

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Tilpa Pest Management Group

Date Received: 12 July 2026

Submission from Tilpa Pest Management Group

To – Parliamentary Enquiry into “ Dingoes in National Parks in NSW “

Introduction

My name is Leon Zanker and I am a landholder and Co Ordinator of the Tilpa Pest Management Group. Together with my wife and family, I have lived and worked on a property “ Laurel Vale “, situated between Tilpa and White Cliffs in western NSW, for the past 44 years.

The Tilpa Pest Management Group comprises some 21 Landholder entities covering an area of approximately 2.75 million acres, located on both sides of the Darling River, centered around the small village of Tilpa between Wilcannia and Bourke.

Context

We live in a semi-arid rangeland landscape, where the predominant enterprise is the free range grazing of wool and meat sheep, goats and cattle.

Directly to our north east on the eastern side of the Darling River, is the Mt. Grenfell National Park.

Directly to our south on the eastern side of the Darling River is the eastern portion of the Paroo Darling National Park, comprising the former grazing properties, Wilga, Tilpilly and Coonavitra.

Directly to our West and South-West, on the western side of the Darling River is the western portion of the Paroo Darling National Park, comprising the former grazing properties of Mt. Murchison, Peery, Mandalay and Arrowbar.

And directly to our north is the Nocolèche National Park.

Over time, our group area, particularly on the western side of the river, has experienced incursions of wild dogs, both from breaches to the Dingo fence along the Queensland border and localized seasonal breeding. Predatory impacts on our sheep and goat grazing enterprises vary greatly, depending on dog numbers and seasonal conditions.

This year, despite increasing wild dog control efforts, our numbers and predatory impacts are increasing alarmingly.

Five years ago, some group member properties participated in a research project run by the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit of the NSW Department of Primary Industries.

In collaboration with Western Local Land Services, this project known as “The Western Tracks Wild Dog Collaring Project “ aimed to establish movement and behavioral patterns of wild dogs in our area. The project area also took in parts of the western portion of the Paroo Darling National Park.

A Research Paper has just been released publicly, namely “ Eco Management Restoration – 2026 – Smith – Activity and Habitat Selection of an Apex Predator in Semi-arid Rangelands.” Findings pertinent to this enquiry are as follows,

- Average activity area of wild dogs in our landscape is 683 Square Kilometres
- Average distance travelled is 15.4 kms per day.
- Average landholding size in our area is 429 square Kilometres.
- Wild dogs routinely crossed multiple landholder’s properties within their activity area.

These findings demonstrate that National Parks cannot be looked at exclusively, they are part of the same landscape . Therefore, any changes to the current wild dog management practices on National Parks will have an immediate and profound impact on everybody.

Response to Enquiry Terms of Reference

a) Genetic Status of Dingoes, the distinction between dingoes and dogs and recent research into the genetic profile of NSW dingoes.

- DNA analysis of wild dogs trapped in our area over the last 5 years has shown a fair degree of variance in “genetic purity.” To my knowledge no dogs came back as pure Dingo. (Remembering that this is very subjective depending on the base line data one wants to compare with.)

Anecdotal visual observation of dogs trapped in our area show a fair degree of hybridization.

In our opinion we do not have dingoes, we have wild dogs.

b)- Legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes in NSW in National Parks.

– Landholders are mandated by the Biodiversity Conservation Act to uphold their Bio Security obligation to control feral and pest animals on their properties. National Parks, as landholders, **are and should be** included in the same legislation. Wild dogs are included as pest animals.

c)- Ecological role of Dingoes in National Parks.

– As mentioned above the activity range of our wild dogs includes multiple properties, which includes our National Parks. They cannot be considered as individual entities. To be considered exclusive, National Parks would have to be fenced with dog proof fencing. This will not happen for two reasons,

1) - The cost and maintenance of building such fences around National Parks would be totally prohibitive.

2) - **Most importantly** it would be an **ECOLOGICAL DISASTER**. Wild dogs are an apex predator. By the time the range bound wild dogs had eaten all the kangaroos, small lizards and everything else that could be chased down, their overpopulation would result in mass starvation.

For wild dogs to fulfill their ecological function within National Parks, their numbers have to be managed in balance with available resources. That means the use of lethal control methods.

d) – Cultural Significance of Dingoes for First Nations Communities.

- No Comment

e) – Impact of Current Government Policies and programs for the management of Dingoes in NSW in National Parks.

As mentioned in TOR point b). Under current legislation, National Parks and private landholders are mandated to uphold their bio security obligations through the Biodiversity Conservation Act. For this to be effective **a nil tenure approach** over the entire landscape must prevail. The current legislative framework enables this to happen, therefore there should be no change to the current status quo.

f) –Dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks.

- No Comment

g) – Other Issues

- 1) Future of Pastoralism in NSW. – In our opinion, if lethal control programs to control wild dog numbers in National Parks were abandoned, the grazing of sheep and goats, and then cattle would become untenable. Our pastoral industry would be destroyed within 5 to 10 years, and along with it the entire social, economic and environmental fabric of much of NSW.

-2) – Social Licence – The National Park Estate in NSW has been increasing steadily over recent years and will continue to do so. This has caused a lot of angst amongst rural communities, especially with regard to loss of productive agricultural land, loss of community, lack of engagement with neighbors over fencing and pest management issues and the closing down of waters forcing over abundant kangaroos onto adjacent properties. In western NSW, National Parks has worked hard to try to redress that, and to build rapport with local landholders. If lethal wild dog management ceased in National Parks, that social licence would be irreparably destroyed.

Summary

The Tilpa Pest Management Group is located directly betwixt and between four large national Parks. Currently we are experiencing increasing numbers of wild dogs on our country and the subsequent predatory impacts from them. The mental stress of constantly dealing with mauled and maimed sheep, lambs and goats, greatly reduced lambing and weaning percentages and loss of income cannot be understated.

We rely on the nil tenure, coordinated approach to wild dog management to have any chance of success in controlling our wild dog numbers. Our neighboring National Parks are currently very much part of that nil tenure, coordinated approach and we want to see it stay that way.

We therefore ask that the Enquiry Committee give our submission due and thoughtful consideration.

Leon Zanker
Co Ordinator Tilpa Pest Management Group

Contact – Email –

Date – 5-7-2026

