

2022 - 2026
Cat Management Plan for the
City of Melville

Table of contents

Executive summary.....	3
Introduction.....	7
Legislation	7
Cat Act 2011	7
Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999	8
Process to develop the Cat Management Plan	8
Best practice cat control.....	9
Cat management in other Local Governments.....	10
Current cat management strategies in the City of Melville	12
Cat Act 2011	12
Community education	12
Nuisance cats	12
Cat trapping.....	12
Categories of cats	12
Data analysis.....	13
Cats in Melville.....	13
Cat trapping data.....	13
Cat related nuisance complaints.....	13
Anecdotal observations of cat presence in natural area reserves.....	14
Community attitudes and feedback	14
Comparison to other community surveys	17
Cat welfare	17
Positive role of cats in households	18
Impact of cats on wildlife	19
Other relevant data sources	21
Peer review by subject matter experts.....	21
Public comment	23
Objectives	23
City of Melville Role	25
Evaluation.....	25
Action plan.....	27
References	32

Executive summary

At the February 2021 Ordinary Meeting of Council, Council passed a motion to direct the CEO to engage with the community and other relevant stakeholders prior to preparing a plan to manage cats in the City of Melville. All local governments in Western Australia are responsible for enforcing and administering the Cat Act 2011, which is legislation set by State Government. In 2019, the State Government completed a statutory review of the Cat Act 2011 to determine if the Act should continue and whether there is a need for a full review of the Act. The review found that although the Act had been well received by the community, it could be more effective in regards to consistency in the number of cats allowed per household and dealing with nuisance/wandering cats. In December 2021 the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Bill 2021 passed WA Parliament. Under the new laws an online registration system for cats and dogs will be established which will be acquired and maintained by the State Government. The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 is the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation. One of the objectives of the Act is to conserve Australian biodiversity with predation by feral cats listed as a key threatening process

The City engaged with the community, relevant State agencies and cat industry bodies and experts to develop this plan. Numerous data sources and research papers, including feedback from 1132 community participants, informed the objectives and actions outlined in this plan. In October 2021, stakeholders from a number of different organisations were invited to peer review the draft plan. We received six responses from the following organisations:

- Cat Haven
- Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch University
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- South West Group
- WA Feral Cat Working Group
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

Specific feedback on the content of the plan has been incorporated. Overall all five respondents who completed the online survey either agreed or strongly agreed that:

- The City had used reputable data sources to inform the draft plan;
- The City had used a sufficient amount of data to inform the draft plan;
- The objectives in the draft plan adequately addressed priorities identified from informing data;
- The actions in the draft plan adequately contributed to the identified objectives.

The community were invited to view the draft Cat Management Plan and provide formal comments on the actions listed within the draft, and indicate their level of support for each action. The City received 97 valid submissions. The table below outlines the four objectives for this plan; key findings to inform these objectives; actions to achieve these objectives; and the percentage of participants who indicated their support during the public comment period.

Objective one: Improve the health and wellbeing of owned cats in Melville	
Action	% of participants who support
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on the health and welfare benefits of keeping cats indoors	84.54%

Key findings to inform this objective

The City of Melville has more cats' registered compared to local governments of comparable size.

Just over half (51.2%) of cat owners who responded to the City's survey informed us that they allowed their cat to roam. The main reason provided for cats being allowed outdoors was a belief they need to be outside to remain happy and healthy.

Research shows that wandering cats crossed more roads per day and showed signs of being in fights with other cats. This makes wandering cats more susceptible to disease, injury, and predators.

Objective Two: Reduce predation of feral, owned, un-owned and semi-owned cats on native wildlife

Actions	% of participants who support
Investigate a cat local law to: a) Restrict the number of cats allowed per household; and b) Prohibit cats from certain areas e.g. native bushland and reserves.	93.82%
Advocate the State Government, through the South West Group, to review the Cat Act 2011 to include night-time cat curfews and specify the number of cats allowed per household	88.66%
Advocate the South West Group to take a lead role in, and provide support to securing grant funding to conduct a scientific study on the impact of cats in native bushland and reserves before and after implementation of a cat local law	85.56%
Conduct and promote annual animal registration renewal process in accordance with the Cat Act 2011	87.63%
Investigate and implement additional promotional opportunities (e.g. discounted fees) for annual animal registration renewals	80.41%
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on options to keep cats confined e.g. cat runs	83.5%
Continue to implement feral animal control program	92.76%
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on community responsibilities in relation to semi-owned and unowned cats i.e. feeding, general welfare, reporting etc.	75.26%

Key findings to inform this objective

The majority (70.78%) of cat owners who responded to the City's survey informed us that their cat has never brought wildlife home. We know however from studies of pet

cats using video-tracking collars or scat analysis that 85% of the animals killed by pet cats are not brought home.

Research suggests that pet cats, despite their valued role as companion animals, are also a major threat to native wildlife. Pet cat impacts are serious and should be reduced. Anecdotal observations of cat sightings in natural area reserves are a commonplace occurrence in the City of Melville. Results from the City's survey indicate there is community support from all respondents for prohibiting cats from certain areas e.g. native bushland or reserves and for night-time curfews for cats.

Night-time curfews for cats would have the least impact on cat owners given just over half of cat owners (51.2%) responded that they allowed their cat/s to roam outside the boundary of their property. Of the 51.2% of cat owners who allowed their cat to roam outside the boundary of their property

- 31.67% only allowed their cat to roam during the day;
- 17.14% allowed their cats free access indoors and outdoors at all times;
- 1.52% allowed their cats to roam during the night only; and
- 0.22% informed that their cat/s lived outside and were not allowed inside.

Survey findings highlighted there was a strong fear in cat owners of cats needing to be confined to their owners property at all times and penalties associated with this.

There is currently no limit to the number of cats that can be kept per household in the City of Melville. When asked, half of all respondents (50.42%) informed that two cats should be the limit per household; furthermore 89% of cat owners owned less than three cats. The above is in line with findings from the State Government statutory review which found there was strong support for a limit to the number of cats allowed per household and curfews. This review also found there was strong support for these to be implemented State-wide (in legislation) rather than at a local government level.

Findings from the City's survey indicate there are misconceptions from all respondents about what actions are required under the current Cat Act 2011 and what management practices the City currently has in place. This indicates a need for education and promotion.

Objective Three: Reduce cat-related nuisance issues for the wider community

Actions	% of participants who support
Review and re-sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Cat Haven for facilitation of impounded cats	88.66%
Conduct a full review of all processes related to nuisance and trapping cats	89.69%
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on nuisance and trapping cats	85.56%

Key findings to inform this objective

Cat related complaints are trending upwards with the City having received the most cat related complaints (146) in 2020. Feedback from the City's survey indicates that 69.33% of all respondents find the roaming of cats to be a nuisance.

Objective Four: Provide support to Melville residents who choose to have cats in their lives	
Actions	% of participants who support
Promote community education campaigns to encourage rehoming or adoption of cats from animal shelters	85.57%
Promote awareness campaigns and support to address unnecessary surrender and abandonment of cats	90.72%
Advocate the State Government, through the South West Group, for funding to subsidise cat runs in support of cat owners who wish to transition their cats to indoor living	74.23%
Establish a partnership with the Cat Haven to host ongoing events at City of Melville facilities where people can positively interact with cats (e.g. cat yoga)	69.07%
Raise awareness through community education of the benefits and positive role cats play in households and families	68.04%
Key findings to inform this objective Research suggests that companion animals offer a range of health related benefits including a decreased risk for death due cardiovascular diseases, and allergic sensitisation to multiple allergens during childhood. Dogs and cats are much more than companions – they have become a part of the family. Feedback from the City's survey indicates cat owners would require support in a number of forms should in future, cats be required by law to be confined to their owner's residential property.	

The actions will be implemented over a period of five years from 2022 to 2026. Once this plan and the resources required to implement it have been supported by Council, Neighbourhood Amenity will be responsible for identifying outcomes and key performance indicators for each action. These will be monitored through the City's corporate reporting tools. Neighbourhood Amenity will also be responsible for conducting one minor review of the plan in 2024 and a full review in 2027. The following resources are required to implement the 2022 – 2026 Cat Management Plan:

- \$27,500 for marketing, communications and education programs; and financial contribution to the MOU with Cat Haven for 2022 – 2026;
- Approximately \$80,000 annually for five years to employ a full time Project Officer to oversee implementation, review and evaluation of the plan; and
- Approximately \$102,000 (pro rata for approximately six months); or \$60 per hour for a legislative officer/consultant to draft a cat local law.

Introduction

At the February 2021 Ordinary Meeting of Council, Council passed a motion to direct the CEO to engage with the community and other relevant stakeholders prior to preparing a plan to manage cats in the City of Melville. While cats are loved family-members for many, research shows free-roaming cats kill millions of native animals each year, and can cause nuisance for members of the community. Research also suggests that keeping cats from wandering is better for their health. Many households own cats, and the City acknowledges they are a significant part of our community. Cats provide love, companionship, and important health and wellbeing benefits to their owners. The 2022 – 2026 Cat Management Plan aims to balance the needs and interests of our many cat owners whilst protecting native wildlife and amenity for the rest of the community.

This plan addresses the following City of Melville informing documents:

- 1) [2020 – 2030 Strategic Community Plan](#)
 - Contributes to the realisation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal ‘Life on Land’
 - Contributes to the ‘Clean and Green’, ‘Safe and Secure’ and ‘Healthy Lifestyles’ community aspirations
- 2) [2020 – 2024 Corporate Business Plan](#)
 - Contributes to Priority one – Ensure the improvement and sustainability of our environment, specifically addressing strategy one:
 1. Protect and improve our natural assets to enhance our environment
 - Contributes to Priority three – Empower the voices of our diverse community by strengthening engagement
 - Contributes to Priority four – Support healthy lifestyles and wellbeing, specifically addressing strategy two:
 2. Increase advocacy and partnerships for identified needs relating to community health, safety and security
- 3) [2019 Natural Areas Asset Management Plan](#)
 - Contributes to the Feral Animal Control Strategy
- 4) [2017 – 2021 Safer Melville Plan](#)
 - Contributes to Goal six – People feel safe and secure in all places at all times, specifically addressing:
 - a. Enforcing and educating the community on various local laws e.g. Dog and Cat Act, local parking laws, Bushfire Act and Litter Act
- 5) [2019 – 2023 Healthy Melville Plan](#)
 - Contributes to the goal: Mentally Healthy Community, specifically addressing:
 - Providing programs which support a mentally healthy community

Legislation

Cat Act 2011

All local governments in Western Australia are responsible for enforcing and administering the Cat Act 2011, which is legislation set by State Government. Under the [Cat Act 2011](#), all domestic cats six months and older must wear a collar with their registration tag when in a public place and must be:

- Sterilised;
- Micro-chipped; and

- Registered with the local government where the cat is ordinarily kept.

Cat owners who do not comply with these requirements may be liable for fines. Under the current Cat Act 2011, local governments are unable to:

- Ban cats from all public areas or require cats to be confined to property boundaries;
- Put in place cat curfews; or
- Put in place requirements for cats to be under effective control.

In 2019, the State Government completed a statutory review of the Cat Act 2011 to determine if the Act should continue and whether there is a need for a full review of the Act. The review found that although the Act had been well received by the community, it could be more effective in regards to consistency in the number of cats allowed per household and dealing with nuisance/wandering cats. The final report from the statutory review was tabled in Parliament in November 2019 and suggested that the Cat Act should contain provisions about confining cats to premises and the number of cats allowed so that the same rules apply across the State and local governments do not have to make their own local laws about these matters. Local governments are still waiting to see if a full review of the Cat Act 2011 will be undertaken by the State Government and whether they will make any amendments to the Cat Act 2011 based on the final report. Any action taken by the State Government as a result of it will impact this plan. Updates can be found on the [Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries website](#).

In December 2021 the [Dog Amendment \(Stop Puppy Farming\) Bill 2021](#) passed WA Parliament. Under the new laws an online registration system for cats and dogs will be established which will be acquired and maintained by the State Government. All existing dog and cat registers in WA currently maintained by local governments will be merged into the centralised registration system. This will bring benefits to customers and will also ease the regulatory burden on local governments. Registration fees will be reviewed by the State Government to cover the ongoing costs of the system, with new fees where applicable. More details will become available once the new system is acquired.

Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999

The [Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act \(EPBC\) 1999](#) is the Australian Government's key piece of environmental legislation. One of the objectives of the Act is to conserve Australian biodiversity. Cats have been devastating to Australian fauna, and, in recognition of this, 'predation by feral cats' is listed as a key threatening process in the EPBC Act. In 2015, the Australian Government released an updated [Threat Abatement Plan](#) to guide coordinated management of feral cats (Department of the Environment 2015) and the inaugural [Threatened Species Strategy \(Commonwealth of Australia 2015\)](#) committed to a range of targets to reduce the impacts of cats and support the recovery of native species affected by cats. As well as detailing strategies, actions and targets relating to the management of feral cats, these national documents recognise the need to engage with the public to enhance awareness of cat impacts, and build support for responsible pet ownership.

Process to develop the Cat Management Plan

The City understands cat management is a complex issue and engaged with the community, relevant State agencies and cat industry bodies and experts so all perspectives were heard and understood. The below are the key milestones to develop this plan.

- Established an internal project team to develop this plan. This project team included staff from Rangers, Parks and Natural Areas, Governance, Engagement, and Communications
- Identified all data sources and research to inform this plan
- Sought feedback from the Community Feedback Panel
- Community survey and outreach – community were invited to provide feedback by completing a survey or attending a listening post
- Analysed data from engagement and other data sources and prepared a draft Cat Management Plan
- Peer review of the draft plan by subject matter experts, cat and wildlife industry experts.
- Public comment – the community were invited to provide comment on the final draft of the plan.

The next step to progress this plan is for it to be considered by Council at the March 2022 Ordinary Meeting of Council.

Best practice cat control

The [WA Feral Cat Working Group has developed a research program](#) to increase knowledge to mitigate cat impacts on biodiversity in WA. As at July 2021, the research program is yet to be fully implemented. Once implemented, it will provide decision makers with research to inform best practice cat control strategies for WA. The WA Feral Cat Working Group is also in the process of developing a website which will be a resource containing research on cat management and control. [Numerous studies have been conducted to determine the ethics and effectiveness](#) of various cat control strategies such as trap, neuter return; collar mounted pounce protectors; belled collars; sterilisation; confinement etc.

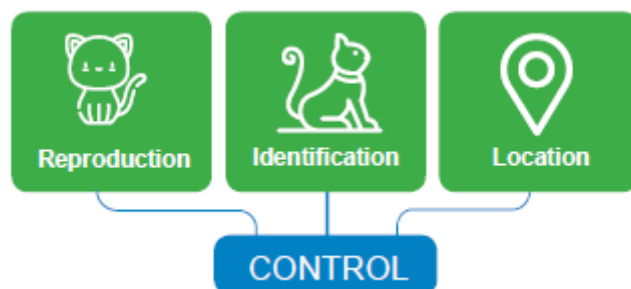
A journal article published in 2011 by Calver, et al. reports on a study conducted by Murdoch University and the University of Sydney. The article also outlines guidance on how to appropriately and effectively implement a cat management program. A number of the recommended options have informed the objectives and actions in this plan. In 2008, the Australian Government's National Consultative Committee on Animal Welfare (NCCAW) recommended that any cat control program should:

- Protect the welfare of cats;
- Reduce impact on wildlife;
- Reduce public nuisance;
- Recognise the value of cats to our community; and
- Educate the community.

Although the NCCAW was abolished on cost grounds by the Federal Government in 2013, the above objectives are still relevant when considering cat management. In May 2018, the [RSPCA prepared a summary of findings and recommendations](#) identifying best practice domestic cat management in Australia. A number of these recommendations have informed the objectives and actions in this plan. The [2021 – 2031 Australian Capital Territory \(ACT\) Cat Management Plan](#) was developed under the 2017 ACT Animal Welfare and is the most ambitious, far-reaching cat management plan in Australia.

In November 2019 the RSPCA and Animal Welfare League of South Australia (AWL) partnered to develop a [Cat Management Plan for South Australia](#). This plan was based on the NCCAW objectives and considered the recommendations made by the RSPCA in their May 2018 report. The South Australian plan is based on the notion that the core to effective animal management requires control of reproduction, identification and location (see

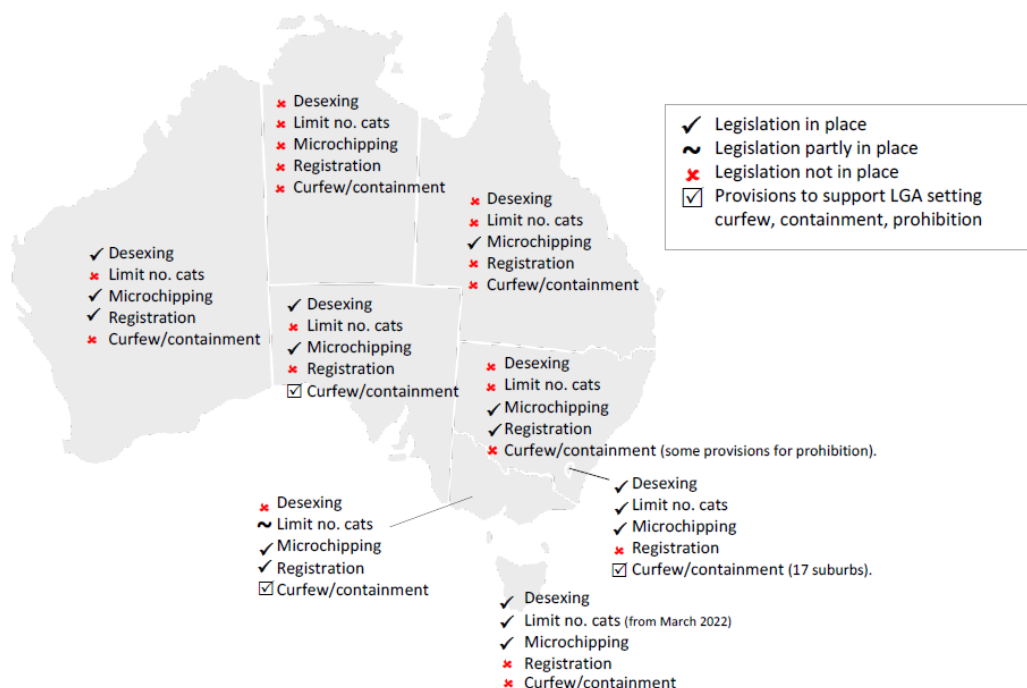
diagram below). This is essentially achieved through desexing (already mandated in the Cat Act 2011); registration and microchipping (already mandated in the Cat Act 2011); and confinement. The success of these strategies is underpinned by community understanding of the requirements of responsible cat ownership; and enforcement of legislation.



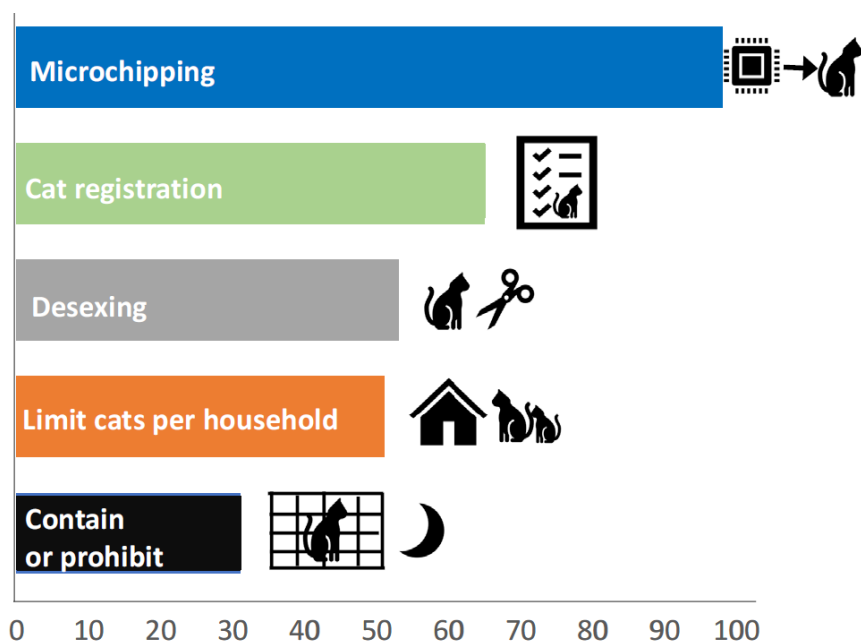
Given the WA Feral Cat Working Group research program is in its infancy, the City has used the above mentioned sources to inform an approach for Melville.

Cat management in other Local Governments

Cat Management is a complex and ongoing issue for local governments so between December 2019 and May 2020, the Threatened Species Recovery Hub circulated surveys to local governments across Australia to gather information on cat management, and to understand what information and actions could support improvements. The findings and recommendations were published in a fact sheet in December 2021. Survey findings found that most local governments have a budget of less than \$40 000 for managing pet and feral cats. It is estimated that local governments across Australia spend \$76 million annually on pet and feral cat management, excluding large budget island eradication programs. The figure below is a summary from the fact sheet and outlines state/territory legislation for pet cats in Australia. Cat management strategies vary significantly nationally. Based on the survey results, one of the recommendations were strong, enabling legislation for pet cat management set at state/territory level, harmonised across jurisdictions.



Survey responses were received from 240 local government areas about pet cats, and 238 local government areas about feral cats. The diagram below shows the percentage of local governments that use each of the cat management actions.



In 2020, the City of Cockburn produced a report with recommendations for domestic cat management in their local government area. This report included a summary of cat management strategies in a number of local governments in the Perth Metropolitan region. This report highlighted that cat management strategies, outside what is mandated through State legislation, vary significantly across local government areas. This not only poses challenges for people living on the boundary of local government areas, but also highlights inconsistency in approaches.

Current cat management strategies in the City of Melville

Cat Act 2011

The City of Melville does not have a cat local law, however is responsible for enforcing and administering the Cat Act 2011. Further information can be found on the City's [Cat Registration page](#).

Community education

The City runs ongoing community education campaigns to encourage responsible ownership and cat registration. In 2020, the City partnered with five Local Governments, and the South West Group, to roll out the [Happy at Home](#) education campaign. The aim of the campaign was to inform, educate and encourage cat owners to keep cat's at home.

Nuisance cats

The City has information and tips on the [Cat Ownership Rules and Management](#) webpage to assist the community to deal with nuisance cats.

Cat trapping

Cat trapping is carried out periodically throughout the year within various bushland areas. Any stray or unregistered domestic cats trapped are taken to a cat management facility at the Cat Haven. Registered domestic cats which are compliant with the Cat Act 2011 are released nearby. Visit the [Feral Animal Control Program webpage](#) for more information.

Categories of cats

- **Feral cats** – cats that are unowned, unsocialised, have no relationship with or dependence on humans and reproduce in the wild. In the [Sustainability and Biosecurity Invasive Species Policy Statement](#) feral cats have been declared a pest that can be controlled through lethal means.
- **Domestic cats** – cats with some dependence (direct or indirect) on humans. They can be owned, semi-owned and unowned.
 - **Owned** – cats identified with, and cared for by a specific person, and are directly depending on humans. They are usually sociable although sociability varies. These cats are registered with a local authority and identified according to the Cat Act 2011.
 - **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.

- **Unowned** – also referred to as strays, these cats are indirectly depending on humans with some having casual and temporary interactions with humans. They are of varying sociability, including some who are unsocialised to humans, and may live in groups.

Data analysis

Cats in Melville

As at July 2021 there are 4,010 cats registered with the City of Melville. The following table has been prepared to assist in understanding how this number compares to neighbouring local governments of comparable size (Cockburn and Canning), and a larger local government authority (Stirling). Melville has more cats registered compared to local governments of comparable size.

Local Government Area	Population*	Private dwellings*	Number of cats registered
City of Melville	98,083	41,252	4,010
City of Cockburn	104,473	42,827	3,139
City of Canning	90,184	35,658	2,454
City of Stirling	210,208	96,536	7,038

[*Obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016 Census](#)

Cat trapping data

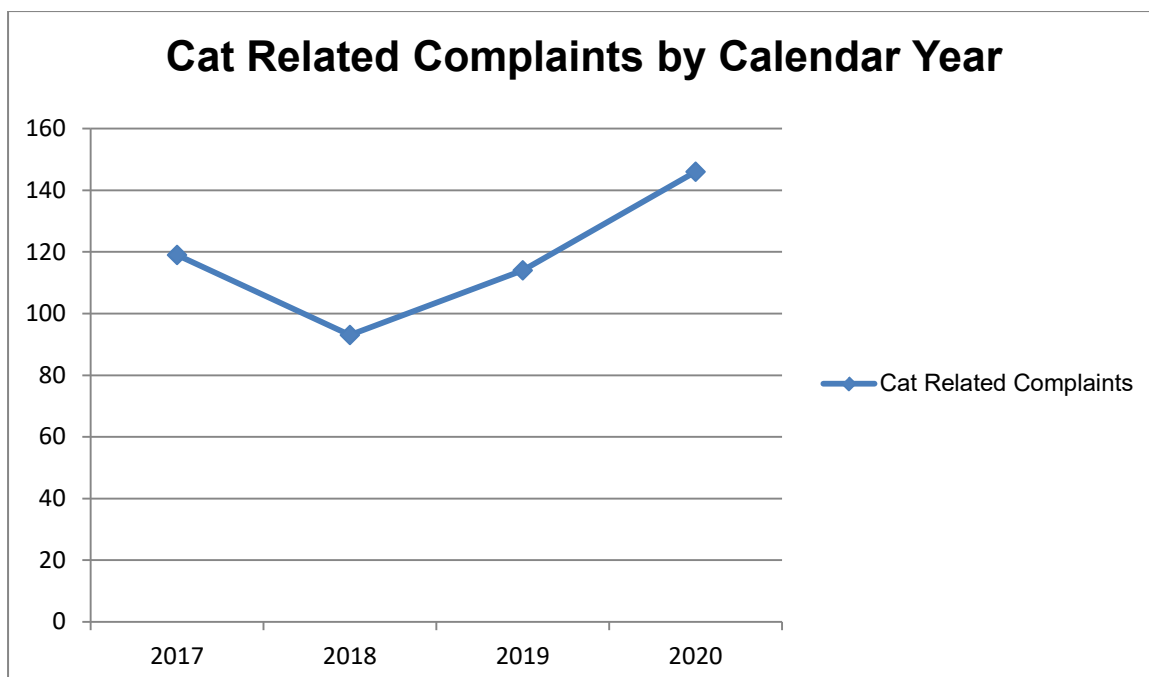
Cat trapping is carried out periodically throughout the year within various bushland areas. The City entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Cat Haven in May 2020 to relocate any stray or unregistered domestic cats trapped to their cat management facility. Prior to this time, domestic cats that were trapped were released. Since the MoU has been in place one cat has been taken to the Cat Haven. The City's Natural Areas Team suggest this does not reflect the actual number of cats in reserves as the approach is to target nuisance cats. It should also be noted that cats are prone to evading traps.

Cat related nuisance complaints

The graph below outlines the number of cat related complaints received by the City over four calendar years. The City received the most cat related complaints (146) in 2020. This could be attributed to the fact that more people were at home due to the pandemic and therefore more aware of nuisance from cats. As a comparison, in 2020, the City received 445 complaints related to barking dogs (the most common dog related complaint). It should be noted that there are more dog related offences under current legislation which could be why the City receives more dog related complaints.

It is important to note that cat related complaints are trending upwards. Year to date (31 July 2021) the City has received 81 cat related complaints indicating this is an issue which is increasing in the community. Common cat related complaints included:

- Cats spraying on outdoor furniture etc. and defecating in back yards
- Cats roaming at night and disturbing dogs
- Cats roaming and killing birds in back yards
- Cats fighting with each other
- Cats walking on or getting into roof spaces.



Anecdotal observations of cat presence in natural area reserves

The City does not record cat sightings in natural area reserves as they are a commonplace occurrence. They are only recorded and passed to the City's Feral Animal Controller when there are repeat sightings of the same cat. The City does have the following anecdotal observations and photographic evidence of cats in natural area reserves:

- Cats are commonly observed within most of our bushland reserves by Natural Areas staff and 'Friends' groups, mainly in the early mornings.
- From the Feral Animal Controller, *"Cats are observed in the reserves on almost every occasion we visit or undertake spot lighting. Given their observed behaviour I am pretty sure they are all domestic cats but collars are rarely present. Cat tracks (and scats) are also regularly recorded."*
- A Bull Creek resident reported a litter of kittens living in bushland in autumn 2021 – these kittens evaded trapping
- An egret was suspected by an Ecologist (contractor) to have been killed by a cat at Blue Gum Lake. The City is not able to identify cause of wildlife deaths in most instances but was able to in this case.

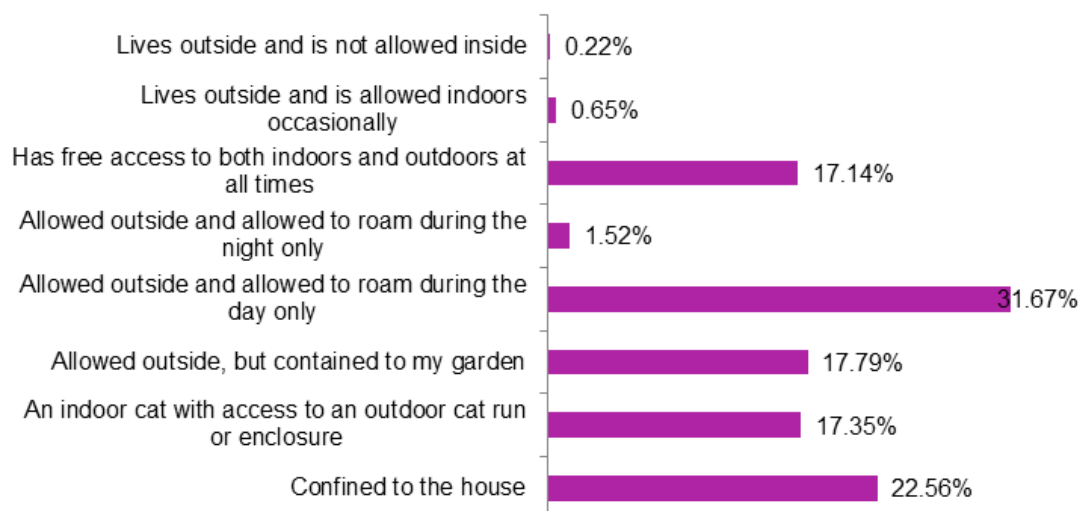
Community attitudes and feedback

2021 community survey

The City [conducted engagement](#) to consult the community on how we can work better together to manage cats for the health, welfare and safety of both cats and native animals, and to test knowledge of current cat management and level of support for future management. The engagement was promoted through multiple traditional and digital channels, and sought community feedback through the Community Feedback Panel (March 2021), and community outreach by completing a survey or attending one of three listening posts (14 May to 30 June 2021).

The Community Feedback Panel meeting was attended by 28 members who discussed the City's role in managing cats, responsible ownership, and potential impacts on native wildlife. The panel was generally against the roaming of cats, and recommended the City provide more education on current requirements under the Cat Act 2011. There was also a recommendation to communicate and promote responsible cat ownership through a database of registered cat owners. The City received 1,035 completed surveys and

engaged with 69 people face to face at the listening post locations. There was an equal representation of cat and non-cat owners and 96.8% of respondents were City of Melville residents. The majority of cat owners owned less than three cats (54.1% owned one cat and 35.71% owned two cats). The graph below outlines all respondents' feedback regarding the lifestyle of their cat.



Just over half of cat owners (51.2%) responded that they allowed their cat/s to roam outside the boundary of their property. Of the 51.2% of cat owners who allowed their cat to roam outside the boundary of their property:

- 31.67% only allowed their cat to roam during the day;
- 17.14% allowed their cats free access indoors and outdoors at all times;
- 1.52% allowed their cats to roam during the night only; and
- 0.22% informed that their cat/s lived outside and were not allowed inside.

The main reason cat owners provided for their cat's spending time outside was a belief that cats need to be outside to remain happy and healthy. A number of open comments were also received with common themes being the cat's mental health and wellbeing, pest control, and a perception of cruelty to keep cats inside. When asked about their cats hunting:

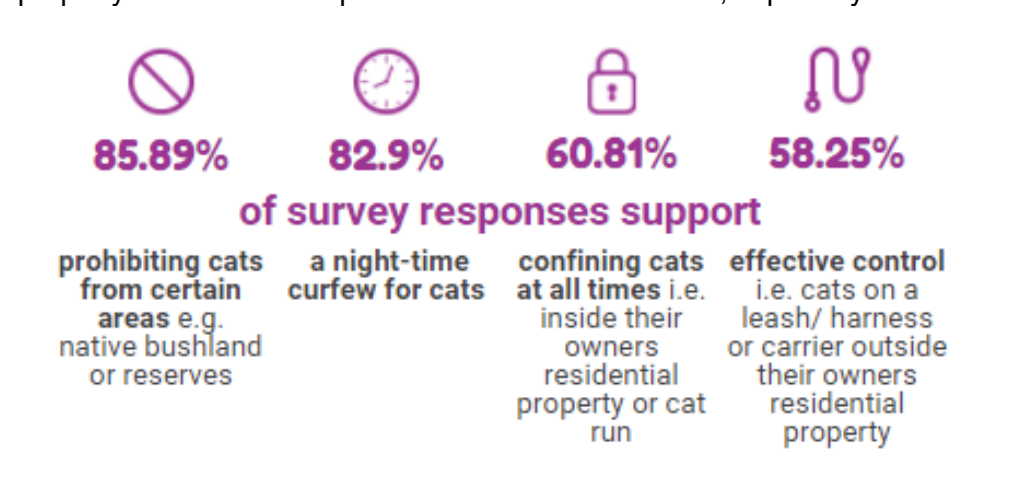
- 59.31% of cat owners informed us that their cat did not hunt; and
- 70.78% of cat owners informed us that they had never experienced wildlife being brought home by their cats.

There is currently no limit to the number of cats that can be kept per household in the City of Melville. When asked, half of all respondents (50.42%) informed that two cats should be the limit per household. There were a number of additional comments provided in this question with key themes reflecting property size, breeding, fostering exemptions and cat owner welfare. A number of questions were asked to understand the roaming of cats and if this roaming caused nuisance in the community. The majority of all respondents (88.44%) had witnessed a cat or cats roaming in their neighbourhood with 69.33% of all respondents informing us that they found the roaming to be a nuisance. The top five concerns regarding roaming cats were:

- Killing or injuring wildlife;
- Spraying and defecating;

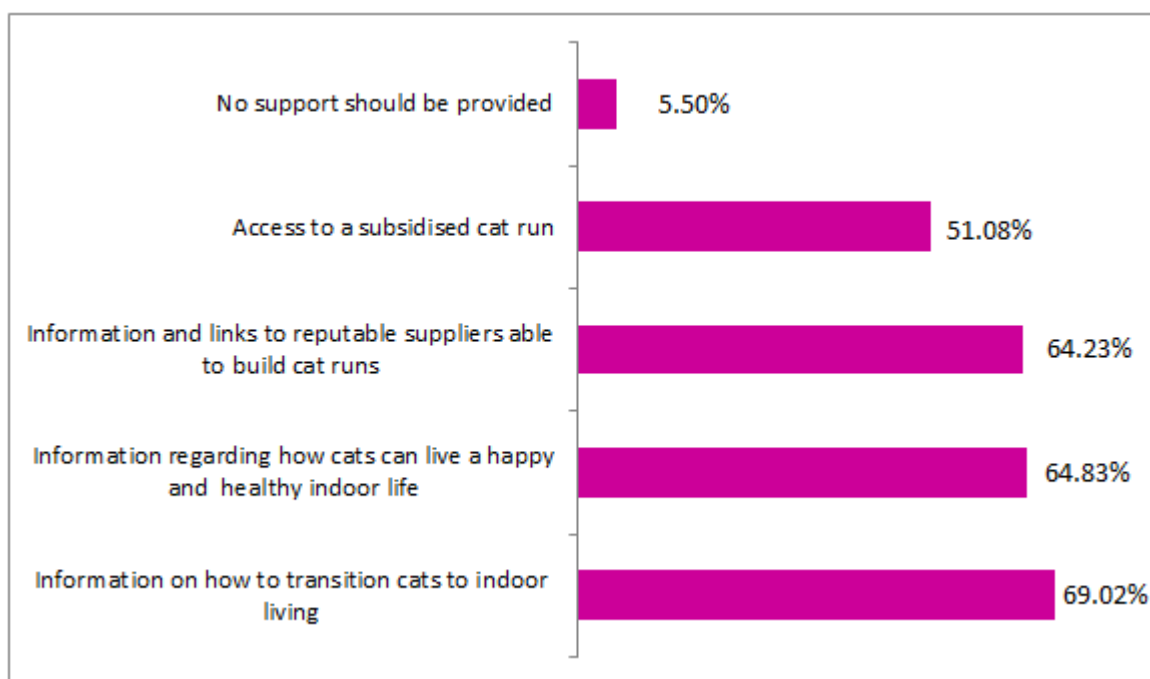
- Fighting with other cats;
- Intrusion on their property; and
- Impact on their pets.

A number of open comments were received with other issues/concerns reported as damage to outdoor furniture; security camera and light activation; mental and physical health impacts due to cat attacks; dogs barking (and lack of sleep due to this); and injury or death to family pets. Respondents were asked to share their level of support for a number of statements. The results are presented below. There is community support from all respondents for prohibiting cats from certain areas and for night-time curfews for cats. There is less community support from all respondents for cats to be confined at all times, and for cats to be under effective control when outside their owner's residential property. Survey findings highlighted there was a strong fear in cat owners of cats needing to be confined to their owners property at all times and penalties associated with this, especially for mature cats.



Respondents were asked what support should be offered should in future, cats be required by law to be confined to their owner's residential property. The graph below outlines the results from all respondents. A number of free text comments were received as part of this question with key themes including:

- A subsidy to cover services for stress management, toys, cat litter etc.
- Free cat registration
- Flexibility of enforcement and penalties
- Exemptions depending on types of properties
- DIY workshops and training to build cat runs
- Reducing red tape on planning approvals (for extensions related to building cat runs)
- Full funding for cat runs
- Education and information on cat management for cat owners and non-cat owners.



Participants were also invited to share their knowledge regarding current cat management practices and legislation. Results indicate there are misconceptions about what actions are required under the current Cat Act 2011 and what management practices the City currently has in place. This indicates a need for education and promotion. Other findings from the survey were community misunderstanding of the objectives of the engagement, with a strong fear of implementing cat confinement and penalties.

Comparison to other community surveys

A number of reports, journal and research articles related to community attitudes around cats and cat control have been published over time. As a point of interest the results from a number of these have been compared to the findings from the 2021 survey. Findings from the 2019 State Government statutory review of the Cat Act 2011 were consistent with findings from the City's engagement. Findings from both showed:

- Community support for night-time cat curfews;
- Less community support for cats to be confined at all times; and
- Support for two cats to be permitted as a maximum at a single residence.

Furthermore the State Government statutory review found there was strong support for cat numbers and confinement/curfews to be implemented State-wide (in legislation) rather than at a local government level.

A journal article published in 2002 in the Australian Veterinary Journal by Grayson, et al. outlines the results of a survey conducted with City of Melville residents in March 1996. It should be noted that there was no cat control legislation in place when the survey was conducted in 1996. Interestingly results from both the 1996 and 2021 surveys showed support for legislation that stipulated a maximum number of cats per property, and support for legislation that restricted cats' ability to roam – particularly in natural areas and reserves.

Cat welfare

A citizen science initiative by Roetman, et al. of the University of South Australia published in 2017 suggests that pet cats usually live for around 10 – 15 years but that unowned and semi-owned cats did not live as long as owned cats. Some research suggests this is because semi-owned and unowned cats are more likely to wander making them more susceptible to disease, injury, predators, and starvation. The project tracked over 400 cats

with GPS trackers over a five day period. Results showed the following statistically significant findings:

- Wandering cats typically crossed more roads per day than sedentary cats
- Wandering cats typically showed signs of being in fights with other cats more often than sedentary cats
- Wandering cats were typically seen with prey more often than sedentary cats.

This research informed the 2020 Happy at Home campaign developed by the South West Group in partnership with six local governments. The campaign encouraged the key message that “cats are happiest and healthiest at home with you!”

A Swedish study by Egenvall, et al. published in 2009 examined mortality rates and causes for domestic cats based on life insurance statistics. The study found that the most common causes of cat mortality were:

- Urinary disease
- Traumatic causes (traffic accident and falls from heights)
- Neoplastic conditions (cancer)

The study also noted that infectious disease was the most common cause of death in the total cat population. Insured animals however need to be vaccinated against infectious diseases so this cause has not appeared in this study. This study is overall not representative of the general cat population but does indicate that one of the leading causes of cat mortality (traumatic causes) is linked to the amount of time cats have access to the outdoors.

Positive role of cats in households

While a number of negative impacts of cats are noted in this document, it is also important to highlight the positive role cats play in households. Australian research by Smith published in 2012 summarised the health related aspects of companion animal ownership and how to integrate companion animals into healthcare and health promotion. The research noted that companion animals offer a range of health related benefits classified into three categories:

1. Physical health by facilitating improvements in the human immune system, and cardiovascular health and physical fitness;
2. Psychological health including the ability of pets to assist during therapeutic work, playing an important role in child development, and providing psychological health benefits; and
3. Social health, due to the role pets can play as social enablers.

Examples of health related benefits are outlined in the table below which is an excerpt taken directly from the Australian research by Smith published in 2012.

Table 1. Health related benefits of companion animal ownership		
Health benefit	Benefits to owners	Patients most affected
Physical health	Cardiovascular health ^{34–37} - Pets can help reduce stress and lower blood pressure (eg. patting a dog or watching fish swim peacefully in an aquarium) - Pet owners show improved recovery rates from heart surgery	Adults and the elderly, in particular those who are stressed, and/or have cardiovascular disease
	Physical fitness (primarily for dog owners) ^{38–40} - Dogs are great exercise partners and provide social support - Dog owners are more physically active (primarily though walking dog) and have reduced risk of obesity and better physical health	All ages, particularly those who are physically unfit or overweight
	Immune system development ^{41,42} Exposure to pets lowers the likelihood of developing allergies	Children
Psychological health	Animal assisted therapy (AAT) ^{26,27,28,43,44} - AAT with dogs and/or fish can increase morale, eating habits and overall health in Alzheimer patients - AAT increased attendance, decreased violent behaviour, and increased language and social skills in children with ADHD - In clinical settings, AAT reduces stress in children	People of all ages with various disorders
	Mental health ^{21,45,46} - Owners are less likely to experience loneliness and depression, as pets provide social support (with similar effects to human-human relationships), and provide a sense of purpose - Older people with pets are less stressed by major adverse life events than nonpet owners	Adults (particularly during times of stress or loss of a loved one), the elderly, socially isolated, chronically ill (physical or mental) or those with a terminal illness, and/or physical impairment
	Child development ^{47,48} - Pets may play a role in the social-emotional development of children, including self esteem, autonomy and empathy for others - Children who own pets show increased trust, community feeling, safety, self confidence and self enhancement	Children and adolescents
Social health	Pets as social enablers ^{49,50} - Pets are a good catalyst for meeting people (eg. neighbours, strangers) - Other social opportunities, including animal clubs and societies - Pet attachment is positively correlated with family cohesion and adaptability - Improves social interaction for the elderly and those with Alzheimer disease when used in visiting programs	People living alone and/or those having difficulty meeting others

A journal article by Qureshi, et al. published in 2009 investigated cat ownership and the risk of fatal cardiovascular disease. The study found a decreased risk for death due to all cardiovascular diseases (including stroke) was observed among persons with cats. It went as far as suggesting that acquisition of cats as domestic pets may be a novel strategy for reducing the risk of cardiovascular diseases in high-risk individuals. An article by Ownby, et al. published in 2002 investigated exposure to dogs and cats in the first year of life and risk of allergic sensitisation at six to seven years of age. The article found that exposure to two or more dogs or cats in the first year of life may reduce subsequent risk of allergic sensitisation to multiple allergens during childhood.

Animal Medicines Australia published a report on pet ownership in Australia in 2016. One of the top five insights was the fact that dogs and cats are much more than companions – they have become a part of the family. The report noted that pet ownership has been found to be significantly correlated with a number of health benefits such as fewer doctor visits, lowered stress and increased social support for individuals. With specific reference to cats it noted that cat owners have significantly better scores for psychological health than non-pet owners.

Impact of cats on wildlife

In December 2020 the Federal Government published a report of the inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia. The inquiry was commissioned to examine the prevalence and impact of feral, stray and domestic cats, the effectiveness of various

legislative, regulatory and collaborative responses; and made six recommendations. A number of these recommendations highlight the impact of cats on wildlife. Specifically the recommendations call for the Australian Government to:

- Recognise and prioritise the problem of feral cats in Australia;
- Undertake a body of work to improve understanding of the impact of feral, stray and domestic cats in Australia; and
- Develop a clear strategy in partnership with states and territories for the management of stray and domestic cats.

In 2019 the Threatened Species Recovery Hub summarised the impact of pet cats on Australian wildlife and published the results in a research findings factsheet. Key findings are presented in the table below.

Total pet cat population:	3.8 million
Percentage of households with pet cats:	27%
Size of animals cats can kill:	up to 4 kg
Percentage of pet cats that roam:	71%
Mean home range of a pet cat:	2 hectares (about the size of two playing fields)
Average density of pet cats in Australian suburbs:	39 to 70 per km ²
Average number of animals (mammals, birds and reptiles) killed per roaming cat per year:	186
Number of all mammals, birds and reptiles killed by pet cats per year:	390 million
Number of native mammals, birds, reptiles killed by pet cats per year:	241 million

Pet cats collectively kill 28–52 times more mammals, birds, reptiles per km² in urban areas than feral cats kill per km² in natural environments

The research found that:

- Feral cats are an enormous problem for wildlife across Australia;
- Pet cats, despite their valued role as companion animals, are also a major threat to native wildlife; and
- On average, each pet cat that is allowed to roam kills 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year in Australia. This number includes 110 native animals.

In 2021 the Threatened Species Recovery Hub summarised the impact of feral cats on Australian invertebrates in a research findings factsheet. Key findings were:

- Feral cats collectively consume 1.1 billion invertebrates per year across Australia;
- Roaming pet cats also prey on invertebrates across Australia; however, there are currently no estimates for the number of invertebrates consumed; and

- Insects and other invertebrates play many important roles in ecosystems, such as pollination and decomposition and are a very important food source for many native wildlife species.

A case study by Greenwell, et al. published in 2019 describes the impact of a desexed, free roaming cat on the behavior of a threatened coastal seabird, the Australian Fairy Tern, *Sternula nereis nereis*, in Mandurah, south-western Australia. The study using wildlife cameras and direct surveys observed:

- A cat entering the tern colony a number of times at night;
- Dead and/or injured adult tern, and injured or missing tern chicks;
- Cat tracks and scats around the colony providing strong evidence of cat predation;
- An initial change in nesting behaviour; and
- Colony abandonment and the reproductive failure of 111 nests as a result of this predation.

This study highlighted the negative impacts of free-roaming cats on wildlife and the need for monitoring and controlling cats at sites managed for species conservation. It also provided strong evidence that desexed cats can continue to negatively impact wildlife through predation, but also indirectly through fundamental changes in prey behaviour and a reduction in parental care.

An article by Legge, et al. 2020 describes the findings from an Australian study investigating the impact of domestic cats on fauna. 66 studies of predation by pet cats worldwide (including 24 Australian studies) were reviewed to determine the predation toll of pet cats in Australia as well as the pressure per unit area in residential areas. The results were compared to estimates of feral cat kill rates in Australia. The study found:

- The per capita kill rate of pet cats was 25% more than feral cats;
- The Australian pet cat population was 3.77 million;
- The per square kilometre predation rate is much higher for pet cats than feral cats - in some cases up to 52 times higher in residential areas;
- Pet cats have been found to have caused local and total fauna extinctions; and
- There is no evidence that suggests pet cats exert significant control of introduced species.

Overall the study found that pet cat impacts are serious and should be reduced.

Other relevant data sources

One of the comments expressed in the community outreach conducted by the City was regarding the role that cats play in pest control and what impact confining cats would have on the rodent population. A journal article by Parsons, et al. published in 2018 reported on temporal and space-use changes by rats in response to predation by feral cats. The findings support ecologists' beliefs that the risk to native wildlife outweighs any benefit of cats being used for pest control. Even though rats were less likely to be seen, they simply shifted their movements and remained present in the system. The findings that cat presence led to fewer rat sightings explain the common perception of their value as rat-predators.

Peer review by subject matter experts

In October 2021, stakeholders from the following organisations were sent an email inviting them to peer review the draft plan via an online survey or telephone interview.

- South West Group
- Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch University
- Centre for Terrestrial Ecosystem Science and Sustainability, Murdoch University
- WA Feral Cat Working Group
- Cat Haven

- WALGA
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

They were asked to rate a series of statements about the draft plan and were also invited to provide an open-ended response for any additional comments. The City received five completed surveys, and one email with feedback from the following organisations.

- Cat Haven
- Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch University
- Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions
- South West Group
- WA Feral Cat Working Group
- Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

Specific feedback on the content of the plan has been incorporated. Responses to the rating questions were:

- All five respondents strongly agreed that the City of Melville had used reputable data sources (e.g. research, community feedback, etc.) to inform their draft Cat Management Plan
- Four out of the five respondents strongly agreed, and one respondent agreed that the City of Melville had used a sufficient amount of data to inform their draft Cat Management Plan
- Two out of the five respondents strongly agreed, and three agreed that the objectives in the City of Melville draft Cat Management Plan adequately addressed priorities identified from the informing data.
- Two out of the five respondents strongly agreed, and three agreed that actions in the City of Melville draft Cat Management Plan adequately contributed to the identified objectives.

Some additional comments from the open-ended responses have been included verbatim below.

The Department had no comments to make, apart from noting that any final Plan will need to be implemented within the legislative boundaries of the Cat Act and Local Government Act. While the creation of a cat local law would assist with cat issues, the making of such a local law is ultimately at the discretion of the City's council. – Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

It is encouraging to see a council being proactive in relation to cat containment- and a well thought out and presented plan. A matter of priority for the City would be restricting the number of cats per household to two which would be in line with many other councils. – Cat Haven

Strongly agree that a local law be drafted to prohibit cats from natural areas. Overall a good range of actions recommended to improve cat wellbeing and reduce their impact on native wildlife. Could consider a longer term goal of keeping cats confined to owners property via a local law as a second or later stage action, or consider this later following monitoring as to how effective education initiatives are. - Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions

The City of Melville has adopted a positive and proactive approach to cat management. The data suggests that by taking appropriate and well informed action now, predation pressure will be reduced on the City's natural areas. – South West Group

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this thorough, well-reasoned draft. -
Environmental and Conservation Sciences, Murdoch University

Congratulations on what looks like a great and well researched cat plan – WA Feral Cat Working Group

Public comment

The community were invited to view the draft Cat Management Plan and provide formal comments on the actions listed within the draft, and indicate their level of support for each action. The submission form was available online at Melville Talks and in line with the City's Disability Access Inclusion Plan, alternative methods of engagement (in person and over the phone) were made available. The consultation took place from 8 November to 3 December 2021. The City received 109 submissions however 12 were removed because they were either duplicates or incomplete. As a result there were 97 valid submissions.

Key findings:

- 96.91% of participants were local residents
- 56.07% of participants were not involved in previous engagements for this project
- 39.18% of participants were cat owners
- 58.76% of participants did not own cats.

The level of support for each action is listed in the action plan on page 27 of this document. The City also received a number of submission comments. These have been collated into a submission report with a corresponding City of Melville Officer comment and will be presented to Council.

Objectives

Based on all of the data and research outlined above, the following four objectives have been identified for this Cat Management Plan.

Objective	Key findings to inform this objective
One: Improve the health and wellbeing of owned cats in Melville	The City of Melville has more cats' registered compared to local governments of comparable size. Just over half (51.2%) of cat owners who responded to the City's survey informed us that they allowed their cat to roam. The main reason provided for cats being allowed outdoors was a belief they need to be outside to remain happy and healthy Research shows that wandering cats crossed more roads per day and showed signs of being in fights with other cats. This makes wandering cats more susceptible to disease, injury, and predators.
Two: Reduce predation of feral, owned, un-owned and semi-owned cats on native wildlife	The majority (70.78%) of cat owners who responded to the City's survey informed us that their cat has never brought wildlife home. We know however from studies of pet cats

	using video-tracking collars or scat analysis that 85% of the animals killed by pet cats are not brought home. Research suggests that pet cats, despite their valued role as companion animals, are also a major threat to native wildlife. Pet cat impacts are serious and should be reduced. Anecdotal observations of cat sightings in natural area reserves are a commonplace occurrence in the City of Melville. Results from the City's survey indicate there is community support from all respondents for prohibiting cats from certain areas e.g. native bushland or reserves and for night-time curfews for cats. Night-time curfews for cats would have the least impact on cat owners given just over half of cat owners (51.2%) responded that they allowed their cat/s to roam outside the boundary of their property. Of the 51.2% of cat owners who allowed their cat to roam outside the boundary of their property: • 31.67% only allowed their cat to roam during the day; • 17.14% allowed their cats free access indoors and outdoors at all times; • 1.52% allowed their cats to roam during the night only; and • 0.22% informed that their cat/s lived outside and were not allowed inside. Survey findings highlighted there was a strong fear in cat owners of cats needing to be confined to their owners property at all times and penalties associated with this. There is currently no limit to the number of cats that can be kept per household in the City of Melville. When asked, half of all respondents (50.42%) informed that two cats should be the limit per household; furthermore 89% of cat owners owned less than three cats. The above is in line with findings from the State Government statutory review which found there was strong support for a limit to the number of cats allowed per household and confinement/curfews. This review also found there was strong support for these to be implemented State-wide (in legislation) rather than at a local government level.
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	Findings from the City's survey indicate there are misconceptions from all respondents about what actions are required under the current Cat Act 2011 and what management practices the City currently has in place. This indicates a need for education and promotion.
Three: Reduce cat-related nuisance issues for the wider community	Cat related complaints are trending upwards with the City having received the most cat related complaints (146) in 2020. Feedback from the City's survey indicates that 69.33% of all respondents find the roaming of cats to be a nuisance.
Four: Provide support to Melville residents who choose to have cats in their lives	Research suggests that companion animals offer a range of health related benefits including a decreased risk for death due cardiovascular diseases, and allergic sensitisation to multiple allergens during childhood. Dogs and cats are much more than companions – they have become a part of the family. Feedback from the City's survey indicates cat owners would require support in a number of forms should in future, cats be required by law to be confined to their owner's residential property.

City of Melville Role

The City of Melville plays a number of different roles in our community. It must be noted that there are a number of other State Government agencies, organisations, and community groups that also play a key role in managing cats in our community. The various roles the City plays are defined below:

- Provider – we are responsible for service and facility delivery
- Partner – we work collaboratively with others to deliver services and facilities
- Funder – we provide funding to others to provide services and facilities
- Regulator – we have statutory obligation to regulate a specific area of activity
- Monitor – we gather information and check progress over time
- Facilitator – we bring together and encourage others to achieve goals
- Advocate – we promote the interests of our community to other decision-making organisations, such as State and Federal governments

The action plan on the next page provides further detail on achieving the identified objectives.

Evaluation

Once this plan and the resources required to implement it have been supported by Council, Neighbourhood Amenity will be responsible for identifying outcomes and key performance indicators for each action. These will be monitored through the City's corporate reporting tools. This Cat Management Plan will be implemented over a period of five years from 2022

to 2026. Neighbourhood Amenity will be responsible for conducting one minor review during the implementation period. This minor review should commence in 2024 and will include:

- Checking in on progress of implementation;
- Identification of any current or more recent research on cat management; and
- If required, stakeholder engagement with the community, cat industry and wildlife experts.

The above will inform additional actions for the Cat Management Plan until a full review is commenced in 2027.

Action plan

Objective one: Improve the health and wellbeing of owned cats in Melville

Action	% of participants who support	City's role	Responsible service area	Resources/budget required	Timeframe
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on the health and welfare benefits of keeping cats indoors	84.54%	Facilitator (partners may include pet stores, vets, cat breeders, South West Group, Cat Haven etc.)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer and \$500 annually	Commence August/September annually in the lead up to animal registration renewals

Objective two: Reduce predation of feral, owned, un-owned and semi-owned cats on native wildlife

Action	% of participants who support	City's role	Responsible service area	Resources/budget required	Timeframe
Investigate a cat local law to: c) Restrict the number of cats allowed per household; and d) Prohibit cats from certain areas e.g. native bushland and reserves. (Please note: community to be consulted on issues, implications and consequences)	93.82%	Regulator	Governance with support from Neighbourhood Amenity and Natural Areas	1 full time Senior Governance Officer or external consultant for minimum six months. No additional operational budget required for advertising etc.	Commence securing human resources March 2022
Advocate the State Government, through the South West Group, to review the Cat Act 2011 to include night-time cat curfews and specify the number of cats allowed per	88.66%	Advocate	Natural Areas	No additional required. To be implemented with existing resources under the current agreement with the	Commence March 2022

household				South West Group	
Advocate the South West Group to take a lead role in, and provide support to securing grant funding to conduct a scientific study on the impact of cats in native bushland and reserves before and after implementation of a cat local law	85.56%	Advocate	Natural Areas	No additional required. To be implemented with existing resources under the current agreement with the South West Group	Commence if/when a cat local law is introduced
Conduct and promote annual animal registration renewal process in accordance with the Cat Act 2011	87.63%	Regulator	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer and \$1000 annually	Commence September/October annually. Renewals to be paid by 31 October in the year they are due
Investigate and implement additional promotional opportunities (e.g. discounted fees) for annual animal registration renewals	80.41%	Facilitator (partners include pet stores, vets, South West Group, Cat Haven and other City of Melville departments)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer Possible financial implications depending on promotional opportunities e.g. discounted or refunded registration fees	Initial investigation completed by June 2022 Second review of promotional opportunities completed June 2025
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on options to keep cats confined e.g. cat runs	83.5%	Facilitator (partners include Men's Shed, local businesses)	Natural Areas	No additional required. To be implemented with existing Natural Areas operational resources and budget	Commence June 2022 Annual promotion to be ongoing
Continue to implement feral animal control program	92.76%	Funder	Natural Areas	No additional required. To be implemented	Ongoing

				with existing Natural Areas operational resources and budget.	
Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on community responsibilities in relation to semi-owned and unowned cats i.e. feeding, general welfare, reporting etc.	75.26%	Facilitator (partners include South West Group, Cat Haven, RSPCA)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer and \$500 annually	Commence Jan/Feb 2023 and then implement annually

Objective three: Reduce cat-related nuisance issues for the wider community

Action	% of participants who support	City's role	Responsible service area	Resources/budget required	Timeframe
Review and re-sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Cat Haven for facilitation of impounded cats	88.66%	Funder	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer Currently the City donates \$1500 annually to the Cat Haven for this partnership. Request to increase this to \$4000 annually and for the City's financial contribution to be formalised within the MoU	MoU to be revised and re-signed in July 2022 for a three year period Next review due July 2025
Conduct a full review of all processes related to nuisance and trapping cats	89.69%	Monitor	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer	Review to be completed by May 2023

Develop and promote new and existing community education initiatives on nuisance and trapping cats	85.56%	Facilitator (partners include South West Group and Cat Haven)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer and \$500 annually	Commence June 2023 (upon completion of review)
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Objective four: Provide support to Melville residents who choose to have cats in their lives

Action	% of participants who support	City's role	Responsible service area	Resources/budget required	Timeframe
Promote community education campaigns to encourage rehoming or adoption of cats from animal shelters	85.57%	Facilitator (Cat Haven key partner)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer	Ongoing
Promote awareness campaigns and support to address unnecessary surrender and abandonment of cats	90.72%	Facilitator (partners include Cat Haven and RSPCA)	Neighbourhood Amenity	1 full time Project Officer	Ongoing
Advocate the State Government, through the South West Group, for funding to subsidise cat runs in support of cat owners who wish to transition their cats to indoor living	74.23%	Advocate	Natural Areas	No additional required. To be implemented with existing resources under the current agreement with the South West Group	Commence March 2022

Establish a partnership with the Cat Haven to host ongoing events at City of Melville facilities where people can positively interact with cats (e.g. cat yoga)	69.07%	Facilitator (Cat Haven key partner)	Healthy Melville	No additional required. To be implemented with existing Healthy Melville (Health Promotions) operations resources and budget	Partnership established by April 2022 Events to be hosted twice a year with dates dependent on availability of suitably social cats.
Raise awareness through community education of the benefits and positive role cats play in households and families	68.04%	Facilitator	Neighbourhood Amenity and Healthy Melville	1 full time Project Officer	Ongoing

Based on the above action plan the following resources are required to implement the 2022 – 2026 Cat Management Plan:

- \$27,500 for marketing, communications and education programs; and financial contribution to the MOU with Cat Haven for 2022 – 2026;
- Approximately \$80,000 annually for five years to employ a full time Project Officer to oversee implementation, review and evaluation of the plan; and
- Approximately \$102,000 (pro rata for approximately six months); or \$60 per hour for a legislative officer/consultant to draft a cat local law.

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