

**Submission
No 66**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mrs Giselle Cooke

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Submission to the Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales

I am making this submission because I believe Australia's native dingo deserves far greater protection within our national parks. These parks should function as refuges for native wildlife, yet current management practices often treat dingoes primarily as pests rather than as an ecologically and culturally significant native species.

Over the past year in particular, I have developed a strong interest in Australia's native dingoes. Through spending time observing a small family group living in the forests of Victoria, I have come to appreciate their intelligence, their complex family relationships and the important role stable packs play within ecosystems. Watching these animals over many months has shown me that they are highly social, cooperative and intelligent. I observed the older male, Yambo, and two younger dingoes, Nerrin and Youti, living together as a stable family group. They displayed clear social bonds, worked together, and generally avoided conflict with people despite living close to a small rural community.

A month ago, Yambo and Nerrin disappeared and have not been seen since. While I do not know what happened to them, it has been deeply upsetting. I cannot help but worry that negative perceptions of dingoes may have contributed to their disappearance. Whether or not that is the case, the experience has highlighted for me how fear, misinformation and long-held misconceptions can influence the way dingoes are viewed and treated. It reinforced my belief that greater public education is essential if we are to move towards evidence-based conservation and coexistence with this remarkable native species.

This personal experience has strengthened my belief that management decisions affecting dingoes should be informed by the best available science, an understanding of their complex social behaviour, and recognition of their ecological and cultural importance.

The current approach in New South Wales raises several concerns.

Firstly, I question whether widespread aerial baiting throughout national parks is consistent with the purpose of these protected areas. National parks exist to conserve native biodiversity. While I recognise that protecting livestock is an important responsibility, broad-scale poisoning across wilderness areas appears to prioritise pest control over conservation without adequately considering the long-term impacts on native dingo populations.

Secondly, the timing and scale of baiting programs deserve closer scrutiny. Removing breeding adults can disrupt stable family groups and reduce the

ecological functions that dingoes perform as apex predators. Scientific research increasingly suggests that healthy dingo populations help regulate ecosystems by suppressing foxes, feral cats and overabundant herbivores, providing benefits for many smaller native species.

I am also concerned about the welfare implications of using 1080 poison. Regardless of one's views on predator control, wildlife management should meet the highest possible animal welfare standards. The suffering associated with poisoning, together with the potential impacts on non-target wildlife, should be carefully examined when considering future management strategies.

The inquiry should also carefully consider the growing body of research regarding the genetic status of dingoes. Management policies should reflect current science rather than relying on outdated assumptions that fail to distinguish between native dingoes, hybrids and feral domestic dogs. If dingoes are recognised as a unique native taxon with important ecological functions, this should be reflected in legislation and management decisions.

Equally important is the cultural significance of dingoes to many First Nations communities. The evidence provided by Aboriginal custodians demonstrates that dingoes are far more than wildlife—they are part of living cultural landscapes, kinship systems and spiritual traditions. Management decisions affecting dingoes should involve genuine consultation with Traditional Owners and incorporate Indigenous knowledge into conservation planning.

I also believe that public education must become a greater priority. Too many Australians still see dingoes only through the lens of fear or as pests to be controlled. Improving public understanding of their ecological role, complex social behaviour and cultural significance would help foster more informed discussions and support management approaches based on science rather than misconceptions.

I encourage the Committee to consider:

- reviewing the use of broad-scale aerial baiting within national parks
- increasing independent monitoring of dingo populations before and after control programs
- recognising dingoes as an important native apex predator in conservation policy
- strengthening collaboration with First Nations communities in dingo management
- investing in research and non-lethal approaches where livestock protection is required, particularly around agricultural land rather than within remote protected areas

- improving public education about the ecological, cultural and behavioural importance of dingoes.

Ultimately, I believe there should be a clearer distinction between managing conflict with livestock on agricultural land and conserving native wildlife within national parks. These objectives are not necessarily incompatible, but current policy appears heavily weighted towards lethal control.

Australia has already lost too many native predators and too many functioning ecosystems. Dingoes play an important ecological and cultural role, and decisions about their future should be based on the best available science, genuine engagement with First Nations knowledge, strong animal welfare principles and the long-term conservation purpose of our national parks.

Over the past year, I have come to see dingoes not simply as predators, but as intelligent, social native animals that are fundamental to healthy ecosystems and deeply significant to many First Nations cultures. I believe Australia has an opportunity to move beyond outdated perceptions and towards management that is informed by science, compassion, education and respect. Future generations deserve to inherit healthy ecosystems where dingoes continue to fulfil the role they have played for thousands of years.

Thank you for considering my submission.