

Frequently asked questions

Proposed amendments to the Dog and Cat Management Act to improve cat management



What is the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995?

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* outlines the legal responsibilities of dog and cat owners and includes powers for local government and stakeholders with a role in dog and cat management.

Who is responsible for the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995?

Ministerial responsibility for the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* is the Minister for Climate, Environment and Water.

Why are you proposing these cat changes?

Current sections of the Act designed to manage cats aren't working because they lack clarity. This creates operational barriers for local government authorities in returning lost cats to owners and managing nuisance cat complaints, as well as barriers for land managers who are responsible for feral cat control.

The proposed amendments aim to improve the way in which both owned and feral cats can be managed by authorities.

What are the changes being proposed?

The themes of the changes are:

- Revising and updating local council powers and functions for seizing and detaining cats, so they can implement their by-laws and manage cats.
- Clarifying the powers and removing barriers for landscape boards, National Parks and other stakeholders to manage feral cats better.

Who have you consulted with to propose these changes?

Cat management is a complex topic with responsibilities shared between individuals; local, state and federal governments; and non-government parties.

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* was reviewed in 2022 in consultation with local government, industry, animal welfare and animal rescue groups. This included reviewing cat management. Since 2022 extended consultation has occurred with those organisations, as well as state government agencies such as PIRSA, Department for Environment and Water and landscape boards.

Feedback from targeted consultation has informed the proposed changes you are asked to comment on.

How do these changes affect me?

There are no additional state laws for cat owners. Cat owners have been required since 2018 to desex and microchip their cats and register the microchip number on Dogs and Cats Online.

However, should your cat become lost, the proposed changes will help councils collect and return cats to their owners. The changes are based on the existing laws that apply to dogs.

Please note, councils may have cat by-laws that set additional requirements for the council area. Please check with your local council for more information.

Can I trap nuisance cats on my property?

Currently anyone can seize and detain a cat that does not have a collar or microchip. The problem is that one does not know whether a cat has a microchip until after it has been trapped.

Furthermore, it is illegal to release a cat.

The new laws propose to better align to the arrangements for dogs, whereby only an authorised person, or a person with permission of an authorised person from their council, can seize and detain a cat.

Residents will be able to trap (seize and detain) nuisance cats on their property after being approved by their local council. The approval to trap will include conditions that ensure the welfare of the cats, and nominate a facility to receive the cat.

What if my cat is not microchipped and is handed into council?

These amendments include a new legislative process for seized cats, where your local council will scan for a microchip to identify and return the cat to owner.

If the cat doesn't have identification, councils will keep the cat for a minimum of 72 hours and post notices on their website and offices. After 72 hours, councils may rehome or have the cat humanely euthanised.

This is the same procedure as dogs.

Owners are reminded that all cats are required to be microchipped and recorded on Dogs and Cats Online.

Is my cat at risk of being destroyed?

Currently cats in specific areas may be destroyed.

The proposed amendments seek to remove barriers particularly where biodiversity protection activities are needed.

Roaming cats face many risks including vehicles, attacks from other animals, exposure to disease and extreme weather. Cat owners are encouraged to keep their cat safe from these risks and to keep them from places they are not permitted.

Why amend powers to destroy cats?

The *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* currently contains power to destroy cats.

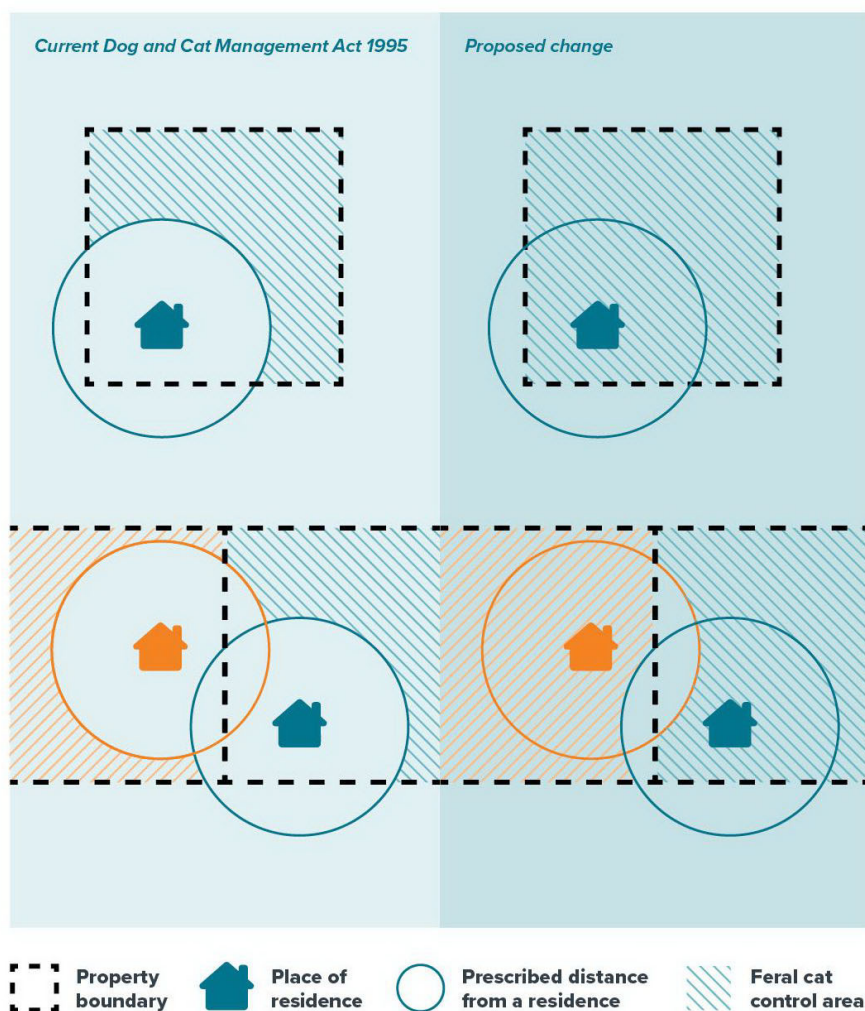
The proposed changes seek to extend these powers to persons performing functions under specific legislation, to reflect modern workforce arrangements and remove barriers for land managers to undertake biodiversity protection activities.

For example, a contractor engaged by National Parks to perform duties to destroy feral animals would have the power to destroy a cat found in the National Park.

A person would have the power to destroy feral cats located on their property, if the cats aren't found within the prescribed distance of a neighbouring residence. The distance remains one kilometre, unless otherwise prescribed by regulations.

See diagram: Prescribed area around residence

Prescribed area around residence



Aside from legislative changes, what else is being done to manage cats better in our neighbourhoods?

The proposed amendments are focussed on resolving current issues in the Act, to allow local and state government manage cats in an effective, appropriate, balanced way.

The state government has identified the following priorities for cat management action in 2024-25:

- Cat desexing initiatives and grants to reduce unwanted litters.
- Support for councils to develop and implement local by-laws.
- Community education that promotes responsible pet ownership.

Tell us what future actions you'd like to see by responding to the YourSAy questionnaire. We have a dedicated 'looking forward' page to capture your ideas.

How can I give my feedback?

Please read the explanatory guide which outlines the proposed changes, then complete the questionnaire on YourSAy. You can provide additional thoughts in the comments section.

What are the steps after consultation?

The government will review and consolidate all feedback to finalise the draft Bill for Parliament consideration.

The consultation report will be published on YourSAy.

Have YourSAy

What do you think? Your feedback will help us understand the collective community views regarding dog and cat management expectations.

We will consider all feedback to finalise the draft Bill for Parliament to consider. A consultation report will be published on YourSAy. All respondents will be notified.

To have your say, complete the submission form on YouSAy at yoursay.sa.gov.au