

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Richard Whitling

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Thankyou for the opportunity to provide a submission on The Animal Welfare Committee into the report on treatment and cultural and ecological significance of dingoes in national parks in NSW.

The inquiry should recognise that current dingo management policies largely rely on outdated genetic research based on just 23 genetic markers. Newer studies using up to 195,000 markers show that Australia's wild-living canids are overwhelmingly dingoes, with hybridisation relatively rare in stable, undisturbed populations. In New South Wales, more than three-quarters of sampled wild canids showed over 93% contemporary dingo ancestry.

There should be a strategy that aims to recognise 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. Modern conservation science increasingly recognises that ecological function — including the dingo's role as an apex predator — matters alongside genetics when assessing wildlife populations.

I would like to see that the Inquiry identifies that dingoes differ from domestic dogs in ecological role, social structure, breeding patterns and behaviour, and that Australia has no established continent-wide population of feral domestic dogs living independently across ecosystems; it's now widely understood that the wild canids occupying these landscapes are dingoes performing important ecological functions.

It is not appropriate that in NSW "wild dog" is an umbrella term covering dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids — current legislation makes no distinction between roaming or stray dogs and dingoes.

Nor is it appropriate that dingoes are the only native mammal specifically exempt from protections under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, allowing lethal control across National Parks. Under the term "wild dog," they're classified as priority pest animals under Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans developed by Local Land Services.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) carries out dingo ("wild dog") control on public conservation land to meet its General Biosecurity Duty under the Biosecurity Act 2015, in line with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy. Information obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 revealed that NPWS deployed more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes between 2020 and 2025. These Acts need to

change so that the NP&WS do not have a General Biosecurity Duty that required 1080 poison baits or, generally, other means of killing dingoes.

I hope that the growing ecological and genetic evidence leads the Inquiry to recognise that dingoes are an important native species in terms of their ecological role in:

- Regulating kangaroo and wallaby populations, easing grazing pressure on landscapes
- Helping eradicate introduced goats
- Suppressing — and in some cases eradicate — foxes and cats through territorial competition and predation, easing pressure on smaller native wildlife
- Contributing to suppressing pig populations
- Influencing the movement and behaviour of herbivores, reducing pressure on vegetation communities

Research suggests stable dingo populations may suppress fox numbers more effectively than poison baiting alone. Removing apex predators can destabilise ecosystems, contributing to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened species.

Hopefully the Inquiry will importantly note that dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many Cultural Custodians across NSW and the wider continent, connected to stories, dance, art, lore, kinship systems and responsibilities to Country.

Yours Sincerely,
Richard Whitling (B.App.Sc)