

Friends of Grasslands

supporting native grassy ecosystems

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Standing Committee on the Environment and Energy

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Dear Sir/Madam

Inquiry into the problem of feral and domestic cats in Australia

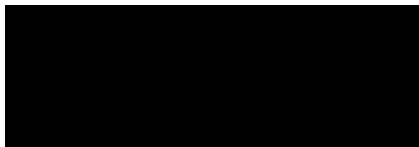
Friends of Grasslands (FOG) is a community group dedicated to the conservation of natural temperate grassy ecosystems in south-eastern Australia. FOG advocates, educates and advises on matters to do with the conservation of grassy ecosystems, and carries out surveys and other on-ground work. FOG is based in Canberra and its members include professional scientists, landowners, land managers and interested members of the public.

Many grassy ecosystems have been subject to significant disturbance and are now listed nationally as threatened, e.g. Lowland Grassy Woodland in the South East Corner Bioregion, Natural Temperate Grassland of the South Eastern Highlands and White Box-Yellow Box-Blakely's Red Gum Grassy Woodland and Derived Native Grassland are all listed as critically endangered. These ecological communities are home to or used by a number of bird and reptile species that are also listed as threatened. Such reptile species in grassland communities include the Grassland Earless Dragon (endangered), Striped Legless Lizard (vulnerable) and Pink Tailed Worm Lizard (vulnerable) are all potentially subject to predation by cats. Bird species in grassy woodland communities include the Superb Parrot (vulnerable), Scarlet Robin (vulnerable in the ACT) and White Winged Triller (vulnerable in the ACT).

In the ACT we are conscious of potential impacts of both domestic and feral cats on these species because of the proximity of urban areas to high quality grassland and grassy woodland reserves. Cat containment is mandatory in new suburbs adjoining reserves, and expansion of cat containment is being considered (see the *Draft ACT Cat Plan 2019-29*). In response to public consultation on this draft plan, FOG's view is that cat containment should extend across the whole of the ACT as soon as possible. In fact, the ideal situation is for cat containment to extend to all urban areas within Australia. While recognizing that cats have a role in control of vermin in rural areas, we consider it essential that options for expanding cat containment to rural areas be considered and that other pest control methods be investigated in these areas.

For cat containment to work in reducing impacts on wildlife, both compliance and enforcement are very important and need to be resourced adequately. While many of our conservation laws are potentially effective, in practice they often fall down because of inadequate resources allocated to compliance and enforcement, and cat containment is unlikely to be any different. As well, community education about the need for and advantages of cat containment needs to be resourced adequately to ensure effective uptake of such measures.

Yours sincerely



Geoff Robertson
President

22 July 2020