

Draft Northern Regional Cat Management Strategy: Summary of Development

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- In April 2019, there was a request to NRM North from several northern councils, via the General Managers' forum, to undertake a facilitated process with council representatives to improve domestic and stray cat management in the Northern region.
- Consequently, a subcommittee of the Northern Regional Cat Management Working Group (CMWG) was established to develop a *Northern Regional Cat Management Strategy* (the strategy).
- This activity is consistent with the *State Cat Management Plan 2017-22*, which supports regional plans and strategies to address domestic, stray and feral cat management.
- The strategy is intended as a guidance document for key partners and stakeholders, such as Cat Management Facilities, RSPCA, the Australian Veterinary Association, the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service, State Government and NRM North.
- The strategy guides future cat management activities by identifying and prioritising suitable actions and providing a framework for collaboration between councils and key stakeholders.
- Public consultation on the strategy was considered, however, due to the timeframe and available resources, the decision was to produce a strategy with input from councils, key partners and industry stakeholders, and consider community consultation if appropriate for initiatives which may flow on from implementation of the strategy.
- A consultant (TerraForm Design) was engaged by NRM North to facilitate the strategy development process.
- The strategy working group is a sub-committee of the CMWG, consisting of council representatives and key stakeholder representatives who participated in three facilitated workshops and reviewed draft documents out of session.
- Throughout the process, regular updates were provided to stakeholders, and a wireframe document and draft of the strategy were circulated to the strategy working group and Council General Managers on 2 September and 17 December 2019 respectively.
- The strategy is not intended to bind stakeholders to being responsible for the activities identified, rather it is an aspirational document that provides direction for future cat management activities. It requires collaboration to implement, while retaining flexibility to enable stakeholders to engage as appropriate and where resources permit.

- The strategy document is made up of eight sections, with a focus on 10 cat management issues for northern Tasmania and the associated strategic directions which will guide implementation activities. Table 1 shows the ten issues and the desired outcomes as reflected in the draft strategy. For each of the ten issues, detailed actions are also included in the strategy.
- The strategy also refers to the development of annual implementation plans which will guide activities and assist in determining roles and resources required to implement activities over the subsequent 12 months.
- At the General Managers' meeting on 24 January 2020, it was resolved that individual participating councils would workshop the draft strategy prior to endorsement, final design and publication.
- During March and April, NRM North staff provided presentations to two councils on the draft strategy. Unfortunately, presentations to other participating councils were cancelled or postponed due to COVID-19 restrictions. Presentations have recommenced in December and are expected to be complete by March 2021.

Table 1: The ten cat management issues and corresponding desired outcomes as identified in the draft *Northern Regional Cat Management Strategy*

Cat management issue	Desired outcome of Northern Regional Cat Management Strategy implementation
1. De-sexing and microchipping	For all domestic cats to be de-sexed and identified by microchip from four months of age, and owners to keep their contact details on microchip registries up to date.
2. Responsible cat ownership	For all cat owners to understand and enthusiastically practice responsible cat ownership.
3. Protecting significant conservation, commercial and community assets	To have significant conservation, commercial and community assets identified (mapped) with appropriate strategies identified to mitigate cat related risks at priority sites
4. Nuisance and stray cats	To reduce the impact of nuisance cats by encouraging owners to contain their cats to their property, preventing the feeding of stray cats, educating the community against dumping unwanted cats, and encouraging reporting of stray cats to protect identified significant conservation, commercial and community assets.
5. Feral cats	To ensure best practice techniques to manage feral cats are developed and implemented to support integrated cat management across all land tenures in northern region.
6. Cat breeding and hoarding (permitting and animal welfare)	For all cat breeding in the region to be only undertaken by registered or permitted breeders and animal welfare standards maintained including by discouraging the keeping of multiple cats and preventing cat hoarding.

Cat management issue	Desired outcome of Northern Regional Cat Management Strategy implementation
7. Professional cat management capacity	To have improved professional cat management capacity that is shared across all collaborating cat management partners in northern region.
8. Shared regional cat management facilities and resources	To progressively develop a network of partners to enable rural and remote communities' access to shared regional resources including cat management facilities to service the northern region.
9. Voluntary compliance	For all cat owners and community members to voluntarily comply with their legal and moral rights and obligations for responsible cat ownership and management.
10. Improved knowledge to better inform cat management	To have cat management in the region guided by best available science and regionally relevant data to support evidence-based decision making.