

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: WoolProducers Australia

Date Received: 16 July 2026

Ms Emma Hurst
Chair
NSW Legislative Council
Animal Welfare Committee

16 July, 2026

Dear Ms Hurst

WoolProducers Australia (WoolProducers) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry on behalf of the Australian wool-growing industry and, in particular, the many woolgrowers whose properties are located in close proximity to National Parks, State Forests and other public lands.

About WoolProducers Australia

WoolProducers is the peak national representative body for the Australian wool growing industry. WoolProducers advocates the industry's interests to government and internationally, enabling woolgrowers to determine policy and drive change in their industry. Our members include the State Farming Organisations from each of the major wool-producing states, including the NSW Farmers' Association, together with independently elected woolgrower directors.

WoolProducers has a long-standing and direct interest in the effective, coordinated and humane management of wild dogs. WoolProducers led the development of the National Wild Dog Action Plan and remains a foundation supporter of the coordinated, landscape-scale management model that has been adopted across Australia, WoolProducers therefore fully endorses the submission made on behalf of the National Wild Dog Action Plan. It is from this national policy perspective, and it is in support of the many NSW woolgrowers whose enterprises adjoin National Parks and other public lands, that WoolProducers makes this submission.

Executive summary

- Coordinated wild dog management is essential to protect livestock welfare, farm businesses and the economic sustainability of regional communities adjoining National Parks.
- Existing programs involving National Parks, Local Land Services and neighbouring landholders have significantly reduced livestock losses and improved animal welfare, and any weakening of public land managers' capacity to undertake strategic management risks reversing decades of successful collaboration.
- Contemporary genetic research confirms wild-living dogs in NSW exist along a continuum of dingo and domestic dog ancestry, particularly in eastern Australia, and current management has not been shown to increase hybridisation or compromise the genetic integrity of dingo populations.
- Recent scientific reviews find no consistent evidence that reducing wild dog control improves biodiversity or that current programs cause widespread ecological harm, and no experimental evidence that dingoes can control feral cat and fox populations.

- The current legislative framework appropriately manages dingoes through biosecurity and pest management legislation, recognising both their ecological role and the need to manage impacts on agriculture and biodiversity.
- Independent NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews have consistently found the priority should be improving the coordination and effectiveness of pest animal management — not reducing management effort.
- First Nations people hold diverse views and cultural connections relating to dingoes and other native species in NSW National Parks, and these are best considered at the local level rather than assuming a single Indigenous perspective. The Inquiry should ensure any recommendations maintain coordinated, landscape-scale management and do not shift the costs of dingo conservation onto producers, farming families and regional communities.

Recommendations to the Inquiry Committee

1. Retain the capacity of National Parks and other public land managers to undertake strategic wild dog and dingo management, maintaining the nil-tenure approach to coordinated, landscape-scale control.
2. Ensure management decisions continue to be based on contemporary scientific evidence and local impacts.
3. Strengthen coordination, resourcing and investment in coordinated programs, consistent with the findings of the NSW Natural Resources Commission.
4. Avoid recommendations that increase livestock losses, compromise animal welfare or transfer the costs of dingo conservation onto regional landholders.

Introduction

For many years, coordinated wild dog management by National Parks, Local Land Services, producer organisations and neighbouring landholders has reduced livestock losses, improved animal welfare and supported the viability of farming businesses across New South Wales — the product of decades of significant investment of time and resources.

For the regional communities WoolProducers represents, this is not simply a discussion about wildlife conservation. It is a matter of livestock welfare, farm business viability, community wellbeing and the future sustainability of agricultural enterprises operating alongside public lands. WoolProducers is concerned that recommendations arising from this Inquiry could unintentionally weaken these hard-won arrangements and urges the Inquiry to carefully consider the practical consequences of any measures that reduce the capacity of public land managers and landholders to manage the ongoing impacts of wild dog attacks on livestock and biodiversity.

This submission is informed by the practical experience of woolgrowers, the National Wild Dog Action Plan, the NSW Wild Dog Strategy, independent reviews by the NSW Natural Resources Commission, and contemporary scientific research into dingo ecology, genetics and management.

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

There has been considerable discussion about whether the wild-living dogs found in NSW are pure dingoes, hybrids or domestic dogs. Recent DNA research using ancient dingo genomes has significantly improved our understanding: earlier studies underestimated domestic dog ancestry in some populations because they lacked pre-European dingo DNA for comparison. This research shows that dingo ancestry exists along a continuum rather than as a simple split between "pure dingoes" and "domestic dogs", with most wild-living dogs retaining substantial dingo ancestry.

The latest research also demonstrates that populations in eastern Australia, including much of eastern NSW, generally carry higher levels of domestic dog ancestry than inland and remote populations — a pattern largely reflecting the long history of European settlement, agricultural development and domestic dog populations in the east. Importantly, recent studies find no evidence that current management programs are increasing hybridisation or damaging genetic integrity; long-term monitoring shows dingo populations can remain genetically stable despite ongoing management.

For the woolgrowers WoolProducers represents, the key issue is not whether a wild-living dog is classified as a dingo, hybrid or wild dog, but whether it is causing impacts on livestock, wildlife or neighbouring properties.

(b) Legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes

The current legislative and policy framework, including the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015, the NSW Wild Dog Strategy and the National Wild Dog Action Plan, reflects decades of practical experience managing wild dog impacts across Australia. These frameworks were shaped not by theoretical concerns but by the first-hand consequences that governments, producers and land managers experienced from ineffective or uncoordinated management, and they recognise a simple reality: wild dogs do not respect property boundaries.

Underpinning them is the nil-tenure approach, which holds that all land managers share responsibility for managing impacts regardless of whether land is publicly or privately owned. For woolgrowers, this principle has been fundamental to the success of coordinated management programs.

Dingoes and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act

Dingoes are not recognised as protected native fauna under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016, being specifically excluded from the Act's definition of protected animals. This reflects the long-standing complexity around their taxonomic status, their ability to interbreed with domestic dogs, and the varying levels of domestic dog ancestry in many contemporary populations. Recent genomic research reinforces this: while dingoes have existed in Australia for thousands of years and developed distinct population

structures before European settlement, many modern populations, particularly in eastern Australia, show varying levels of domestic dog admixture.

The current framework therefore manages dingoes primarily through biosecurity and pest management legislation rather than threatened species legislation, consistent with the fact that:

- dingoes are not listed as threatened under NSW or Commonwealth legislation;
- dingoes remain widespread across Australia; and
- many contemporary populations contain varying levels of domestic dog ancestry.

Any recommendation that fundamentally alters this framework should carefully weigh these legislative and scientific realities.

(c) The ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

Recent reviews of the scientific literature show that the ecological role of dingoes is complex and highly dependent on local conditions. While some studies suggest dingoes may suppress foxes and feral cats in certain circumstances, others find little or no effect, and scientists continue to debate how often these interactions occur and whether they consistently deliver biodiversity benefits.

Importantly, there is currently no strong experimental evidence that dingo control consistently increases foxes and feral cats across all landscapes, nor that simply increasing dingo numbers will automatically improve biodiversity everywhere. In contrast, many coordinated NSW programs use an integrated approach targeting wild dogs, foxes, feral cats and feral pigs together, delivering biodiversity benefits by reducing the impacts of multiple pest species at once.

This matters because some public commentary assumes that reducing wild dog management will automatically improve biodiversity – a conclusion the available evidence does not support. Management decisions should instead be based on local evidence, measured impacts and demonstrated outcomes.

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

Aboriginal cultural views regarding dingoes are diverse and vary between communities. A locally based approach is therefore appropriate, recognising cultural values while balancing statutory biosecurity obligations, biodiversity conservation and the protection of other culturally significant species and landscapes. Decisions about dingo management are best made at the local level, where cultural values, environmental outcomes and landholder needs can be weighed together, rather than by assuming a single Indigenous perspective across the State.

(e) The impact of current government policies and programs

From the perspective of the woolgrowers, current coordinated management programs have delivered substantial benefits. Management undertaken by National Parks, Local Land Services, producer groups and neighbouring landholders has reduced livestock losses, improved animal welfare outcomes and supported the viability of agricultural businesses across many parts of NSW.

Findings of the NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews

The NSW Natural Resources Commission has undertaken a number of independent, government-commissioned reviews into pest animal management on public lands, assessing whether programs effectively protect biodiversity, agricultural production and neighbouring communities. Notably, these reviews did not find excessive pest management occurring in National Parks. Instead, they consistently identified that:

pest management was often not undertaken at sufficient scale;

- management effort varied between regions;
- coordination between land managers could be improved; and
- neighbouring landholders continued to experience significant impacts from pest animals originating on public lands.

These findings point to a need to improve management effectiveness rather than reduce management effort. WoolProducers is concerned that recommendations arising from this Inquiry may be inconsistent with these independent conclusions.

(f) Dingo management including opportunities of indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks

Under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015, all land managers, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, have a General Biosecurity Duty to manage wild dog impacts and prevent harm to neighbouring lands. This is delivered through Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans and Local Wild Dog Management Plans, which require collaboration across land tenures and stakeholders. These planning processes give First Nations communities, traditional owners and local Aboriginal land councils the opportunity to contribute cultural knowledge and identify culturally significant values associated with dingoes and their landscapes.

(g) Other related matters

WoolProducers' greatest concern is that recommendations arising from this Inquiry could weaken the ability of National Parks and other public land managers to undertake effective wild dog management, placing livestock enterprises, animal welfare and regional communities at considerable risk. Yet the National Wild Dog Action Plan, developed collaboratively by governments, conservation agencies, scientists and livestock industries, including WoolProducers, demonstrates that effective management and conservation are not mutually exclusive. This is reinforced by the NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews, which repeatedly called for stronger coordination and more effective management rather than reduced effort.

Many local wild dog management groups have spent decades building partnerships between National Parks, Local Land Services and private landholders, delivering significant reductions in livestock losses across large landscapes. Weakening these arrangements risks undoing that progress. For sheep and wool enterprises adjacent to National Parks, effective management is not merely desirable but essential to ongoing viability, without it, livestock losses, animal welfare impacts and management costs increase while productivity and confidence to invest decline, leaving some enterprises economically unviable.

The Inquiry should therefore ensure that any recommendations do not unintentionally transfer the costs of dingo conservation onto livestock producers, farming families and regional communities.

Conclusion

As the peak national body representing an industry that lives with wild dog impacts every day, WoolProducers is concerned this Inquiry may lead to recommendations that weaken existing management arrangements on public lands. The available scientific evidence does not demonstrate that current programs are threatening the long-term persistence of dingoes in NSW, increasing hybridisation or causing population collapse. In contrast, there is substantial evidence that wild dogs continue to impose significant economic, social and animal welfare impacts on livestock enterprises, and independent NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews have repeatedly called for stronger coordination and more effective pest animal management across land tenures.

WoolProducers therefore urges the Committee to exercise caution before recommending any changes that may reduce the capacity of National Parks and other land managers to undertake strategic wild dog management. For woolgrowers, this is not an abstract policy issue, it is about whether farming businesses can continue to operate successfully alongside public lands into the future.

The challenge before the Committee is not whether dingoes should be conserved, but how conservation can be balanced with the practical responsibility to protect livestock, regional livelihoods and animal welfare. The current coordinated framework provides that balance and should be strengthened, not weakened.

WoolProducers welcomes the opportunity to provide further information or to appear before the Inquiry if that would assist its deliberations.

Yours sincerely

Jo Hall
Chief Executive Officer
WoolProducers Australia