



KOoyongKoot ALLIANCE

KooyongKoot Alliance Position Statement

Cat Curfews

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Felis catus is major threat to native wildlife and should be subject to a 24-hour curfew.

At present Stonnington, Boroondara and Glen Eira Council areas have no cat curfew and Monash and Whitehorse Councils have night-time curfews only.

Research by the Australian Government's National Environmental Science (NES) Program quantified the impact of Australia's pet cat population on wildlife at a national scale. The study, conducted by Legge, et al.¹, found that collectively, pet cats kill 390 million animals per year across Australia, and on average, each roaming pet cat kills 40 native reptiles, 38 native birds and 32 native mammals (i.e., 110 native animals) per year.

In Boroondara for example, in 2021, there were a reported total of 5,403 registered pet cats². By applying reclaim data from the RSPCA, an average of only 7% of cats impounded are registered prior to release³. From this we can estimate that there are at present 77,185 pet cats in the City of Boroondara. Without a cat curfew, they are all free to roam.

The NES Program further found densities of 40–70 roaming pet cats per square kilometre in suburbs. The City of Boroondara covers an area of 60 square kilometres⁴, and so from this we can estimate that there are between 2,400–4,200 cats currently roaming the City of Boroondara. If each of these cats kill 110 native animals per year⁵, then we can approximate that between 264,000–462,000 native animals are killed in Boroondara every year. If we are look at the earlier figures above however, telling us that 77,185 pet cats are (potentially) roaming in Boroondara, then the kill rate of native animals will be approximately 8,490,350. That is, close to 8.5 million. Further, if statistics were available regarding the numbers of feral and stray cats in the area—known to kill 75% more than domestic cats⁶—this figure would be considerably higher. Cats are an introduced species and as such our native wildlife is not adapted to live with them, cats kill for fun, not for food.

It is important to remember that nighttime curfews don't protect birds and especially reptiles from daytime attacks.

Feral cats are an enormous problem for wildlife – across Australia, Cats have played a leading role in most of Australia's 34 mammal extinctions since 1788, and are a big reason

¹ S. Legge, P. L. Taggart, C. R. Dickman, J. L. Read, and J. C. Z. Woinarski, "Cat-dependent diseases cost Australia AU\$6 billion per year through impacts on human health and livestock production," *Wildlife Research*, vol. 47, no. 8, pp. 731–746, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1071/WR20089>.

² Boroondara City Council. "City of Boroondara domestic animal management plan 2021–2025: responsible pet ownership," Boroondara City Council. Victoria, 2021.

³ Ibid.

⁴ City of Boroondara. "City of Boroondara annual report 2021–2022," Victoria, 2022.

⁵ S. Legge, P. L. Taggart, C. R. Dickman, J. L. Read, and J. C. Z. Woinarski, "Cat-dependent diseases cost Australia AU\$6 billion per year through impacts on human health and livestock production," *Wildlife Research*, vol. 47, no. 8, pp. 731–746, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1071/WR20089>.

⁶ S. Legge, J. C. Z. Woinarski, C. Dickman, B. P. Murphy, L. Woolley, and M. C. Calver, "We need to worry about Bella and Charlie: the impacts of pet cats on Australian wildlife," *Wildlife Research*, vol. 47, no. 8, pp. 523–539, 2020, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1071/WR19174>.

why populations of at least 123 other threatened native species are declining. (Invasive species Council)

Further cats are the primary host of the parasite *Toxoplasma gondii* that causes the disease toxoplasmosis. This parasite can be transmitted from cats to other animals, including humans, where it takes up residence in the brain⁷. Due to the prevalence of cats in human societies, about one in three people worldwide are unwitting hosts of *Toxoplasma gondii*⁸. It is contracted by ingesting food or water contaminated by cat excrement where it goes about taking control of the immune system. There is a growing body of evidence that this parasite is linked to serious neurological disorders in people, including schizophrenia, intermittent explosive rage disorder, suicide, mood swings, depression and anxiety⁹. There is a disproportionately high presence of toxoplasma in people who die in traffic accidents, and 20% of cases of schizophrenia are related to the presence of toxoplasma cysts. It is believed that more than one million suicide attempts worldwide are related to the parasite¹⁰. It can also kill human fetuses¹¹.

In summary, cats, are predatory by nature, spreader of dangerous parasites and have a major negative impact on native wildlife.

The KKA advocate for our 5 Gardiners Creek Catchment councils to follow the lead of Knox City Council who introduced a 24-hour cat curfew in 2023 thereby protecting native wildlife and the health and safety of citizens as well as providing a safe secure environment for domestic cats and providing improved health, safety and longevity – as well as better neighbourhood relations!

Curfews must not just be implemented but enforced as well.

⁷ M. C. Pineda, "Toxoplasma: the parasite that takes over our brains," 5 January 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://theconversation.com/toxoplasma-the-parasite-that-takes-over-our-brains-197100>

⁸ S. Arrunda *et al.*, "Clinical manifestations and visual outcomes associated with ocular toxoplasmosis in a Brazilian population," *Scientific Reports*, vol. 11, no. 3137, 2021, doi: <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41598-021-82830>

⁹ B. Sullivan, "Is the brain parasite Toxoplasma manipulating your behaviour, or is your immune system to blame?," 14 May 2019. [Online]. Available: <https://theconversation.com/is-the-brain-parasite-toxoplasma-manipulating-your-behavior-or-is-your-immune-system-to-blame-116718>

¹⁰ M. C. Pineda, "Toxoplasma: the parasite that takes over our brains," 5 January 2023. [Online]. Available: <https://theconversation.com/toxoplasma-the-parasite-that-takes-over-our-brains-197100>

¹¹ Arranz-Solís, D., Mukhopadhyay, D., & Saeij, J. J. P. (2021). Toxoplasma effectors that affect pregnancy outcome. *National Library of Medicine*, 37(4), 283-295. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pt.2020.10.013>