

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Shamefully, Australia has the highest mammal extinction rate in the world. This coupled with also having one of the highest land clearing and deforestation rates among wealthy nations underlines how critical National Parks are for the preservation of biodiversity, cultural identity and our future. Unfortunately, we have lost our way.

NSW Government data shows that in one year alone, from 2022 to 2023, there was a 47% increase in land clearing. The Government spends huge sums of money on “pest” baiting and eradication programs, not only of dingoes, but also on what are deemed as exploding kangaroo populations, and other herbivores that are seen to compete with livestock and increase pressure on grasslands. Such horrendous raping and pillaging of the land, flora and fauna is totally environmentally, economically and socially unsustainable and ethically immoral. We, as humans, are part of the web of life, not above it. It is an imperative that we wake up and change our current practices or we, and our fragile environment face a bleak future.

The continued persecution of Dingoes under our current legislative and land management practices, highlights our short sighted, myth fuelled, outdated, maligned approach. Recognising the dingo's pivotal role as keystone predators in regulating and maintaining animal populations (including their own) is an imperative for ecological function and biodiversity conservation. Dingoes must be protected in our legislative and land management frameworks, not treated as a vermin and pests.

In addressing the terms of reference below I illustrate how and why it is imperative to change our ways and recognise and protect dingos as the distinct, ecologically important Native species they are.

Terms of Reference Responses:

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

Although the Dingo and the domesticated and feral dog, both come from the Canine family, Dingoes are **not** a dog.

Dingoes are genetically, behaviourally, functionally and distinctively different to dogs.

As top order trophic regulators, Dingoes in stable family groups self-regulate via hierarchical dominance, infanticide and territorial management and control.

To ensure the survival of her own pups, the Alpha female will kill pups of other female pack members thereby limiting the packs population in proportion to the ecological balance within their territory.

Also unique to dingoes, they mate with one partner for life and produce only one litter per year, as such dingoes rarely interbreed with the domestic dog. Recent genetic research data shows the majority of free-roaming 'dogs' are genetically pure Dingoes or Dingo-dominate hybrids which in defending their territory, can keep the feral dog's and other invasive species populations in check.

Inter-breeding between the dingo and dog only occurs due to the de-stabalsing and fragmentation of the dingo pack. This pack fragmentation is often the result of current inhumane baiting and culling practices.

Dingoes are Native to Australia. They have been an inherent part of the Australian landscape for well over 11,000 years contributing to and shaping Australian distinct biodiversity until colonisation. With colonisation and subsequently as a direct result of human ignorance and miss-management, the lands are being striped bare and Australian's ecological equilibrium is becoming alarmingly unbalanced.

Our management practices must change including how we see and interact with the dingo. We must recognise, the distinct role Dingoes play in maintaining ecosystem health by supporting biodiversity, in controlling both native herbivore populations and suppressing invasive species such as Rabbits including mesopredators foxes and cats. This unique Dingo activity has a positive impact for native flora and fauna.

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

The dingos, as a Native Australian mammal with a keystone role in regulating ecological biodiversity and stability, must be protected within all of Australian legislative and management frameworks, particularly those concerning their management in NSW National Parks.

To point out a few of the regulatory frameworks that **must be changed**:

- the [Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016](#), **excludes** Dingoes from protection as a Native Mammal. This results in dingoes being continually persecuted and killed by horrific lethal control methods in National Parks,
- the lumping in of dingoes in the umbrella term 'wild dog' in [Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans](#) developed by Local Land Services (LLS) results in dingo wrongly, being classified as a priority pest.
- In order for NSW National Parks to meet it's 'General Biosecurity Duty' under the [Biosecurity Act 2015](#) to manage pest animals, and align with the priorities set out in the New South Wales

Wild Dog Management Strategy, NSW National Parks kill dingoes (under the guise of 'wild-dog') on public conservation land.

This is not conservation, it is the persecution of dingoes base on myth and outdated science. It must be changed. There is enough present day scientific evidence that show the critical role dingoes play in protecting ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

Failure to recognise the stabilising ecological role Dingoes play in our environment, is a failure in conservation. This failure in National Parks current management practices make a mockery of the role National Parks are meant to have in conservation.

With the dwindling area of natural habitat due to deforestation and land clearing, National Parks must take hold of the mantle and provide protection for our dingoes.

We do not want to continue with the mistakes of our past. It is now 90 years since Australia finally woke up to give full legal protection to the Thylacine – only for the last known one to die alone in captivity at a Tasmanian Zoo 59 days latter. It was all too little, too late! We need timely action to and protect Dingoes now before it is too late.

As previously mentioned, where dingoes are left alone (not culled) they generally exist in regulated, low density numbers which self-regulate via complex social structures of hierarchal dominance, infanticide and territorial management and control.

Lethal control methods cause ongoing pack fractures. With pack disintegration, individuals are driven to fend for themselves and cohesive territorial and environmental regulatory control becomes weakened and lost. This puts the whole ecological system at risk.

As Australia's only native canine, and apex predator, dingoes also regulate herbivore populations such as kangaroos and control invasive species numbers, such as foxes, goats, cats, wild pigs etc. By keeping these populations in check and protecting their territories from competing predators, dingoes are central to reducing over grazing pressure on vegetation and reducing predation pressure on native wildlife.

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

The culling of dingoes is an affront to our First Nation people. As is evident in the [National First Nations Dingo Declaration](#), written by Traditional Owners, dingoes are an interwoven integral part into our first nations identity and the cultural heritage of this land.

The declaration calls for a new approach around “Caring for Dingoes on Country” and greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management.

We must respect this.

(e) the impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in National Parks

The overwhelmingly reliance of inhumane lethal control methods including 1080 poison, baiting, trapping and shooting in an attempt to cull dingoes, has a far more widespread negative impact than originally intended.

In addition to the above in (d) about these current management practices fracturing the dingo pack complex self-regulating social structures and consequently their ability as top order trophic regulators in our fragile environments, they also have dire consequences for other vulnerable native species.

In particular, 1080 baiting indiscriminately kills far more widely than dingoes, either directly or indirectly via secondary poisoning. This is especially so with current baiting rates of 1080 poisoning. In our National Parks alone, between 2020 to 2025, over 1.5 million 1080 baits were deployed in National Parks. Add to this, the huge number of baits used on private land, and on conservation and forestry lands, the amount of poisons in our environment is horrendous. From first hand experience, I have seen how this drastically impacts our native wildlife, which National Parks are meant to protect. On and around my property in the mid-north coast, post Government aerial and private land poisoning programs, I have seen a plummet in populations of native quolls, birds of prey such as wedged tailed eagles and owls, brush turkeys, and even smaller mammals such as antechinus just to name a few.

Even more, for 5 years before the commencement of aerial baiting I had a large free range domesticated poultry and guinea fowl flock, that were never attacked by dingoes even though there was a healthy dingo family patrolling the immediate area.

We were told that this poison isn't poisonous to many of these animals but in these concentrations and the frequency that it is occurring, it certainly is.

1080 remains in the environment much longer than what is officially recognised and builds up in the muscle tissues of animals. Hence the animal themselves and their carcass becomes toxic baits. This has never been adequately researched, as hasn't the fact the current baits are synthetically manufactured with a lot longer life than the natural chemical that they are meant to mimic. In addition, even the natural chemical is not endemic to NSW (they are found only in very few plants in WA) hence, none of our native species in NSW have built up a tolerance to these poisons.

Australia and New Zealand are the only countries in the World that use this barbaric 1080 poisoning. It causes horrendous prolonged suffering in its victims. It is banned everywhere else in the World, yet in ignorance, Australia still promotes its use. This must stop.

(f) Dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in National Parks

Ongoing dingo management must be about dingo preservation, particularly in National Parks. Much can be learnt from First Nations knowledge, experience and ways of "being" with the land. First Nations peoples have cared for dingoes and Country for thousands of years, maintaining deep, ongoing relationships that continue to support healthy landscapes and biodiversity. As we have seen in fire management, it is in all our interest to have greater involvement of First Nations people in dingo management and protection, particularly in National Parks.

(g) any other related matters.

It appears that much of the current management practices of dingoes in National Parks is focussed on agriculture protection rather than positive biodiversity outcomes. Yet in this misguided approach, evidence shows that lethal control of dingoes can worsen outcomes for livestock management. By fracturing dingo social hierarchy, we disrupt group dynamics as outlined previously, forcing individuals and inexperienced juveniles to become more opportunistic and threatening to livestock. Additionally, the fracturing of the dingo pack also weakens their territorial control over feral dog populations and other invasive species.

There is also emerging evidence that the loss of stock to dingo predation is much less than often claimed. As a recent sheep loss study in Victoria highlights, the annual stock loss rates to

dingoes is consistently very low at around 50 to 100 sheep per million. This is negligible. Additionally, we need to remember that dingoes are also scavengers and can all too easily be blamed for killing stock when in fact they are only feeding on existing carcasses which have died from other causes.

We do not need to choose between protecting livestock or the dingo, our apex predator. We can protect both.

There are effective Non-Lethal Alternatives including:

- livestock guardian animals such as guardian dogs like Maremma sheepdogs, Anatolian Shepherds, and Kangals and other animals such as donkeys and llamas. This approach has proven to be highly effective in deterring predators not just dingoes.
- Modification to management practices by having a presence where frequent checks can be made, as opposed to absentee farming;
- Utilising sensory light and noise making deterrents

Promoting coexistence and education of landholders and the wider community on the ecological benefits of dingoes and the long term effectiveness and success of non-lethal approaches is required.

We need to let go of myth and fear, recognise the dingo for its keystone role in ecological health of our environment and work together for better outcomes for all.