

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Dingo Management in NSW National Parks.

Having spent all my holidays growing up and numerous visits throughout my life to North Durras in the Murrumbidgee National Park I have a deep connection to the NSW South Coast. My family were the original White settlers at North Durras. The beauty of this area is unsurpassed and the protection of this pristine National Park along with all Australian National parks is paramount. I am also a passionate advocate for our Native Dingoes.

The dingo is our only apex, land predator. However, it is our only native animal that is exempt from protection under the Biodiversity and Conservation Act 2016. This is so wrong! There are 3 important terms of reference for the New South Wales Parks and Wildlife as set out below.

1. To End Dingo killing within NSW National Parks

Ecological Importance:

As our only native, apex land predator Dingoes are a keystone species that are vital for a balanced ecosystem. The reason for having a national park is to protect these valuable Australian habitats where our native flora and fauna exist in complex, interconnected ecosystems. You cannot take out the Dingoes without the whole system collapsing. They are crucial to keep the Kangaroo, wallaby population in balance- which will also keep the native grasses, allowing for more feed for other small mammals.

There is strong evidence that Dingoes will suppress feral cats and foxes by changing their behaviour in Dingo territory. They will also eradicate goats and with intact packs will hunt pigs and deer - killing the young, old, sick and weak individuals. They will also help keep the feral cats and foxes away merely by their presence. Feral cats and foxes will avoid Dingo territory. Removal of these feral species will allow the smaller mammals, quolls, antechinus etc.. to survive. Dingoes will do all this for free if left alone!

2. Greater Involvement of Cultural custodians in decision-making regarding Dingoes in National Park to ensure the cultural significance of dingoes is reflected in legislation and management. Dingoes are sacred to our First Nations people. They are connected to kinship systems, stories, art and dance as well as cultural responsibilities to Country. It is essential they are included in the management of Dingoes.

3. Financial Support and extension services for Farmers surrounding National Parks.

Co-existence and implementation of non lethal management :

1080 poisoning, trapping and shooting of Dingoes must be banned. The funding of this should be redirected to supporting sheep and cattle farmers with purchase and training of Livestock Guardian Animals and better fencing. Around the world co-existence farming with native predators has been managed for years.

There are many guardian animals eg, Maremmas, donkeys and others that have been used successfully. There needs to be an education process where farmers can be shown how well they work in keeping Dingoes away. The killing of Dingoes results in unstable pack structures leading to possibly more attacks on stock as young dingoes cannot complete their hunting education without the dominant male and female of the group. It also means kangaroo/wallaby populations are not kept in balance and results in foxes, cat, goat populations increasing with no Dingoes around.

Co-existence with Dingoes is the only path forward to protect our beautiful Australian native forests and wild life. Financial support needs to be redirected towards co-existence instead of lethal management .

Native Dingo not 'Wild dogs' :

Current Dingo management is based on outdated genetic research using on 23 genetic markers. Contemporary studies now use up to 195,000 markers indicating more than three quarters of sampled wild canids showed over 93% contemporary Dingo ancestry. Hybridisation is rare in stable, undisturbed populations. There are no 'Wild dogs' living in our National parks only Dingoes! - Canis Dingo.

Research suggests that traces of domestic dog ancestry in wild dingo populations are the result of historic rather than recent interbreeding events. These dingos still retain the ecological traits and behaviour of the Dingo keystone species and apex predator that they are.

Conclusion:

In order to conserve biodiversity in New South Wales National parks it is essential to protect our native Dingoes. Leaving our Native Dingoes in the wild allows for increased Biodiversity in a sustainable, ethical and more financially efficient way.

I cannot bear to think of would become of our National Parks without Dingos. It is not too late to turn this around. What we have in our Australian National Park is too precious to lose. I implore you to consider this submission to end killing of Dingoes, allow greater involvement of First Nations People in Dingo management and redirect funding for lethal management towards co-existence.

Yours Sincerely,

Alison Hilditch

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