



Memo to: Councillor Hill

Copy to: Mayor Watton, all Councillors, General Manager, Directors, Senior Leadership Group, and Communications & Engagement Team

From: Warren Murphy, Acting Director Planning and Environment

Subject: Pelaw Main Roaming Cats

Date: 20 January 2026

Reference: CRM 2026/914 - DOC2026/010636

Dear Councillor Hill,

I refer to your enquiry regarding feral cat population in Pelaw Main.

As per the below email and another correspondence forwarded to council from the Federal Member's office - is it possible to identify if the concerns being raised here and a continuation of issues previously put to council from residents of Pelaw Main regarding cat issues?

If this is a continuation of issues from the same group of cats roaming this area, what is the appropriate action to be taken to have a declaration of 'nuisance animal' made to allow further intervention from council?

Council officers have investigated the subject matter and advise as follows:

- It is unclear if this is a continuation of issues from the same group of cats.
- The management of cats deemed to be feral is the responsibility of the NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water and as such, councils are not authorised to manage feral animals.

Additional information can be found using the following link:

<https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/topics/animals-and-plants/pest-animals-and-weeds/pest-animals/feral-cats>

- The circumstances in which cats are prohibited under the *Companion Animals Act*, which may allow intervention by Council Rangers are:

- **Food Preparation or Consumption Areas**

Defined as any public place within 10 metres of any apparatus for preparing or consuming food. Cats in public thoroughfares such as roads and footpaths are not considered to be in a prohibited area.

o **Wildlife Protection Areas**

Wildlife protection areas are defined as any public place or any part of a public place set apart by the local authority for the protection of wildlife and in which the local authority ordered that cats are prohibited for the purposes of the protection of wildlife and in which, or near the boundaries of which, there are conspicuously exhibited by the local authority at reasonable intervals notices to the effect that cats are prohibited in or on that public place.

These must be formally declared by a council. Cessnock City Council does not currently have any declared Wildlife Protection Areas.

- There is no offence for a cat roaming or straying, and they are not legally required to be confined to their property (unlike dogs). Consequently, the general wandering of cats does not create a lawful basis for intervention.
- Council is one of thirty Councils currently involved in phase two of the RSPCA's [Keeping Cats Safe at Home project](#). This proactive and collaborative project is designed to:
 - o Reduce cat overpopulation through targeted free cat desexing and microchipping;
 - o Protect native wildlife from predation by roaming cats;
 - o Support communities and councils by reducing nuisance complaints and pound intake;
 - o Promote responsible pet ownership through community engagement and education.

Please note a copy of this memo will be uploaded to Council's website.