

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

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I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to the inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales.

Dingoes are an ecologically significant apex predator, a culturally important species to First Nations peoples, and a native animal that plays a critical role in maintaining ecosystem balance across Australia. Current management approaches in New South Wales continue to rely heavily on lethal control methods, including aerial baiting, trapping, and shooting, despite growing scientific evidence that these practices are ineffective in achieving long-term ecological stability and may actively worsen ecosystem disruption.

This submission calls for a science-based, humane, and culturally informed approach to dingo management in New South Wales.

## # 1. End Lethal Control of Dingoes in National Parks

Lethal control methods such as 1080 poison baiting, trapping, and shooting should cease within National Parks and protected areas.

National Parks exist to conserve biodiversity and ecological integrity. The routine killing of apex predators within conservation reserves is fundamentally inconsistent with that purpose.

Scientific literature increasingly demonstrates that widespread lethal control can:

- \* Disrupt dingo pack structures and social stability
- \* Increase breeding rates and juvenile dispersal
- \* Cause ecological imbalance through mesopredator release
- \* Reduce natural regulation of invasive species such as foxes and feral cats
- \* Undermine long-term coexistence outcomes for both wildlife and livestock

The use of 1080 poison is of particular concern due to its indiscriminate nature and the suffering it causes to target and non-target animals alike.

Dingoes are highly intelligent, social animals that maintain complex family structures. The destruction of these structures through repeated lethal programs causes ongoing ecological and animal welfare impacts.

Protected areas should function as safe refuges for native wildlife, including dingoes.

## # 2. Recognise Dingoes as Native Wildlife

Dingoes should be formally recognised and protected as native wildlife under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

The current exclusion of dingoes from meaningful biodiversity protection creates an inconsistent and scientifically outdated framework that allows ecologically important native predators to be managed primarily as pests.

Substantial evidence supports the long-term presence of dingoes in Australia over thousands of years, where they have become deeply integrated into Australian ecosystems and ecological processes.

Regardless of ongoing debate regarding genetic purity, wild-living dingoes continue to perform the ecological role of apex predators. Management decisions should prioritise ecological function and conservation outcomes rather than narrow or impractical purity standards.

The NSW Government should:

- \* Recognise dingoes as a native species deserving protection
- \* Establish clear conservation objectives for wild dingo populations
- \* Protect genetically significant populations where appropriate
- \* End broadscale classifications that treat dingoes as vermin within conservation landscapes

## # 3. Support First Nations Leadership and Cultural Custodianship

Dingoes hold profound cultural, spiritual, and kinship significance for many First Nations peoples across Australia.

For thousands of years, dingoes have featured in lore, ceremony, cultural identity, and traditional ecological knowledge systems. Their importance extends well beyond ecological value alone.

Any future dingo management framework in New South Wales should include:

- \* Genuine consultation with Traditional Owners
- \* Increased Indigenous leadership in wildlife management decisions
- \* Co-management opportunities within National Parks
- \* Recognition of cultural knowledge alongside western scientific approaches

First Nations communities should be empowered to participate directly in policy development, conservation planning, and land management relating to dingoes.

A culturally informed management approach would strengthen both conservation outcomes and reconciliation efforts.

#### # 4. Invest in Non-Lethal Coexistence Strategies

The NSW Government should increase financial and practical support for non-lethal livestock protection and coexistence measures.

There are proven alternatives to broadscale lethal control that reduce livestock conflict while allowing dingoes to maintain their ecological role.

These include:

- \* Exclusion fencing
- \* Guardian animals
- \* Improved husbandry practices
- \* Carcass management
- \* Night enclosures and rotational grazing
- \* Targeted deterrent systems

Many landholders already successfully coexist with predators using these methods. Government investment in education, infrastructure grants, and transition support would provide more sustainable long-term outcomes than repeated lethal control programs.

Rather than relying on ongoing poisoning and trapping, public funding should prioritise coexistence and prevention strategies.

## # 5. Ecological Importance of Dingoes

Dingoes perform a critical ecological role as Australia's apex terrestrial predator.

Research has linked healthy dingo populations with:

- \* Reduced fox and feral cat activity
- \* Improved biodiversity outcomes
- \* Reduced overgrazing pressure from herbivores
- \* Greater ecosystem resilience

Removing apex predators from ecosystems frequently causes cascading environmental consequences that can worsen biodiversity decline.

At a time when Australia faces ongoing native species extinctions and ecosystem degradation, the protection of functioning predator systems should be considered a conservation priority.

The current management of dingoes in New South Wales reflects outdated approaches that are increasingly inconsistent with ecological science, animal welfare principles, and cultural recognition.

This inquiry presents an important opportunity to reform dingo policy by:

- \* Ending lethal control in National Parks
- \* Recognising dingoes as protected native wildlife
- \* Supporting First Nations leadership and cultural custodianship
- \* Investing in humane, non-lethal coexistence strategies

Dingoes are not merely a pest species to be controlled. They are an integral part of Australia's ecological and cultural landscape and should be managed accordingly.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this submission.

Sincerely,

Patrick Richardson