

**Submission
No 222**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Dr Benjamin Allen

Date Received: 16 July 2026

Hon Emma Hurst MLC
Committee Chair

Date: 16 July 2026

Dear Emma

RE: Inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales

Thank you for the invitation to contribute a submission to the inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales, and for your interest in dingoes more broadly.

I have been Australia's leading dingo research biologist for some time, and remain active in the field. I have published more empirical data on most aspects of dingo ecology and management, and from more regions across the country, than almost all others; and I have also had the good fortune of leading the largest-scale and most scientifically robust dingo research experiments ever conducted, across multiple states.

For over 20 years I have worked for the Queensland, South Australian, and New South Wales government in dingo-focussed positions and led the wildlife research team at the University of Southern Queensland, where I worked with multiple individuals and agencies to better understand dingo biology and the effects of management interventions on their ecological roles. I now work nationally in a private sector role where I continue to research and manage dingoes and advise on appropriate dingo conservation management strategies for a variety of government and non-government clients at all levels. I welcome the enquiry and appreciate the opportunity to share some of this information with you and the committee.

I have organised my submission into two parts, which each address the Terms of Reference in the order they were presented in your invitation for submissions.

- **Part A** represents some more detailed information on Terms that I personally felt I could contribute more useful information on.
- **Part B** provides my short responses to a series of online statements made by a dingo advocacy organisation known as 'Defend the Wild'.

'Defend the Wild' has been encouraging people to prepare submissions to the inquiry using

pre-prepared statements provided online (available at: www.defendthewild.org). Much of this material is factually incorrect, misleading and illustrates the common deployment of the many myths, furbies and red herrings associated with dingo ecology and management, as described in the recent advice to policy makers contained in Allen (2026), which is also appended to this submission.

I hope that this information is useful for the committee, and I welcome any opportunity to discuss dingo management with you or any member of the committee at any time.

Yours sincerely,

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Part A

1. The genetic status of dingoes, the distinction between dingoes and dogs and recent research into the genetic profile of NSW dingoes

Dingo genetics is a very dynamic and highly technical field. Over the last 30 years genetic research capabilities have advanced from studying microsatellites, to single nucleotide polymorphisms (SNP; or 'snips'), to whole genomes, and what we think we know about dingoes changes with each new scientific advance. New research findings that supersede the findings from previous research are frequently published, almost every few months. Understanding what a given study or group of studies say about dingo genetics is incredibly nuanced and requires a detailed and sophisticated understanding of highly complex and ever-changing subject matter. Hyperfocus on a given study or group of studies can result in a very misleading view of dingo genetics.

Some general conclusions are apparent despite this complexity. Early research in the 1970s, 80s and 90s was principally concerned with dingo 'purity' or hybridisation, or the percentage of domestic dog genes within a given animal. The prevailing view was that pure dingoes were of greater conservation significance than hybrid dingoes, and that hybrid dingoes were a threat to pure dingoes ([Corbett 2001](#)) – a view consistent with all other international precedents ([Allen et al. 2017b](#)). A series of studies over several years reported on 'purity levels' in different parts of the country. Purity levels were higher in some places and lower in others, as expected. But in general, purity levels were lower in southeastern Australia and higher elsewhere ([Stephens et al. 2015](#)). These observations were attributed to the higher prevalence of domestic dogs in southeastern Australia since European arrival to the continent. Lethal control of dingoes does not appear to negatively affect their genetics or most other demographic parameters in the absence of exclusion fencing (e.g. [Miller et al. 2024](#); [Stephens et al. 2023](#)).

Despite the substantial disagreement over their genetic status arising from the advancing analytical capabilities described above, and a somewhat bitter and distracting debate on the definition and naming of dingoes, the most recent genetic research (based on genomic comparisons to ancient dingo reference samples) has confirmed that these patterns still hold – there is indeed a greater proportion of hybrid dingoes in southeastern Australia ([Ravishankar et al. 2026](#)). Regional and local differences also exist, and adjacent and disjunct dingo populations from different parts of the country can be reliably distinguished from each other (e.g. [Miller et al. 2024](#)), but they are all still dingoes. For example, dingoes from Fraser Island, the Blue Mountains, north-west Victoria, the Simpson Desert, or the Kimberleys might all be genetically distinguishable from each other, but they are not different sub-species; they are all correctly identified as *Canis familiaris* ([Fisher et al. 2024](#)).

Although interesting to many people, the subject is somewhat academic, and the management or policy significance of dingo genetics is negligible. Genetic identity issues are jumbled up with taxonomy issues, which are further jumbled up with naming and nomenclature issues, which are further jumbled up with legislation and definitions within legislation, which are further jumbled up with policy and management guidance in different places. But all of this has little to do with on-ground dingo conservation and management: dingo management policy and practice does not hinge on their appearance or genetics; it hinges on their location and

impacts.

Wolf-dog hybrids in other countries are considered a threat to wolves and are actively removed, but not so in Australia. In contrast to the way hybrids are managed internationally, nowhere in Australia are managers actively trying to remove hybrids to conserve the more pure individuals (Allen et al. 2017b); dingo advocates are diametrically opposed to such a view because all genotypes are now considered 'dingoes' in their view (or equally 'wild dogs' – it doesn't matter). This creates an inconsistency between Australia and all other countries and policy contradictions between the Commonwealth and the States, and for these and other reasons dingo genetics and related issues typically fall into the category of myths, furbies and red herrings that only serve to derail meaningful discussion on appropriate dingo conservation and management (Allen 2026).

The following studies provide the most useful, up-to-date summary information on the genetic status of dingoes, and the influence of genetics on dingo conservation and management:

- Allen BL. (2026). Myths, furbies and red herrings associated with dingo ecology and management. *Ecological Management & Restoration*, 27:e70055.
- Allen BL, Allen LR, Ballard G, Jackson SM, & Fleming PJS. (2017). A roadmap to meaningful dingo conservation. *Canid Biology & Conservation*, 20:45–56.
- Fisher D, Baker A, Travouillon K, Frankham G, Eldridge M, Jackson S, Umbrello L, Lavery T, Weisbecker V, Ingleby S, Stemmer D, Phillips M, Menkhurst P, Archer M, Rowe K, Hand S, Warburton N, Helgen K, Cooper S, & Cremona T. (2024). Australasian Mammal Taxonomy Consortium (AMTC) position statement on the taxonomy of the dingo. Australian Mammal Society, Melbourne.
- Ravishankar S, Nguyen NC, Taufik L, Michielsen NM, Bergström A, Tobler R, Fordham D, Brüniche-Olsen A, Rahbek C, Llamas B, & Souilmi Y. (2026). Paleogenomics-informed inferences of European dog admixture enables scalable dingo conservation. *Conservation Letters*, 19:e70052.

2. The legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes in New South Wales in national parks

I have no specific comments to add here, except to acknowledge that present legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks in New South Wales and around the rest of the country are, despite their nuances, all focussed on managing dingoes (and all other animals) according to *where they are* and *what they are doing*, and not *what their genetics are* or *what they look like*. This is an appropriate approach to take, and any policies that attempt to formulate management objectives based on dingo identity and function will unavoidably create a raft of policy inconsistencies and contradictions along with impossible measurement and compliance issues (i.e. which is exactly the mess the Victorian government now finds themselves in). Such approaches should be avoided.

3. The ecological role of dingoes in national parks

As a 15.7 kg canid that eats a broad variety of food items from insects to stranded whales (Behrendorff et al. 2016; Doherty et al. 2019), dingoes can have a variety of ecological roles

in the ecosystems they inhabit. They are predators, competitors, scavengers, seed dispersers, disease transmitters, and hosts for various parasites and pathogens, including zoonotic pathogens that affect many people (Fleming et al. 2014; Fleming et al. In press; Fleming et al. 2017). These ecological roles can sometimes be substantial, and at other times be negligible or inconsequential. In short, dingoes can have a variety of positive, negative and/or neutral ecological roles, which vary from place to place and time to time.

Without elaborating on all their roles, many or perhaps most people equate (1) 'dingo suppression of foxes and feral cats' or some other pest animal, (2) 'dingoes can green the desert' or restore ecosystems through trophic cascade effects, with 'the ecological role of dingoes'. This view is exemplified in the material presented by 'Defend the Wild', described below in Part B. The (3) risk dingoes pose to threatened fauna is also of particular concern, especially in New South Wales, where these risks have been explored in great detail (Allen & Fleming 2012). All three of these issues are particularly relevant for national park managers tasked with conserving biodiversity. Assuming that these are the specific ecological roles of interest to the committee, I have provided (below) extracts from a recent peer-reviewed journal article which summarises the status of evidence for these ecological roles. Allen (2026) states:

Myth 1: Dingoes suppress foxes and feral cats

Many people believe that an increase in dingo numbers will result in a decrease of European red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and/or feral cat (*Felis catus*) numbers, or conversely, that a decrease in dingo numbers – especially when achieved through lethal dingo control – will result in an increase of fox and/or cat numbers (Letnic et al. 2012; Ritchie & Johnson 2009; Wallach et al. 2010). This ecological phenomenon is referred to as mesopredator release. Many Australian conservationists are concerned about potential mesopredator releases because it is thought that dingo control might lead to a trophic cascade, where mesopredator increases will cause a chain reaction that will end in a decrease in the numbers of smaller prey species, which are often threatened (Carwardine et al. 2011; Johnson 2006). Dozens of observational and correlative studies report results 'consistent with' this view but, without exception, every single study with an experimental design capable of quantifying these processes has consistently demonstrated that the feared mesopredator releases do not occur (Allen et al. 2013; Castle et al. 2023). Not only is there no reliable evidence for dingo control-induced mesopredator release, but there is a large and growing body of reliable evidence that it does not occur – both an absence of evidence *and* evidence of absence for dingo control-induced mesopredator release. "Moreover, these demonstrable conclusions are contextually-independent and consistent between experiments conducted in different times and places, inclusive of above- and below-average seasonal conditions in arid, semi-arid, and tropical monsoonal ecosystems" (Castle et al. 2023, pg. 21). Not a single study has ever measured a numerical increase of mesopredators in response to a measured numerical decrease of dingoes, leading Newsome (2013) to conclude that "suppression of foxes and feral cats by reintroduced dingoes has not been demonstrated, nor have theories of mesopredator release been demonstrated by dingo removal". That lethal dingo control causes mesopredator release is a demonstrable myth. However, mesopredator releases do sometimes happen in nature and have been documented for a relatively small number of other (largely marine) species and ecosystems outside Australia (Terborgh & Estes 2010), so it nevertheless remains possible that it might one day be observed to occur somewhere in Australia under some conditions.

When reflecting on this myth some might reasonably ask: how does one explain the perceived contradiction between the many correlative studies that claim to find results consistent with mesopredator release and all the experimental studies that unanimously demonstrate the opposite? Castle et al. (2023) showed that 6 of the 28 (21%) recent correlative studies report results *inconsistent* with mesopredator release, so there is indeed some variability in what the correlative studies report. But regardless, there may be several possible reasons for the perceived disparity.

1. Groupthink. The available body of correlative studies does not consist of a random pool of independent articles – they are the product of the same minds interpreting things in the same narrow way. Groupthink arises when members of a particular group prioritize harmony and conformity over objective and critical evaluation. This creates a silo mentality or echo chamber that leads to a shared, often distorted, reality within the group. Several interrelated biases reinforce distorted realities within groups, including: (A) *shared information bias*, when group members focus on information they all already know while ignoring alternative insights offered by others; (B) *confirmation bias*, when individuals within the group selectively seek and cite reports that affirm the group's preexisting beliefs while disregarding or completely ignoring contradictory evidence; (C) *publication bias*, when like-minded editors and journals selectively publish studies based on the supportive direction of their conclusions, creating a false impression of consensus or the collective weight of evidence; (D) *in-group bias*, or a tendency to favour the perspectives and members of one's own group, often viewing outsider interpretations as incorrect or less valuable; and (E) a *false consensus effect* also occurs when group members overestimate how much everyone else (both inside and outside the group) agrees with their views, making their shared interpretation feel like an objective truth when this is not the case. These biases ultimately lead to the post-truth science denial exemplified by advocates of dingo control-induced mesopredator release (Allen et al. 2017a). Manipulative experiments grounded in 'the scientific method' are so important precisely because they circumvent groupthink problems (Chamberlin 1890; Platt 1964; Popper 1959).
2. Pseudoreplication. The mere presence of multiple papers might lead one to erroneously conclude that people have observed mesopredator release in multiple different circumstances, but many studies are essentially repeat observations of the same thing. For example, anyone undertaking a cross-fence study will almost certainly observe an ecological difference from one side of the dingo barrier fence to the other; no one is disputing the existence of cross-fence differences. But given the presence of multiple causal agents the *cause* of those differences can only be illuminated with manipulative experiments that isolate the different agents through randomised allocation of treatments that are also actually measured, not merely assumed. Thus, further cross-fence studies might observe 'high dingoes, low mesopredators' on one side of the fence and 'low dingoes, high mesopredators' on the other, and they might all be interpreted as evidence consistent with mesopredator release, but we would still be no closer to understanding the cause of those observations until an experiment is done and the treatment cause and effect is measured (Allen et al. 2011b).
3. Scale. The influence of scale on one's study design is typically underappreciated given that scale is one of the most critical determinants of whether a study is likely to observe 'mesopredator release' or not. Methods matter, and small temporal and/or geographic scales will almost always find negative dingo-mesopredator relationships while larger scales will almost always find the opposite. Dingoes, foxes and cats are not

friends at individual levels – dingoes will kill foxes and cats in one-on-one encounters if they get the chance (Moseby et al. 2012). So, to the extent they do not like each other, studies with small scales will not detect mesopredators if the dingoes are present at that time and place, and vice versa (Allen et al. 2015). Such fine-scale avoidance behaviour is ubiquitous across the animal kingdom as a mechanism enabling coexistence – it does not necessarily imply numerical or functional suppression, limitation, or top-down control at a population level. Given this, it is not surprising that almost all the studies that purportedly find ‘mesopredator release’ have small temporal (e.g. snap-shot, single-survey studies where sampling lasts just a few days) and/or spatial (e.g. small or single-site studies) scales (Castle et al. 2023) and studies with repeated surveys over many years across large or many study sites consistently show that these negative relationships disappear and become neutral or positive. Detecting negative relationships between predators is likely an artefact of small-scale study designs in many cases, whereas dingoes, foxes and cats coexist at larger scales relative to their management (Allen et al. 2015).

At a fundamental level, the disagreement between those who believe this myth and those who don’t has nothing to do with dingoes or mesopredators, but everything to do with methods and study designs. Some people are clearly willing to accept and promote correlations as “strong evidence” of causation despite the issues described above and elsewhere (e.g. Allen et al. 2011a), while others more cautiously follow what might be reliably claimed from experiments. To be fair, there are those who criticise some of the population sampling methods used in the experiments too. For example, Hayward and Marlow (2014) objected to passive tracking indices on grounds their assumptions were not validated, instead advocating for occupancy modelling, prompting Allen and Engeman (2014) to systematically validate the underlying assumptions and restore confidence in indices when executed properly (a position defended further by Nimmo et al. 2015). But to the extent Hayward and colleagues’ criticisms are valid, such criticisms simply reinforce the unequivocal reality that there is indeed an absence of evidence for mesopredator release.

To conclude the situation using an analogy: can anyone confidently assert that a particular drug alleviated a migraine without confirming its presence or dosage as an active ingredient? No. Yet, this is what happens when advocates of the myth claim that dingoes can alleviate the symptoms of Australia’s ecological ‘migraines’—namely, mesopredators. The claim lacks any confirmatory data to isolate the presence or dosage of dingoes as the active ingredient in the ecological medicine being prescribed. Those who hesitate to swallow it are pressed to trust the claims because they were ‘published in highly reputable journals’ (a fallacious appeal to authority), labelled as ‘dingo demonizers’ for questioning the claim (a diversionary ad hominem attack), and ‘challenged to demonstrate why the claim is not true’ (an attempt at shifting of the burden of proof) (Letnic et al. 2011; but see also Estes et al. 2011). If mesopredator release was as ubiquitous as claimed by the believers then we would expect to find it in some of the experimental studies, but we don’t, at least not yet. Those still advocating for the myth have a duty of care to prove their theory by identifying or undertaking robust experiments with findings that support it.

Myth 2: Dingoes can green the desert

Similar to the idea that dingo suppression of mesopredators will lead to a trophic cascade that results in the decline of smaller prey, many believe that dingo suppression of herbivores will lead to a trophic cascade that results in enhanced vegetation growth, with a plethora of subsequent benefits (Johnson

2006; Letnic et al. 2012). Some have even proclaimed that dingoes have greater effects on desert ecosystems than rainfall (Wallach et al. 2010). There is more reliable evidence that dingoes can indirectly cause vegetation growth by reducing herbivory than there is that dingoes can indirectly cause growth in prey populations by reducing mesopredator predation. However, the likelihood that dingoes' positive effects on vegetation are as expansive and profound as they are claimed to be is a myth, or the likelihood that dingoes will 'green the desert' in the absence of livestock removal is a myth. Dingo removal can increase kangaroo populations (Allen 2015; see also modelling studies Choquenot & Forsyth 2013; Pople et al. 2010; Prowse et al. 2015) and dingoes have been observed on countless occasions to eliminate sheep (*Ovis aries*) and goat (*Capra hircus*) populations (Allen & West 2013, 2015; Pople & Froese 2012). But in most cases, this has not resulted in vegetation growth because the loss of some herbivores (like sheep or kangaroos) is muted by countervailing increases in other herbivores (like cattle), maintaining the status of herbivory and vegetation (Kennedy et al. 2022; Kreplins et al. 2022). In some island settings, however, empirical dingo introduction experiments have demonstrated classic trophic cascades whereby dingoes eliminate herbivores (goats) and indirectly enhance vegetation regrowth (Allen et al. 2021). Thus, dingoes are known to produce these positive ecosystem effects in specific contexts, but these contexts are seldom replicated or realised across most areas because of compensatory herbivory. Dingo suppression of herbivores might more often result in increased vegetation growth if or where compensatory herbivory can be constrained.

Furphy 4: Dingoes are not a threat to threatened species

Dingoes evolved to become a surplus-killing canid with a broad generalist diet that includes species from every trophic level, such as vegetation, insects and insect larvae, small mammals, lagomorphs and bandicoots, small macropods, large macropods, exotic ungulates, birds, reptiles, turtles, fish and even stranded marine mammals as large as whales (Behrendorff et al. 2016). In short, dingoes will eat whatever is available and desirable in a given location (Doherty et al. 2019). When a desirable, common species are available (like rodents, rabbits, bandicoots or wallabies), dingoes will preferentially consume those. But when such preferred species become unavailable, dingoes will simply switch to other less-desirable species, which can sometimes be threatened species. Dingoes can threaten populations of such species at these times. For example, dingoes preferentially consume rabbits *Oryctolagus cuniculus* in the Strzelecki Desert, but when rabbits become unavailable following drought and dust storms, dingoes increase predation rates on dusky hopping-mice *Notomys fuscus*, threatening their populations (Allen et al. 2018). Under other conditions in other places, dingoes consume arboreal sugar gliders *Petaurus breviceps* (Allen et al. 2012) and even threaten fragmented koala *Phascolarctos cinereus* populations (Gentle et al. 2019). Dingoes are one of the most important predators of crocodiles and marine turtles, eating their eggs and destroying up to 94% of nests in some places, threatening the survival of endangered turtle rookeries (Somaweera et al. 2011). In western New South Wales, "up to 75 (94%) of the 80 extant [threatened] species were predicted to be at risk of dingo predation (71% at high risk)" (Allen & Fleming 2012; pg. 35). Threatened native species reintroduction programs have also failed, in part due to unexpectedly high predation rates from undetectably low dingo populations (Moseby et al. 2011). For these and other reasons, dingoes are recognised as a known or potential threat to at least 14 nationally listed species as small as 70 g (Allen & Leung 2012). Though dingoes might have sustainably coexisted with most native Australian animals for a few thousand years (Johnson 2006), this coexistence did not occur under post-European conditions associated with altered fire regimes, widespread land clearing and habitat fragmentation, artificial water

provisioning, and increased availability of native and invasive prey species within dingoes' preferred weight range. These conditions predispose threatened species to increased and unsustainable predation by dingoes and other predators (Allen 2011). The present-day risk dingoes pose to populations of threatened native species should not be ignored or assumed to be negligible in the absence of reliable data indicating this to be the case.

4. The cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

I have no specific comments to add here, except to acknowledge that dingoes are culturally significant to many indigenous communities and other non-indigenous communities alike. It is inappropriate to assume all indigenous communities think the same on a given subject, and I also acknowledge that First Nations communities have diverse views towards dingoes. These include positive, negative and neutral views towards dingoes, and views which support contemporary dingo management approaches (including dingo conservation or lethal control in different contexts).

5. The impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in national parks

Policy can have wide-reaching impacts on dingoes and other fauna, for good and bad. For example, prohibition of dingo control or failure to control dingoes when they should have been controlled has led to declines of livestock and threatened fauna, whereas, controlling them when they should not have been controlled has wasted considerable money and caused unnecessary harm to dingoes and other fauna. Both scenarios continue today: many people, acting in accordance with government policy, control dingoes when they shouldn't and fail to control dingoes when they should.

Much more could be said on this subject. But with respect to the idea that dingo control efforts threaten dingo populations in national parks, I provide an additional extract from Allen (2026), which states:

Myth 5: Dingo populations are not safe from lethal control in national parks

A variety of different national and state-based laws influence the way dingoes are managed across Australia. Firearms laws govern who and where firearms can be used to shoot dingoes, and human health laws govern which drugs or chemicals can be used to sedate, euthanize or poison dingoes. Animal welfare laws govern the permissibility of harming dingoes in different ways, and biosecurity laws govern what can or should be done with dingoes if they occur in a particular location. But it is fauna conservation laws that protect dingoes in most national parks around Australia to a greater or lesser extent. To begin with, "lethal dingo control does not occur over approximately one-third of Australia (~2,564,000 km²), nor does it occur each year in each region that does bait dingoes" and "noteworthy amounts of bait were used only in north-

eastern Australia” where a relatively small amount of land is devoted to national parks (Allen et al. 2015). So, it is only the dingoes living in national parks within the regions where dingo control occurs that even have the possibility of being exposed to lethal control ‘on park’. Most national parks within these regions do not control dingoes most of the time, but in parks where dingoes are intentionally exposed to lethal control, lethal control still typically occurs in restricted areas along boundaries that neighbour livestock production land, and usually at infrequent and irregular times. For example, there is 4,248,000 Ha of public land (e.g. national parks) in north-eastern Victoria, yet dingo control is only permitted within a 3 km-wide livestock protection buffer zone along the interface of adjoining private land, totalling 1,990,000 Ha or ~47% of the public land in the area. However, dingo control has only occurred in ~320,000 Ha or ~16% of the permitted buffer zone, or ~8% of the public land (see www.agriculture.vic.gov.au for details). Data on the number of dingoes removed from this area conservatively estimate a sustainable removal rate of 3–9% (N = 422–650 dingoes/year; B. Allen, unpublished data) of the roughly 5,000 dingoes present on public land in north-eastern Victoria (which also produce several thousand new dingo pups each year). Thus, while some individuals may be exposed to lethal control in some restricted areas of some national parks, this type of data indicates that dingo populations can indeed be considered quite safe from lethal control in national parks in a more general sense.

6. Dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks

General dingo conservation and management guidance is outlined in the National Wild Dog Action Plan (NWDAP; Anon 2020), which is endorsed by all state and territory governments and the commonwealth government. The NWDAP encourages the development of regional- or local-level plans which ignore tenure and instead focus on the specific conservation and management objectives of each local area. All stakeholders are encouraged and have the opportunity to participate in the development of local area plans, including any indigenous people and organisations present in each area. In this way, indigenous knowledge, input, and leadership is readily incorporated into dingo management planning where and whenever it is offered.

I have personally facilitated the development of local area dingo management plans that have sought and received substantial contributions from indigenous people on several occasions in Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales. There are many opportunities to incorporate indigenous knowledge and leadership into dingo conservation and management planning in national parks through this local area planning process. I encourage the committee to support the NWDAP in its efforts to incorporate indigenous knowledge and leadership through these existing mechanisms.

7. Other related matters

Dingoes are a remarkable animal that elicit a variety of passionate views from all sorts of people on all sorts of issues. Having been deeply involved in these issues for many years, I have observed that well-meaning discussions and inquiries can quickly devolve into endless and intractable debates on subjects that have little relevance to the actual on-ground conservation management of dingoes. To overcome these challenges, I have recently published a summary resource (Allen 2026) to assist stakeholders and policymakers with navigating the following issues shown in the table below. I have appended a copy of the resource to this submission, and I encourage the committee to familiarise themselves with its contents so that the inquiry can proceed successfully without getting distracted on inconsequential issues.

Table 1. Selected myths, furbies and red herrings associated with dingo ecology and management (adapted from Allen 2026).

#	Category	Topic
1	Myths	Dingoes suppress foxes and feral cats
2		Dingoes can green the desert
3		Genetically pure dingoes are less harmful to livestock than hybrid dingoes
4		Dingoes are dogs / Dingoes are not dogs
5		Dingo populations are not safe from lethal control in national parks
6	Furbies	Poison baiting for dingoes threatens populations of non-target animals
7		Dingoes are a threatened species
8		Dingoes regulate their densities, or keep their own numbers down
9		Dingoes are not a threat to threatened species
10		Non-lethal control tools are less harmful to dingoes
11	Red herrings	Dingoes are a native animal / Dingoes are a non-native animal
12		Dingoes are apex predators
13		Lethal dingo control doesn't work
14		Lethal dingo control affects dingo pack structure
15		The science pertaining to [insert any of the previous topics] isn't settled, is controversial, or subject to debate, disagreement or alternative interpretation

Attachments

Attachments to my submission include a copy of the following peer-reviewed scientific journal article:

- Allen BL. (2026). Myths, furbies and red herrings associated with dingo ecology and management. *Ecological Management & Restoration*, 27:e70055.

The article is freely available at: <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/emr.70055>

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Part B

Provided below is a copy of online statements made by 'Defend the Wild' in **black font** (downloaded on 13 July 2026), followed by my brief responses to their statements **in red font**. I have provided these responses to assist the committee with interpreting the statements and claims that the committee is likely to receive by anyone following the advice offered by 'Defend the Wild'. More comprehensive information is provided in Allen (2026); for brevity I have not elaborated on these responses here but would be glad to discuss them with any member of the committee at any time.

'Defend the Wild' advice and my brief responses

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

Submissions could examine recent developments in dingo genetics research and how current management frameworks do not reflect contemporary science. Contributors may wish to discuss hybridisation, ecological function, the impact of lethal control on dingo family stability, and the distinction between dingoes and domestic dogs.

- Current dingo management policies are largely based on outdated genetic research using only 23 genetic markers. Contemporary studies now use up to 195,000 markers and indicate that overwhelmingly, Australia's wild-living canids are dingoes, with hybridisation relatively uncommon in stable, undisturbed populations. In New South Wales, more than three-quarters of sampled wild canids showed over 93% contemporary dingo ancestry.

Current dingo management policies are silent on dingo genetics and are not influenced by genetics; they expressly ignore genetics. Dingo genetics is largely irrelevant to dingo management (as it is for almost all Australian fauna). New genetic studies appear frequently in the scientific literature. Old studies (based on microsatellites) did use 23 genetic markers to determine purity. Newer studies (based on SNPs or 'snips') do use up to 195,000 markers to determine purity. The newest studies (based on whole genome comparisons to ancient dingo reference samples) confirm widespread hybridization. The stability of dingo populations has little to do with hybridization, and there is limited evidence that dingo control affects hybridization in undesirable ways. Any claimed proportion of dingo ancestry is sensitive to and highly influenced by methodology and definitions, which are highly variable in the literature and (mis)used intentionally for dramatic effect by some people – stated proportions need to be qualified with reference to the methods and definitions being used before they can be reliably understood.

- Research indicates 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 role of dingoes as apex predators - is an important consideration alongside genetics when assessing

wildlife populations.

The first part of this statement is untrue at worst and highly misleading at best, for reasons explained in Allen (2026). The second part of this statement is meaningless without further context. It also represents an 'appeal to authority', which is a logical fallacy intended to distract readers from the merits of the underlying science.

- Dingoes differ from domestic dogs in several important ways, including their ecological role, social structure, breeding patterns, and behaviour. Australia does not have an established continent-wide population of feral domestic dogs living independently across ecosystems, and it is now widely understood that the wild canids occupying these landscapes are dingoes performing important ecological functions.

This statement is largely true, although the underlying definitions are obscure, making it difficult to clarify the nuance within the statement.

- Earlier genetic research on Australia's wild canids relied on only 23 genetic markers and heavily influenced many dingo management policies that remain in place today.

The first part of this statement is true, but the latter part of the statement is untrue (see above).

- Contemporary genetic research now uses thousands of markers and has significantly changed scientific understanding of wild canids in Australia.

This statement is largely true, however, how significantly this genetic research has changed our understanding is debatable. The most recent genetic research supports the earlier results described decades ago; not a lot has changed about our understanding of dingo hybridisation over the last 40 years.

- Recent studies indicate that overwhelmingly, wild-living canids in Australia are dingoes, with recent interbreeding between dingoes and domestic dogs considered uncommon.

This statement is largely true, however, there are some subtle and unstated definitional issues here that are obscuring the nuance in the statement.

- A 2023 genetic analysis of 307 wild canid samples across Australia found no evidence of free-living domestic dogs or active dingo-dog hybrid populations.

This statement is largely true, however, there are some subtle and unstated definitional issues here that are obscuring the nuance in the statement. This study did not use the same commonly accepted definitions used by others.

- In New South Wales, 103 wild canid samples were analysed, with more than three-quarters showing over 93% contemporary dingo ancestry.

See previous responses.

- Research suggests that traces of domestic dog ancestry in wild dingo populations are often the result of historic rather than recent interbreeding events.

This statement is largely true, although interbreeding still occurs in many places.

- Dingoes with low to moderate levels of dog ancestry still retain the ecological traits and ecosystem function of dingoes, including their role as apex predators.

I agree completely with statement and share the same opinion. However, in a strictly scientific sense, there is very little data to confirm the accuracy of this statement.

- Poisoning, trapping, and shooting can destabilise dingo family groups and territorial structure, potentially increasing the likelihood of breeding with domestic dogs.
- The first part of this statement is true, and I suppose the latter part of the sentence is true too, although there is limited information on the topic. The latter part of the statement reflects the concern, and I have raised the same concern myself, but we do not have a lot of data to know if these concerns are warranted. Some empirical studies show these concerns to be unwarranted (Stephens et al. 2023). There is also a subtle double-standard or inconsistency being applied here: earlier statements downplay the risk and importance of hybridization (in an attempt to discourage lethal dingo control), yet here the risk of hybridization is emphasized as a problem (in an attempt to discourage lethal dingo control). This double-standard belies an ideological or ethical opposition to lethal dingo control and not a genuine concern for hybridization.
- Modern conservation science increasingly recognises ecological function alongside genetics when assessing wildlife populations and management approaches.

This statement is technically true but is largely meaningless without further context.

- Australia does not have an established continent-wide population of feral domestic dogs independently occupying ecosystems across the landscape.

This statement is true, although small feral dog populations are present in some highly urbanised areas.

- Debate around “genetic purity” has played a significant role in dingo management policy, despite evolving conservation science increasingly recognising the importance of ecological function and population stability.

This statement is untrue. Debate about purity has been substantial, but purity has almost no influence on dingo management policy or practice whatsoever. And the importance of ecological function and stability is also highly debated, with mixed results apparent in the literature. With respect to ‘the debate around genetic purity’, it is really quite simple: dingo advocates downplay hybridisation in an attempt to have ‘wild dogs’ recast, relabelled, reframed and renamed as ‘dingoes’ in the hope that this renaming will increase public and then political opposition to lethal control. Unfortunately, this cynical approach undermines the primary mechanism needed to achieve dingo conservation and places Australia at odds with all recognised international norms and standards for addressing hybridisation (Allen et al. 2017). Dingo conservation efforts need not be complicated by appeals to their genetic status.

- Dingoes and domestic dogs differ in several key respects, including:

- ecological role (apex predator in Australian ecosystems versus human-associated domestic species)
- social structure (stable, family-based packs versus more opportunistic groupings in domestic dogs)
- breeding patterns (typically annual breeding in dingoes versus multiple breeding cycles in domestic dogs)
- behaviour and ecology (cooperative hunting, territoriality and wild-adapted behaviours in dingoes)

This is largely true, although the link between this information and the management of dingoes is unclear. The relevance (if any) of hybridization is also unclear in these statements.

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

Submissions could examine how dingoes are classified and managed under existing legislation and policy frameworks in New South Wales, including whether current approaches appropriately recognise dingoes as ecologically important wildlife.

- In New South Wales, the term “wild dog” is an umbrella term used to collectively refer to dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids. There is no distinction between roaming or stray dogs and dingoes under current legislation.

This is correct, but changing the name or collectively referring to the same group of animals as ‘dingoes’ would not change this. The only thing that would materially change the way animals are managed on-ground would be to define the different types of dingoes and dogs in a practical and mutually exclusive way and then prescribe different management approaches to each type.

- Dingoes are the only native mammal specifically exempt from protections under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, allowing lethal control across National Parks.
- Dingoes (under the term ‘wild dog’) are classified as priority pest animals under *Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans* developed by Local Land Services.
- The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service undertake dingo (‘wild-dog’) control on public conservation land in order to meet its ‘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.
- Information obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 revealed that more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) between 2020 and 2025.

This information might be compared to similar data provided in Allen et al. (2015) for

contextualization and comparison with other States.

- Current policy settings continue to manage dingoes within broad pest management frameworks despite contemporary ecological and genetic research recognising dingoes as an ecologically important native species.

The 'contemporary ecological and genetic research' is frequently revised, and the 'ecologically important nativeness' of dingoes has no bearing on policy settings geared towards managing the impacts of dingoes in similar ways to the way other species are managed; multiple native species are permissibly controlled to manage their impacts (e.g. kangaroos, cockatoos, flying foxes, magpies etc), and dingoes are no different in this regard.

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

Submissions could explore the ecological importance of dingoes as apex predators and their role in maintaining healthy ecosystems within National Parks.

- Dingoes are Australia's only native canid and are recognised as an important apex predator and keystone species.

This is true, but the statement is meaningless without further context.

- Dingoes **regulate** populations of kangaroos and wallabies, reducing grazing pressure on landscapes.

The first part of the statement is true, as shown in multiple desktop and field studies. However, this does not typically result in reduced grazing pressure because livestock producers increase their stocking rates of species less susceptible to dingo impacts (e.g. cattle), as shown in multiple large-scale and multi-disciplinary government research programs over many years (see Allen 2026 for details).

- Dingoes **eradicate introduced goats**, reducing pressure on vegetation.

See previous comment.

- Dingoes **suppress**, and in some cases eradicate, foxes through territorial competition and predation easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.

This statement is patently, objectively, demonstrably and unequivocally false (see Allen 2026 for details). Dingoes do not suppress or eradicate foxes.

- Dingoes **suppress** introduced cats through territorial competition and predation easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.
- This statement is patently, objectively, demonstrably and unequivocally false (see Allen 2026 for details). Dingoes do not suppress or eradicate cats.
- **Research** suggests that stable dingo populations may suppress fox populations more effectively than poison baiting programs alone.

Some studies “suggest” this, but these studies do not have the ability to reliably determine this. Multiple studies across several large-scale and long-term government conservation programs demonstrate the success of poison baiting programs at reducing fox populations, but not a single study (no, not one) has ever detected dingo suppression of foxes. This is indisputable (see Allen 2026 for details).

- Dingoes also contribute to the **suppression** of pigs, reducing pressure on landscapes.

Dingoes eat pigs, so in that sense they ‘contribute’ to their suppression in – using the same logic – exactly the same way they ‘contribute’ to the suppression of koalas, birds, skinks, turtles, insects, whales, plants and everything else they eat. Like foxes and cats, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that dingoes suppress feral pig populations.

- The presence of dingoes influences the behaviour and movement of herbivores and other animals, reducing pressure on vegetation communities.

The first part of this statement is true, the same way it is true for every other carnivore and herbivore that coexists; many animals ‘influence the behaviour and movement of herbivores and other animals’. See earlier responses for the veracity of the latter part of the statement.

- The **removal** of apex predators can destabilise ecosystems, contributing to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened species.

This can be true depending on the definition of ‘removal’ being used. The ‘complete eradication or loss’ of some apex predators can have these effects, but this is not the same thing as the ‘sporadic lethal control’ exemplified by contemporary lethal dingo control practices. There is no evidence to suggest that repeated lethal control of dingoes (as currently occurs in some NSW national parks and elsewhere) is destabilizing ecosystems or causing vegetation decline in isolation of other causal factors.

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

Submissions could highlight the cultural importance of dingoes to First Nations communities, including their role in lore, kinship, Songlines, storytelling and Caring for Country practices. It is important here to be supportive of Cultural Custodians and their connection to dingo, but not to speak on their behalf. You may wish to reference the [National First Nations Dingo Declaration](#), which was written by Traditional Owners and outlines a strong cultural perspective on dingoes.

- Dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many Cultural Custodians across New South Wales and the wider continent.
- Dingoes are connected to stories, dance, art, lore, kinship systems and cultural

responsibilities to Country.

- Many Cultural Custodians consider dingoes to be protectors, teachers and part of healthy Country.
- The 2023 First Nations Dingo Forum brought together 100 Traditional Owners from 20 nations across Australia and led to the development of the National First Nations Dingo Declaration.
- The declaration calls for a new approach centred around “Caring for Dingoes on Country” and greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management.
- [Oral histories and archaeological research](#) show that Cultural Custodians buried companion dingoes, with evidence that these animals were given intentional burials consistent with ancestral or ceremonial practices.

First Nations communities, like all other Australians, are encouraged and can freely participate in established local dingo management planning processes anytime, as is already occurring in many places around the country.

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

Submissions could examine the ecological, genetic, cultural and animal welfare impacts associated with current dingo management programs in New South Wales National Parks.

- Current management programs relies on lethal control methods including 1080 poison baiting, trapping and shooting.

Lethal control programs are indeed common, but a wide variety of non-lethal control approaches are also used.

- Lethal control can disrupt stable dingo family groups and pack structures.

This statement is obviously true, but the ensuing disruption does not produce negative consequences for dingoes or broader fauna communities. Dingo pack structures are naturally very dynamic, or in other words ‘they’re used to it’ (see Allen 2026 for details).

- Disruption of dingo family structures may increase the likelihood of dingoes breeding with domestic dogs.

See earlier responses.

- Removal of dingoes causes trophic cascade.

See earlier responses. The word “removal” is not defined here, and neither is “trophic cascade”, and even if they were defined there is no information on the importance of this statement without further information. Despite this criticism, the claim is a common one that has received a lot of attention in the literature and is perhaps best addressed by the recent information presented in Allen (2026).

- Removal of dingoes from ecosystems leads to increases in introduced predators and herbivore pressure.

See earlier responses.

- Trapping of dingoes raises serious welfare concerns for the time the animal remains in the trap, unable to access food, water or shelter.

Animal welfare is always a concern for any wildlife control program, but the welfare impacts of dingo trapping are well-studied and considered acceptable to regulators and most organisations. The harms and death experienced by trapping also typically produce less welfare impacts to dingoes than natural causes of death. Trapping, when done in accordance with established guidance, can be one of the most harm-less ways to manage dingo populations.

- Current management programs do not adequately reflect contemporary ecological science or cultural perspectives relating to dingoes.

This statement is meaningless without further context. Which management programs? What ecological science? Whose cultural perspectives? Some might argue for the above, but the opposite is also true. More information is needed here.

- Current management of dingoes in National Parks is largely focused on agricultural protection not biodiversity outcomes.

This may be true, but 'it depends'. State governments typically have a general biosecurity obligation under their Biosecurity Acts to manage 'restricted matter' (i.e. dingoes) on their land just the same as every other landholder. Previous governments have been successfully sued by adjoining landholders for not controlling dingoes within parks. Exactly *why* a given park manages dingoes is context-specific. Many may do it to prevent dingoes from parks causing impacts to adjoining landholders, whereas others may do it to prevent dingo impacts to threatened native fauna on-park. Biodiversity outcomes on-park are sometimes a by-product of dingo control programs implemented to prevent impacts off-park. For example, endangered quolls in NSW parks fare better or reach their highest densities in places subject to repeated lethal dingo control intended to protect neighbouring livestock producers.

- No funding is allocated for research and development into non-lethal coexistence strategies for agricultural properties neighbouring National Parks.

Allocated by who, exactly? Though much more is always needed, a lot of research occurs into non-lethal dingo control strategies.

- Many Cultural Custodians report feeling excluded from decisions relating to dingo management on their Country.

This is unfortunate. I would encourage them to contact their Local Land Services (LLS) office, contact other local landholders in their area, or contact the National Wild Dog Coordinator (available through the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions; CISS) and seek opportunities to participate in the development of local area planning processes.

I am confident that these stakeholders would welcome participation from Cultural Custodians at any time.

(f) dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks

Submissions could support opportunities for greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management and conservation across New South Wales National Parks.

- 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 outcomes that benefit all Australians.
- Indigenous knowledge systems hold detailed, place-based understanding of dingo behaviour, ecology, and their role in broader ecosystem function, complementing and strengthening western scientific approaches.
- Across New South Wales, Indigenous ranger groups are increasingly leading monitoring and management programs for dingoes on Country, providing important on-ground insights into populations and behaviour.
- This leadership is particularly significant given existing gaps in comprehensive, statewide data on wild dingo populations.
- Cultural Custodians are increasingly advocating for Indigenous-led approaches to dingo conservation and management, including expanded roles in National Park governance and decision-making.
- Strengthening the role of Cultural Custodians in decision-making processes would improve cultural, ecological, and conservation outcomes, with flow-on benefits for ecosystem health and biodiversity.
- Co-management approaches offer a practical framework to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems with western science in National Parks management, improving both governance and on-ground effectiveness.
- The principles outlined in the National First Nations Dingo Declaration provide a relevant foundation to inform future policy development and support more inclusive and effective dingo management approaches.

See previous response.

(g) any other related matters.

Your submission could discuss how changes to dingo management within National Parks may create concern or uncertainty for neighbouring landholders in relation to predation on farmed animals, and consider how the Government could support the development, accessibility, and broader adoption of effective non-lethal predator deterrents.

- Longstanding lethal control measures have not eliminated the risk of predation on farmed animals, with some studies finding broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes could **exacerbate** the risk of predation on calves.

This statement is highly misleading. The eradication of dingoes from some areas in south-eastern Australia has obviously eliminated their risks to farm animals, in much the same way as the eradication of sabre-toothed tigers or thylacines has resulted in the elimination of their risks as well. But contemporary dingo baiting practices do not seek to 'eliminate' dingoes or their risks – they instead seek to coexist with dingoes and find a sustainable balance between dingo impacts and dingo control, reducing their numbers and/or impacts to within tolerable limits. Hence, "lethal control measures have not eliminated the risk of predation" because they are not seeking to eliminate the risk of predation. Some studies have shown (i.e. *one* study has shown) increased predation of calves in baited areas, but these results are highly context-specific, and identical studies in multiple other areas did not replicate these results.

- There is currently no extension services to support landholders to implement non-lethal predator deterrent strategies in New South Wales. Funding currently utilised for broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes and trapping and shooting in National Parks could be re-directed to support neighbouring landholders with coexistence extension services.

This is untrue. Extension services typically advise on all aspects of appropriate dingo management, inclusive of both lethal and non-lethal predator deterrent strategies. More funding is always welcome.

- Livestock Guardian Dogs have been **proven** effective at reducing or eliminating predation on livestock by dingoes. They also provide other benefits to landholders including deterring macropods (kangaroos and wallabies) from grazing paddocks, protection from foxes and protection from birds of prey.

Livestock Guardian Dogs are a lethal control tool proven to impose extreme animal welfare impacts on dingoes and other fauna – welfare impacts that exceed those of poison baiting, trapping and shooting as assessed by widely accepted humaneness assessment procedures (Allen et al 2019). Even so, guardian dogs are indeed useful in some cases, and are widely supported by extension services, livestock producer organizations and most others in places where the use of guardian dogs are appropriate (Anon. 2024).

- There is **widespread anecdotal evidence** from landholders that donkeys are effective guardians against canid predators. There is a strong opportunity for the New South Wales Government to support more robust trials into the use of livestock guardian donkeys to support properties neighbouring National Parks.

There is very little evidence for the effectiveness of donkeys, but what evidence is available is captured in Anon. (2024). More research on these things is always welcome.

- Investment is needed into research, development and scaling of coexistence strategies in New South Wales that ensures landholder interests are protected and dingoes can be retained in the environment to play their important ecological role.

I agree with this statement, but dingoes are already 'retained' under current management approaches and the definition of "coexistence" needs clarifying and better defining. As stated in Allen et al. (2023): "'Coexistence' is a term often and mistakenly used to infer, imply or encourage abstinence from animal killing, but this is ecologically inaccurate. Coexistence *requires* killing and death; coexistence *is not* the absence of animal killing or death." Allen et al. (2025) provided further information on the ethical support for coexistence strategies that include some form of lethal control. Explicit recommendations for future research, development and coexistence scaling strategies were recently provided in Allen (2026).

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