



South West  
NRM



# Case Study

2020 – 2023

Responsible pet ownership  
behaviour change campaign

## The Greater Bunbury urban region is home to a high density population of the critically endangered ngawyr or western ringtail possum (*Pseudocheirus occidentalis*).

A key threat to the ngawyr in this area is predation from foxes, cats and domestic dogs. The density of domestic cats and dogs in urban areas is many times higher than the density of wild predators so the impact they can have, if not responsibly managed, is significant.

South West NRM's behaviour change program used the principles of community-based social marketing to understand and overcome the barriers to keeping cats enclosed at home and keeping dogs inside at night.

Detailed surveys and focus groups with pet owners informed the design of the program, which included education events, a Facebook community group, a cat enclosure rebate program and the donation of books to local schools and libraries.

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### Funding program

This project was delivered by South West NRM, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.

### Funding

National Landcare Program – \$150,000

### Regional coverage

Greater Bunbury Region



### SW NRM program

Creating safe havens for the Western Ringtail Possum and priority nationally listed threatened species in the South West.

### Stakeholders

Local cat and dog owners, pet supply businesses, vets, local community.

### Project manager

Jaya Vaughan and Lorraine Duffy

### Program manager

Dr Brian Chambers



National  
Landcare  
Program





## Key achievements

- Initial survey of pet owner behaviour yielded over 900 responses, allowing a high level of confidence in program design.
- Development of communication materials including video series with local pet owners and pet behaviourist, Dr Kate Kindsay, website and guides to keeping cats contained.
- Cat enclosure rebate program supported residents of the Greater Bunbury region to contain 44 cats, potentially saving over 50,000 native animals over a 10-year period.
- Pet owner market day with catio supplier displays, pet behaviouralist and fauna rehabilitation presentations attended by 250 pet owners.
- Over 350 members of the Responsible Pet Owners SW WA Facebook group.
- 'No Place Like Home' book by Meredith Spencer published and donated to local schools and libraries to educate children on the importance of protecting threatened native wildlife.
- Follow-up behaviour survey with 700+ pet owners to measure campaign effectiveness found that:
  - The proportion reporting that they contain their cats increased from 56% to 74%.
  - The proportion reporting that they contain their dogs at night increased from 32% to 43%.



Image Credit: Forsyth, Glen Iris





## Potential future activities

This program has demonstrated the effectiveness of responsible pet ownership campaigns. South West NRM will continue to advocate for State and local governments to adopt cat enclosure rebate programs to build on this success.