

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

Name: Name suppressed

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The Director

Animal Welfare Committee

NSW Legislative Council

Parliament House

Macquarie Street

Sydney NSW 2000

Submission to the Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales

Dear Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to this inquiry. I am writing as a New South Wales resident and concerned citizen to raise concerns about the ongoing use of 1080 (sodium fluoroacetate) poison in the management of dingoes in national parks, and to support stronger recognition of dingoes' genetic distinctiveness, ecological role and cultural significance. I address my comments below against the relevant terms of reference.

(a) Genetic status of dingoes and the distinction between dingoes and dogs

Recent genomic research from the University of NSW and the University of Adelaide, analysing large numbers of genetic markers, has found that the great majority of canines living wild in NSW national parks are dingoes, not feral domestic dogs, and that this holds true regardless of coat colour or markings. I submit that the Committee should recommend the NSW Government formally recognise this distinction in policy and legislation, rather than continuing to manage dingoes under the catch-all and scientifically outdated label of "wild dog".

(b) Legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing dingo management

Dingoes are currently the only native NSW mammal specifically excluded from protection under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016. At the same time, they are treated as a priority pest species under Local Land Services' Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans, obliging landholders to control them under the General Biosecurity Duty in the Biosecurity Act 2015. This means that even inside national parks, dingoes are subject to lethal control programs, including 1080 baiting, that would not be applied to a protected native species.

1080 is a Class 1a acute toxin with no registered antidote. Death is not instantaneous and can take many hours, and because baits are non-selective, they pose a risk to non-target native wildlife as well as to working and companion dogs that may enter baited areas. I submit that the Committee should

examine whether the continued use of 1080 in and around national parks is consistent with contemporary animal welfare standards, and whether less indiscriminate methods exist that could achieve landholder protection objectives without this welfare cost inside conservation land.

(c) Ecological role of dingoes in national parks

As Australia's apex land predator, dingoes play an important role regulating populations of introduced herbivores and mesopredators such as feral cats, goats and pigs. Broadscale lethal control, including aerial and ground baiting, risks destabilising these food-web relationships, with flow-on effects for native vegetation and smaller native fauna that dingo presence would otherwise help protect. I submit the Committee should weigh this ecological function seriously when assessing whether current control intensity inside national parks is appropriate.

(d) Cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

Dingoes hold deep cultural and totemic significance for many First Nations communities. The Minyurnai Rangers of the Bandjalang clan have developed a dingo management program on the 2,000-hectare Minyurnai Indigenous Protected Area that demonstrates culturally-led, non-lethal approaches can be both effective and respectful of that significance. I submit this and similar programs should inform the Committee's recommendations.

(e) Impact of current government policies and programs

I am concerned that current policy settings direct the killing of dingoes inside national parks primarily to prevent movement onto neighbouring private land, using methods, including 1080, that are applied uniformly regardless of a park's particular conservation or cultural values. I submit the Committee should recommend a review of where and how intensively lethal control, and 1080 baiting in particular, is used inside the conservation estate, with a presumption against its use in areas of high ecological or cultural significance.

(f) Opportunities for Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation

I support recommendations that would formally resource and expand Indigenous-led dingo management, drawing on programs such as Minyurnai, and that would involve First Nations knowledge holders as a matter of course in the design of dingo management policy for national parks, not only as stakeholders consulted after policy is set.

Summary of recommendations

- Formally recognise dingoes as genetically and taxonomically distinct from domestic dogs in NSW policy and legislation.
- Review and reduce the use of 1080 poison baiting for dingo control inside national parks, particularly in areas of high conservation or cultural value.
- Commission an independent assessment of the welfare impact and non-target risk of 1080 baiting relative to alternative control methods.
- Support and resource Indigenous-led, non-lethal dingo management programs, such as the Minyurnai Rangers' approach, as a model for other parks.
- Ensure First Nations communities are involved in the design, not just the review, of dingo management policy in national parks.

Thank you again for the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry. I would be glad to provide further information if it would assist the Committee.

Yours sincerely,

