



ACT
Government

DRAFT ACT CAT PLAN 2019-29

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION REPORT

DECEMBER 2019

Produced by the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development

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Director-General, Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development
Directorate, ACT Government, GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601.

Telephone: 02 6207 1923

Website: www.environment.act.gov.au

Acknowledgment to Country

We wish to acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land we are meeting on, the Ngunnawal people. We wish to acknowledge and respect their continuing culture and the contribution they make to the life of this city and this region.

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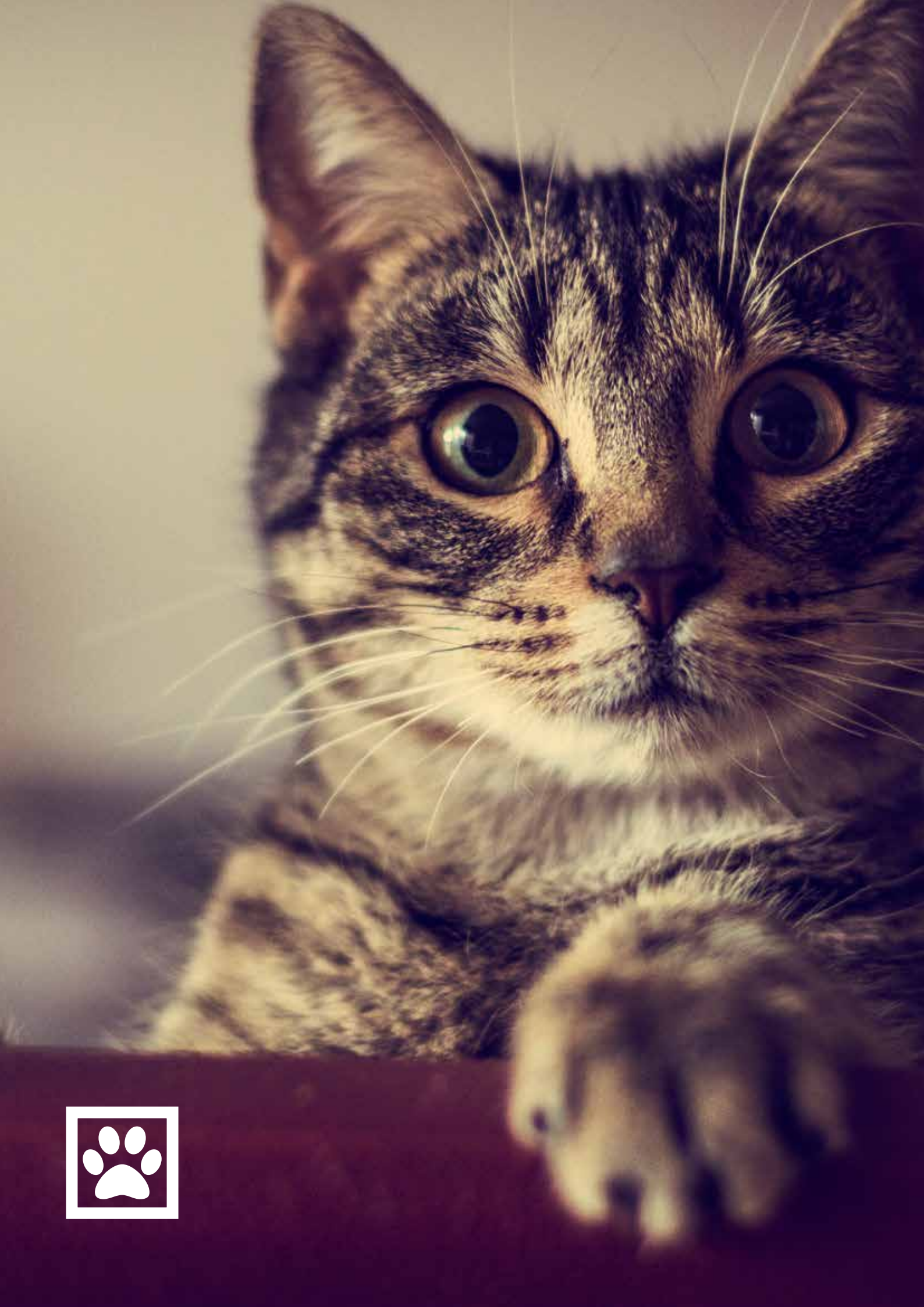
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A close-up, vertical photograph of a cat's face, showing its eye and fur texture, positioned on the left side of the page.

INTRODUCTION

With about a quarter of Canberra households owning cats, cats are a significant part of our society. Cats provide love, companionship, and important health and wellbeing benefits to their owners. In return, it is essential that we provide safe and happy homes for them.

In 2019, the ACT Government released the draft ACT Cat Plan (the draft plan). The vision of the draft plan was that ‘All cats will be owned, wanted and cared for by responsible cat owners.’ This is supported by the draft plan’s objectives of ‘*caring for pet cats through responsible pet ownership*’ and ‘*protecting wildlife from cat predation*’.

Community consultation was undertaken to engage with the ACT community on how we can work together to improve our laws, services and programs for managing all cats—domestic and feral.

This report details the consultation process and outlines the key insights received from the community in feedback to the draft plan and the changes being made to the final plan in response to this feedback.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION PROCESS

Community consultation took place on the draft plan from 6 April to 3 July 2019. The consultation was widely promoted, including through the media, social media, placement of information fliers at local businesses, including vets, and the delivery of postcards to 100,000 ACT households.

YOURSAY

YourSay, the ACT Government’s engagement website, was the main platform for seeking community feedback. The site provided access to the draft plan, background information on cats and the environment, and details of events and workshops. It hosted a survey seeking the community’s views on cat ownership and management and invited written submissions.

COMMUNITY FORUMS AND EVENTS

Community events were held in order to promote consultation on the draft Plan and to provide information and practical advice surrounding cat containment. This included DIY cat containment workshops at Bunnings and public information forums.

KEY STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATION

Conversations were held with key stakeholders to discuss the draft plan and cat management in the ACT more broadly. The Directorate directly contacted 23 organisations via email and held meetings with six businesses and community groups during the consultation period.

COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION

4,087 survey responses were received from residents across the ACT. Surveys were filled out online and at local libraries. Written submissions were received from 17 organisations and community groups representing cat breeders, cat rescue and animal welfare organisations and nature conservation community groups among others. Submissions were also received from 103 individuals or families representing both cat owners and non-owners.

CONSULTATION RESPONSE SUMMARY

SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey included 16 questions, several that allowed the input of more than one response. The questions aimed to gauge information and opinion on topics including cat ownership, if and how people currently contain their cats, semi owned and unowned cats, roaming cats, expansion of mandatory cat containment and other measures to improve cat management. A copy of the survey is at **Appendix 1**.

Orima Research were engaged to provide a detailed analysis of the survey responses, a summary of the responses by theme is provided below. A complete copy of the *Orima* report is at **Appendix 2**.

- **Cat ownership** - About half the respondents owned cats. This is an over-representation of the amount of cat owners in the ACT, as it is estimated that around one quarter of ACT residents own cats.
- **Containment practices** - Just over half of cat owners responded that they kept their cats contained, restrained or supervised at all times, including in containment structures, or outside only if supervised or on a leash. The most common reason indicated for this was concern for the welfare of the cat. The remainder indicated they allowed their cats to have some sort of unsupervised access to outside, including at any time and only during the day (contained at

night). The most common reasons for not containing cats were also to do with concern for the cat's welfare, for example, concerns that containment would be stressful for the cat.

- **Semi owned, unowned and roaming cats** - Around half of respondents indicated that they are aware of unowned or semi-owned cats in their suburb, with many indicating that they have experienced some nuisance from roaming cats.
- **Cat containment preferences** - the survey provided three options for mandatory cat containment and asked respondents to indicate their preference. The three options provided are indicated below.
 - > **Blanket approach** - Non-owners were most likely to indicate a preference for this approach.
 - > **Grandfathered approach** - Cat owners most commonly preferred this approach.
 - > **Phasing in approach** - This was the second most preferred approach for both owners and non-owners.

Respondents also expressed preference for options that were not included in the survey, such as partial containment (night-time only), voluntary containment only and no containment at all.

- **Support for management measures** - Survey respondents were asked to indicate their support for a range of cat management measures including:
 - > cat registration
 - > greater enforcement/more fines and penalties
 - > mandatory cat containment and
 - > financial assistance for low-income cat owners.

Cat registration had the highest level of support amongst both cat owners and non-owners, whereas more fines and penalties had the lowest level of support among both groups. Around half of cat owners indicated a support for containment, with higher levels of support from non-owners. Financial support for low-income owners was most strongly supported by people who own cats, with less support from people who do not own cats.

WRITTEN SUBMISSIONS

Written submissions were invited in response to the draft plan. A total of 120 submissions were received from both groups and individuals. Most submissions included comment on the strategies and key topics included for discussion in the draft plan. The key insights and matters identified in the submissions are grouped below under the relevant strategies.

STRATEGY 1: PROMOTE RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP

AFFORDABLE DE-SEXING

There was strong support for the de-sexing of cats to be made more affordable and more accessible, especially for cat-owners on lower incomes. There was acknowledgment that affordable options and schemes do exist, but these can be hard to navigate for some people.

Submissions included that encouraging and incentivising breeders to de-sex kittens before sale would be a positive step and that educating cat owners on the importance of de-sexing and the benefits it can provide to pet cats and the broader community would support the promotion of de-sexing.

SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION TO IMPROVE RESPONSIBLE CAT OWNERSHIP

We heard that the community would welcome more information and education for cat owners on caring for your cat and on ownership rights and responsibilities. Education materials that are accessible to a culturally and linguistically diverse audience are important, for example it was suggested that an online education portal with downloadable information in a range of languages about caring for companion animals and meeting legal obligations would be useful.

Citizen science was recognised as important in education and gaining knowledge about the habits and impacts of cats, but there was concern that it may not always be objective.

ROAMING CATS CAN BE A NUISANCE

People want cat owners to be more responsible when it comes to keeping their cats out of other people's yards. We heard that wandering cats can be a nuisance, particularly to avid gardeners by using their garden beds as a toilet and to other contained pets in neighbouring houses or yards.

STRATEGY 2: IMPROVE COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT

REGISTRATION OF CATS

Introducing registration for cats was broadly supported, particularly by non-owners. Many cat owners were also supportive, as long as any registration scheme is accessible and affordable for all cat owners, and it offers benefits that are not already offered by microchipping.

Some respondents also raised that a registration scheme would not address issues with semi-owned and unowned cats and would only impact people who were already responsible pet owners.

COMPLIANCE AND ENFORCEMENT GENERALLY

Many people in our community would support greater investment in compliance and enforcement, particularly when it comes to enforcement of de-sexing and microchipping laws, making sure the current breeding guidelines are adhered to, and enforcement of containment rules in cat containment areas.

We also heard that education and engagement are equally as important as enforcement - these need to go hand in hand.



STRATEGY 3: REDUCE NUMBER OF SEMI-OWNED AND UNOWNED DOMESTIC CATS

HUMANE TREATMENT

We heard that people want the ACT to lead the way in compassionate conservation methods. It is important to the Canberra community that cats who are semi-owned or unowned are treated humanely and with compassion. We heard that there are colonies of 'street cats' that are cared for by and important to some members of the community.

There is support for the trap, desex and release approach, already undertaken by some rescue organisations, with others emphasising that cats should be trapped, desexed and adopted if suitable, but not released, to reduce impacts to wildlife.

Improving rates of desexing is seen as the most vital strategy to reduce the number of semi-owned and unowned cats.

INCREASE ADOPTION OF CATS

The perceived high levels of breeding, particularly 'backyard' breeding of cats is a concern in the community. People told us they want to see greater enforcement of existing breeding regulations and activities to encourage a reduction in breeding levels and an increase in adoption of cats.

STRATEGY 4: CONTINUOUSLY IMPROVE DOMESTIC CAT WELFARE AND MANAGEMENT PRACTICES

CODES OF PRACTICE (ANIMAL WELFARE ACT 1992)

We heard that the current Codes of Practice (CoP) relating to cat welfare and management are appropriate, but may need review and updating to ensure that they still represent best practice management.

ACCESS TO BETTER INFORMATION

Providing access to training, for example, short courses in cat ownership, including cat behaviour and care, would help to improve domestic cat welfare and management. This information needs to be accessible to all cat owners and prospective cat owners.

UNDERTAKE RESEARCH

Many submissions supported further research to better understand the impacts of cats on wildlife, and other elements of cat behaviour, to help with effective management. It was raised that much of the studies available at the moment are fairly old and that new information, gained through research programs, would improve cat management.

STRATEGY 5: EXPAND CAT CONTAINMENT

SUPPORT FOR CONTAINMENT

We heard wide ranging responses on the issue of cat containment with pros and cons provided for each of the approaches presented in the draft plan.

- **Blanket containment approach** - Some advocated for blanket containment across the ACT as soon as possible to reduce any further predation on native wildlife. This was also seen as the most straight forward approach in terms of compliance and enforcement. Others felt a blanket approach was the way to go, but that people needed enough time (5 or 10 years) to prepare.
- **Grandfather approach** - The grandfather approach, meaning any new pet cats (after a certain date) will be required to be contained, but existing pet cats will not, was seen as the option that would have the least impact on cats and cat owners. Others saw this approach as the most difficult to understand and enforce, as different containment rules could apply to cats within the same suburb, street or even household.
- **Phasing containment in across the ACT** - Support was shown for the phasing in approach, with the importance of prioritising the implementation of containment in areas near nature reserves, or where a specific problem is identified, highlighted.

Others supported a version of containment not put forward in the draft plan, such as only in suburbs bordering nature reserves, curfews at night-time only, or allowing cats to roam freely in owner's yards if supervised.

We heard from some cat owners that contained cats are happier and safer, and the owners have less vet bills. Others expressed concerns about the impact containment may have on the welfare of their cats and the expenses involved in implementing containment measures.

WELFARE CONCERNS

There was concern that potential animal welfare issues may arise from cat containment and some respondents did not support containment if it would lead to stress on cats due to changed circumstances or inappropriate containment measures. It was suggested that detailed containment guidelines, focussing on pet welfare, should be developed in line with any containment strategy.

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

The community raised several issues to be considered if cat containment is to be implemented at a broad scale:

- Containment itself may place stress on both cats and their owners.
- The cost of implementation may impart particular stress on the elderly or infirm, renters and low-income cat owners.
- It was felt that enforced containment may lead to surrender or abandonment of some cats if owners feel they cannot comply.
- Infrastructure and support needs to be put in place to manage a transition to containment and current containment arrangements need to be reviewed for efficacy before wider implementation occurs.

STRATEGY 6: REDUCE IMPACTS OF FERAL CATS

CONTROL IN AREAS WHERE IT MATTERS THE MOST

Submissions received were largely supportive of feral cat management but stressed that it needs to be targeted to areas where cats are having the greatest impact on native wildlife.

Respondents presented a strong view that humane management methods that do not have the potential to pose a threat to native animals (such as baiting), need to be employed. There were also concerns expressed about the ability to distinguish between feral cats and roaming pet cats in management activities, particularly in reserves bordering suburbs.

LISTING FERAL CATS AS A KEY THREATENING PROCESS

There was some support for the listing of feral cats as a key threatening process under the Nature Conservation Act in order to help with feral cat management and acknowledge their impacts. This will be considered further with an aim to support the implementation of the Australian Government Threat Abatement Plan for Predation by Feral Cats.

SUPPORT EXPANSION OF PREDATOR PROOF FENCING AROUND NATURE RESERVES

There is wide ranging support for the expansion of predator proof fencing around nature reserves to offer greater protection to native animals in the reserves.

STRATEGY 7: ENGAGE RURAL LANDHOLDERS IN IMPROVED CAT MANAGEMENT

ENGAGEMENT IS IMPORTANT

It is important to engage with the rural community to figure out what the issues may be with cat management, and what solutions work best for them. The human/cat relationship may also be different in rural areas and this needs to be considered in rural cat management. Any management activity also needs to address the role of cats in rural areas which may differ to urban areas, cats are seen to have an important role in vermin control in rural areas and any plans for containment need to address this.



STRATEGY 8: REDUCE RISKS TO HUMAN HEALTH

EDUCATION IS IMPORTANT

We heard an acknowledgment that there are risks to human health associated with cats but these can be easily addressed through education for cat owners on basic hygiene practices.

HEALTH BENEFITS OF PET OWNERSHIP

Many submissions highlighted the benefits to human health of owning a pet cat and felt that this should be acknowledged in the final plan, along with any risks.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The final ACT Cat Plan includes changes to incorporate the feedback received during the community consultation process. Table 1 below outlines the changes to strategies and actions within the plan that have been made in line with the community responses outlined in this report.

Table 1: Changes proposed based on consultation process

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
VISION		
All cats in the ACT will be owned, wanted and cared for by responsible owners.	NO CHANGE	Comments relating to the vision were widely supportive.
OBJECTIVES		
1. Caring for pet cats through responsible cat ownership 2. Protecting wildlife from cat predation	ADD THIRD OBJECTIVE: 3. Reduce nuisance by roaming cats to ACT residents.	Many submissions commented on cat nuisance, a third objective has been added in line with this.
STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS		
S1. Promote responsible cat ownership	Add box into Strategy 1 – Responsible cat ownership A responsible cat owner 1. Obeys cat laws 2. Meets all needs of their pet including basic needs (food, water, toileting areas, places to rest, hide and scratch), as well as play and companionship. 3. Prevents their pet cat being a nuisance to other ACT residents.	Support. Concerns were raised about the need to address ‘nuisance cats’ and the need for owners to meet all the needs of a cat. Suggestions were made to include information on what it means to be a ‘responsible cat owner.’
→ Promote responsible cat ownership through community education and engagement.	NO CHANGE	Strong support for increased education and engagement – suggestions were made to ensure that education materials are accessible to all, including Canberran’s who may not speak English.
→ Raise awareness of cat behaviour though citizen science	CHANGE TO: Raise awareness of impact of roaming cats on wildlife and other ACT residents, including through research and citizen science.	Support for evidence based management and improving awareness and knowledge, although citizen science should only be a part of this.
→ Improve cat desexing rates	NO CHANGE	Strong Support, particularly for any action to make de-sexing more affordable

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
S2. Improve compliance and enforcement	NO CHANGE	Support
→ Explore improved systems for cat identification and reunification with owners, including the introduction of cat registration, as part of a pet registration model.	CHANGE to indicate progression of cat registration as below. Introduce a compulsory registration scheme for cats as part of a pet registration model to improve capacity for cat identification and reunification with owners.	Broad support for registration as long as scheme is accessible and affordable for all cat owners, and offers additional benefits to microchipping. Suggestions to improve/centralise existing microchipping services to provide better information.
→ NEW ACTION Review and amend the <i>Domestic Animals Act 2000</i> to support compulsory registration of cats.	This additional action supports the action above.	
→ Implement a program of compliance and enforcement in concert with a public education campaign, using a system of warnings and information. Pursue repeat offenders for offences against the <i>Domestic Animals Act 2000</i> .	CHANGE to emphasise public education campaign as below: Implement a public education campaign using a system of warnings and information, in concert with a program of compliance and enforcement. Pursue repeat offenders for offences against the <i>Domestic Animals Act 2000</i> .	Support – education and information should be an important part of any compliance program.
S3. Reduce number of semi-owned and unowned domestic cats	NO CHANGE	Support
→ Provide information to the community to increase awareness about the environmental and welfare implications of abandonment and feeding wandering cats.	NO CHANGE	Largely supportive
→ Encourage people currently feeding cats they do not own to determine if the cat is owned and, if not, either adopt and care for the cat (including microchipping and desexing the cat) or take the cat to an animal shelter	REMOVE	Consultation raised that there are risks with encouraging people to take cats to a shelter themselves, including that people may take kittens without their mother, encouraging the mother cat to breed again.

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
→ Work with animal care and rescue organisations to manage semi-owned and unowned cats in public places through 'trap, desex and adopt' activities.	CHANGE TO: Work with animal care and rescue organisations to manage semi-owned and unowned cats in public places including through 'trap, desex and adopt' activities.	Largely supported – encouragement for government to partner with rescue organisations to work on management of these cats. Support expressed for 'trap desex and return' activities where cats are not able to be adopted.
→ Consider strengthening laws and penalties for abandoning cats	NO CHANGE	Support
S4. Continuously improve domestic cat welfare and management practices	NO CHANGE	
→ Develop and adopt model Codes of Practice (CoPs) and Standard Operating Procedures (SoPs) for the humane treatment of domestic cats, including under the <i>Animal Welfare Act 1992</i> .	NO CHANGE	Support
→ Review and implement CoPs, SoPs and memoranda of understanding (MOU)/ agreements with external service providers for the operation of cat management facilities.	NO CHANGE	Support for review and updating.
→ Provide up to date information to practitioners responsible for implementing domestic cat management so that they understand animal welfare impacts (humaneness) of available methods and the best approaches for to carry them out.	MINOR CHANGE to the following wording to clarify the statement: Provide access to appropriate training and education to practitioners responsible for implementing domestic cat management to improve welfare outcomes for cats.	Support
→ Facilitate provision of adequate cat management facilities/shelters to support: finding and reclaiming of lost cats; adoption and re-homing; and compliance and enforcement.	NO CHANGE	Support

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
S5. Expand cat containment		
→ Encourage the uptake of voluntary cat containment through the provision of information, education and awareness raising on 'benefits to cats', 'benefits to wildlife' and 'how to cat contain'.	MINOR CHANGE Encourage voluntary cat containment by providing information on benefits to cats, benefits to wildlife, how roaming cats can cause nuisance and how to contain a cat.	Support To include raising awareness to reduce nuisance of roaming cats
→ NEW ACTION	Continue to declare all new suburbs as cat containment.	
→ Consider options for how and when to expand the area of mandatory cat containment.	CHANGE TO: Introduce city-wide cat containment requirements for new cats acquired after a date declared by the government, with grandfathering arrangements for all cats owned before this date. Review and amend the <i>Domestic Animals Act 2000</i> to support this expansion of cat containment.	Mixed Views from significant feedback received. The importance of protecting wildlife in areas such as nature reserves was acknowledged. Cat owners were most supportive of containment with a grandfather clause so that existing pet cats are not required to be contained. A blanket approach was widely supported by non-owners. There was acknowledgment among owners and non-owners that phasing in containment gives people time to adjust to changes but concerns were expressed that broad containment measures would negatively impact some cats and owners.
→ Expand area declared (mandatory) cat containment	REMOVE – COVERED IN ACTION 17	Mixed views expressed as described at action 17.
→ Review definitions of cat containment in legislation to allow cats to be contained 'on leash'.	CHANGE TO: Bring forward legislation to ensure that cats may be walked on a lead and harness lawfully in all suburbs, including in containment areas.	Strong Support
S6. Reduce impacts of feral cats		
→ Educate people about the impacts of cats on Australian wildlife.	NO CHANGE	Support. Focus on feral cats.
→ Consider listing predation by feral cats as a Key Threatening Process under the <i>Nature Conservation Act 2014</i> and, subject to listing, prepare an ACT Action Plan for Feral Cats.	CHANGE TO: Support implementation of the Australian Government threat abatement plan for predation by feral cats and assess any nomination of feral cats as a key threatening process under the <i>Nature Conservation Act</i> .	Mixed feedback. Strong support by Conservation group submissions. Other submissions raised concerns regarding human treatment of animals, risks to non-target animals and unintentional targeting of unowned domestic cats.

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
→ Participate in regional and national, monitoring research and trials to:	NO CHANGE	Supported
> increase understanding of the feral cat population and impacts on the environment; and		
> improve efficacy, humaneness and expand available feral cat control methods.		
→ Undertake feral cat control where feasible, cost-effective and provides highest conservation benefit as part of integrated pest animal management.	NO CHANGE	Concern of impact of control activities on domestic cats - e.g. accidental baiting or targeting of roaming owned cats along with feral cats.
→ Increase cat-free conservation areas by expanding predator-proof fences in nature reserves.	NO CHANGE	Strong support
S7. Engage rural landholders in improved cat management		
→ Undertake awareness raising and training of rural landholders regarding cat management on rural properties, including:	NO CHANGE	Support for engagement with rural landholders on cat management issues.
• responsible cat ownership		
• impacts of cats on agriculture and methods for limiting transmission of parasites and disease to livestock		
• pest control methods including feral cats and vermin (rats and mice).		
→ Engage with rural landholders and animal care and rescue organisations on managing wandering domestic cats on rural properties.	NO CHANGE	Support for engagement.
→ Consider options for expanding cat containment to rural areas	NO CHANGE	Little feedback received
→ Work with rural landholders to reduce the impact of feral cats on the environment.	NO CHANGE	Little feedback received

SECTION OF PLAN	PROPOSED CHANGES	FEEDBACK FROM PUBLIC CONSULTATION
S8. Reduce risks to human health	CHANGE TO: Promote human health and well-being through responsible pet ownership.	Mixed views on need. Some supported inclusion due to comprehensive strategy. Others commented that not relevant. Others suggested broadening to recognise health benefits from ownership of cats.
→ Raise awareness about appropriate hygiene practices when caring for cats	NO CHANGE	As above, mixed views on whether this is a necessary inclusion.
→ NEW ACTION	Recognise responsible pet ownership can promote health and wellbeing through companionship.	Additional action and information has been added in response to feedback that positive health impacts of cat ownership should be recognised.

APPENDIX 1

CAT MANAGEMENT

SURVEY



HAVE YOUR SAY ON CAT MANAGEMENT IN THE ACT

THE ACT GOVERNMENT WANTS TO HEAR FROM ALL CANBERRANS ABOUT HOW WE CAN BETTER MANAGE CATS IN THE ACT FOR THE HEALTH AND WELLBEING OF BOTH CATS AND NATIVE WILDLIFE.

SURVEY CLOSES ON FRIDAY 28 JUNE 2019

1. Do you own a cat(s)?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No – skip to question 6

TELL US ABOUT YOUR CATS

2. How many cats do you own?

3. Is your cat(s) an indoor or outdoor cat? ☒ all that apply

- ☐ I keep my cat(s) indoors at all times
☐ I keep my cat(s) indoors at night time only
☐ I let my cat(s) outdoors as it likes
☐ I let my cat(s) outdoors under control (e.g. on lead)
☐ I let my cat(s) outdoors in a cat run
☐ I let my cat(s) outdoors in a containment fence
☐ Other (please specify)

4. What are some of the reasons you keep your cat(s) indoors or contained? ☒ all that apply

- ☐ I live in a cat containment area
☐ It reduces harm to native animals
☐ It's important to my cat's safety and wellbeing
☐ I don't want my cat being a nuisance to neighbours
☐ Other (please specify)

5. Please tell us why you let your cat(s) outdoors?

☒ all that apply

- ☐ Cost of containment measures (eg. cat run)
☐ Lack of indoor space
☐ No screens on doors and windows
☐ I live in a rental property and cannot make the necessary changes to my home
☐ I do not live in a cat containment area
☐ I do not want a litter tray in my house
☐ I do not know how to keep my cat indoors
☐ I do not understand why I would keep my cat indoors
☐ Keeping my cat indoors would be stressful for my cat
☐ Other (please specify)

SEMI-OWNED AND UNOWNED CATS

Semi-owned or unowned cats are cats that are not cared for by an identifiable owner.

6. Are you aware of any semi-owned or unowned cats in your suburb?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

7. Do you feed or care for any cat(s) that you do not own?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

8. If yes, why? ☒ all that apply

- ☐ It is in poor health
- ☐ I feel partly responsible for it
- ☐ I feel sorry for it
- ☐ I like the interaction
- ☐ I don't know what to do with it
- ☐ Other (please specify)

ROAMING CATS

9. How often have you experienced nuisance from roaming cat(s)?

- ☐ Daily
- ☐ Monthly
- ☐ Weekly
- ☐ Once or twice a year
- ☐ Fortnightly
- ☐ Never

CAT CONTAINMENT

The ACT Government has committed to investigate options for expanding cat containment in the ACT. This would require cat owners to keep their cat(s) indoors or in a purpose built cat run.

10. What do you think is the best approach to expand cat containment for the ACT?

- ☐ **Phasing-in approach** – gradually add additional identified suburbs over time
- ☐ **Grandfathered approach** – only new cats adopted/purchased after an established date will have to be contained (unless they live in an existing cat containment area)
- ☐ **Blanket approach** – declare all remaining suburbs cat containment areas at the one time at a set future date

11. To what extent do you support or oppose the following measures to improve cat management?

	STRONGLY SUPPORT	SUPPORT	NEITHER SUPPORT OR OPPOSE	OPPOSE	STRONGLY OPPOSE
More domestic animal enforcement officers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More fines and penalties	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cat containment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cat registration/identification	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Financial assistance for low income cat owners (eg. desexing)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

12. What do you think is a reasonable timeframe for the ACT Government to require all pet cats to be contained in all suburbs?

- ☐ 5 years
- ☐ 10 years
- ☐ 15 years
- ☐ never

DEMOGRAPHICS

13. What is your suburb?

14. What is your age?

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+
- ☐ Prefer not to answer

15. What is your gender?

- ☐ Female
- ☐ Male
- ☐ Indeterminate/intersex/unspecified
- ☐ Prefer not to say

16. What is your current living arrangement?

- ☐ I currently live in a property I own
- ☐ I currently live in a rental property
- ☐ I currently live at home with parents/guardian
- ☐ Other (please specify)

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on the draft ACT Cat Plan or for further comments visit www.yoursay.act.gov.au or call 13 22 81.

Send your survey to Nature Conservation, GPO Box 158, Canberra City ACT 2601

APPENDIX 2

CAT MANAGEMENT

SURVEY ANALYSIS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate conducted an online survey from 6 April to 3 July 2019 to gauge community sentiment on cat management in the ACT.

The survey used an opt-in process, rather than a random sample, which resulted in cat owners being overrepresented in the results. To account for this, analysis of the survey results was conducted separately amongst cat owners and non-owners.

The survey found that there are a number of semi-owned, unowned and roaming cats across the ACT, more noticeable by non-owners of cats (46%) than cat owners (25%). The research also suggests that there is a slight positive impact in reducing these figures within existing cat containment suburbs, reducing from 47% in other suburbs to 40% in cat containment suburbs for non-owners, with cat owners noticing less of a difference (22% in cat containment suburbs and 25% in other suburbs).

These differences could potentially be explained by cats roaming from other suburbs into cat containment suburbs, considering that 42% of owners in other suburbs give at least one of their cats some sort of unsupervised freedom, compared to only 3% in cat containment suburbs (although during the day only).

The survey canvassed levels of support for five possible cat management measures:

- cat registration/identification;
- financial assistance for low-income cat owners (for instance, to de-sex their cat);
- cat containment;
- more domestic animal enforcement officers; and
- more fines and penalties.

The proposed cat management measures are broadly supported by both cat owners and non-owners (although generally more strongly amongst non-owners). Cat containment was arguably the most *divisive* measure canvassed by the survey, with very strong levels of support among non-owners (90%) and considerably more muted support among cat owners (51%, with 35% opposed to this proposed measure). However, these figures show cat containment attracted on-balance support even amongst cat owners.

Respondents were presented with three possible approaches to expanding mandatory cat containment in the ACT from the seventeen suburbs where it is currently in place:

- **Phasing-in approach** - gradually add additional identified suburbs over time.
- **Grandfathered approach** - only new cats adopted/purchased after an established date will have to be contained (unless they live in an existing cat containment area).
- **Blanket approach** - declare all remaining suburbs cat containment areas at the one time at a set future date.

In terms of public support, the survey results suggest considerations in favour of each of these proposals:

- Despite low support among cat owners (17%), the **blanket approach** received the strongest level of support among non-owners (63%), and therefore, given the relative proportions of owners and non-owners, is likely to have strongest support across the ACT population as a whole.
- Amongst cat owners, who are likely to be most affected by the approach chosen, a **grandfathered approach** received the strongest level of support (48%, compared to 13% among non-owners). This is also the approach most likely to be seen as reasonable by cat owners who are opposed to a containment policy altogether (69% of such respondents favoured a grandfathered approach over its two alternatives).
- The **phasing-in** approach was the second most preferred option amongst both owners (35%) and non-owners (24%), making it a possible compromise option between the competing preferences of owners and non-owners.

The survey found considerable difference in opinion between cat owners and non-owners as to the most reasonable timeframe in which to roll out cat containment to all ACT suburbs. However, the majority of both cat owners (56%) and non-owners (91%) would consider a timeframe of ten years to be a sufficiently extended timeframe.

BACKGROUND AND RESPONDENT PROFILES

BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY

The Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate is exploring options for cat management in the ACT. As one of several components of community engagement, the Directorate designed and promoted an online survey of the ACT community, to gauge community sentiment on cat management, among both cat owners and non-owners.

The survey was conducted online from 6 April to 3 July 2019, accessible through the ACT Government's YourSay page.

The survey attracted a total of 4,087 survey respondents. For the purposes of this report a total of 203 non-ACT residents have been removed (leaving a sample of n=3,884).

As the survey adopted an inclusive methodology, rather than a strict random sample, some caution needs to be exercised in extrapolating results to the broader ACT community.

This report also draws on some findings from other ACT Government research—in particular:

- the Community Views Survey (conducted by ORIMA Research in March 2019); and
- the 2019 Pet Census (conducted by Micromex Research in May-June 2019).

Analysis and reporting was conducted by ORIMA Research, in accordance with the international quality standard ISO 20252.

PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Percentages in this report are based on the total number of valid responses made to the particular question being reported on. In most cases, results reflect those respondents who expressed a view and for whom the questions were applicable. 'Prefer not to say' responses have been excluded from the demographic profile (although respondents who declined to provide demographic responses have still been included in the overall results). Percentage results throughout the report may not add up to 100% (particularly when displayed in chart form) due to rounding or where respondents were able to select more than one response.

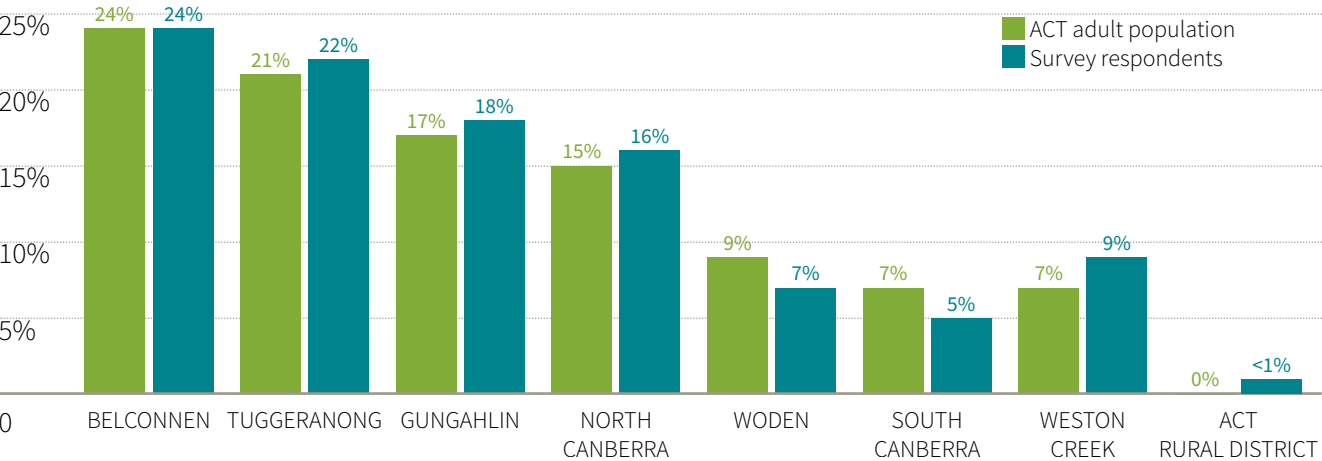
For some questions, respondents were asked to explain the reasons behind their practices (e.g. their reasons for containing their cat, not containing their cat, or feeding stray cats). These questions presented respondents with a pre-coded list, but also allowed for respondents to select 'Other' and offer a different reason. In some cases, these 'Other' responses have been coded into a new category and have been included in reporting. Where this has been done, the new category is marked with square brackets. Note that these categories may have been selected by more respondents had they been explicitly offered.

RESPONDENT PROFILE

Representation of respondents by region was closely similar to the population (see **Figure 1**) with the majority of respondents from Belconnen (24%), Tuggeranong (22%) or Gungahlin (18%).

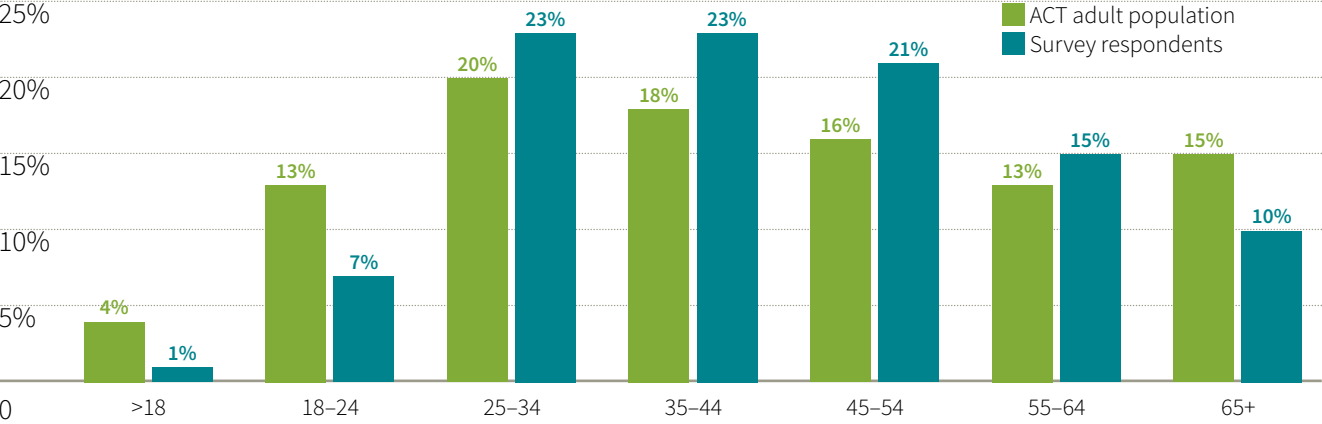
The age profile of respondents was broadly similar to the ACT population (see **Figure 2**), with some slight under-representation of the youngest and oldest age groups.

Figure 1: ACT districts



Survey respondents compared to ACT adult population (ABS 2016 Census data)

Figure 2: Age groups



Survey respondents compared to ACT population (ABS 2016 Census data)

* The ‘under 18’ segment of survey respondents is compared with the 15-17 age group from Census data.

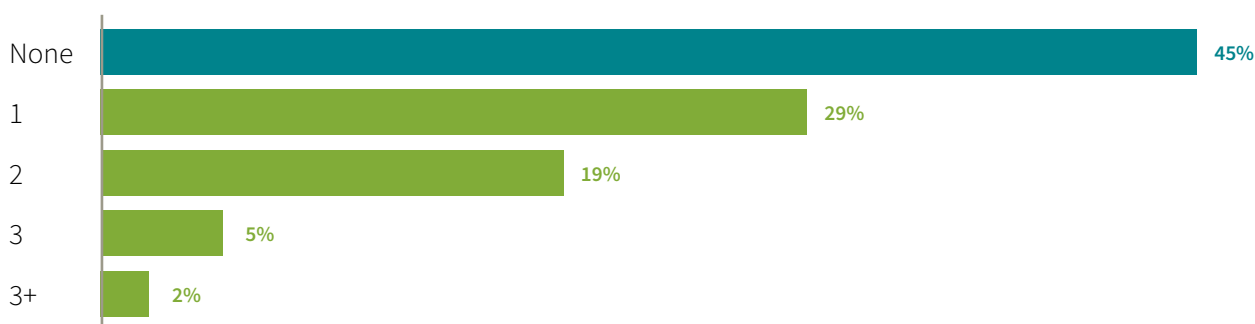
The survey sample was broadly similar to the ACT population in terms of home ownership (72% of respondents owned their home, compared to 65% across the ACT¹—the slight difference being attributable to the relative mix of age groups in the sample).

1 Australian Bureau of Statistics: *Housing Occupancy and Costs, 2017-18*

The largest demographic difference between the sample and the ACT population was the gender mix, with females heavily overrepresented (71% of the sample, compared to 51% of the ACT population, according to 2016 ABS census data). However, this is likely to have minimal impact on overall results, given the similar demographic profiles, rates of cat ownership, and attitudinal results of males and females surveyed.

As shown in **Figure 3**, around half of respondents (55%) were cat owners; and of these cat owners, around half (48% of cat owners, or 26% of all respondents) owned more than one cat.

Figure 3: Number of cats owned



Base: all respondents (n=3,884)

The level of cat ownership among survey respondents is 2-3 times higher than more realistic estimates of cat ownership rates—for instance, the ACT Government's March 2019 Community Views survey, which found 24% of households owned a cat; or the ACT 2019 Pet Census, which found a cat ownership rate of 16%.² Due to the differences in cat ownership levels between this survey and the Community View Survey, the rest of this report will provide results for cat owners and non-cat owners separately.

² There may also be over-representation, among cat owners, of those who own more than one cat (52% of cat owners in the Cat Management Survey, compared to 32% in the ACT Pet Census).

SEMI-OWNED, UNOWNED AND ROAMING CATS

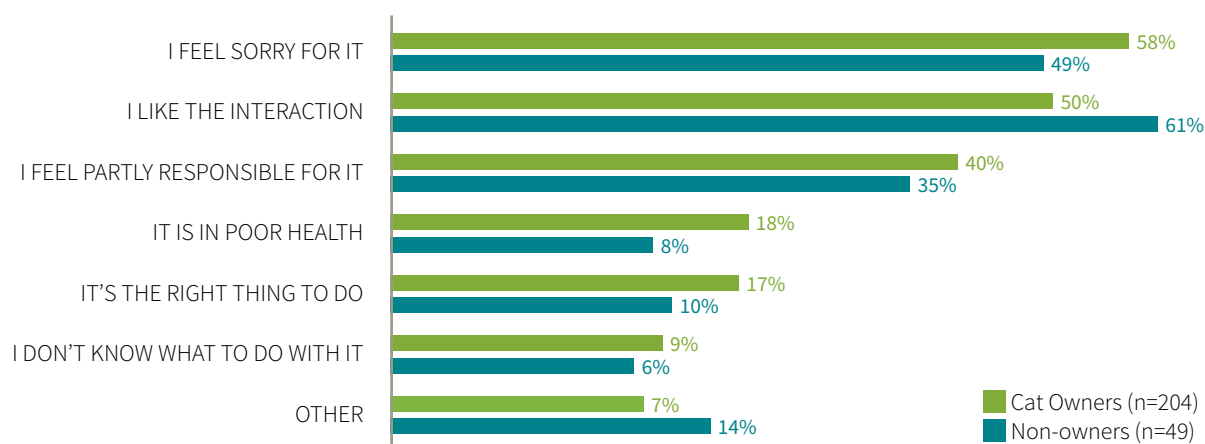
One quarter of cat owners (25%), and nearly half of non-owners (46%) indicated they were aware of semi-owned, unowned and roaming cats in their suburb. Across the broad regions of the ACT (as shown in **Map 1**), the reported incidence of unowned/semi-owned cats was highest in Tuggeranong (31% by cat owners, 53% by non-owners).³

Cat owners were more likely to indicate they fed or cared for one or more of these stray cats (10%, compared to 3% of non-owners); and owners are more likely to do so the more cats they already own (7% of single-cat owners feed strays, compared to 18% of those who own three or more cats).

As shown in **Figure 4**, the most common reasons cited for feeding stray cats are:

- feeling sorry for the cat - more common among owners (58%) than non-owners (49%); and
- enjoying the interaction - more common among non-owners (61%) than owners (50%).

Figure 4: Reasons for feeding a cat you do not own



The majority of respondents indicated that roaming cats are at least sometimes a nuisance to them, although this perception varied considerably between owners and non-owners (**Figure 5**). Non-owners were over four times more likely as cat owners to perceive roaming cats as a daily nuisance (33%, compared to 7% for cat owners), and around six in seven non-owners felt roaming cats were a nuisance at least once or twice a year (82%, compared to 50% of cat owners).

- The reported incidence of nuisance roaming cats was highest in Tuggeranong, among both cat owners (57% indicated at least some nuisance) and non-owners (89% indicated at least some nuisance, with 44% indicating a daily nuisance).
- Among both owners and non-owners, the central districts (North and South Canberra) and Woden were seen as having either a lower incidence, or a less severe frequency, of nuisance roaming cats.
- In general, perceptions of cat owners were more similar across regions than those of non-owners.

³ Incidence of unowned cats was highest among respondents indicating they lived in an 'ACT rural district' (55% for owners, 80% for non-owners). However, these figures should be treated with caution due to low respondent numbers (n=11 and n=5 respectively). For the rest of the report, this group will not be included in district-level comparisons.

Map 1: Incidence of semi-owned or unowned cats across the ACT

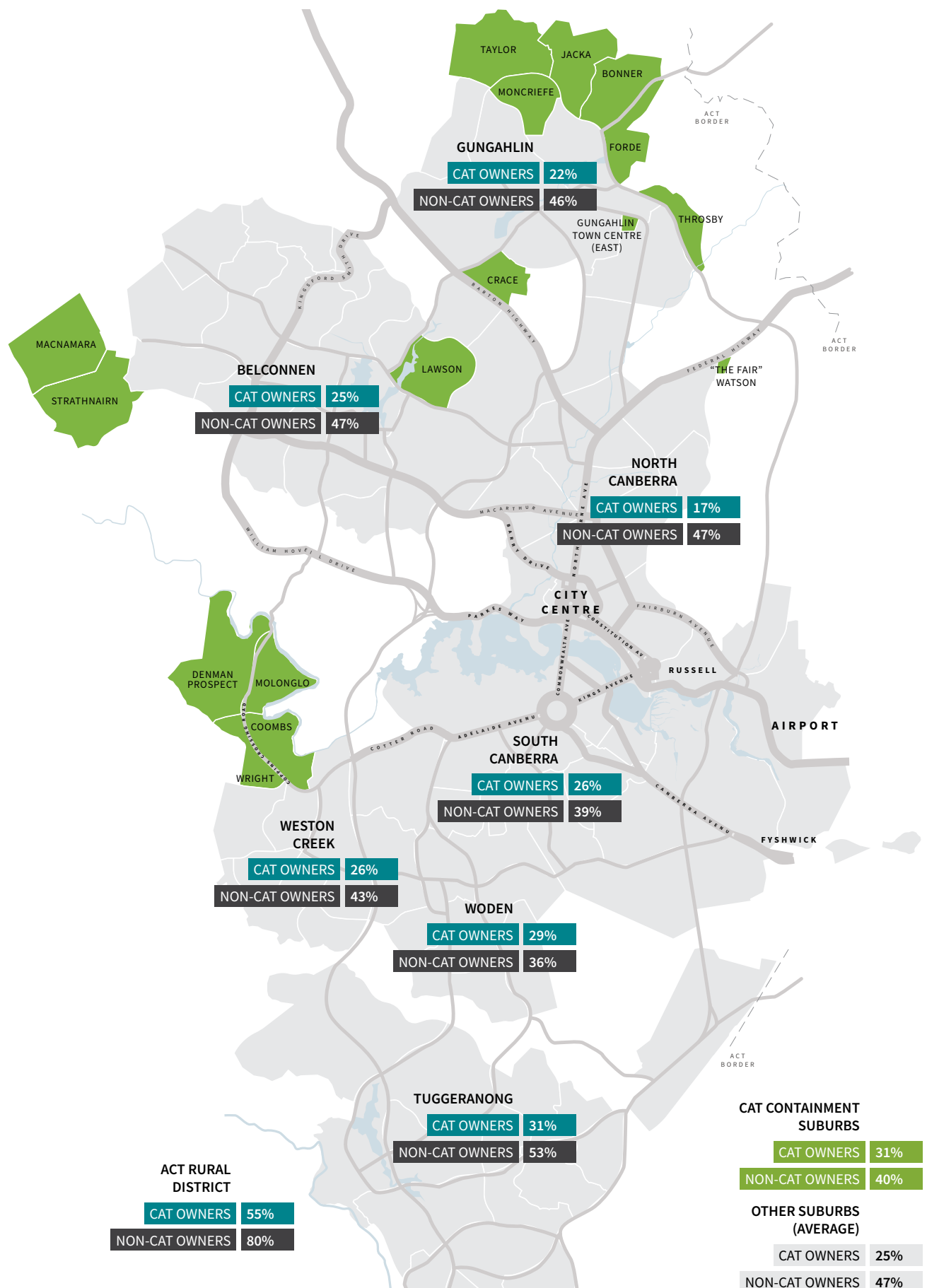
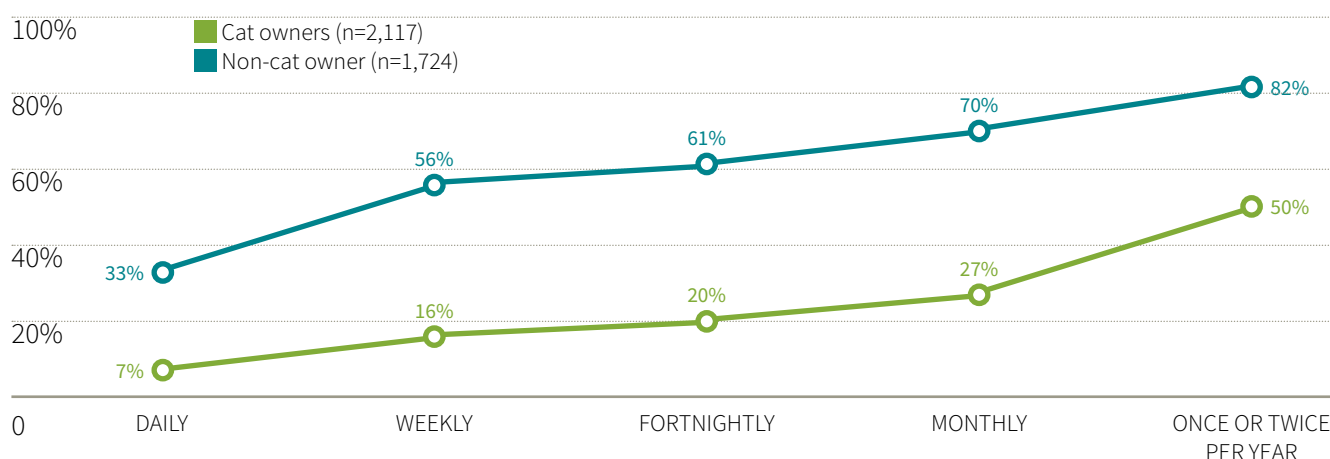


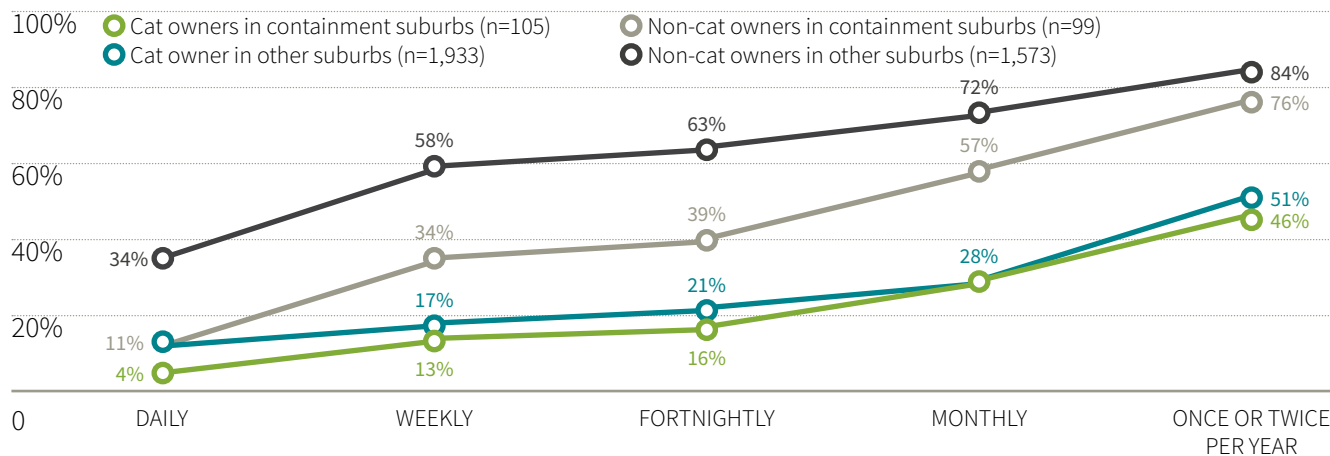
Figure 5: Perceived frequency of nuisance cats



Nuisance roaming cats were less frequently experienced in cat containment suburbs, as shown in **Figure 6**. However, even in these suburbs, roaming cats were experienced as a nuisance at least once or twice a year by around three quarters of non-owners (76%), and just under half (46%) of owners.

As shown in **Figure 6**, the difference between cat containment suburbs and other suburbs was more apparent to non-owners than to owners. For instance, similar (and low) proportions of cat owners reported that roaming cats presented a daily nuisance, whether they lived in cat containment suburbs (4%) or other suburbs (7%); but among cat owners, the difference was much greater (11% in cat containment suburbs, compared to 34% in other suburbs).

Figure 6: Frequency of nuisance cats (cat containment and other suburbs compared)



CAT MANAGEMENT AND CONTAINMENT

CURRENT PRACTICES

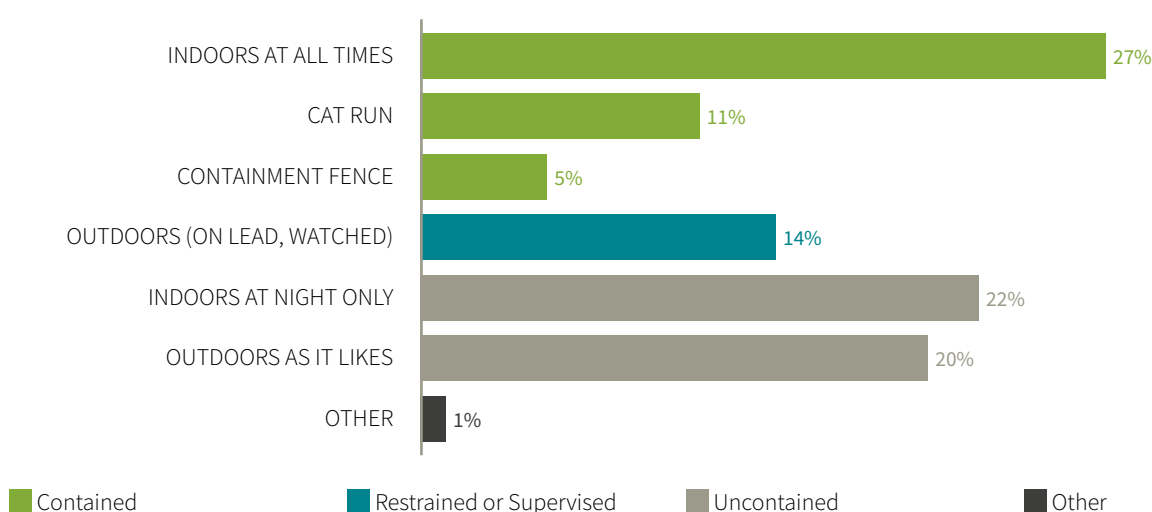
The majority of cat owners (58%) indicated that they keep their cat either contained, restrained or supervised at all times (as shown in **Figure 7**). This includes 44% of owners who keep their cat physically contained (within their house, a cat run or a containment fence), and an additional 14% who allow their cat outdoors but only under supervision, or on a lead.

This finding is in line with the 2019 ACT Pet Census, which found 56% of cats in the ACT are confined.

The remaining 42% of owners give at least one of their cats some sort of unsupervised freedom, including 20% who let their cat outdoors whenever it wishes.⁴

- Within containment suburbs, 97% of owners keep their cats contained, restrained or supervised at all times (compared to 56% in other suburbs). Of the remaining 3%, most indicated they keep their cats inside at night-time only.
- Owners with more cats are slightly more likely to ensure they are either contained, restrained or supervised at all times (increasing from 56% for one cat, to 64% for three or more), and are much more likely to invest in a physical structure to do so (11% of people with one cat have a cat run or containment fence, compared to 21% for those with two cats and 30% for those with three or more).

Figure 7: Current cat containment practices

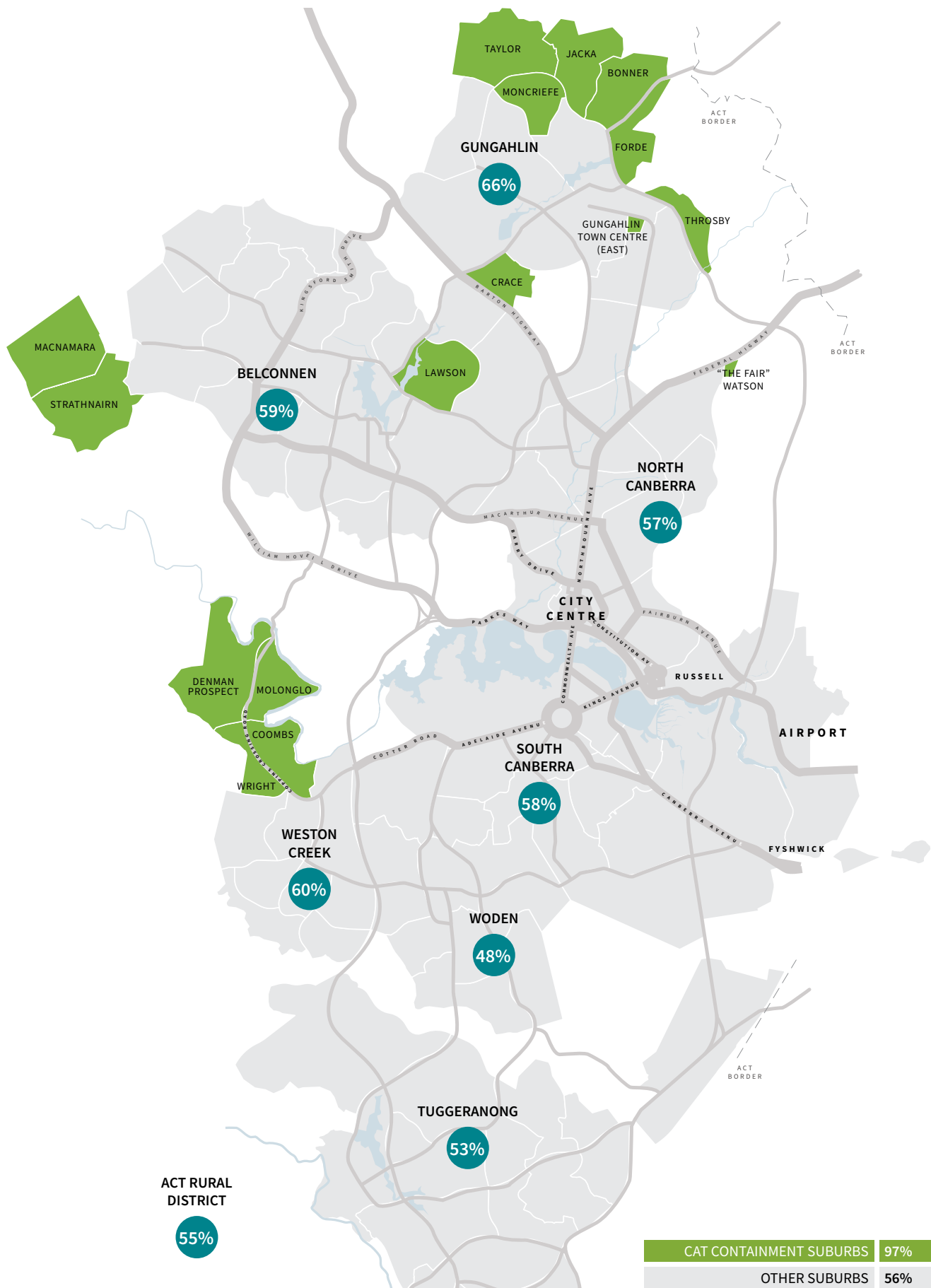


Base: Cat owners (n=2,192)

Rates of cat containment were highest in Gungahlin (due largely to the concentration of cat containment suburbs there), and lowest in Woden, as shown in **Map 2**.

.....
4 Owners who indicated in their text responses that they had different arrangements for different cats, or for the same cat at different times, were classified under the option that included the highest level of cat freedom—for instance, owners of two cats who let **one** of the cats outside whenever it likes, are classified under 'I let my cat outdoors as it likes'. The 1% of unclassified 'other' responses are from people who give their cat(s) some unsupervised freedom.

Map 2: Rates of cat containment across the ACT (Proportions who keep their cat(s) contained, restrained or supervised at all times)



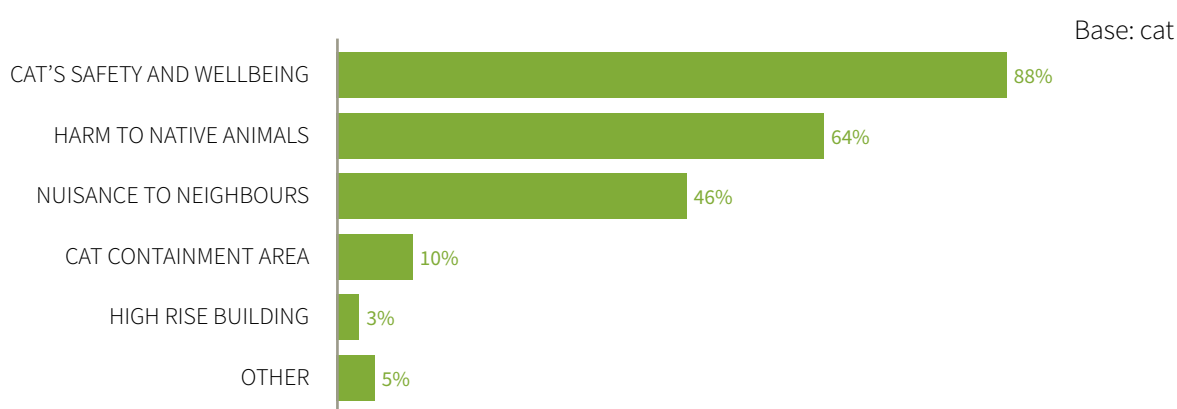
REASONS FOR CONTAINING OR NOT CONTAINING CATS

Cat owners' concern for their pet's wellbeing is the predominant reason cited for keeping the cat contained (see Figure 10), and also the predominant reason for not keeping the cat contained (see **Figure 8**).

Owners who keep their cat(s) contained mostly cited their concern for either the cat itself (88%), or native animals (64%), and/or neighbours (45%).

Within cat containment areas, 93% of owners cited the fact that they lived in such an area as a reason for containing their cat, including 22% who cited this as the only reason. Owners in cat containment areas were also a little less likely to cite the 'concern' reasons mentioned above.

Figure 8: Reasons for containing cats

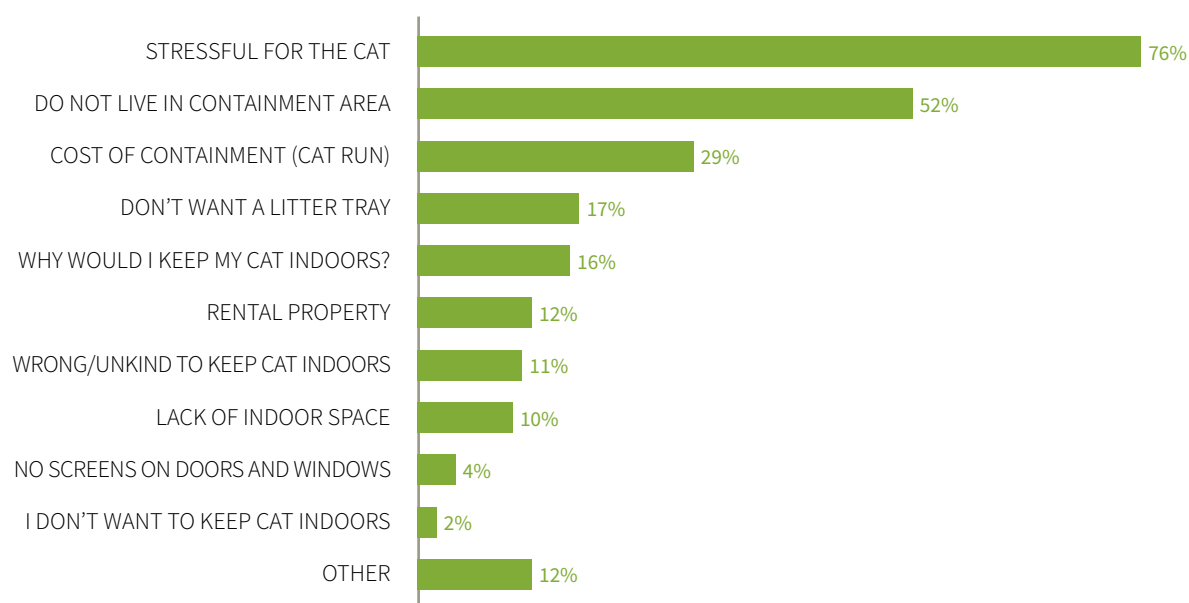


owners who keep their cats contained (n=1,224); multiple response allowed

Owners who did not contain their cats most commonly did so because they believed this would be stressful for the animal (76%); and related to this, 11% expressed the opinion in their free-text comments that containing cats is cruel or unfair to cats in general.

- Over half of owners not containing their cats gave 'I do not live in a cat containment area' as a reason (52%), although this was rarely (only 4% of the time) cited as the only reason.
- The next most commonly given substantive reason for not containing cats, after concern for the animal's stress levels, was the cost of containment measures (28%).

Figure 9: Reasons for not containing cats



Base: cat owners who give their cats unsupervised freedom some or all of the time (n=905); multiple response allowed

LEVEL OF SUPPORT FOR CAT MANAGEMENT MEASURES

The survey canvassed levels of support for five possible cat management measures:

- cat registration/identification;
- financial assistance for low-income cat owners (for instance, to de-sex their cat);
- cat containment;
- more domestic animal enforcement officers; and
- more fines and penalties.

As shown in **Figure 10** and **Figure 11**, support for these measures was generally stronger among non-owners, and not all measures attracted majority support among cat owners. However, all measures attracted more support than opposition, among both cat owners and non-owners.

- Among non-owners, there was majority support for all five cat management proposals canvassed by the survey.
 - > The highest level of support was for cat registration (94% of non-owners—also supported by 73% of owners).⁵
 - > The lowest level of support was for ‘financial assistance for low-income cat owners’; however, this still enjoyed solid majority support (67%).
- By contrast, financial assistance was the most strongly supported measure among cat owners (82%).
 - > The five measures had variable levels of support amongst cat owners. Within this group, there was:
 - > strong majority support for financial assistance for low-income owners (82%) and cat registration (73%);
 - > bare majority support for cat containment (51%), which also recorded the highest level of opposition (35%); and
 - > only minority support for more domestic animal enforcers (46%), as well as for more fines and penalties (41%).

⁵ The ACT Pet Census found lower levels of support for cat registration, but a similar split in opinion between owners and non-owners (64% support among owners, 84% among non-owners).

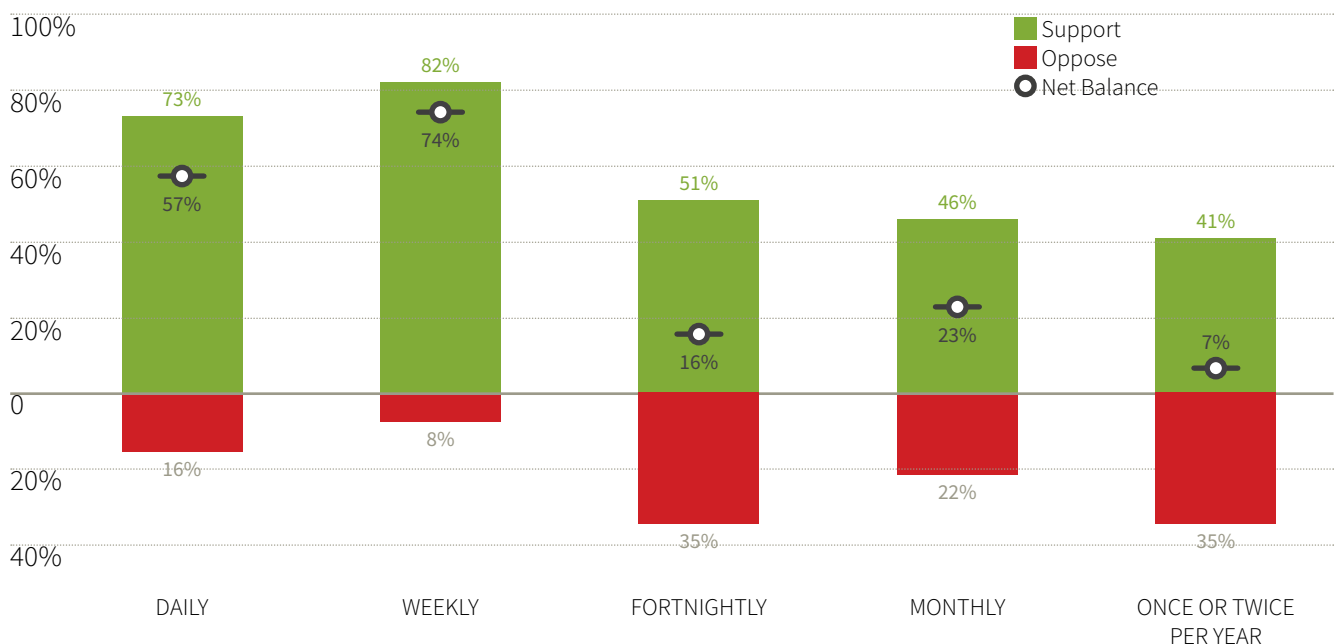
Figure 10 and **Figure 11** also show net balance levels for each of these possible measures. ‘Net balance’ is defined as the level of positive sentiment minus the level of negative sentiment—in this case, support minus opposition. Net balance scores can be negative or positive (from 100 to -100), and any positive score indicates that a measure is more supported than opposed.

All five measures had positive net balance scores, among both cat owners and non-owners.

- The weakest net balance score overall was for ‘more fines and penalties’ amongst cat owners (41% supported, 35% were opposed—a net balance score of 7).
- The weakest net balance score amongst non-owners was for more financial assistance for owners (67% supported, 18% were opposed—a net balance score of 49).

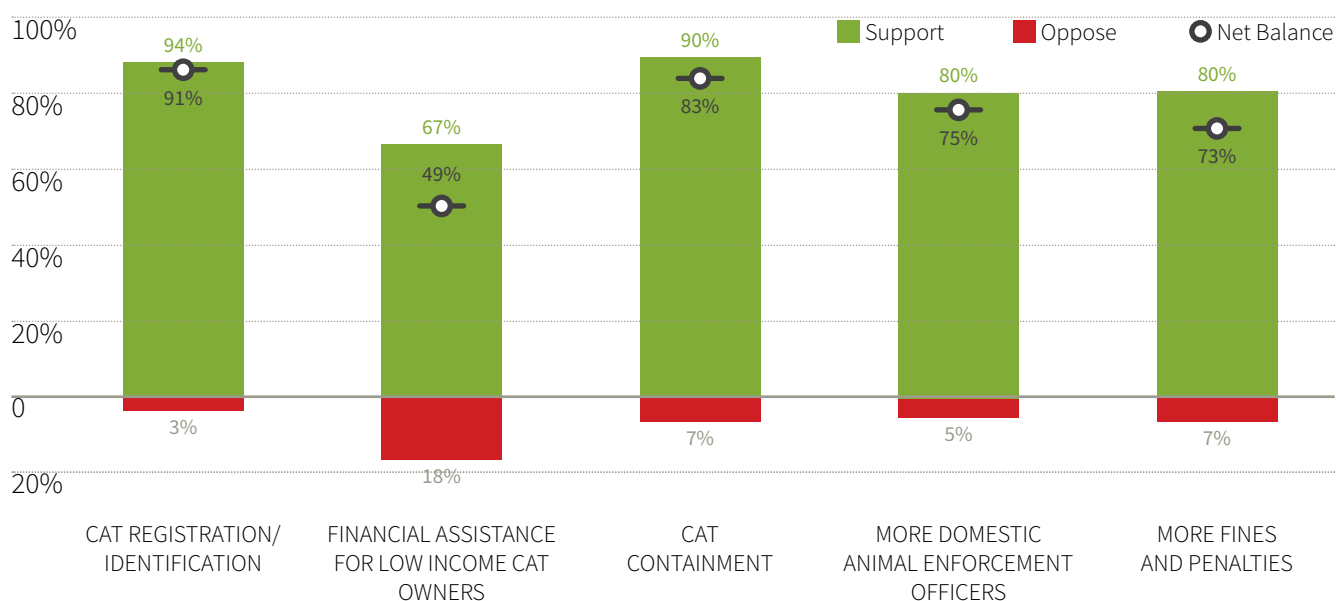
The most polarising of the measures canvassed by the survey was cat containment, which is discussed in more detail below.

Figure 10: Support for cat management measures: cat owners



Base: All cat-owning respondents (n=2,056-2,066). Chart shows the % supporting each measure (green bars), the % opposing (red bars), and the net balance (support minus opposition; narrow rectangles)

Figure 11: Support for cat management measures: non-owners



Base: All non-owner respondents (n=1,678-1,689). Chart shows the % supporting each measure (green bars), the % opposing (red bars), and the net balance (support minus opposition; narrow rectangles)

ATTITUDES TO CAT CONTAINMENT

SUPPORT

The greatest *difference* in support levels for any measure canvassed by the survey was for cat containment, which was supported by most non-owners (90%) but only a bare majority of cat owners (51%).

- Cat containment was more strongly supported by cat owners who already live in containment suburbs—76% of these owners indicated support, compared to 50% in other suburbs.
- *Net balance* support scores for cat containment were lowest among cat owners in Woden (-3), Tuggeranong (8) and South Canberra (10), and highest in Gungahlin (30). With the exception of Tuggeranong, a similar pattern held among non-owners (although at much higher levels of net support).

OPPOSITION

Just over one third of cat owners (35%) indicated they were opposed to cat containment. In addition, opposition to *blanket* cat containment, across the entire ACT, may be slightly higher among cat owners than this figure indicates. Elsewhere in the survey (and discussed further below), respondents were asked to give a preferred timeframe for rolling out cat containment across the entire ACT, and even among cat owners not opposed to cat containment in some form, 5% indicated that this ACT-wide measure should ‘never’ take place.

Considering all respondents who answered either question, 39% of all cat owners (and 8% of non-owners) indicated some kind of opposition to cat containment.

Further analysis of this 39% cohort opposed to cat containment (referred to as *opposed owners* hereafter) found several differences between them and other cat owners (referred to as *non-opposed owners*).

While some opposed cat owners kept their own cat contained, restrained or supervised at all times, this proportion was much lower than among non-opposed owners (30%, compared to 74%). The proportion giving their cat total freedom was also much higher among opposed owners (34%, compared to 11%).

Opposed owners who did not contain their own cat were more likely than non-opposed owners to give ‘I do not understand why I would keep my cat indoors’ as a reason (21%, compared to 4%), and also to express the opinion that it is unkind to keep cats indoors (14%, compared to 4%).⁶

Opposed owners were less likely to be aware of semi-owned or unowned cats in their suburb (17%, compared to 31%), and much less likely to indicate they ever encounter any nuisance from roaming cats (31%, compared to 62%).

Opposed owners also indicated lower levels of support for all other cat management measures canvassed by the survey, including financial assistance for low-income owners. This group recorded negative net balance scores (i.e. were more opposed than supportive of) more domestic animal enforcers, and more fines and penalties.

Opposed owners differed considerably from non-opposed owners in their preference for how cat containment should ideally be introduced. These differences are discussed further below.

METHODS FOR EXPANDING CAT CONTAINMENT

Respondents were presented with three possible approaches to expanding mandatory cat containment in the ACT from the seventeen suburbs where it is currently in place:

- **Phasing-in approach** – gradually add additional identified suburbs over time
- **Grandfathered approach** – only new cats adopted/purchased after an established date will have to be contained (unless they live in an existing cat containment area)
- **Blanket approach** – declare all remaining suburbs cat containment areas at the one time at a set future date

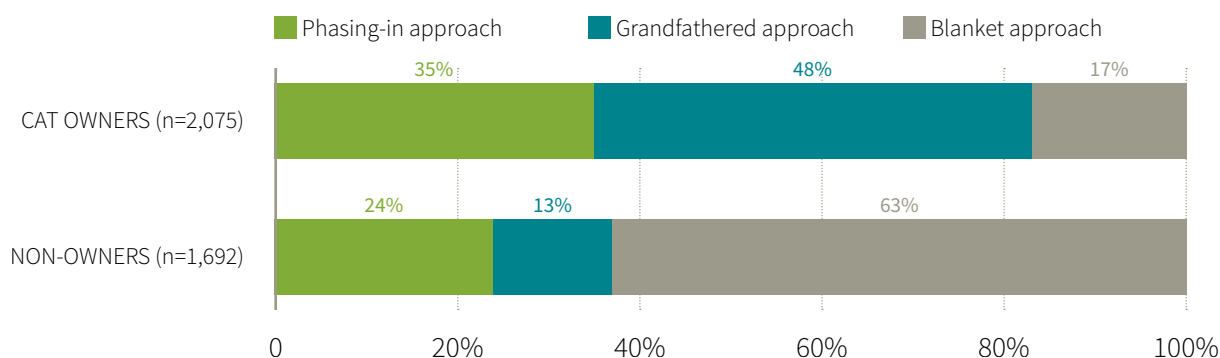
Respondents were asked to nominate which of these three approaches was most reasonable. **Figure 12** shows the extent to which cat owners, and non-owners, preferred each approach.

- Of the three approaches, a blanket approach was most likely to be seen as the reasonable approach by non-owners (63%), but least likely to be seen as reasonable by cat owners (17%).
 - > Given the relative numbers of cat owners and non-owners in the ACT, this measure is likely to be the first preference of approximately half of the overall ACT community.
- Amongst cat owners, a grandfathered approach is most preferred (46%)—although this is least preferred among non-owners (13%).
- Phasing in approach is second most preferred option in both groups (35% support among cat owners, 24% non-owners).

Amongst cat owners, the preference for a grandfathered approach is most pronounced among those who oppose the expansion of cat containment altogether. Among these opposed owners, 69% prefer a grandfathered approach, with almost all of the remainder (30%) preferring phasing-in. Among non-opposed owners, preferences are much more evenly divided (39% phasing in, 34% grandfathered, 27% blanket).

⁶ Note that this response was coded from the verbatim comments and was not presented to all respondents. As **absolute** percentages these figures should be treated with caution, as more respondents are likely to have selected this option had it been explicitly offered.

Figure 12: Preferred approach to expanding cat containment in the ACT

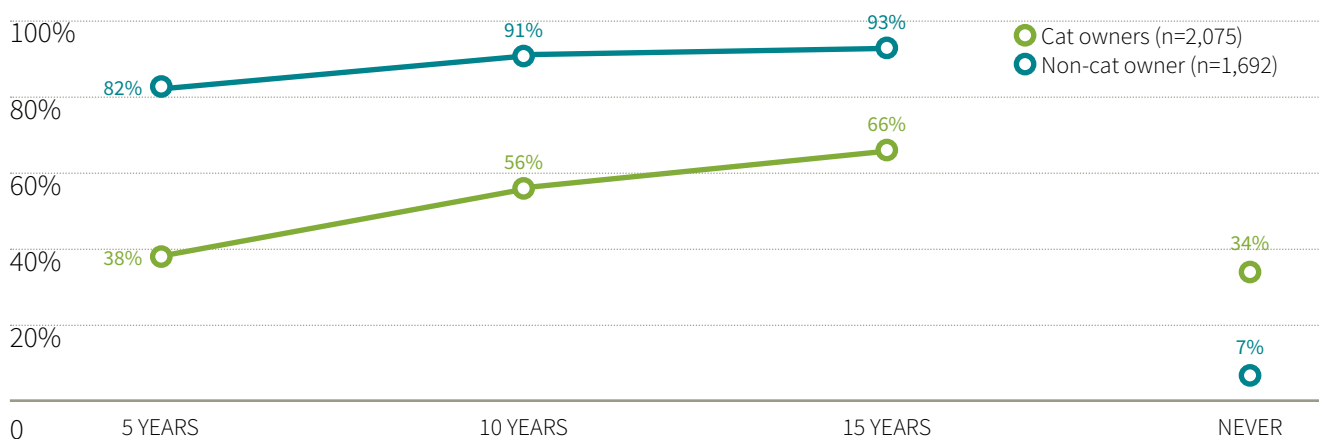


Single response; respondents were asked to indicate what they considered the ‘most reasonable’ approach

Respondents were also asked to indicate a reasonable timeframe for all pets to be contained within all suburbs. Responses of cat owners and non-owners are shown in **Figure 13**.

- More than one third of cat owners think it will never be reasonable to implement cat containment in all suburbs (34%, compared to 7% among non-owners). As mentioned earlier, this includes a small proportion of cat owners who are not opposed to cat containment in some form.
- The shortest possible timeframe (five years) is seen as reasonable by 82% of non-owners (and hence, given the relative proportion of non-owners in the ACT, by a majority of the ACT community as a whole).
- Only 38% of cat owners consider five years the most reasonable timeframe, although a majority (56%) would accept a timeframe of 10 years.
- Cat owners already within cat containment suburbs are more likely to accept shorter timeframes (55% consider five years reasonable, and 78% would accept 10 years).

Figure 13: Preferred timeframe



Respondents asked to nominate a reasonable timeframe for total pet containment in all suburbs. Apart from ‘Never’, results shown are cumulative (i.e. 10 years includes the proportion who selected 5 years; 15 years includes the proportion who selected 5 or 10 years)

The background is a solid green color. Overlaid on this are several thin white lines that intersect to form a series of triangles and other geometric shapes. The lines appear to be part of a larger, partially visible design that extends beyond the edges of the page.

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Director-General, Environment and Planning Directorate,
ACT Government, GPO Box 158, Canberra ACT 2601.

Telephone: 02 6207 1923

Website: www.environment.act.gov.au