

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

Name: Name suppressed

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I welcome the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry and encourage the Committee to adopt a modern, evidence-based framework for dingo management that recognises the ecological, cultural and conservation value of dingoes while providing practical, targeted support for livestock producers experiencing genuine impacts.

Dingoes are a native keystone species

The dingo (*Canis dingo*) is Australia's apex terrestrial predator and has occupied this ecological role for more than 11,000 years. As a keystone species, dingoes influence ecosystem function through top-down regulation of prey populations and interactions with other predators. Research has demonstrated that healthy dingo populations can suppress invasive predators such as foxes and feral cats, reduce overabundant herbivores in some landscapes, and contribute to improved biodiversity outcomes.

Protecting dingoes is therefore not simply about conserving a single native species; it is about maintaining ecological processes that National Parks were established to protect.

National Parks should prioritise conservation

The primary purpose of National Parks is the conservation of native biodiversity and ecological integrity. Native apex predators are fundamental components of healthy ecosystems and should be managed as wildlife rather than as agricultural pests.

Current management practices that rely on broad-scale lethal control within protected areas are inconsistent with this conservation purpose. Widespread baiting or culling can disrupt stable dingo social structures, potentially increasing dispersal and conflict while diminishing the ecological functions performed by intact family groups.

Protected areas should provide refuge for native wildlife, including apex predators, and should not become extensions of agricultural pest control programs.

Accurate terminology matters

The continued use of the term "wild dog" within legislation, policy and management documents creates unnecessary ambiguity.

In eastern Australia, "wild dog" management frequently targets animals that are genetically and functionally dingoes. Scientific evidence indicates that many eastern NSW dingo populations retain high levels of dingo ancestry, with studies suggesting that fewer than 10% of eastern NSW dingoes have evidence of domestic dog ancestry within the last ten generations.

Where dingoes are the animals being managed, policy should identify them as dingoes. Accurate terminology improves transparency, public understanding and evidence-based decision-making.

Conservation is currently inadequate

Despite their ecological significance, dingoes receive remarkably limited conservation attention within NSW National Parks.

There are currently no dedicated dingo conservation reserves within the NSW National Parks estate, no dedicated conservation program, no specialist staff responsible for dingo conservation, and limited long-term investment in monitoring population health, genetics or ecological function.

This contrasts sharply with the ecological importance of Australia's apex predator.

The Inquiry presents an opportunity to establish a coordinated conservation strategy for dingoes within NSW protected areas, supported by long-term scientific monitoring and dedicated funding.

Supporting livestock producers through targeted management

Livestock producers who experience repeated predation require practical assistance and effective management tools. Conservation outcomes and agricultural productivity should not be viewed as mutually exclusive objectives.

Rather than relying primarily on landscape-scale lethal control, NSW should adopt a risk-based management model that prioritises prevention, targeted intervention and coexistence.

This framework could include:

- Investment in Predator Smart Farming practices.
- Expansion of exclusion fencing programs in high-risk areas.
- Increased support for guardian animals, including Maremma sheepdogs where appropriate.
- Improved husbandry practices, particularly during lambing.
- Financial assistance to help landholders implement preventative measures.
- Rapid-response teams to investigate verified livestock attacks and identify the specific animals responsible.

Where non-lethal measures have been implemented but serious livestock losses continue, any lethal control should be highly targeted, based on evidence, limited to confirmed problem individuals or packs, and conducted on private land where livestock impacts occur.

This approach protects agricultural livelihoods while avoiding unnecessary impacts on stable dingo populations within National Parks.

Improving cooperation across land tenures

Many conflicts arise because wildlife conservation and livestock management are administered separately.

The NSW Government should establish regional partnerships involving National Parks, Local Land Services, Aboriginal communities, conservation scientists and livestock producers to develop locally appropriate management plans.

Collaborative planning would improve communication, reduce conflict and ensure management decisions are informed by local ecological knowledge and the best available science.

Recognising Aboriginal cultural values

Dingoes hold profound cultural significance for Aboriginal peoples across Australia and have long been recognised as companions, teachers and important elements of Country.

Management decisions affecting dingoes should incorporate Aboriginal knowledge and ensure Traditional Owners are genuine partners in policy development, research and on-ground management.

Recommendations

I respectfully recommend that the Committee:

1. Formally recognise dingoes as native wildlife within NSW National Parks.
2. Ensure management policies use the term "dingo" where dingoes are being managed rather than relying on the ambiguous term "wild dog".
3. Phase out routine broad-scale lethal control within National Parks except under clearly defined exceptional circumstances supported by transparent scientific assessment.
4. Prioritise non-lethal management through Predator Smart Farming, guardian animals, exclusion fencing and improved livestock husbandry.
5. Restrict lethal management to targeted responses addressing verified livestock predation on private land after preventative measures have been implemented where practicable.
6. Establish dedicated funding for dingo conservation, ecological monitoring and genetic research within NSW National Parks.
7. Create long-term monitoring programs to assess ecological outcomes of different management approaches.
8. Strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal communities so cultural knowledge informs dingo conservation and management.
9. Develop cross-tenure management strategies that balance biodiversity conservation with agricultural needs through collaboration rather than conflict.

Conclusion

This Inquiry presents an opportunity to modernise dingo management in NSW by moving beyond broad-scale control programs towards an evidence-based coexistence model.

Healthy dingo populations are essential for resilient ecosystems, while productive agriculture remains vital to regional communities. These objectives are not incompatible. Through investment in preventative measures, targeted responses to genuine livestock impacts, scientific monitoring, and collaborative management across land tenures, NSW can achieve better outcomes for biodiversity, farmers and the broader community.

National Parks should remain places where native ecological processes are protected and where dingoes are recognised for what they are: Australia's native apex predator, an ecologically indispensable species, and an irreplaceable part of our natural and cultural heritage.