

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 1 June 2026

Partially
Confidential

Summary

This submission addresses the genetic status, ecological role, cultural significance, and legislative treatment of dingoes in NSW national parks, and argues that current frameworks are ecologically, culturally, and legally inadequate.

The classification of dingoes as 'wild dogs' in NSW is not a biological finding, it is a policy position informed by colonial-era perceptions of dingoes as a threat to pastoral interests. Genetic research consistently demonstrates that most canids managed as 'wild dogs' are genetically dingoes.

Dingoes are not a pest on Country for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. They are culturally significant beings with living relationships to First Nations communities, held in place-based stories, governance obligations, and kinship. Colonial dispossession did not destroy this knowledge; it denied the conditions under which that knowledge could do its ecological and cultural work. Management frameworks that exclude First Nations governance are not merely culturally deficient - they are ecologically inadequate.

Dingoes remain the only native mammals in NSW exempt from the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. This is incoherent with any genuine conservation framework and must be revised. Genuine incorporation of First Nations knowledge requires legislative recognition of First Nations governance authority over dingoes on Country. Not consultation about western management decisions. Cultural knowledge and western science must be treated as co-equal and non-substitutable.

Submission

I am an ecologist and PhD student currently working on Yuin Country, in partnership with the Yuin community, to research dingoes through Indigenous and Western knowledge lenses. My work sits at the intersection of conservation ecology and Indigenous knowledge systems and is conducted in genuine engagement with Yuin people. My professional background includes several years of field ecology experience in camera trap monitoring, acoustic monitoring, and eDNA surveys, as well as roles in University education and citizen science. I submit on the basis of this professional experience, my field work on Country, and my engagement with Indigenous knowledge holders along with the scientific literature on dingo ecology and conservation.

The classification of dingoes as 'wild dogs' in NSW is not a biological finding. It is a policy position, informed by a colonialist lens, and one that is increasingly at odds with genetic evidence.

Research from UNSW and Adelaide University has consistently demonstrated that the majority of canids referred to as 'wild dogs' by state governments are genetically

dingoes. This includes animals with black, white, or brown markings that continue to carry high levels of dingo DNA. No robust genetic threshold currently exists in NSW policy to distinguish dingoes from feral domestic dogs for management purposes. This is a distinction that has significant implications for both conservation outcomes and cultural practice.

The 'wild dog' classification carries ecological and cultural consequences beyond its immediate management implications. It represents the renaming of a culturally and ecologically significant native species as a pest or threat. This is a substitution that has stripped recognition of the dingo's identity, function, and significance from the legislative frameworks that govern its management.

Dingoes function as apex predators whose presence regulates mesopredator populations, particularly foxes and feral cats, and shapes vertebrate communities through trophic cascades. The removal or suppression of dingoes from a landscape produces predictable and well-documented ecological consequences: mesopredator release, decline of small and medium-sized native vertebrates, and changes in vegetation structure through altered herbivore pressure.

Management decisions affecting dingoes in national parks where population metrics are absent are currently being made without the scientific evidence base that would normally be required for species management.

Dingoes are not a pest on Country. Dingoes are a relational being, a kinship partner, a cultural presence, a subject of place-based stories and governance obligations held by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The relationship between people and the dingo is not historical. It is living.

Through my engagement with the Yuin community on Yuin Country, I have observed and participated in community events where the depth of connection to the dingo is evident. Yuin Elders and community members have consistently expressed a strong interest in dingo research that recognises the dingoes' cultural and ecological significance. The cultural knowledge of the dingo, such as place-based stories, governance obligations, and observations of local dingo populations, is held and actively shared within the community.

Colonial dispossession did not destroy First Nations knowledge of the dingo. It denied the conditions under which that living knowledge could do its ecological and cultural work. The knowledge is held. The care is present. The community connection to dingoes is sustained. What is absent is the legal protection, governance space, and institutional recognition that would allow custodianship of the dingo to function as it once did, and as it needs to, for the health of Country. Management frameworks that exclude or tokenise First Nations knowledge and governance are not merely culturally deficient. They are ecologically inadequate.

Dingoes are the only native mammals in NSW specifically exempt from protections under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. This exemption has facilitated their classification as companion animals under the Companion Animals Act 1998 and enabled routine lethal management, including 1080 baiting, in national parks, conservation areas, and other public lands.

This framework is not fit for purpose. It is ecologically incoherent, culturally disrespectful, and increasingly inconsistent with the scientific evidence. A native apex predator with 3,500 to 5,000 years of ecological and cultural relationship with this continent, and recognised cultural significance for First Nations people across Australia, has no legal protection and is actively culled in protected areas.

The existing framework reflects colonial-era perceptions of the dingo as a threat to pastoral interests. That perception is now contradicted by the ecological science, the genetic evidence, and the cultural knowledge of First Nations communities. The framework must be revised.

The inquiry asks how Indigenous knowledge and leadership could be more effectively incorporated into dingo conservation practices. This framing is worth examining closely. Effective engagement with Indigenous knowledge is not a matter of consulting First Nations people about western management decisions. It requires recognising First Nations governance of Country as the framework within which conservation decisions are made, not an add-on to scientific management.

My work applies a cultural and western science approach, holding Indigenous and western knowledge systems in genuine co-production, each maintaining its distinctness and contributing what the other cannot. In practice, this means cultural governance and cultural knowledge guide the research design, the interpretation of findings, and the priorities of the work. Western ecological science provides the quantitative evidence (population metrics, genetic data, occupancy models) that supports conservation decision-making and policy advocacy.

Genuine incorporation of First Nations knowledge and leadership requires more than consultation mechanisms. It requires legislative recognition of First Nations governance authority over dingoes on Country, resourcing of Indigenous-led research and monitoring, and co-management frameworks that treat cultural science and western science as co-equal contributors.

Recommendations

On the basis of this submission, I make the following recommendations:

1. Remove the exemption of dingoes from the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and reclassify them as native fauna requiring active protection.

2. Cease 1080 baiting and culling of dingoes in NSW national parks and conservation areas, pending the outcomes of this inquiry.
3. Mandate genuine First Nations leadership — not consultation — in all management decisions affecting dingoes on Country, including decision-making authority over Mirrigaan on Yuin Country.
4. Fund Indigenous knowledge-led dingo research partnerships, beginning on Country where community capacity, cultural knowledge, and willingness already exist.
5. Develop co-management frameworks for dingoes in NSW national parks that treat First Nations governance and western ecological science as co-equal and non-substitutable.
6. Resource community-based monitoring of dingo populations through First Nations ranger programs and Indigenous Protected Area frameworks.
7. Commission the first systematic ecological and genetic study of dingoes on Yuin Country and the NSW far south coast, conducted in genuine partnership with Yuin Nation.