

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission made by **Dr. Paula Arcari** in response to the NSW Parliamentary inquiry into Dingo managements across the state's National Parks.

I am an Animal Studies scholar based in Melbourne, Victoria, and have written extensively on issues relating to the use and treatment of both captive and free-living animals. Drawing attention to, and ultimately stopping, the increasing invasion of human animals into the lives and habitats of other animals is one of the central tenets driving my work. Hence my submission to this inquiry, to ensure that, at minimum, dingoes become protected under the Biodiversity Conservation Act and are thereby offered legal protection from being trapped, poisoned and shot in NSW National Parks.

To that end, and in support of the work of Defend the Wild, I would strongly urge that the following recommendations be included in the Committee's final report:

1. **An end to dingo killing within New South Wales National Parks** to protect the ecological function of dingoes and support biodiversity conservation.
2. **Greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in decision-making and place-based management** regarding dingoes in National Parks to ensure the cultural significance of dingoes is reflected in legislation and management.
3. **Financial support and extension services for landholders surrounding National Parks** to implement non-lethal coexistence strategies, ensuring their interests are protected and dingoes can be maintained in the environment.

With reference to the Terms of Reference of this Inquiry, and again acknowledging the work of Defend the Wild in providing this information, I wish to highlight the following points in support of these recommendations:

(a) the genetic status of dingoes, the distinction between dingoes and dogs and recent research into the genetic profile of NSW dingoes

- Current dingo management policies are largely based on outdated genetic research using only 23 genetic markers. Contemporary studies now use up to 195,000 markers and indicate that overwhelmingly, Australia's wild-living canids are dingoes, with hybridisation relatively uncommon in stable, undisturbed populations. In New South Wales, more than three-quarters of sampled wild canids showed over 93% contemporary dingo ancestry.
- Australia does not have an established continent-wide population of feral domestic dogs living independently across ecosystems, and it is now widely understood that the wild canids occupying these landscapes are dingoes performing important ecological functions.

(b) the legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes in New South Wales in national parks

- In New South Wales, the term "[wild dog](#)" is an umbrella term used to collectively refer to dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids. There is no distinction between roaming or stray dogs and dingoes under current legislation.
- Dingoes are the only native mammal specifically exempt from protections under the [Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016](#), allowing lethal control across National Parks.

- Dingoes (under the term 'wild dog') are classified as priority pest animals under [Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans](#) developed by Local Land Services.
- Information obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 revealed that more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) between 2020 and 2025.
- Current policy settings continue to manage dingoes within broad pest management frameworks despite contemporary ecological and genetic research recognising dingoes as an ecologically important native species.

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

- Dingoes are Australia's only native canid and are recognised as an important apex predator and keystone species.
- Dingoes [regulate](#) populations of kangaroos and wallabies, reducing grazing pressure on landscapes.
- Dingoes [eradicate introduced goats](#), reducing pressure on vegetation.
- Dingoes [suppress](#), and in some cases eradicate, foxes through territorial competition and predation easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.
- Dingoes [suppress](#) introduced cats through territorial competition and predation easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.
- [Research](#) suggests that stable dingo populations may suppress fox populations more effectively than poison baiting programs alone.
- Dingoes also contribute to the [suppression](#) of pigs, reducing pressure on landscapes.
- The presence of dingoes influences the behaviour and movement of herbivores and other animals, reducing pressure on vegetation communities.
- The [removal](#) of apex predators can destabilise ecosystems, contributing to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened species.

(d) the cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

- Dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many Cultural Custodians across New South Wales and the wider continent.
- The National First Nations Dingo Declaration calls for a new approach centred around "Caring for Dingoes on Country" and greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management.
- [Oral histories and archaeological research](#) show that Cultural Custodians buried companion dingoes, with evidence that these animals were given intentional burials consistent with ancestral or ceremonial practices.

(e) the impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in National Parks

- Current management programs rely on lethal control methods including 1080 poison baiting, trapping and shooting.
- Removal of dingoes causes trophic cascade.
- Removal of dingoes from ecosystems leads to increases in introduced predators and herbivore pressure.
- Trapping of dingoes raises serious welfare concerns for the time the animal remains in the trap, unable to access food, water or shelter.
- Current management programs do not adequately reflect contemporary ecological science or cultural perspectives relating to dingoes.
- Current management of dingoes in National Parks is largely focused on agricultural protection not biodiversity outcomes.
- No funding is allocated for research and development into non-lethal coexistence strategies for agricultural properties neighbouring National Parks.
- Many Cultural Custodians report feeling excluded from decisions relating to dingo management on their Country.

(f) dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks

- First Nations peoples have cared for dingoes and Country for thousands of years, maintaining deep, ongoing relationships that continue to support healthy landscapes and biodiversity outcomes that benefit all Australians.
- Cultural Custodians are increasingly advocating for Indigenous-led approaches to dingo conservation and management, including expanded roles in National Park governance and decision-making.
- Co-management approaches offer a practical framework to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems with western science in National Parks management, improving both governance and on-ground effectiveness.
- The principles outlined in the National First Nations Dingo Declaration provide a relevant foundation to inform future policy development and support more inclusive and effective dingo management approaches.

(g) Additional points.

- Longstanding lethal control measures have not eliminated the risk of predation on farmed animals, with some studies finding broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes could [exacerbate](#) the risk of predation on calves.
- There is currently no extension services to support landholders to implement non-lethal predator deterrent strategies in New South Wales. Funding currently utilised for broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes and trapping and shooting in National Parks could be re-directed to support neighbouring landholders with coexistence extension services.

- Livestock Guardian Dogs have been [proven](#) effective at reducing or eliminating predation on livestock by dingoes. They also provide other benefits to landholders including deterring macropods (kangaroos and wallabies) from grazing paddocks, protection from foxes and protection from birds of prey.
- There is [widespread anecdotal evidence](#) from landholders that donkeys are effective guardians against canid predators. There is a strong opportunity for the New South Wales Government to support more robust trials into the use of livestock guardian donkeys to support properties neighbouring National Parks.
- Investment is needed into research, development and scaling of coexistence strategies in New South Wales that ensures landholder interests are protected and dingoes can be retained in the environment to play their important ecological role.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Paula Arcari

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