

NATURE CONSERVATION MARGARET RIVER REGION

SUBMISSION ON THE REVIEW OF THE CAT ACT 2011 (WA)

Nature Conservation Margaret River Region (**Nature Conservation**) is the peak non-profit community-based environmental organisation working on the key environmental challenges facing the southwest of Western Australia. Nature Conservation has more than 3000 local supporters (including members, donors, active volunteers, businesses, and project partners and participants). We advocate for best practice environmental land use and management for the natural environment in our region.

On 24 August 2026, we made a submission in response to a WA State Government request for feedback from the community on a review of the Cat Act 2011 (the Cat Act), which (a) provides for the control and management of cats and (b) promotes the responsible ownership of cats.

Our responses to the questions asked are set out below. Our responses draw on the submission guidance provided by the WA Feral Cat Working Group (WAFCWG), an independent organisation that provides a strategic and science-based focal point for cat management in the state.

QUESTION 1 - About us

We were provided with a list from which to select the organisation type. We confirmed that we are an 'environmental organisation'.

QUESTION 2 - Registration, microchipping and identification

Under the Cat Act 2011, cats aged six months and over must be microchipped, registered with their local government and wear a registration tag when in public places. Under the Cat Act Regulations 2012, a person can register their cat for either one year, three years or for the cat's lifetime.

Qu 2. Should any of these requirements change? If yes, what changes would you suggest and why?

RESPONSE

Yes, we believe these requirements should be changed.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Short-term registration lapses are a major source of non-compliance. Lapsed registration creates an administrative burden for councils chasing renewals.
- There is always a risk that pets can escape from their owners, despite best intentions. An identified pet (registered, microchipped) is far easier to return to its owner in a safe and timely way.

- Microchips can be implanted in a cat from a young age but are easier to implant during sterilisation as the animal is sedated.
- Microchips can migrate around the body of a cat, making them hard to find sometimes. A registration tag is a worthwhile backup if a microchip cannot be detected and/or read.
- Cats are microchipped in WA through several competing private registries with no single authoritative point of truth (noting the petaddress.com.au cross-registry lookup tool). The collapse of HomeSafeID highlighted the problem with having competing private registry companies.
- Transferring registrations between local government is inconvenient but happens regularly when an owner moves with their cat, or their cat is transferred to a new owner.
- Registration compliance is currently low and enforcement is inconsistent.

Changes we recommend:

- Make lifetime registration the default option. Align fee structures so lifetime registration is the most cost-effective choice for owners.
- Registration and microchipping should take place no later than four months of age and can be done at the same time as sterilisation and/or the cat's vaccination schedule.
- Create a state-wide centralised registration system for cats (and ideally all pets, including dogs) for a far more effective and cost-effective option for managing registrations. Learnings from the PetsWA initiative should be used to adequately resource and develop a robust and reliable registration system.
- A centralised registration system could also be used to track the management history of each cat, including its compliance and enforcement history and breeding registration status. Design it to allow direct data sharing with enforcement, shelters and the microchip database.
- A centralised (government-run or government-contracted) registry for microchipping will provide greater resilience and could be combined with centralised registration.
- Require all microchip implanters to lodge data with a single WA (or a nationally interoperable) database.
- Legislate a duty on owners to update contact details within a fixed period (e.g., 14 days) of a change of address or ownership.
- Registration compliance is likely to increase when permanent containment is implemented.
- Registration, microchipping, and containment could be incentivised at the same time by means-tested funding support (or short-term reduced fee campaigns paired with education).
- Enforce compliance for registration and microchipping with penalties. However, have a six-month amnesty and education period (excluding repeat offenders) to reduce risk of pet abandonment.

Outcomes if these suggested changes are enacted:

Higher sustained registration rates over a cat's life. All cats will be registered by four months of age, with identification (microchips and tags). A centralised registration system for cats (and ideally all companion animals) will ensure that roaming pets are promptly and efficiently returned to their owners and that the state will have a single platform for managing registrations (and ideally microchipping records too). Reduced compliance-chasing workload for local government rangers. Fewer cats entering shelters as 'unclaimed', lowering management costs for local governments.

QUESTION 3 - Sterilisation

Under the Cat Act, cats must be sterilised by six months of age unless exempt.

Qu 3. Should the sterilisation requirements change? If yes, what changes would you suggest and why?

RESPONSE

Yes, we believe that sterilisation requirements should change.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Cats can reach sexual maturity and become pregnant at between three to four months old, well before the current legal deadline of six months for sterilisation. Despite an owner's best intentions, unwanted pregnancies can occur in kittens.
- RSPCA Australia and the Australian Veterinary Association now recommend sterilisation before puberty and no later than four months of age as safe and effective
- Breeding-approval exemptions can be misused as a workaround to keep cats intact without genuine breeding intent.
- A significant contributor to the overpopulation of cats is unwanted pregnancies taking place before six months of age.
- Unwanted cats are commonly given up for adoption, abandoned, or passed on to shelters that already have significant numbers of cats to deal with already.
- There is now robust scientific evidence to show that sterilising at an early age has no significant impacts on cat welfare.
- WA currently has limited systematic data on statewide sterilising rates. Without these data, it is hard to evaluate policy or target interventions.
- Where a kitten is too young to sterilise before sale, the current voucher-based approach relies on buyer follow-through. There is no strong compliance mechanism to confirm the voucher is actually redeemed and the kitten sterilised.

Changes we recommend:

- Ensure that all cats are required to be sterilised no later than four months of age.
- Exemption permits for this requirement should be offered only to approved, active breeders.

- Tighten exemption criteria to require proof of active, approved breeding activity.
- Education campaigns should emphasise that between three and four months of age is the ideal time for sterilisation.
- Require sterilisation status to be recorded and updated in a consolidated microchip/registration database. Use the data to identify low-compliance regions for targeted follow-up.
- Strengthen the voucher scheme with a follow-up/verification obligation. Link voucher redemption to an update of the microchip record, with penalties for non-redemption past a deadline.

Outcomes if these suggested changes are enacted:

All cats will be sterilised by four months of age, unless their owner has secured an exemption permit. Compliance with sterilisation requirements will increase as well as awareness of where it can be improved. Higher actual sterilisation completion rates rather than just voucher issuance. The frequency of unplanned pregnancies will drop considerably, reducing the number of cats going into already busy shelters or being abandoned.

QUESTION 4 – Breeding

Under the Cat Act, any person who wishes to breed cats must apply for and obtain approval to breed. Only approved cat breeders are permitted to breed cats.

Qu 4. Should any aspects of the breeding approval requirements under the Cat Act change? If yes, what changes would you suggest and why?

RESPONSE

Yes, we believe that some aspects of the breeding approval requirements under the Cat Act should change.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- The suitability of breeding facilities is checked on approval but needs to be regularly inspected to ensure compliance with responsible cat ownership and best practice welfare requirements.
- The 2019 review specifically found a gap in education on microchipping obligations at the point of transfer. Breeders and rescues are a particularly important channel for reaching new owners.
- The prevention of illegal and inappropriate breeding needs to be monitored and enforced.
- Housing, health and heritable-disease standards are not consistently checked after initial approval.
- Breeding approvals exist in WA, but there is no easily checkable public register linking an advertised cat back to its approved breeder. This makes it hard for buyers or enforcement officers to verify legitimacy.

Changes we recommend:

- Adapt existing inspection measures for granting breeding approvals to ongoing inspections and approvals of breeding facilities.
- Include a transfer-obligation campaign as part of broader responsible pet cat ownership education programs.
- A move to permanent containment for cats will help to address the problem of illegal and inappropriate breeding.
- Adopt a breeder ID scheme modelled on Victoria's Pet Exchange Register. Require every approved breeder or authorised seller to display a unique number, alongside the microchip number, in every advertisement.
- Fund periodic inspections of breeding facilities tied to an enforceable code of practice (as used in Victoria). Allow approval to be suspended for demonstrated non-compliance.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

All cats involved in breeding are housed in suitable facilities with their welfare needs addressed. Unapproved/backyard breeding becomes far easier to identify and act on. Improved welfare standards among approved breeders. All breeders understand their microchipping obligations.

QUESTION 5 – Enforcement and compliance

Qu 5. Do you have any suggestions to improve cat owners' compliance and local governments' enforcement of the Cat Act? If so, what are they?

RESPONSE

Yes, we have suggestions to improve compliance and enforcement.

Our suggestions relate to: prevention of roaming, a clearer definition of cat categories, and consistency in laws across the State. Each of these are addressed in turn below.

Prevention of roaming

Context:

The already announced Cat Act Amendment (Local Laws) Bill has been tabled in parliament. This bill is intended to enable local governments to introduce cat containment local laws via the Cat Act (2011). There is no certainty that this bill will be introduced, therefore it is important that this review also includes feedback on cat containment. It is likely that further improvements to cat containment could be achieved by improvements to the Cat Act.

Definitions:

- “Preventing cats from roaming” is often referred to as “permanent containment”, “24/7 containment” or “keeping your cat under effective control at all times”. The goal of permanent containment is to simply prevent a cat from free roaming at all times.
- Solutions to achieve this include, and you can certainly implement more than one:

- Keeping your cat inside your home, including modifying a window with an exit box or window box to permit safe outdoor time.
- Keeping your cat confined to your back yard via modifying your fences (fence-topper netting or rollers) and closing off escape routes.
- Keeping your cat in an outdoor 'catio' (much like a bird aviary), that can be stand-alone or linked to your home to allow your cat to come in and out as it pleases.
- Transporting your cat (e.g., to the vet or a groomer) in a cat box, backpack or stroller.
- Taking your cat for a walk on a harness and leash.
- Discussion of mandatory permanent containment should always emphasise that the mental and physical needs of the cat should be considered and addressed with all containment options.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Under a One Welfare approach, which treats animal welfare, human wellbeing and environmental outcomes as linked, not competing goals, mandatory permanent containment is strongly supported by a wealth of robust scientific evidence.
- The option for local governments to introduce local laws for cat containment currently exists in all parts of Australia except WA and NSW. Widespread adoption of containment laws has happened, particularly in Queensland and Victoria.
- Roaming cats live shorter lives, are at greater risk of death from vehicle strike, animal attack and abuse, and are at greater risk of catching diseases. Roaming cats travel up to 5 km a night. Two thirds of cat owners have lost a cat to a roaming-related death – 200 pet cats die in roaming related incidents each week in Greater Perth. Cats do not have an essential need to roam across your neighbourhood; they are better off safe and happy at home all the time.
- Pet cats kill more than 1 million animals in Australia every single day, most are native animals. Pet cats kill up to 50 times more animals on an area basis compared to feral cats in the bush. They will hunt regardless of whether they have been fed and only bring home 15% of their prey, meaning owners never see most of the animals they kill. Night curfews are not effective, they just change what the cat kills: birds and reptiles by day, mammals and frogs by night. In the Margaret River region, we have observational data that cat prints have been seen near the nests of hooded plovers, an endangered bird species that nests on the coast line in the southwest.
- Roaming pet cats are at greater risk of catching toxoplasmosis, a disease that can cause illness, miscarriages and birth defects in people, as well as increasing the risk of mental illness. Treating cat related diseases in humans costs \$6.1 billion each year in Australia.
- Pet cats spread diseases that cause harm to wildlife, livestock, and people, including some diseases that are cat-dependent, meaning that they would not exist in Australia if cats were absent.
- Roaming cats cause social disturbance, fighting, spraying and toileting in sandpits.
- Permanent containment done in an appropriate way (i.e., ensuring that a cat's physical and mental needs are met) allows expression of natural behaviours, promotes good health and welfare, and minimises stress, and is supported by a diverse group of

stakeholders, including environmental groups (such as ours), the Australian Veterinary Association and cat welfare organisations (e.g., Cat Haven WA).

- At least 78% of local governments in Western Australia will seek to implement permanent containment for cats as soon as it is possible.
- ‘Grandfathering’ or ‘transitional’ approaches to introducing permanent containment do not work. The ACT is already considering winding back their grandfathering approach to containment. Such methods ignore the underlying strong rationale for containment and make enforcement of any containment impossible. Rather, a six-month amnesty and education period (excluding repeat offenders) is a more effective way to commence permanent containment.

Changes we recommend:

- The Cat Act Amendment Bill is a good start for cat containment in WA, should it be implemented. However, the Cat Act review should recommend implementing mandatory permanent containment at the state level, as it is now for dogs and other companion animals, delivering consistency across all local governments.
- The WAFCWG is also supportive of combining the Cat Act with Acts covering other animals (e.g., the Dog Act) in a more consistent approach to containment of all companion animals.
- A move to permanent containment should be done with a significant communication campaign to educate the community, focusing on the importance of language barriers and cultural differences where appropriate.
- We oppose any ‘grandfathering’ or ‘transitional’ approaches to the requirement for permanent containment. These methods ignore the underlying strong rationale for containment and make enforcement of any containment impossible. Rather, six months’ notice should be provided ahead of when the requirement for containment will start.
- We recommend an educational approach to non-compliance in the first six months for first time offenders, after which standard penalties should begin. However, owners who demonstrate repeat non-compliance should be met with penalties rather than ongoing education. Infringement penalties should increase in value for each repeat offence.
- Powers of seizure and cancelling registrations should apply for ongoing failure to comply.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

All pet cats are safe and happy at home, while their impacts on wildlife and society are avoided. Consistent laws are implemented across the state, allowing for better coordination of education and enforcement to ensure enduring social change.

Clearer definitions for cats

Context:

The domestic cat (*Felis catus*) can be grouped into categories based on where and how they live. However, these categories are arbitrary, and individual cats may move from one category to another. In Western Australia, cats are currently assigned from a management perspective to one of three categories: domestic, stray and feral:

- Domestic (or pet / owned) cats live with and are dependent on humans for food and habitation; they are socially important.
- Stray cats are often found roaming in and around urban areas, rural properties, industrial areas, and tips. They depend on resources provided by humans, and very few are registered. Most are not sterilised or vaccinated, and some may have been a pet cat at some stage.
- Feral cats live as wild animals in self-sustaining populations in natural habitats of all types, detached from humans and survive exclusively by hunting and scavenging.

Challenges & Opportunities:

- A lack of consistent and relevant terminology for cats across WA's various policy and legislation relating to cats creates inconsistencies and challenges with implementing management strategies and enforcement.
- The nation is moving rapidly towards more responsible management for all cats. A key component of this change is to provide a framework that prioritises animal welfare considerations for all impacted animals.
- Trap-neuter-release (TNR) as applied to stray cat populations is not a valid form of cat management in Australia due to reasons including poor welfare for stray cats, disease and predation impacts on wildlife, societal nuisance and risks to human physical and mental health.
- A tertiary definition set (i.e., domestic/stray/feral) as applied currently in WA does not support best practice management from an animal welfare perspective, as informed by research.
 - Responsible pet cat ownership has a best practice goal of permanent containment combined with appropriate entertainment to address mental and physical needs.
 - Responsible feral cat management requires land managers to implement methods that dispatch cats humanely and effectively.
 - There is no such thing as responsible or humane "stray cat management" that maintains stray cat colonies. Stray cats suffer from myriad health issues, are at great risk of injury or death from cars and other animals, and live short, low-quality lives.

Changes we recommend:

- A binary approach to cat definitions simplifies best practice management by focusing on the shared goals (outcomes) for each category:
 - Owned cats: the goal for owned cats is to have them permanently contained while appropriately entertained;
 - Unowned cats: the goal for unowned cats is to have them either become owned cats (where possible) or humanely euthanised (where ownership is not possible or unrealistic).
- Using the owned/unowned option is clearer, less emotive terminology than other options, including 'domestic' (confused with the species common name), 'feral' (there are valid concerns against demonising feral cats and unowned is a less judgmental term), and 'pet' (owned cats cover the full variety of human-cat relationships that extend beyond just pets, including breeding animals and companion animals etc).

- A binary approach makes the move towards pet cat containment far clearer and effective to enforce. Either a cat is owned and it should be at home with its owner(s), or it is unowned and it should be rehomed if at all possible, or humanely euthanised otherwise.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

A binary definition approach for cats underpins a clear and effective three-tiered engagement strategy: (a) appropriate management via responsible ownership of owned cats (early age sterilisation, registering, permanent containment etc); (b) transition of as many unowned cats as possible to the owned/pet category through socialising and adoptions; and (c) removal via humane euthanasia of unowned cats that are clearly identifiable because they are not registered, microchipped or contained (i.e., the onus is on the cat owner, not cat management officers to identify owned cats).

Consistency in laws across the state

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Inconsistency between different local governments across the state in core issues relating to responsible pet cat ownership is unhelpful and confusing.
- A significant contributor to low compliance with cat laws in Western Australia currently is inconsistency and confusion.
- Inconsistent offence categories and penalty levels between local governments create confusion for owners and uneven deterrence.
- Punitive-first enforcement, without a preceding education step, risks driving abandonment of pet cats to avoid fines. A six-month amnesty period (excluding repeat offenders) with an education focus is likely to be more effective.
- WA currently lacks consistent statewide data to evaluate whether enforcement approaches are working. Past evaluations of containment elsewhere have relied on narrow metrics (complaints/impoundments alone), which understate its welfare and conservation benefits.

Changes we recommend:

- The core aspects of responsible pet cat ownership – early age sterilisation, microchipping and registration, and mandatory permanent containment – need to be consistent across WA, rather than varying according to local government areas.
- Legislate a standard first-response pathway of information and warning notices before infringement, for first-time non-welfare offences. Reserve fines for repeat non-compliance or until after the amnesty period has finished. Increase the scale of fines for each repeat offence.
- The number of cats a household can own without formal approval should also be standardised across WA to minimise confusion and to avoid problems when the cat and/or owner is relocating (see further details below).
- A model cat local law template needs to be developed and made available to all local governments, noting that this is intended to be done as a response to the passing of the Cat Act Amendment (Local Laws) Bill.

- Require local governments to report a standard set of cat management metrics annually to LGIRS for publication. Include cat welfare and wildlife-impact indicators alongside compliance metrics, not just complaint counts.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

Laws for responsible cat ownership are consistent across the state, reducing confusion and increasing compliance. An evidence base for the next statutory review that reflects the full One Welfare picture.

QUESTION 6 - Additional suggestions

Qu 6. Are there other changes that would improve the Cat Act or its administration?

RESPONSE

Yes, we have other changes to suggest that would improve the Cat Act and its administration.

In summary, these changes are: a consistent limit on the number of cats that may be owned, centralised management facilities, consolidation of animal laws, education on responsible pet cat ownership, and ensure that Trap-Neuter-Release is illegal and subject to penalties for non-compliance.

A consistent limit on the number of cats

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Inconsistency between different local governments across the state on cat ownership limits is unhelpful and confusing.
- The higher the number of pet cats owned, the poorer the welfare and health of these pet cats (this point does not relate to professional breeders).
- Reducing excessive cat numbers per owner, particularly those without adequate facilities, will increase human health, reduce financial pressure, and improve welfare outcomes for pet cats.

Changes we recommend:

- Cat ownership standard limits should be consistent across Western Australia.
- A consistent statewide cat ownership standard limit of three cats (over the age of three months) per household should be introduced.
- If owners really want more than three cats and have the facilities to do this responsibly (with appropriate provision of enrichment and without negative impacts to their neighbourhood), they should be able to apply for a permit to do so.
- Permits for households wanting more than three cats should be efficiently issued but follow a process that ensures initial and follow-up checks to ensure appropriate welfare standards are in place.
- We recommend a maximum limit of six cats per household under permits, which mirrors limits for dogs.
- We recommend no changes to the existing process required for those wanting to breed cats.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

Laws for responsible cat ownership are consistent across the state, reducing confusion and increasing compliance.

Centralised management facilities

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Cat management (i.e., shelter) facilities take considerable resources to setup and run. Intakes also vary across the year, and this variation is exacerbated in smaller intake areas.
- Perth has a network of large, well-established cat management facilities (e.g., Cat Haven WA) that could be adequately resourced to effectively manage the state's urban cat population.
- Cost-sharing via existing facilities is a more effective use of rate payer funds to ensure all councils have adequate access to management facilities.
- Improved education and more responsible pet cat ownership will reduce the demand for cat management intake volumes.

Changes we recommend:

- Rather than build new cat management facilities, local governments should be encouraged to engage with existing facilities for their cat shelter needs.
- The state government should fund upgrades to ensure there is a network of management facilities across the state that are fit for purpose and able to adequately deal with the volume of incoming cats. We are particularly concerned to ensure that regional cat management facilities are available, since these areas have greater concerns around cat management given the abundance of local wildlife, and yet are often not provided for, leaving concerned residents with unwanted cats with only untenable options such as costly trips to Perth, cat release or unwarranted euthanasia.
- Both the state government and local governments (the latter via appropriate use-based cost sharing agreements) should share the cost of adequately supporting and resourcing cat management facilities.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

Management facilities for cats in Western Australia are adequately resourced, sufficient in size to deal with existing animal loads, and appropriately funded via a shared approach between the state and local governments.

Consolidation of animal laws

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Many of the improvements that could be made to the Cat Act also apply to relevant policy and legislation for other companion animals.
- The core requirements of responsible pet ownership are very similar across all companion animals.

- A combined “companion animals” act would reduce the administrative burden at both state and local government levels. It would also improve consistency for all animals and simplify enforcement for local governments.

Changes we recommend:

- Investigate combining the Cat Act with other relevant legislation and policy to produce a Companion Animals Act that includes cats.
- Investigate similar provisions enabled for dogs under the Dog Amendment (Stop Puppy Farming) Act 2021 to prevent kitten farming and ensure traceable breeding approvals for cats.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

Laws for responsible pet ownership are consistent across the state, reducing administrative burden and simplifying enforcement.

Education on responsible pet cat ownership

Challenges & Opportunities:

- Awareness of best practice for responsible pet cat ownership varies considerably across Western Australia, including with different aspects of responsible ownership.
- While some households are doing the right thing, others need support to understand how to give their cats the best life possible. Cultural backgrounds, language barriers, and socioeconomic status also influence how aware people are of the right thing to do.
- Standard cat management models suited to urban areas are often inappropriate or ineffective in remote Aboriginal communities.
- There is a real opportunity to bring the community up to speed on multiple issues at once.
- Shared communications on the benefits of the four core principles of responsible pet cat ownership – early age sterilisation, microchipping and registration, and mandatory permanent containment – can be done together.

Changes we recommend:

- The state should invest in ongoing public education campaigns to educate the public about responsible pet cat ownership.
- These campaigns should be developed in collaboration with leading stakeholders, including the WA Feral Cat Working Group.
- Support community-led, non-punitive sterilisation and containment-support programs for remote Aboriginal communities (e.g., see those developed by AMRRIC). Provide this as an explicit alternative compliance pathway in relevant areas while education campaigns can be conducted, rather than an urban-focused model.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

A more educated public will ensure better outcomes from responsible pet cat ownership, bringing benefits to the cats themselves, cat owners, the general public, wildlife and agricultural animals. Improved community trust and cooperation with animal management programs in remote Aboriginal communities.

Ensure Trap-Neuter-Release (or Trap-Neuter-Return; TNR) is maintained as an illegal activity with penalties enforced for infringements

Challenges & Opportunities:

- There is a comprehensive evidence-based case that supports with absolute clarity the case as to why TNR programs have no place in the management of cats anywhere in Australia. This position takes a 'one welfare' management approach, considering not only the cat, but the welfare of all other stakeholders (wildlife, people) in the process.
- TNR is not endorsed for Australian settings by any major cat welfare organisation, including the Australian Veterinary Association and RSPCA Australia. Note that the pros and cons of TNR in overseas countries is very different with different assumptions and local context to consider.
- A core part of TNR is the release of unowned cats back to the wild after sterilisation, which is currently illegal in WA. Those released cats will continue to lead compromised lives full of disease and suffering and will still kill and maim wildlife.
- Provision of inconsistent food and sometimes health related services to stray cats in no way avoids the considerable welfare implications that come from scavenging, diseases, and both physical and mental threats experienced while roaming.
- Stray cats live sad, short, and harsh lives with poor welfare outcomes. If people are going to go to the trouble of trapping and sterilising a cat, they should do the right thing and then give it a proper home with containment and a caring owner to provide responsible care.

Changes we recommend:

- The Cat Act should be modified to make it explicit that any management program (such as TNR) that releases a captured cat into the wild is illegal.
- Infringement penalties for releasing captured cats into the wild should be rigorously enforced and increase in value for each repeat offence.
- Part of the education program for responsible cat ownership should emphasise the problems associated with TNR programs to avoid misrepresentation clouding their understanding.

Outcomes if these changes are enacted:

Only appropriate management solutions for cat management are deployed in Western Australia, ensuring a 'one welfare' approach to responsible pet cat ownership.

QUESTION 7 – Learning from other jurisdictions

Qu 7. Are there initiatives in other jurisdictions that have been successful in cat management that could be considered in WA?

RESPONSE

Yes, we suggest that initiatives from Victoria and from The City of Bendigo are useful to consider in WA.

Victoria's Pet Exchange Register and breeder "source number" scheme

Context:

- Introduced under the Domestic Animals Amendment (Puppy Farms and Pet Shops) Act 2017.
- Requires every advertisement for sale or giveaway of a cat (or dog) to display a microchip number and a source number traceable to the seller.

Relevance to WA:

- Directly transferable model addressing the traceability gap (see answers to Questions 2, 4).
- Already operating at scale, so implementation lessons are available.

The City of Greater Bendigo's implementation of mandatory permanent containment

Context:

The City of Greater Bendigo have implemented mandatory permanent containment for pet cats. The Act came into effect on 01 Jul 2024, with a 12-month period for education and adjustments accompanied by lenient compliance and enforcement processes. The City is collecting data on roaming cat collections, incoming cats to their management shelters (these are centrally managed) and cat registrations.

The City were one of three east-coast local governments who presented at a workshop in 2025 organised by the WAFCWG and WALGA for WA local governments to attend. Ideas were shared on what had worked, what had not worked, and what they would do to improve the implementation of mandatory permanent containment.

Relevance to WA:

- Contrary to myths about possible risks of implementing permanent containment for cats, the City's early data are showing (a) a decrease in cats coming into the shelter (i.e., people are not surrendering cats more than before), and (b) a decrease in roaming cat collections (i.e., people are being more compliant with the changed rules).
- The City has run an evidence-based education campaign and is seeing the benefits through improved compliance and reduced roaming without any increase in abandonments.