

From: [REDACTED]
To: [Cat and Dog Review](#)
Subject: Feedback on Cat Laws
Date: Sunday, 4 August 2019 8:35:41 PM

To whom it may concern,

I would like to give feedback on the review of the Cat Act 2011. I have no input to the part of the review as it relates to dogs.

I am totally in support of the stated aims of the Cat Act which are:

- encourage responsible pet ownership
- safely return lost animals to their homes
- keep the community and other animals safe
- reduce the number of animals admitted to pounds and shelters
- reduce the proportion of animals that are euthanised

However, my observations are that the aims are not currently being achieved and that too much focus is being placed on easy targets (such as registered breeders) and not enough education and resources placed on the root causes for excessive cat numbers.

I am not a cat breeder, but in the past have been actively involved on the Council of a registering cat body that is recognised under the Act.

Since the Act was introduced, I am aware of many registered breeders of pedigree cats being hounded by their local Councils. The majority of these people breed as a hobby and for the love of their chosen breed of cat. The fees for breeding cats are high (\$100 per cat per year) and the approach of Councils seem to be mainly antagonistic and punitive towards breeders and multiple cat owners, to the extent that some are unwilling to engage, effectively forcing them to become uncontrolled backyard breeders. They bounce between rangers and the planning departments and are forced to abide by strange rules that fail to take into account that their cats are pets who live in their houses with them – not breeding stock that are in purpose built pens in the back yard. These are the same people who have been microchipping, desexing and educating their kitten buyers into being responsible cat owners. Meanwhile, on Facebook and other places, there are reports of cats being dumped or being allowed to breed because the a large section of the population remains uneducated about their responsibilities under the Act.

The Cat Act legislates items such as mandatory microchipping, desexing and registration of cats, but I see very little in the Act that encourages responsible pet ownerships. Some local Governments are pro-active about providing information regarding the keeping of cats, but beyond that, there appears to be very little that encourages responsible pet ownership. Furthermore, current laws which treat cats as possessions rather than living creatures do little to ensure that cats are being looked after.

- There is little support for renters who have cats,
- There appears to be no penalty for people who abandon their cats,
- There is little in the way of encouragement for people who keep their cats indoors or contained to their property,

- Cat Registering Bodies and Rescue organisations actively encourage their members/supporters to desex, microchip and keep their cats confined, and yet they are often the targets of Local Government because they are easy to locate.
- Pedigree breeders are demonized as being the root of all issues, despite the fact that most cats that end up in cat rescue are domestic cats.
- Councils can be inflexible (for example – I heard about someone who had 2 indoor cats in a Council that restricted cat numbers to 2. Their elderly mother moved into their granny flat and brought her cat. The Council told them they would need to get rid of one of the cats).
- There is inconsistency in approach between Councils and most Councils are not resourced to actively police the Act and so respond to complaints and easy targets.
- Inconsistencies in local laws means that people who move between Councils may find themselves with more cats than they were previously allowed, which contributes to the number of cats being dumped.
- A change in personnel at a Council may result in a previously conciliatory approach suddenly becoming antagonistic, causing a great deal of stress to the cat owner.

A local government circular that were issued after the Cat Act was released 31-2013 allowed for 3 times the local limit for cat organisations prescribed under the Cat Act. This then appeared in the Cat (Uniform Local Provisions) Regulations 2013 (Clause 7). Many of the Councils across the metropolitan area have a limit of 2 or 3, meaning that breeders/show enthusiasts may have 6 – 9 cats. For breeders, this is often not enough to maintain a healthy gene pool, particularly for a breed that is less common in WA. Councils are able to be flexible with their own local laws, but within the showing and breeding communities, there are multiple examples of Councils who are not willing to discuss options to allow the breeder or owner to retain additional cats, even when they have a safe and healthy environment to care for them.

Breeders often take on the responsibility of the cats that they have bred for life, however when an owner has a change in circumstance and the breeder takes the cat back, they are then faced with the dilemma as to what to do. If they keep the cat for a while to allow it to settle before trying to rehome it, or simply can't re-home they may find themselves in breach of the rules even if they have the space and capacity to care for the cat. The same applies for retired breeding cats or cats that have not been able to be rehomed for some reason. If they are not able to temporarily or on a long term basis assist – then what is the option? Euthanise the cat or send it to a rescue group? Seems to be in contradiction to the stated aims of the Act, but that is in fact what the consequence will be.

Safely return lost animals to their homes

Microchipping has been adopted for many years now by registering cat bodies and rescue groups and there are many stories of cats being reunited with their owners. I totally support this approach, however, have, in the past heard of situations where Rangers and Rubbish do not carry a microchip reader with them so that cats that have hit by cars and unlikely to be identified by means of their microchip. (This may have changed as I have not heard recently whether this is still a concern).

Keep the community and other animals safe

Cats present little threat to humans. Where there is a threat to wildlife, cats should be kept inside or confined to their properties. The confinement or curfew of cats is dealt with on a local

level. However, Cat Registering Bodies and Rescue organisations actively encourage their members/supporters keep their cats confined. Is there any data available as to the number of people who have cats contained to their yards due to cat enclosures, netting or products such as Oscillicat. Understanding the cat-owning community would help in making an informed decision as to how to manage the cats. Feral populations are a separate issue and are not usually made up of pedigree cats but rescue groups who are supporting feral populations with strategies such as trap, neuter and release should be supported.

Reduce the number of animals admitted to pounds and shelters

If you go onto any pet group on facebook you will find multiple posts from people who either are trying to re-home their cats because their rental agreements do not allow for pets, they are moving to residential care and are not able to take their cats, or are concerned neighbours reporting that people who have moved out have left their cats behind to fend for themselves. REIWA (Real Estate Institute of WA) do have a pet bond but based on posts on facebook from people not being allowed to take their pets, it is either not widely used or not widely known. A quick search on their website produces very little information about the pet bond and anecdotally I am aware of people who own rental properties who have been advised by their property managers to not allow pets as it is easier. Why does there seem to be so little attention to addressing these issues?

Reduce the proportion of animals that are euthanised

The best way to do this seems to be to reduce the number of animals admitted to pounds and shelters as per the point above. However, how much focus is placed on why these cats are being dumped? Cat Haven has stated in the past that pedigree cats form a very small proportion of the cats that end up in their shelter and yet there seems to be a concerted effort to reduce the number of pedigree breeders and little attempt to educate and help people who do have cats. Why is there not a bigger focus on:

- Why so many people feel that they have to get rid of their cats when they move into a rental property,
- Why people are not penalized for abandoning their cats when they move house,
- Why there are so few options for elderly people to care for their beloved pets when they need to move into residential care.

In summary I support the stated aims of the Act, however, the fact that there is so much of the Act left to be dealt with in local laws that it results in a confusing and inconsistent response and does not effectively deal with the core issues. Instead, it makes life difficult for people who are trying to make a difference such as registered breeders or pedigree cats and their supporting organisations. Meanwhile Cat Rescues and Shelters are faced with heartbreaking choices as they are flooded with unwanted cats every year.

Thankyou for the opportunity to respond.

Yours sincerely,

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