

**Government Response to
Report of Environment Committee
on
Petition of Erica Rowlands: Mandate the registration and desexing
of pet cats and kittens**

Presented to the House of Representatives

In accordance with Standing Order 256

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Introduction

- 1 The Government has carefully considered the Environment Committee's report on the Petition of Erica Rowlands: Mandate the registration and desexing of pet cats and kittens (the Petition).
- 2 The Government welcomes the Committee's report, which highlighted the important issue of cat management with regard to registration, desexing, and microchipping.
- 3 The Government responds to the Committee's report in accordance with Standing Order 256.

Background

- 4 On 10 November 2021, Erica Rowlands (the Petitioner), presented the Petition to the House of Representatives. The petition requested "that the House of Representatives pass legislation requiring all domestic cats to be registered via microchip to their legal owners, and to be desexed unless kept contained by registered cat breeders."
- 5 The Petitioner stated the following reason for the Petition: "It is widely known that cats cause a problem for native species, and that rescue groups face relentless battle against the effects of irresponsible owners. We have committed as a nation to invest in the goal of being predator free by 2050, but with no improvement in sight for the management of pet cats, or the elimination of feral populations. Requiring cats to be registered and desexed will reduce their populations, enforce responsible cat ownership, and protect our wildlife."
- 6 The Petitioner desired action on the management of cats to support achieving the goal of New Zealand being predator free by 2050.
- 7 The Environment Committee (the Committee) considered the Petition, hearing from a range of submitters. The Committee produced a report on its findings, recommending legislation be developed to implement a nationwide cat management framework. The Ministry for Primary Industries, Department of Internal Affairs, and the Department of Conservation were consulted in this process.

Recommendations and government response

- 8 In its report, the Committee recommended that legislation is developed to implement a nationwide cat management framework based on the principle that

cats should be registered, desexed, and microchipped, with appropriate exemptions.

- 9 The Government recognises merits in the Committee's recommendation. However, the Government does not believe that the development of a nationwide cat management framework is a priority at this time.
- 10 The Committee proposed duplicating the framework already in place for dogs, citing changes in public attitudes as well as options for enforcement following the enactment of the Dog Control Act 1996.
- 11 The Government considers that although there are some issues in common across dogs and cats, the current dog control model is not easily transferrable to the management of cats.
- 12 Addressing the concerns raised by the Petitioner and the Committee's report will not only require regulatory change but also a cultural shift in how New Zealanders perceive cats and their impact on the environment. Exploring how to achieve this would necessitate involvement from agencies across Government, as well as consideration of potential impacts on the local government sector.

Conclusion

- 13 The Government acknowledges the growing interest in changing how cats are managed in New Zealand. However, there is currently no scope to advance regulation, as described by the Committee, to control and register cats.
- 14 During this term, the Conservation portfolio will investigate refreshing New Zealand's Predator Free 2050 Strategy. Considering regulations to control and register cats may form a part of this work.
- 15 The Government would like to thank the petitioner and the Environment Committee for raising this issue.