

EUROBODALLA SHIRE COUNCIL

PUBLIC FORUM

All members of the community who have registered have been advised that they have a **maximum of five minutes** to put their case.

Ordinary Meeting of Council on 10 April 2018

Name	Subject/Comments
Public Forum – 10.00am	
Trish Hellier	4. Confirmation of Minutes – contents in minutes
Steve Coleman	NOM18/004 Cat curfew
Ms Shane O’Keefe	NOM18/004 Cat curfew

RSPCA NSW is pleased to support Deputy Mayor Anthony Mayne's motion to lobby the NSW State Government to introduce cat curfew/s.

1. The RSPCA encourages the containment of cats in an enclosed area, that is, within the owner's property boundaries.
2. There are a number of reasons for this:
 - i. The containment of cats help to protect cats from cat fights and associated injuries and diseases such as bite wound abscesses and Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV).
 - ii. Containment of cats can also protect cats from injury and fatality associated with wandering and being hit by a car, attacks by dogs and cruelty from humans. Cats may also become lost accidentally whilst wandering and trying to compete for territory amongst other wandering cats.
 - iii. Containment of cats increases the opportunity for interaction between owners and their pet cats and reduces the potential impact of hunting by cats and disturbance caused to neighbours.
3. Cat containment and cat curfews should always be considered in the local context, particularly for this region, given there are nine national parks fully or partly within this one shire.
4. The potential impact of owned domestic cats on wildlife populations should be assessed according to the specific area in which they live. This is because impacts on wildlife populations may vary depending on the nature of the area in which the cats are located. Again, this is a critical consideration given the close proximity to national parks in this local context.

For example, owned cats living in areas adjoining wildlife reserves, national parks and new residential developments adjoining remnants of native vegetation may be more likely to have an impact on wildlife populations compared to cats living in highly urbanised settings.
5. Another example, In the Australian Capital Territory, a cat containment area can be declared in a suburb, or area of a suburb, if there is a serious nature conservation threat as a result of cat activities.
6. Where cats are contained, steps must be taken to ensure that adequate exercise and environmental enrichment products are provided to ensure both the physical and psychological needs of cats are met and to prevent the development of behavioural problems. There are more and more products now available on the market that can adequately equip responsible cat owners with the means to ensure that their cats have a quality of life that can and will meet the needs of their companion cat. These include discreet cat mesh enclosures and rolling fence barrels that prevent cats from being able to scale fences.
8. The RSPCA also supports the use of a leash and harness to walk cats outside the owner's property under direct supervision to provide cats with supervised time off their property. Sounds odd, but it works.

9. Where cat containment or cat curfews are introduced, a phase-in period should be implemented to provide cats with an adjustment period and to provide owners with time to modify their properties as required.

An amendment to the NSW Companion Animals Act 1998, either to provide for a cat curfew, or give local councils the discretion to introduce a curfew, would help in encouraging responsible pet ownership.

Managing cats and their impacts is a major challenge in Australia. No one has the ultimate solution to deal with the various categories of cats. At least we can deal with the owned cat population and influence their outcomes, by way of cat curfews.

The NSW Government would do well to acknowledge that dog owners are discriminated against in NSW under the Companion Animals Act in terms of requirements and obligations. That is, in addition to cat curfews, consideration needs to be given to the Companion Animals Act which balances out the requirements of dog owners with that of cat owners.

Again, RSPCA NSW is in full support of this motion given the win/win nature of it.

That is, cat owners, communities, cats and the native wildlife, all win!

My name is Shane O'Keefe. I am Vice Chair of Mid South Coast WIRES. My role is the rescue and initial care of native wildlife.

I am here to request that Council lobbies the NSW Parliament to review The Companion Animal Act 1998 to amend the Act to include a domestic cat curfew between dusk and dawn statewide and/or the necessary laws for Councils in NSW to implement. The present Act is 20 years old and with reference to the many studies conducted on cat behaviour and their affect on our native wildlife, the Act is clearly outdated.

The Eurobodalla Council is to be commended for the Catbib program. By implementing this innovative program the Council has acknowledged that, to quote, 'roaming domestic cats are a significant conservation issue in Eurobodalla' and 'the scientific evidence is overwhelming that we need to be proactive and do something to protect wildlife from domestic cat predation.' As it is voluntary for cat owners to put these bibs on their cats when outside the success rate for protecting our wildlife has not been significant. Of the many wandering cats I have seen in recent months only one was wearing a catbib.

Cat curfews have been successfully implemented in Victoria and the ACT. Some suburbs in Canberra are designated as cat free suburbs. WA has strict laws making microchipping and desexing compulsory and place limits on cat ownership numbers. Councils in Victoria have the legislated right to implement a cat curfew. The Yarra Range Council has a 24 hour cat curfew requiring residents to keep cats within their property at all times. It is time NSW Councils are provided with similar powers.

The health benefits of having a pet are widely documented. For many people their pet cat is an important family member, but it is in their nature to stalk and hunt. When allowed to roam, particularly at night, our wildlife falls victim to this natural instinct. As Councillors will note in the WIRES' information brochure submitted for your reference, 'if allowed to roam freely outside, particularly after dark, one domestic cat kills between

five to thirty mammals a night.' 'This has a devastating impact on our wildlife.' In my role as a WIRES member I have experienced first hand the injuries suffered by our defenceless wildlife because of domestic cat attacks. Most of these creatures had to be euthanased.

The Australian Cat Tracker study by Dr Phillip Roetman showed that 90% of pet cats travelled significantly longer distances at night than in the day. His study also showed that 70% of cat owners and non owners supported keeping cats indoors or in an enclosure at night.

The Cat Protection Society states ' Every cat deserves a loving and responsible home and Australia's unique wildlife deserves protection. With just a little thought and planning we can have both.'

In defence of our unique wildlife and also the quality of life every pet deserves I employ the Eurobodalla Councillors to support the motion to advocate the NSW government to introduce a cat curfew and/or stricter requirements for cat containment.