

As a result of the FOI we received a copy of a heavily edited report dated September 08, a subsequent report, dated December 08 (attached) and a copy of a three page Report (NSW Department of Primary Industries – Reports of large black cats in NSW; 26th March 2009; attached) we assume has been provided to your office (March 2009 Report) as response to the information you requested.

As a result of selective editing we are concerned that the information provided in the March 2009 Report does not present a balanced view, particularly when compared to previous DPI reports (including December 08). In fact in our view the March 2009 Report leaves you ill informed if not ignorant of the matters investigated, as set out in the extracts below, vis-à-vis ¹:

- Page 1 para 1; *“because people persistently (albeit infrequently) see and report: ……….”*
This view would be contested by the reliable eyewitness sightings (>500) of a large black cat we have on record.
- Page 1 para 3; *“the report however concluded that none of the available evidence conclusively proved the presence of free ranging exotic large cats in NSW”.*
This statement is misleading and does not accurately reflect the wording or the intent of the NSW DPI, 2003 or the December 2008 Reports. The conclusion of the NSW DPI December 2008 report actually states that:
“This report has a similar conclusion to previous report by NSW Agriculture on this phenomenon. There is no scientific evidence found during this review that conclusively proves the presence of free ranging exotic large cats in NSW, but a presence cannot be discounted and it seems more likely than not on available evidence that such animals do exist in NSW.”
- Page 2 para 5; *“However by themselves, the eyewitness reports are not a reliable scientific resource”*
Notwithstanding over 500 recorded sightings are very compelling evidence that cannot be discounted.
- Page 2 para 6; *“Some paw prints have been found to be consistent with those of a medium sized cat.”*
This sentence has been edited to stop a word short of the sentence in the referenced e-mail in the December 2008 Report in which D. Pepper-Edwards (large cat expert; Taronga Zoo) states that he found the prints to be *“consistent with a medium sized cat – Puma”*
- Page 3 dot point 1; *“However none of the evidence provides conclusive evidence of the existence of a large cat and the most likely origin is from dog paws”*
Nowhere in the DPI reports is there any mention of dog paws nor has DPI refuted the prints are those of a cat. Several professionals have attested to the fact that the large number of plaster casts and photographs of pug prints we have presented are those of a large cat(s).

There are many more inaccuracies and unsubstantiated statements which do not reflect facts. You will understand our concern that you are not able to make a properly informed decision on the March 2009 Report provided to your office.

This is especially so, as we now know the NSW DPI, December 08 Report (provided to the Minister’s Office) is a report that substantially supports the view we have been expressing. We are referred to as but we wish to make it clear we are acting on behalf of a very large group of concerned individuals within the NSW community.

¹ quotes from the March 2009 Report are in italics

It is our view that the NSW Government has a duty of care, but the government must make the decision on how to deliver the final outcome recognising it is privy to a broad body of evidence provided by our group and many others. At a minimum we have suggested that the Government publicly acknowledge the existence of these animals and the potential risks they present.

We also previously requested the Government raise awareness through proper public education including how to manage an encounter with these animals and express precaution to those living on the fringe of bushland especially those with young children or the aged. Bushwalkers should be warned to be vigilant and not walk alone and farmers with stock should be advised that these animals exist so they can properly protect their stock and their livelihood.

We recognise it may be unrealistic to trap or shoot these animals but have spoken with DPI staff who concur that our desire outlined above is not unreasonable or cost prohibitive. It is difficult to reconcile why the Government is making every effort to remain in denial and not act, especially considering the first step of dealing with this problem appears to be neither unreasonable nor costly.

Whilst we understand this matter may be low on your priority list we reiterate that based on the body of evidence it may only be a matter of time before we are faced with a tragic event associated with these animals. We would be pleased to have the opportunity to present you with the **evidence/facts** we have and the other side of the story that is apparently being avoided.

We trust this information will clarify the inconsistencies in the March 2009 Report and look forward to your response.

Yours faithfully

cc: The Hon. Barry O'Farrell MP.
The Hon. Ray Williams MP
Hawkesbury Mayor: Bart Bassett

encl: NSW DPI Report December 2008
Premiers Report (NSW Department of Primary Industries – Reports of large black cats in NSW; 26th March 2009)