans for companion animals;• Provide strategic input and advice in relation to Council's companion animal events and educational programs to help raise awareness about companion animals and the Companion Animals Act 1998; and• Assist Council with the delivery of effective and responsible care and management of companion animals.

KEY STAKEHOLDER	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Cat Owners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legally required to microchip and register their cat; and • Legally required to comply with the Companion Animal Act.
Community Cat Carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support and care for the wellbeing, welfare and protection of semi-owned and un-owned cats; and • Collaborate and advocate for social, welfare and environmental outcomes within the current (and future) legislative framework.
Breeders and Sellers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Required to have a licence to breed for commercial gain; • Must provide a licence number when advertising cats for sale; • Must ensure that any cat sold or given away is microchipped and owner details are updated; and • Legally required to comply with the <i>Companion Animal Act</i>.
Pet Shops and Pet Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Source of information and products for cat care and may sell pet cats; and • Must ensure that any cat sold or given away is microchipped and owner details are updated; and • Legally required to comply with the <i>Companion Animal Act</i>.



KEY STAKEHOLDER	ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES
Animal Care and Rescue Organisations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide education, advice, foster care and re-homing of rescued animals.
Royal Society for Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The RSPCA advocates for improved animal welfare and management practices.
Veterinary Practitioners Board of NSW	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The registration of veterinary practitioners and licensing of veterinary hospitals; • Investigation of complaints against veterinary practitioners; • Developing codes of professional conduct for veterinary practitioners; • Enforcing the provisions of the Act and Regulation; • Promoting professional development of veterinary practitioners; and • Providing information to veterinary practitioners and consumers of veterinary services.
Australian Veterinary Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Australian Veterinary Association (AVA) is the professional organisation that represents veterinarians across Australia. AVA members are committed to continuing education and abide by the Code of Professional Conduct.
Veterinary Practitioners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide care and treatment of pets, including de-sexing services.
Rural Landholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Manage owned or semi-owned cats on their properties.



MONITORING, REPORTING AND REVIEW







Information will be gathered to improve our understanding about trends in the uptake of responsible cat ownership.

Annual reporting on progress in implementing actions will occur through reports prepared by for the Companion Animal Committee.






The Camden Cat Plan, including its implementation and outcomes, will be evaluated towards the end of the five-year plan.






STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS



CCP01 – RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP				
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP01.1 – Promote responsible pet ownership through community education and engagement	1. Improve available information for the community about being a responsible cat owner			Short Term
	2. Events, information nights, pop-up events.			Short Term
	3. Pet Awareness Safety Program (schools, child care centres etc.)			Short Term
	4. Companion Animal Ranger Compliance (nuisance cats)			Short Term
	5. Engage with real estate agents and developers to provide information about updating microchip information.			Short Term

CCP01 – RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP





OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP01.2 – Improve microchipping, registration and cat desexing rates for owned cats	1. Free microchipping program, pet tags, cat collar bells, and targeted microchipping days and events.			Short Term
	2. Improve microchip details being updated by cat owners through education and event days.			Medium Term
	3. Proactive registering of unregistered cats, for example writing to cat owners where their cat is not registered and exploring opportunities for registration fee subsidies from Council.			Medium Term
	4. Promote Council's subsidised desexing program.			Short Term
	5. Investigate opportunities to collaborate with organisations to hold free or subsidised desexing events.			Medium Term

CCP01 – RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP				
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP01.3 – Raise awareness of the impact of roaming cats on wildlife and implement strategies to limit cats’ impact on local diversity	1. Investigate opportunities to establish Wildlife Protection Areas in Council bushland reserves. <i>This is an action from Council's Biodiversity Strategy 2023 and will include a feasibility study and community consultation to identify suitable locations. The outcome will be that Wildlife Protection Area/s are developed within Council reserves and appropriate compliance and management measures to protect wildlife from cats.</i>			Medium Term
	2. Promote, through Council’s media channels, messages to encourage cat owners to keep their pets inside or in an outdoor enclosure.			Short Term
	3. Provide advice and assistance to residents to help manage roaming cats (e.g. paper collars, template letters etc) and consider an incentivised program to support the use of enclosures.			Short Term





CCP02 – SEMI-OWNED ND UNOWNED DOMESTIC CATS



OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME
				SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP02.1 – Provide information to the community to increase awareness about the environmental and welfare implications of abandonment and feeding semi-owned and unowned cats	1. Provide information to the community to increase awareness about the environmental and welfare implications of abandonment and feeding semi owned and unowned cats.			Medium Term
	2. Provide information to local residents, organisations and businesses about semi-owned and unowned cats.			Medium Term



CCP02 – SEMI-OWNED ND UNOWNED DOMESTIC CATS				
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP02.2 – Reduce number of, and ensure the welfare of, semi-owned and unowned cats	1. Consult and collaborate with animal care, community and rescue organisations, local businesses and residents managing semi-owned and unowned cats in public places.			Medium Term
	2. Investigate opportunities to trial and implement (if successful and where possible) a community cat program, targeted desexing and/or trap, desex and adopt activities that meet legislative requirements and ensure the welfare of cats is maintained.			Medium Term
	3. Ensure that community members involved in managing semi-owned and unowned cats are aware of and meet their, and Council's, obligations to ensure compliance with legislation.			Medium Term
	4. Work with and educate property owners that have multiple semi-owned cats on their property to reduce the number of cats through targeted desexing and rehoming.			Short Term

CCP03 – IMPROVE DOMESTIC CAT WELFARE AND REHOMING

OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP03.1 – Ensure Council’s current Animal Shelter is providing the highest level of welfare for cats in their care	1. Work with the Animal Shelter operators to ensure contract requirements are being met and that the shelter is meeting the needs and welfare of cats in their care.			Short Term
CCP03.2 – Reduce the length of stay for cats in the shelter	1. Continue to find innovative ways to promote cats available for adoption. Investigate temporary housing, foster care opportunities and/or advertising of cats at other locations to promote adoption (for example, Libraries, Oran Park Administration, shopping centres).			Short Term
CCP03.3 – Build the new Camden Animal Shelter	1. Provide a best practice animal shelter in the Camden LGA that supports finding and reclaiming of lost cats; adoption and re-homing; desexing program, compliance and enforcement.			Medium Term

CCP04 – REDUCE THE IMPACT OF FERAL CATS				
OBJECTIVE	ACTIONS	EXISTING ACTION	NEW ACTION	TIMEFRAME SHORT TERM: 1-2 YEARS MED TERM: 2-5 YEARS
CCP04.1 – Reduce the impact of cats on wildlife	1. Provide information to the community about the impacts of cats on Australian wildlife.			Short Term
	2. Participate in regional and national monitoring, research and trials to increase understanding of the feral cat population in Camden and the potential impacts on the local environment.			Medium Term





ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Camden Companion Animal Advisory Committee

ACT Government – ACT Cat Plan 2021-2031





(02) 4654 7777

70 Central Avenue, Oran Park

www.camden.nsw.gov.au