Submission No 130

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Landholder members of NSW Wild Dog Working Group

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Braidwood South Coast
Wild Dog Working Group

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Below is our submission to the above Inquiry being conducted by the Animal Welfare Committee.

We are writing on behalf of landholder members of our local Braidwood South Coast Wild Dog Working Group.

This Working Group covers the largest land area of the 13 wild dog working groups in the South East of NSW. It extends over 832,000 hectares from Georges Basin in the North to Bodalla along the Coast and inland from the north of Nerriga to the headwaters of the Shoalhaven and Deua river on the Great Dividing Range. It includes all of the National Parks in this area.

Through the working group, a wild dog management plan is agreed between private landholders, National Parks and Wildlife Service. NSW Forestry and the South East Local Land Service that recognizes the impact of wild dogs on livestock enterprises as well as on native wildlife.

Wild dogs, including dingoes, feral domestic dogs and their hybrids are a major vertebrate pest in NSW. They pose a significant biosecurity risk conveying disease and causing financial impacts to agricultural production. If wild dogs are not managed there will also be an increased risk of extinction of many threatened native species.

Many of the landholders have been directly affected by attacks on their livestock over many years from wild dogs that come out of the National Parks adjacent to their farms including from Morton, Monga, Deua and Tallaganda National Parks. Those attacks have been increasing over a significant part of the plan area even as the numbers of sheep and other small livestock have reduced dramatically, by over 68% in the last 10 years.

It is the continuing impact on the safety and welfare of domestic livestock from these wild dogs that is a major concern for members.
Coordinated, collaborative landscape scale, tenure neutral control across all land areas is necessary to control the problem.

This submission addresses the terms of reference as below.

Terms of Reference
That the Animal Welfare Committee inquire into and report on the treatment and the cultural and ecological significance of dingoes in national parks in New South Wales, and in particular:

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

Dingoes are not native to Australia. They only arrived about 3,500 years ago according to archaeological evidence from 1969 in caves on the Nullarbor, per Milham and Thompson Mankind Vol 10 1976.

South-East NSW has the most hybridised population of dingoes in Australia (Scarsbrook et al 2026). That level of hybridisation is also confirmed in recent Adelaide University research (Souilmi and Ravishankar (2026) and Stephens (2023).

However, whether a wild dog is a pure dingo or a hybrid does not help the problem being faced by farmers.

They represent a biosecurity risk. Regardless of their genetic make-up the damage caused by wild dog attacks on domestic livestock has a direct impact on the safety and welfare of those animals. Those attacks are regarded as one of the most significant unmanaged risks to agricultural productivity, paricularly in south east NSW.

There is also the added issues of uncertainty and management confusion created by policy changes in the ACT and Victoria which seek to recognise dingoes as a separate species in spite of research suggesting genetic makeup is a poor basis for management rather than focussing on the impact they have and engaging in control activities to reduce those impacts.

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

Wild dog management is a core component of the NSW biosecurity framework.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 establishes a general biosecurity duty across NSW for landholders and public agencies to take measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate biosecurity risks. The Act extends to National Parks and obliges them to take practical measures to minimise the impact of wild dogs on their land or neighbouring lands.

National Parks has a wild dog policy 2015 (last updated 2024). This commits National Parks to control wild dogs to minimise harm to livestock on neighbouring properties in accordance with obligations under the Biosecurity Act and to minimise impacts on biodiversity while allowing for the conservation of dingoes.

There is also a NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022-27, as well as Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans issued by each of the 11 Local Land Services Regions.

The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022-27 identifies the use of wild dog management plans as an essential part of best practice wild dog management that should be developed for all wild dog affected areas in NSW. It also notes that this community-led approach is increasingly being used as a model for managing other pest animals more effectively.

Wild dog working group management plans for each of the 13 wild dog working groups in the area of the South East Local Land Services form part of the framework for management of wild dogs. These plans are agreed between private landholders, National Parks and Wildlife Service, NSW Forestry and the South East Local Land Service. The working groups provide an opportunity for community engagement in a nil-tenure coordinated approach to wild dog control. These plans have been in place from early 2000s supported by the then labor Government.

Effective biosecurity management requires consistent and coordinated action across all land tenures. The most effective part of the arrangements is the provision of Pest Animal Controllers through Local Land Services who provide services under contract to National Parks and across private property to remove wild dogs that are causing damage for domestic livestock and prevent attacks.

However, despite the framework, the increased level of attacks in our local area as well as across other parts of south east NSW demonstrates there are problems with the current management which need to be improved.

Some of the problems relate to strategic policy decisions by Government Agencies that are made without discussing these with landholders through wild dog management working groups as is

envisaged in the wild dog management strategies, or which cut across a nil-tenure landscape-wide approach to wild dog management.

There are compliance powers issues - the ability for the provisions of the Biosecurity Act 2015 to be enforced by the LLS against National Parks and other government agencies or even private landholders where there is a failure of control activities appears to be inadequate or insufficiently applied.

The extent of these problems is spelt out in more detail below.

Most of the issues would be able to be addressed and wild dog management improved if there were more collaborative and co-operative engagement by Government agencies with private landholders through the wild dog working groups and the processes that are so positively written about in strategic plans are actually given effect.

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in national parks

Because of the level of hybridisation in south east NSW it is not possible to consider separately how dingoes fulfil a place in the environment rather than the wild dogs that are actually resident.

Clearly wild dogs have a significant negative impact both on native wildlife and on domestic livestock outside of National Parks.

They also impact on native wildlife within National Parks.

What the ecological role of wild dogs is across Australia is strongly debated (see Donfranscesco et al (2023)) and whether their role is beneficial is open to question.

Dingoes never reached Tasmania or Kangaroo Island and are not present on many others. The ecology in those places appears to get on quite well without any need for wild dogs as an apex predator.

Wild dogs are also identified in much research, along with other predators, as a key factor in the decline and endangerment of many Australian mammals.

The danger that wild dogs represent to endangered mammals appears to be well recognised by National Parks who in establishing enclosures for reintroduction of endangered species have acted to remove wild dogs from within those enclosures.

Arguments that leaving wild dogs in an environment will reduce numbers of other predators such as cats and foxes is not supported by a large volume of research. It is also clear in much of the research that wild dogs do not have a significant effect on other pest animals such as pigs, deer or rabbits.

From our local experience with the increased numbers of wild dogs from National Parks attacking livestock on agricultural land, it is strongly suspected that the number of wild dogs within National Parks exceeds the prey available to them.
While this exodus is causing severe consequences for affected landholders the excessive numbers of wild dogs must also have critical impacts on Australian native mammals within the National Parks.
To address this situation a change to the way in which wild dogs are managed within National Parks is required.

At its simplest level the fact that in south east NSW wild dogs are emerging from National Parks in increasing numbers raises a serious issue of whether there is an ecologically sustainable population of dingoes in relation to the food sources available within the National Parks.

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

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

As noted above, most of the wild dog control activity is limited to the fringes of National Parks. This approach has been undertaken with the aim of providing an opportunity for maintaining the genetic purity of wild dogs. However, recent research indicates that for the southeast on NSW in particular the level of interbreeding is such that this is less justifiable in National Parks in south east NSW.

As noted in relation to (c) above there is a need to improve the way in which wild dogs are managed in National Parks in south east NSW to both protect biodiversity and agriculture.

Wild dogs attacks are currently being experienced on properties that have not suffered attacks for more than 40 years. Locally, there have been over 50 wild dogs caught on private property within the last 8 months.

(f) dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous

knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks, and

Dingo management requires that they not be in such numbers that they adversely affect the continued existence of native species.
Nor should they be impacting the ability to undertake domestic livestock grazing on land adjacent to national parks.

Dingo management will necessarily also consider the issue of the use of 1080 or other baits in controlling them.
There is a push against use of 1080. In its defence the inbuilt tolerance of quolls and other native mammals has been well researched. And its limited impacts on other Australian predators owls eagles etc with no residual food chain effect.

(g) any other related matters.

Potential consequences from

A. stopping use of 1080

1080 is a highly regulated, practical and effective tool.

A recent Australian review (Invasive Species Council Citation2020) concluded that 1080 has been essential for enabling the survival or recovery of many native threatened species and their reintroduction to sites where introduced predators have been suppressed or eradicated. The use of 1080 was also considered to have welfare benefits for native animals by freeing them from the pressure of heavy predation or competition by introduced animals. The review concluded that a ban on 1080 without an effective replacement would overall result in greater suffering (as well as declines in native species), and recommended as a high priority, research into effective replacements for 1080 that are more humane.

Our understanding is that there are no currently effective viable alternatives.

We also understand that many Australian mammals have a high level of tolerance to 1080 and considerable research has been undertaken on this aspect.
It has little or no residual or transfer effect unlike other known poisons that have been considered -eg anticoagulants and PAPP.

Research by Souilmi and Ravishankar (2026) and Stephens (2023), has also found long-term lethal control programs have had limited impact on dingo purity in central and Western Australia.

B. Inadequate wild dog management

Not adequately controlling wild dogs within national parks has implications not only for the safety and welfare of domestic wildlife but also the native wildlife on which they prey within the National Parks.

More broadly, for agriculture there is serious risk of escalation and spread of damage to domestic livestock if the numbers of wild dogs continues to increase and their spread is not prevented. At its worst it has potential to destabilise Australia's ability to produce prime lambs and wool across the currently unaffected central and western slopes and Riverina.

The emotional and mental effects of wild dog attacks on individual landholders are significant and well documented.

In areas of sustained wild dog pressure, producers are forced to shift away from small stock enterprises completely, altering agricultural patterns and enterprise diversity and economic choices.

Yours Sincerely

Mandy O'Brien Anne/John Rolfe Mick McGrath