

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Dingoes are the only native mammals specifically exempt from protection under the Biodiversity Conservation Act, allowing them to be trapped, poisoned and shot. This is unacceptable. They are in fact incredible animals and a keystone species.

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 (under the term ‘wild dog’) are incorrectly classified as priority pest animals under Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans developed by Local Land Services. Research indicates that lethal control methods such as poisoning, trapping and shooting can disrupt stable dingo pack structures, increasing social instability and the likelihood of interbreeding with domestic dogs.

Dingoes differ from domestic dogs in several important ways, including their ecological role, social structure, breeding patterns, and behaviour. 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 such as:-

- regulating populations of kangaroos and wallabies, reducing grazing pressure on landscapes.
- eradicating introduced goats, reducing pressure on vegetation.
- suppressing, and in some cases eradicating, foxes and cats through territorial competition and predation easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.
- contributing to the suppression of pigs, reducing pressure on landscapes.
- influencing the behaviour and movement of herbivores and other animals, reducing pressure on vegetation communities.

The removal of apex predators destabilises ecosystems, contributing to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened species.

Modern conservation science increasingly recognises that ecological function - including the role of dingoes as apex predators - is an important consideration alongside genetics when assessing wildlife populations.

Current policy and management frameworks do not reflect contemporary science. Current dingo management policies are largely based on outdated genetic research using only 23 genetic markers.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.

An end to dingo killing within National Parks is urgently needed to protect the ecological function of dingoes and support biodiversity conservation.

Greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in decision-making and place-based management regarding dingoes in National Parks is also required to ensure the cultural significance of dingoes is reflected in legislation and management.

The 2023 First Nations Dingo Forum brought together 100 Traditional Owners from 20 nations across Australia and led to the development of the National First Nations Dingo Declaration which was written by Traditional Owners and outlines the strong cultural perspective on dingoes. Dingoes are connected to stories, song lines, dance, art, lore, kinship systems and cultural responsibilities to Country. Many Cultural Custodians consider dingoes to be protectors, teachers and part of healthy Country. The declaration calls for a new approach centred around “Caring for Dingoes on Country” and greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management. 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. Strengthening the role of Cultural Custodians in decision-making processes would improve cultural, ecological, and conservation outcomes, with flow-on benefits for ecosystem health and biodiversity.

Financial support and extension services for landholders surrounding National Parks to implement education programs and non-lethal coexistence strategies should be made available to ensure dingoes can be maintained in the environment.

Information obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 revealed that more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes on public conservation land were deployed by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) between 2020 and 2025. Longstanding lethal control measures have not eliminated the risk of predation on farmed animals, with some studies finding broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes exacerbating the risk of predation on calves due to the disruption of stable pack structures. This is totally unacceptable. Funding currently utilised for broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes and trapping and shooting in National Parks should be re-directed to support neighbouring landholders with coexistence education and extension services. Livestock Guardian Dogs (and donkeys) have also been proven effective at reducing or eliminating predation on livestock. They additionally provide other benefits to landholders including deterring macropods (kangaroos and wallabies) from grazing paddocks, protection from foxes and protection from birds of prey.

The ecological, genetic, cultural and animal welfare impacts of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes need urgent revising. Current management programs relies on lethal control methods including 1080 poison baiting, trapping and shooting resulting in:-

- disruption of stable dingo family groups and pack structures increasing the likelihood of dingoes breeding with domestic dogs.
- trophic cascade increasing introduced and herbivore pressure.
- serious welfare concerns for the time the animal remains in the trap, unable to access food, water or shelter.

- inadequate reflection of contemporary ecological science, cultural perspectives and biodiversity outcomes relating to dingoes (rather than agricultural protection).
- a complete lack of non-lethal coexistence strategies for agricultural properties.
- Cultural Custodians feeling excluded from decisions relating to dingo management on their Country.

First Nations peoples have very successfully 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. Indigenous knowledge systems hold detailed, place-based understanding of dingo behaviour, ecology, and their role in broader ecosystem function, complementing and strengthening western scientific approaches.

Across New South Wales, Indigenous ranger groups are increasingly leading monitoring and management programs for dingoes on Country, providing important on-ground insights into populations and behaviour. This leadership is particularly significant given existing gaps in comprehensive, statewide data on wild dingo populations.

Cultural Custodians are increasingly advocating for Indigenous-led approaches to dingo conservation and management, including expanded roles in National Park governance and decision-making. This is also urgently needed in places such as Fraser Island where indigenous people and dingoes have co-existed successfully for thousands of years resulting in the pristine environment Fraser Island has been known for. This however, is slowly being destroyed with the advent of far too many people, vehicles (particularly 4WDs) and complete ignorance of some about ecology and biodiversity. Again, it is a people problem not a Dingo problem.

Co-management approaches offer a practical framework to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems with western science in National Parks management thereby improving governance, indigenous and western relations and on-ground effectiveness.