

Heather Havens

President The Cat Association of the Northern Territory

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Date: 11 August 2025

To The Committee of the Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory.

Dear Committee Members,

I am writing to make a submission regarding the proposed legislative amendments concerning the welfare and protection of domestic animals, with specific emphasis on the pressing issue of abandonment. The Cat Association of the Northern Territory has, over many years, witnessed firsthand the devastating impact that abandonment has on companion animals and our community at large.

It is essential that our laws reflect not only the moral responsibility we have to our animals, but also the practical realities faced by rescue organizations, local governments, and everyday citizens. Animals that are discarded or left to fend for themselves are placed in an impossible situation, often resulting in prolonged suffering and preventable death.

We support the introduction of stronger legislative measures to deter abandonment and provide mechanisms for enforcement, ensuring that those who fail in their duty of care can be held accountable.

The Cat Association will only comment on the New Section 23 E Abandoned Animals

### **New Section 23 E Abandoned animals**

This new section addresses issues that are considered both animal cruelty and a financial cost to taxpayers.

#### **cruelty**

Abandonment places vulnerable animals at immediate risk, stripping them of shelter, reliable food sources, and the safety that comes from responsible care. These animals, thrust suddenly into unfamiliar surroundings, often struggle to adapt, facing daily threats from vehicles, other animals, and the elements. Many lack the necessary survival skills, and their suffering begins the moment they are left behind.

Unaccustomed to fending for themselves. Starvation is a horrible death.

### **Financial Burden to the taxpayer**

Beyond the immediate welfare concerns, abandonment can also have cascading effects on the broader community. Stray animals may become vectors for disease, contribute to the spread of parasites, and strain the resources of local animal welfare organizations. Municipalities are often forced to divert funding and manpower to address the problem, taking away from other vital services. The emotional toll on compassionate community members who encounter suffering animals should not be underestimated, as many are left distressed by the sight of pets left to fend for themselves or perish needlessly.

Trapping and euthanizing abandoned cat's costs between \$400 and \$600.

Abandoning cats or other animals constitutes a form of animal cruelty, as supported by substantial research in the field. Animal abandonment also incurs significant costs, which can be substantiated by statistics from the Darwin and Palmerston City Council.

The Cat Association of the Northern Territory thanks the Legislative Assembly Committee for inviting us to present our case regarding abandoned animals.

Kind regards,

Heather Havens

President, Cat Association of the Northern Territory