

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Animal Welfare Committee

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Position: Merino Producer
Property:

Executive Summary

As a long-standing Merino sheep producer in Bulahdelah, surrounded by 49,000 hectares of National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) estate, I welcome the opportunity to lodge this submission.

My property occupies a historical Land Grant issued by King George IV to the Australian Agricultural Company in 1824. While agricultural operations have sustainably managed this landscape for over two centuries, our livelihoods, animal welfare, and personal safety are under severe, escalating threat due to a failure by the NPWS to fulfill its statutory land management obligations.

This inquiry must address the regulatory double standards that allow public land managers to evade the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, using unscientific nomenclature to shield destructive feral predators under the guise of "conservation."

Addressing the Terms of Reference

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

- **The Myth of Genetic Purity:** Current scientific definitions permit animals with up to 30% domestic dog DNA to be classified as "pure dingoes." In coastal New South Wales, hybridisation is widespread; there is zero evidence of 100% pure dingoes remaining in the wild.
- **A False Equivalence:** To illustrate the significance of a 4% genetic variance (where animals are cited as 96% dingo), it is worth noting that humans share roughly 96% of their DNA sequence with chimpanzees. Small genetic differences manifest as drastically different behavioural and physical traits.
- **Classification Reality:** The wild canids emerging from the NPWS estate into agricultural zones display the behaviour, pack structures, and hunting traits of

feral domestic dogs—not apex native predators. Misclassifying highly hybridised feral dogs as "dingoes" serves only as a regulatory shield to protect invasive pests from necessary eradication.

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

- **Systemic Failure of the Biosecurity Act:** Under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, all land managers—including Government agencies and public authorities—have a shared general biosecurity duty to prevent, eliminate, or minimise biosecurity risks, which includes controlling feral wild dogs.
- **Regulatory Double Standards:** Private landholders face strict enforcement and heavy penalties if they fail to manage invasive species on their properties. Conversely, the NPWS routinely operates as though it is exempt from these laws, acting as a protected sanctuary from which feral dogs launch devastating attacks on neighbouring private properties.

(1)(c) The ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

- **Unnatural Pack Behaviour:** Genuine dingo populations traditionally operate in small, isolated family units. The canids stemming from local national parks (such as Mungo Brush) are moving in highly aggressive, large packs of 12 or more individuals. This is unnatural, domestic pack-dog behaviour that destabilises local ecosystems rather than protecting them.
- **Surplus Killing:** These feral predators do not hunt strictly for sustenance. My livestock are routinely run to death or brutally maimed and left to rot, indicating recreational surplus killing—a distinct behavioural trait of feral domestic dogs, not native apex predators filling a balanced ecological niche.

(1)(d) The cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

- *As a private landholder, I defer detailed commentary on First Nations cultural heritage to qualified Indigenous representatives. However, I emphasise that the agricultural heritage of the Merino industry on this specific parcel of land dates back to 1824, representing an enduring, 202-year-old cultural and economic pillar of regional New South Wales that deserves equal protection.*

(1)(e) The impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in national parks

- **Passive and Active Breeding Programs:** The passive management policies of the NPWS in areas like Mungo Brush have created de facto breeding programs for feral dogs. This has directly resulted in animals losing their fear of humans, culminating in documented incidents where five habituated wild dogs from NPWS land had to be culled after actively attacking members of the public.
- **Evasion of Accountability and Transparency:** As a landholder and President of the Mid North Coast Wild Dog Association, I have repeatedly sought operational data from the NPWS regarding their predator numbers and management strategies. These requests have been met with stonewalling, a refusal to cooperate under Freedom of Information frameworks, and bureaucratic attempts to label concerned community advocates as "vexatious" to avoid public accountability.
- **The Baiting Disparity:** The operational failure is perfectly illustrated by community baiting programs. I have personally witnessed NPWS representatives attend Local Lands Services (LLS) coordinated baiting events and collect a mere six (6) wild dog baits to cover over **49,000 hectares** of national park. In contrast, I walk away with six baits to cover my private **40 hectares**. This tokenistic "lip service" to biosecurity is an absolute failure of land stewardship.
- **The Human and Financial Toll:** Over 14 years, I have lost countless sheep to these state-harboured predators. The emotional toll of finding your livelihood ripped apart, night after night, due to a NPWS deliberate negligence, is soul destroying and unsustainable.

(1)(g) Any other related matters: International Lessons in Predator Mismanagement

Proponents of increasing protections for these hybrid canids frequently cite the 1995 "Trophic Cascade" model from the reintroduction of gray wolves in Yellowstone National Park. New South Wales must learn from the realities of that experiment, not the myth:

1. **Overstated Science:** Recent landmark peer-reviewed studies have exposed the original Yellowstone trophic cascade data as heavily exaggerated, relying on flawed mathematics and sampling biases. The landscape did not automatically "heal" via a single predator.

2. **Socioeconomic Hostility:** The program inflicted severe economic damage, livestock loss, and immense stress on rural ranching communities, leading to deep, ongoing hostility between rural citizens and urban policy-makers.
3. **Regulatory Correction:** Today, jurisdictions surrounding Yellowstone have been forced to implement historically high hunting quotas and zero-tolerance zones outside park borders to protect agricultural biosecurity.

New South Wales should avoid engineering a crisis that mirror's the mistakes made abroad. We already possess an out-of-control feral dog problem; expanding NPWS powers or relaxing predator control boundaries will permanently devastate the state's livestock industries.

Recommendations for the Committee

To restore balance, protect animal welfare, and safeguard regional economies, I urge the Committee to recommend the following:

1. **Curb NPWS Autonomy:** Strip the NPWS of the bureaucratic discretion that allows them to bypass the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. Public land managers must be legally compelled to meet the exact same pest eradication benchmarks as private landholders.
 2. **Mandatory Boundary Fencing:** If the NPWS or any state agency wishes to conserve or breed canids, they must be legally mandated to contain them behind fully secure, predator-proof boundary fencing at the agency's expense.
 3. **Proportional Control Mandates:** Legislate that pest control funding, baiting volume, and trapping efforts undertaken by the NPWS must be mathematically proportional to the total acreage of the estate they manage.
 4. **Reject Enhanced Protections:** Strongly reject any policy shifts aimed at granting "dingo" protection status to hybridised wild dogs in coastal and agricultural zones of New South Wales.
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