

**Submission
No 226**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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My name is Cheryl Sharma and I would consider myself a conservationist and environmentalist and as such find I am at odds with our governments labelling and treatment of our native apex predator – the dingo.

I have walked in many of our beautiful national parks only to be horrified by seeing the signage of the 1080 baiting program targeting foxes and wild dogs. Who are these wild dogs I wonder?

It is very convenient to place dingoes under the 'wild dog' label so everything is clean, no one can get upset and presumably landholders are satisfied. But it seems Science can help here in identifying dingoes as opposed to wild dogs. Possibly the data being used to identify dingoes is outdated and therefore there is an urgent need to update the genetic research.

It is a disgrace to know what is being done to the dingo. Labelling it as a 'wild dog' gives the confidence to allow reckless extermination which has been the case for too many years. In all my walks in national parks over many years I have only seen one dingo. However, on the other hand I have seen so many '1080' signs.

I understand landholders want to protect their livestock and properties neighbouring national parks but is labelling the dingo as a pest and using a poisonous bait the answer, especially in the year of 2026?

Cannot we look elsewhere for a better answer? Cattle ranchers in America are facing a similar scenario with their cattle and wolves – using both temporary and permanent fencing, ensuring calving happens simultaneously with wolves birthing, using livestock protection dogs and other means appropriate to their needs they have significantly reduced their livestock losses.

We do have pests in our national parks, these being feral animals. Instead of labelling the dingo as a pest it should be the reverse. The dingo as an apex predator would be the ideal 'weapon' to reduce or even eliminate these feral pests who inhabit our national parks such as pigs, goats, cats, foxes.

It is widely recognised by scientists that when dingoes live on country they maintain a healthy ecosystem. They regulate the amount of herbivores which in turn reduces grazing pressure.

The removal of the dingo as the apex predator contributes to vegetation and small native mammal decline. Allowing larger herbivores to graze without this predator degrades the environment – as evident on the non-dingo side of 'The Dingo Fence'.

It is quite unbelievable to know that the dingo is the only native animal that isn't protected by our government – and why is this? And where did this hatred come from and how old is this legislation? Again, it is the year 2026 – we should have more options than poisonous baiting for an animal that has been in this country for thousands of years and is acutely adapted to the environment.

I find it very disrespectful that an animal who is held in high esteem within the First Nations communities is held in such disdain within the framework of the National Parks with its demise seen as a win. I would hope that with this review the 'National First Nations Dingo Declaration' is taken seriously and not something that is filed away. This declaration underpins the importance of the dingo to the Aboriginal people and the environment. Do I dare to dream that we could see cultural custodians caring for dingoes on country in National Parks?

I sincerely hope there is a positive outcome for the dingo from this review. The dingo must be protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* as are all native Australian animals – the dingo should not be exempt.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the word RESPECT which we are all taught as children from our parents.

R – respect for our apex predator who has an important role to play in the balance of our ecosystem

E – environment, which needs our apex predator desperately

S – sad for all to lose this magnificent animal

P – paradigm shift – we need politicians to listen to what is being said and change their way of thinking

E – education - better education for all so the dingo is given due respect

C – cultural custodians – the national parks need to take heed of their voice

T – time is now to change our methods and ways of looking at the dingo and their ecological importance.

Many thanks for your time,

Cheryl Sharma

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