

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Humane World for Animals

Date Received: 16 July 2026



Humane World for Animals™

Formerly called Humane Society International

Submission to the NSW Dingoes in National Parks Inquiry

16 July 2026

Submitted to:

Animal Welfare Committee

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About Humane World for Animals

For over 70 years, Humane World for Animals (formerly Humane Society International) has been a leader in the animal protection movement working to create a better world for animals. We envision an ecologically sustainable and humane world where people treat animals and nature with respect and compassion.

In Australia, Humane World for Animals has extensive experience in wildlife conservation policy, threatened species protection, and biodiversity law reform at both the national and state level. We have been responsible for many of the scientific nominations underpinning listings of threatened species, threatened ecological communities, and key threatening processes under the *NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and the *Commonwealth Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999*, as well as contributing to state-based conservation and wildlife management processes.

Alongside our policy and advocacy work, Humane World for Animals coordinates the Wildlife Land Trust (WLT), a national network of more than 1,000 privately owned wildlife sanctuaries committed to the protection and restoration of native species and habitats. In New South Wales, 402 private landholders participate in the WLT, many of them also wildlife carers, who provide valuable insight into the practical challenges and opportunities associated with wildlife protection on private land.

Humane World for Animal's work promotes coexistence between people and wildlife, including the development and evaluation of non-lethal approaches to managing human-wildlife conflict. We advocate for wildlife governance systems that prioritise animal welfare, ecological sustainability and transparency, and reduced reliance on lethal control as a default management response.

This submission draws on our long-standing expertise in wildlife protection, conservation science, and humane management to address the management of dingoes in NSW national parks. It identifies opportunities to reform current legislative, policy, and management frameworks so they better reflect contemporary scientific evidence, animal welfare principles, the ecological role of dingoes, and their cultural significance to First Nations communities.

Introduction and context

Humane World for Animals welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the NSW Parliamentary inquiry into dingo management in national parks. This inquiry provides an important opportunity to reconsider whether the treatment of dingoes within the national park estate reflects contemporary science, animal welfare expectations, First Nations knowledge and the fundamental purpose of protected areas.

Dingoes are native animals of profound ecological and cultural significance. As Australia's largest terrestrial predator, they can regulate introduced predators and herbivores and contribute to the functioning of ecosystems. For many First Nations peoples, dingoes are family, connected to Country, kinship, lore, cultural identity and continuing custodial responsibilities.

Despite this significance, dingoes are the only native mammals expressly excluded from protection under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. They are instead grouped with free-living domestic dogs under the term "wild dog" and managed primarily through the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. This framework has normalised their poisoning, trapping and shooting within areas established to conserve native species and ecological processes. Between 2020 and 2025, more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed across NSW national parks.

The assumptions underpinning this approach have not kept pace with contemporary evidence. Genome-wide research demonstrates that free-living canids in NSW are overwhelmingly dingoes with high levels of dingo ancestry, challenging the wild dog terminology and rationale used to justify their control. Ecological research shows that killing dingoes can disrupt stable family groups, potentially increasing movement and predation on neighbouring farms, while also weakening their ecological function and increasing the activity of introduced predators such as foxes. At the same time, the severe welfare impacts of 1080 poisoning, trapping and shooting are incompatible with growing recognition of animal sentience and the responsibility to prevent avoidable suffering.

Current management also fails to give adequate recognition to First Nations cultural authority and relationships with dingoes. The National First Nations' Dingo Declaration calls for an end to lethal control and a new model of Caring for Dingoes on Country,

grounded in protection, coexistence and First Nations leadership. These principles offer a strong foundation for reform.

Humane World for Animals submits that the lethal control of dingoes has no place within NSW national parks. Dingoes should be protected as native animals, and government resources should instead support First Nations-led conservation, long-term ecological monitoring and practical coexistence assistance for neighbouring landholders. This submission addresses each of the inquiry's Terms of Reference and outlines the reforms needed to achieve that transition.

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

The terminology and assumptions underpinning dingo management in NSW have not kept pace with contemporary genetic science. The term “wild dog” is routinely used in government policy to collectively describe dingoes, free-living domestic dogs, or hybrids of them both. While administratively convenient, this terminology obscures important distinctions between these animals and creates the misleading impression that the canids targeted by lethal control programs are predominantly free-living domestic dogs or heavily hybridised animals.

Earlier assessments of dingo ancestry relied largely on physical characteristics or microsatellite testing using a limited number of genetic markers and geographically restricted reference populations. These methods did not adequately account for natural genetic variation between dingo populations and consequently overestimated the prevalence of domestic dog ancestry.

A 2022 study examined microsatellite results from 5,039 wild canids sampled across Australia¹. Only 31 domestic dogs and 27 probable first or second-generation dingo–dog hybrids were identified¹. Although domestic dog introgression was more common in south-eastern Australia than in other regions, most wild canids in NSW retained a predominantly dingo genetic identity¹. The authors concluded that domestic dogs and recent dingo–dog hybrids are rare in the Australian landscape and that replacing the term “wild dog” with “dingo” would more accurately reflect the identity of these animals¹.

More recent genome-wide research provides an even clearer picture. A 2023 study analysed 195,474 genetic markers from 402 wild and captive dingoes and compared them with domestic dogs². This substantially higher-resolution method found limited evidence of domestic dog admixture and demonstrated that earlier microsatellite testing had considerably overestimated its prevalence, particularly in south-eastern Australia². Of the 103 wild dingoes from NSW included in the study, 62.1% had more than 99% dingo ancestry, while a further 17.5% were historical dingo backcrosses with more than 93% dingo ancestry. The remaining 20.4% were classified as recent dingo backcrosses, with between 55% and 93% dingo ancestry. No NSW animal was classified as a domestic dog or first-generation dingo–dog hybrid. Across the combined NSW and Queensland sample of 171 animals, only two had less than 70% dingo ancestry. These findings directly challenge the assumption that dingo populations in NSW have been replaced by domestic dogs or dingo–dog hybrids.

The genome-wide research also identified at least five genetically distinct dingo populations across Australia, demonstrating that dingoes are not a single, genetically uniform population. This geographic variation has important implications for both conservation and ancestry testing. If natural differences between regional dingo populations are not adequately represented in genetic reference samples, they may be incorrectly interpreted as evidence of domestic dog ancestry. Earlier genome-wide research similarly identified distinct regional populations, including a south-eastern population encompassing NSW, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory³. Together, these findings highlight the importance of managing dingoes in a way that recognises regional genetic diversity. Lethal control threatens locally distinctive populations, reduces genetic diversity and can disrupt patterns of gene flow. Contemporary genetic information should instead be used to protect and restore regional dingo populations.

The presence of some domestic dog ancestry does not make an animal ecologically equivalent to a domestic dog. An animal with predominantly dingo ancestry may retain the morphology, behaviour, social organisation and ecological function of a dingo. A more flexible conservation approach that considers genomic ancestry, ecological function and local conservation objectives is needed, rather than relying on a rigid distinction between “pure” and “hybrid” animals.

Hybridisation should also not be used to justify lethal control. Studies show that lethal control, including aerial baiting during the dingo breeding season, may increase the risk of hybridisation by disrupting social structures and reducing the availability of dingo mates². The greater prevalence of domestic dog ancestry in regions subject to intensive lethal control may therefore be partly a consequence of the management practices intended to address it². Protecting stable dingo family groups, preventing domestic dogs from roaming at national park boundaries and using contemporary genetic monitoring would provide a more coherent response.

The continued use of the term “wild dog” in NSW policy is therefore scientifically outdated and materially affects how dingoes are perceived and managed. Most free-living canids in NSW national parks should be understood to be and managed as dingoes. Where the presence of a domestic dog is suspected, management decisions should be based on reliable evidence rather than terminology that assumes all free-living canids pose the same risks or have the same conservation status.

Recommendation: Replace the term “wild dog” with “dingo” in NSW legislation, policy and public communications when referring to free-living canids in national parks. These animals should be presumed and managed as dingoes unless reliably identified as domestic dogs.

b) The legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes in NSW national parks

The legal and policy framework governing dingoes in NSW is fundamentally inconsistent. Dingoes are native animals with recognised ecological and cultural significance, yet they are denied the protections ordinarily afforded to native mammals and are instead managed primarily through a biosecurity framework directed towards controlling pest animals.

Schedule 5 of the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* defines protected animals as mammals native to Australia, but expressly excludes dingoes. Dingoes are the only native mammal singled out in this way. This exclusion denies them the general protections provided to other native mammals under the Act and enables their lethal control without the wildlife licensing requirements that would otherwise apply.

In contrast, the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) Wild Dog Policy groups dingoes together with free-living domestic dogs and their hybrids under the collective term “wild dog”. It states that NPWS controls these animals primarily to minimise harm to livestock on neighbouring properties. This policy position is informed by the 11 Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans developed by Local Land Services, all of which identify “wild dogs” as priority pest animals.

The policy also links dingo control to the general biosecurity duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*. This duty requires people dealing with a biosecurity matter to take reasonably practicable measures to prevent, minimise or eliminate the associated biosecurity risk. It applies to occupiers of both public and private land and is interpreted as requiring NPWS to minimise the risk of “wild dogs” affecting neighbouring properties. The practical effect of this framework is the widespread use of lethal control within protected areas. Information obtained under the *Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009* shows that more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed across NSW national parks between 2020 and 2025.

At the same time, the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy and NPWS policy recognise that dingoes have an important ecological role. The stated intention is to concentrate control in areas where the risk of negative impacts is greatest, while allowing dingoes to persist in lower-risk areas and fulfil their ecological function. NPWS may also undertake control to protect visitors, reduce impacts on biodiversity and minimise the flow of domestic dog genes into dingo populations.

In principle, this framework attempts to balance agricultural, conservation and other interests. In practice, however, it places dingoes at a significant disadvantage. Their exclusion from the Biodiversity Conservation Act removes the protective starting point that applies to other native mammals, while the Biosecurity Act creates an affirmative duty to manage the risks attributed to them. Conservation is acknowledged as a policy objective, but it is not supported by an equivalent statutory obligation to protect dingoes or maintain viable, socially stable populations.

The use of the collective term “wild dog” compounds this imbalance. As discussed under ToR (a), contemporary genetic research shows that most free-living canids in NSW are dingoes with high levels of dingo ancestry. Grouping these animals with free-living domestic dogs allows the ecological and cultural significance of dingoes to be

overlooked and enables programs directed at a broadly defined pest category to kill native animals without distinguishing between them.

More fundamentally, the framework permits a protected-area management response that should not be available for a native animal of ecological and cultural significance. Although policy states that control should focus on areas where the risk of negative impacts is greatest, it does not require site-specific evidence that dingoes within a national park are responsible for farm animal losses. Nor does it require NPWS to prevent conflict through non-lethal measures, despite the ecological, cultural and animal welfare harms caused by killing dingoes.

The National Code of Practice for the Humane Control of Wild Dogs recognises that control programs should satisfy three essential requirements: necessity, effectiveness and humaneness⁴. It also states that management should begin by defining the actual problem, rather than treating the presence of the animal itself as the problem, and that success should be measured against stated outcomes rather than the number of animals killed⁴. Even these basic principles are not clearly embedded as enforceable requirements within the NSW framework. In any event, procedural safeguards cannot make the poisoning, trapping or shooting of dingoes consistent with their protection as native animals in national parks.

The Code itself also reflects the same outdated classification problem. Dingoes are treated within a national pest-control document alongside free-living domestic dogs and hybrids, and the control methods contemplated include 1080 baiting, trapping and shooting. While the Code purports to reduce suffering, it does not resolve the more fundamental question of whether a native animal performing an important ecological role should be managed through a pest-control framework at all. Compliance with procedural guidance cannot substitute for a legal requirement to protect dingoes and prohibit their lethal control within national parks.

The current framework therefore gives greater legal force to killing of dingoes than to their conservation. This is particularly inappropriate within national parks, where the protection of native species, ecological processes and cultural values should be the primary objective. A more coherent framework would recognise dingoes as protected native animals, distinguish them from free-living domestic dogs and require conflict to be addressed through prevention and non-lethal coexistence measures.

Recommendation: Amend Schedule 5 of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 to recognise dingoes as protected native mammals. Revise NSW biosecurity and NPWS policies to distinguish dingoes from free-living domestic dogs and prohibit lethal dingo control within national parks.

c) The ecological role of dingoes in national parks

Dingoes are Australia's largest terrestrial predator and play an important role in regulating ecosystems through top-down predation. Their presence can influence the abundance, distribution and behaviour of other predators and herbivores, with flow-on effects for smaller native animals, vegetation and broader ecosystem function. Although these effects vary across environments, the available evidence demonstrates that dingoes are important regulators of ecological communities.

One of the most significant ecological functions performed by dingoes is the suppression of introduced predators such as foxes and cats. Dingoes may suppress these smaller predators through direct killing, competition for food and behavioural avoidance. A 2017 study examined relationships between apex predators and smaller predators across Australia, North America and Europe⁵. In Australia, red fox abundance declined progressively from the margins towards the core of the dingo's range, where dingo abundance was greatest⁵. The study concluded that apex predators can strongly constrain the distribution and abundance of smaller predators, particularly where they persist at sufficient densities across large areas⁵.

Research examining dingoes and cats has found a similar relationship. A 2019 study compared predator activity on either side of the dingo fence and found that cats were more abundant where dingoes were rare⁶. Where dingoes were uncommon, cat abundance increased with prey abundance⁶. This relationship disappeared where dingoes were common, indicating that the presence of dingoes exerted a stronger influence on cat populations than prey availability⁶. The authors also found cat remains in dingo scats and substantial dietary overlap between the two predators, particularly in their consumption of rabbits and hopping mice, providing evidence that dingoes may suppress cats through both direct killing and competition for food⁶.

This role is especially relevant because foxes and cats are major threats to small and medium-sized native animals. By limiting the abundance or activity of these introduced

predators, dingoes may reduce predation pressure on native mammals, birds and reptiles. Conversely, reducing dingo populations may release foxes and cats from this pressure, potentially undermining the biodiversity conservation objectives of national parks.

This concern is supported by research conducted directly within NSW conservation reserves. A 2022 study compared dingo and fox activity across 27 sites in the forest ecosystems of south-eastern NSW, including 13 pairs of baited and unbaited sites⁷. Dingo activity was generally lower at sites subject to poison baiting, while fox activity was higher⁷. On average, dingo activity was almost three times greater at unbaited sites, whereas fox activity was more than eight times greater at baited sites⁷. The authors concluded that dingoes may exert a stronger suppressive effect on foxes than poisoning campaigns and warned that dingo control could be counterproductive for biodiversity conservation by increasing fox activity⁷.

These findings are particularly important in the context of dingo control within NSW national parks. Although 1080 baits targeting dingoes may also be lethal to foxes, the 2022 study suggests that the removal of dingoes can benefit fox populations overall⁷. This may occur because baiting has a stronger effect on dingoes than foxes, allowing surviving foxes to benefit from reduced competition, direct killing and behavioural exclusion. Dingo control should therefore not be assumed to produce a positive biodiversity outcome simply because foxes may also consume some baits. Its broader effects on predator interactions must be considered.

Dingoes can also regulate populations of large herbivores, including kangaroos and goats. Through predation and the influence their presence has on herbivore behaviour, dingoes may reduce concentrated grazing pressure and enable vegetation recovery. These effects can be particularly important in dry and heavily grazed landscapes, where unmanaged herbivore populations can affect vegetation regeneration, soil condition and habitat availability for other species.

A 2022 study reviewed research and presented the experiences of cattle farmers who had ceased lethal dingo control on their properties⁸. The authors reported substantial declines in kangaroo and goat populations following the return or stabilisation of dingoes, accompanied by vegetation regeneration and improved capacity to rest pastures⁸. At Wooleen Station, a 500,000-acre cattle farm in Murchison, Western

Australia, the return of dingoes was followed by the disappearance of goats, a major reduction in red kangaroo numbers and regeneration of streamside trees, perennial grasses and shrubs⁸. The study argued that maintaining dingoes can, in some circumstances, provide ecological and economic benefits by reducing grazing pressure from unmanaged herbivores⁸.

These outcomes will not occur uniformly in every landscape, and the ecological effects of dingoes are shaped by factors including climate, productivity, habitat, prey availability and human activity. However, this variability does not justify disregarding their ecological role. Rather, it demonstrates the need for management to be informed by local evidence and to consider the full range of consequences that may follow when dingo populations are reduced or disrupted.

The ecological effects of lethal control also extend beyond the removal of individual animals. Dingoes live in socially organised family groups that maintain territories and influence how individuals move, hunt and interact with other species. Repeated control can disrupt these groups and produce younger, more mobile populations, potentially weakening the ecological functions associated with stable dingo populations. Assessing control only by the number of baits deployed or dingoes killed therefore fails to capture its broader effects on ecosystem function.

National parks should provide areas where dingo populations can persist at ecologically functional densities and maintain stable social structures. Yet the scale of current control risks turning national parks into population sinks or weakening dingo populations to the point that they can no longer perform their ecological role. Given the evidence that killing dingoes can increase fox activity and disrupt ecological processes, lethal control is incompatible with the biodiversity conservation purpose of national parks.

Recommendation: Manage dingoes as ecologically important native predators and end baiting, trapping and shooting within NSW national parks. Establish long-term monitoring to assess dingo population health, family stability and ecological outcomes.

d) The cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

Humane World for Animals recognises that First Nations peoples are the authorities on their own cultures, Countries and relationships with dingoes. We do not seek to

speak on their behalf. We urge the Committee to listen directly to First Nations Cultural Custodians and organisations and to give substantial weight to their evidence when considering the cultural significance of dingoes and the impacts of current management practices.

Relationships between First Nations peoples and dingoes extend back thousands of years and remain alive today. Across Australia, dingoes are known by many names and are connected to identity, kinship, totems, Dreaming, lore, law, songlines, stories, ceremonies, art and responsibilities to care for Country. These relationships are diverse and specific to individual Nations, but they demonstrate that dingoes cannot be understood solely as wildlife, predators or biosecurity matter.

The [National First Nations' Dingo Declaration](#) provides a powerful collective account of this significance⁹. Developed and endorsed by First Nations Cultural Custodians from across Australia, the Declaration describes dingoes as sacred, as family, and as integral to culture and Country⁹. It recognises dingoes as companions, hunting partners and protectors, as well as animals whose presence helps maintain the health and balance of Country⁹.

The Declaration also rejects the term “wild dog”, stating that it diminishes the dingo, misrepresents its identity and disregards culture⁹. This aligns with the contemporary genetic evidence discussed under ToR (a), but the objection is not only scientific. Describing dingoes as “wild dogs” strips them of their distinct identity and cultural significance, making it easier for their killing to be treated as routine pest management.

Archaeological evidence further demonstrates the depth of relationships between First Nations peoples and dingoes. In 2023, at the request of the Menindee Aboriginal Elders Council, Barkindji Cultural Custodians worked with researchers to excavate the ancestral burial of a dingo, or kali in Barkindji language, near the junction of the Darling Barka and Ancestral Talyawalka rivers in western NSW. The dingo had been intentionally buried in a midden in a manner similar to ancestral burials. Dingo burials have been identified at numerous archaeological sites across south-eastern Australia, particularly along the Murray-Darling river system and the coast, sometimes in the same places as human ancestors. The burial practices indicate that companion dingoes occupied a significant social and spiritual place within First Nations communities.

Examination of the Menindee remains found signs of age, a possible long-term illness and a healed injury. While these findings cannot reveal the precise circumstances of the dingo's life, they are consistent with an animal who survived illness and injury before being carefully buried. Together with the cultural context provided by Barkindji Custodians, the burial offers material evidence of relationships based on companionship, care and belonging rather than the adversarial relationship reflected in contemporary pest-control policy.

Current dingo management can therefore cause cultural harm extending beyond the death of individual animals. The National First Nations' Dingo Declaration describes the killing of dingoes as the killing of family and connects the survival of dingoes with the health of Country, culture and community⁹. Poisoning, trapping and shooting dingoes on Country can interfere with cultural responsibilities and perpetuate systems that have displaced First Nations authority over animals and land.

The killing of dingoes causes cultural harm that cannot be resolved through consultation alone. This harm is compounded by management systems that exclude relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians from decisions affecting dingoes on their Country. Current NSW frameworks do not require the cultural significance of dingoes to be assessed before lethal control programs proceed, nor do they provide First Nations peoples with a consistent decision-making role. As a result, animals of profound cultural importance may be killed on Country through programs developed primarily to satisfy agricultural and biosecurity objectives.

Recognising the cultural significance of dingoes requires more than consultation after management decisions have effectively been made. It requires the NSW Government to acknowledge that dingoes are culturally significant native animals and that decisions affecting them also affect cultural rights, relationships and responsibilities. These considerations should be embedded in legislation and national park management planning and should guide the protection of dingoes and the development of non-lethal approaches to conflict. The specific cultural values and appropriate management approach for each area must be determined with the relevant First Nations peoples rather than assumed to be uniform across NSW.

Recommendation: Formally recognise dingoes as culturally significant native animals in NSW legislation and national park management. End lethal control on

Country and ensure relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians are meaningfully involved in all decisions affecting dingoes.

e) The impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in national parks

Current government policy enables lethal dingo control to occur across extensive areas of the NSW national park estate. Although the NPWS Wild Dog Policy states that control should be concentrated where the risk of negative impacts is greatest, the available information indicates that baiting is conducted at a very large scale. More than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed across NSW national parks between 2020 and 2025.

The scale of baiting is difficult to reconcile with a policy framework that purports to balance the control of “wild dogs” with dingo conservation. Broad-scale baiting does not distinguish between dingoes that have caused harm to neighbouring farm animals and those living within national parks without creating conflict. Nor does it target particular animals responsible for farm animal losses. Instead, poison is distributed across large areas based on the possibility that dingoes may move beyond park boundaries.

This approach raises serious animal welfare concerns. The National Code of Practice for the Humane Control of Wild Dogs acknowledges that control techniques can cause suffering and that management programs should satisfy three essential requirements: necessity, effectiveness and humaneness⁴. However, the most commonly used method in NSW national parks, 1080 baiting, is classified by the Code as only “conditionally acceptable”, meaning it may not be consistently humane and may involve a period of poor welfare before death⁴.

The Code describes 1080 poisoning in carnivores as causing severe dysfunction of the central nervous system, including hyperexcitability, manic running, vocalising, retching, collapse, convulsions, tetanic spasms and ultimately respiratory failure⁴. It acknowledges that animals are likely to remain conscious and capable of experiencing distress and possibly pain during the onset of these effects. A peer-reviewed review of the available evidence concluded that 1080 should not be regarded as a humane poison, noting that poisoned dogs have been observed running uncontrollably,

retching, vomiting and experiencing prolonged involuntary muscle contractions¹⁰. The review also found insufficient evidence to assume that animals are unconscious or unable to suffer during convulsions¹⁰. Because poisoned dingoes commonly die away from human observation and their bodies may never be recovered, the duration and severity of suffering cannot be monitored in routine baiting programs.

Aerial baiting creates additional accountability concerns. Uneaten baits cannot be retrieved, and the number, identity and fate of animals consuming them cannot be reliably determined. The number of baits deployed is therefore not equivalent to the number of dingoes killed, and neither figure would demonstrate that farm animal losses were prevented. This makes it extremely difficult to assess the welfare impact, target specificity or effectiveness of a program after it has occurred.

Other control methods also carry significant welfare risks. The Code recognises that all traps have the potential to cause injury, suffering and distress⁴. Animals restrained in leg-hold traps may experience swelling, lacerations and dislocation, injure their teeth and mouths while biting the trap, or chew at the captured limb⁴. They may also suffer from exposure, thirst, starvation, shock, capture myopathy or predation before the trap is inspected⁴. Shooting may result in a rapid death when performed correctly, but this depends on the animal being clearly visible, within range and shot by an experienced operator using appropriate equipment and shot placement⁴. Poorly placed shots can instead cause non-fatal injuries and prolonged suffering.

The killing of breeding females can also leave dependent pups to die from starvation, dehydration, exposure or predation. The Code states that where lactating females are shot or trapped, reasonable efforts should be made to locate and kill dependent pups⁴. This requirement itself highlights the foreseeable secondary suffering caused by lethal control. It is unclear how dependent pups could be identified or located following aerial baiting, where the poisoned adult is highly unlikely to be found.

Current programs can also undermine ecological outcomes. As discussed under ToR (c), research conducted in south-eastern NSW found that dingo activity was lower and fox activity substantially higher at sites subject to poison baiting⁷. This suggests that killing dingoes may release foxes from competition and other suppressive effects, potentially increasing predation pressure on native wildlife. A program undertaken

within a national park to meet agricultural or biosecurity objectives may therefore produce adverse consequences for biodiversity conservation.

Lethal control may also disrupt stable dingo family groups, altering movement, breeding and territorial behaviour. The resulting populations may be younger and more mobile, potentially increasing movement towards neighbouring properties. Disruption may also reduce the availability of dingo mates and increase opportunities for breeding with domestic dogs, meaning lethal control can exacerbate the hybridisation risk it is sometimes used to address². These population-level effects are not captured by reporting the number of baits deployed.

The cultural consequences are similarly significant. As discussed under ToR (d), many First Nations peoples regard dingoes as kin and as integral to culture and Country. The National First Nations' Dingo Declaration describes the killing of dingoes as the killing of family⁹. Control programs conducted without the agreement or meaningful involvement of relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians can therefore cause cultural harm as well as ecological and animal welfare impacts.

Despite the scale of these programs, public reporting remains focused largely on operational activity rather than outcomes. Information is available on matters such as the number of baits deployed, but there is limited public evidence about the number of dingoes killed, the farm animal losses prevented, welfare outcomes, effects on dependent pups, impacts on foxes and cats, changes to dingo population structure or the cultural consequences of control. This lack of monitoring means the government cannot demonstrate what these programs achieve, despite their known animal welfare, ecological and cultural harms. It further strengthens the case for ending lethal control in national parks.

Current policy consequently risks treating lethal control as an end in itself. The deployment of baits demonstrates that an activity occurred, but not that the underlying conflict was resolved. Government investment should instead be directed towards preventing conflict through non-lethal measures, with outcomes assessed through changes in verified farm animal losses, animal welfare, ecological and cultural values, and long-term coexistence.

Recommendation: End all government programs involving the poisoning, trapping or shooting of dingoes within NSW national parks. Commission an independent review

of the ecological, cultural and animal welfare impacts of past and current programs and publicly report its findings.

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

First Nations peoples have cared for dingoes and Country for thousands of years. Their knowledge of dingo behaviour, family relationships, movement, seasonal patterns and ecological roles has developed through sustained observation and cultural practice. This knowledge remains living, place-based and inseparable from responsibilities to care for Country.

The incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into dingo management should not be understood simply as adding cultural information to an otherwise unchanged pest-control framework. Such an approach risks treating First Nations knowledge as a source of data while retaining decision-making authority within government agencies. Meaningful reform requires First Nations peoples to hold substantive leadership and decision-making roles in matters affecting dingoes on their Country.

The National First Nations' Dingo Declaration calls for a model of "Caring for Dingoes on Country", under which dingoes are recognised as culturally significant and protected native animals⁹. The Declaration advocates for management that brings together traditional knowledge and evidence-based practice, supports peaceful coexistence, and directly involves Traditional Custodians in legislation and management decisions affecting dingoes⁹.

This approach differs fundamentally from the current framework. Rather than beginning with a general assumption that dingoes present a biosecurity risk and determining where lethal control should occur, Caring for Dingoes on Country would begin by recognising their cultural and ecological importance. Management objectives would be developed with the relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians and would reflect the particular knowledge, values and responsibilities associated with each Country.

First Nations leadership should be embedded in dingo conservation through formal roles in national park governance, management planning and the development of protection, monitoring and coexistence initiatives. Relevant Traditional Owners and

Cultural Custodians should be involved from the earliest stage in defining management objectives, identifying culturally significant areas, determining appropriate monitoring methods and evaluating outcomes. Their participation should occur before decisions are made, rather than through consultation on a predetermined proposal.

There are also important opportunities for Indigenous-led monitoring and research. First Nations ranger programs and community organisations could lead or participate in monitoring dingo presence, movement, family structure, diet and interactions with other animals. Cultural indicators of healthy Country could be considered alongside ecological measures used in western science. Bringing these knowledge systems together, on terms determined with First Nations communities, would provide a more complete understanding of dingo populations and their role within particular landscapes.

Any such program must protect Indigenous cultural and intellectual property. Communities should determine what knowledge may be shared, how it is interpreted, who may access it and how it may be used. Sensitive cultural information should not be incorporated into government databases or management plans without the agreement of the knowledge holders. First Nations peoples should retain appropriate control over data and knowledge generated through Indigenous-led monitoring and research.

Meaningful participation must also be adequately resourced. Governments should not expect First Nations peoples to repeatedly provide cultural knowledge, attend meetings or assess proposals without payment and practical support. Dedicated funding is needed for on-Country engagement, ranger employment, community-led research, governance roles and the involvement of Elders and younger generations. Long-term funding would also support the transfer of cultural knowledge and strengthen community capacity to lead dingo conservation.

The views and governance structures of First Nations peoples are not uniform. A single statewide consultation process or advisory body cannot replace engagement with the relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians for each national park and Country. Statewide coordination may provide valuable strategic guidance, but

decisions about particular places must remain grounded in local cultural authority and relationships.

Embedding First Nations leadership would improve more than consultation. It would help shift dingo management away from a narrow pest-control model and towards a place-based approach that recognises the connections between dingoes, people and Country. This would strengthen cultural outcomes while also contributing knowledge and experience that can improve ecological monitoring, coexistence and long-term management.

Recommendation: Establish a properly resourced, First Nations-led framework for dingo conservation in NSW national parks, guided by the National First Nations' Dingo Declaration. Relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians should share decision-making authority and retain control over their cultural knowledge and data.

g) Any other related matters

Reforming dingo management in national parks must be accompanied by practical support for neighbouring landholders. Humane World for Animals recognises that farm animal predation can have serious financial, animal welfare and emotional consequences for farmers. However, the choice is not between leaving landholders unsupported and continuing broad-scale lethal control within national parks. A more durable approach would protect dingoes in conservation areas while helping farmers prevent conflict through effective, property-specific coexistence measures.

At present, government support remains heavily weighted towards baiting, trapping and shooting. There is no dedicated NSW extension service to help landholders assess their individual risk, identify appropriate non-lethal measures, implement them correctly and respond when problems arise. This makes lethal control the most accessible option while preventive approaches remain underfunded and difficult for landholders to access.

Livestock guardian dogs are one such approach. These dogs live with farm animals and protect them by deterring dingoes and other potential threats. An earlier Australian survey found that, after introducing guardian dogs, 68% of participating farmers reported that predation ceased and a further 30% reported that it decreased¹¹. The dogs were also found to be cost-effective, with farmers generally reaching the financial

break-even point within one to three years, depending on the farm animals being protected¹¹.

A long-term follow-up study in 2024 revisited 112 of these farmers an average of 8.9 years later¹². Half were still using guardian dogs, and their effectiveness had generally remained stable over time. Farmers using guardian dogs also reduced their reliance on other forms of predator control. The study concluded that guardian dogs can remain effective over extended periods and that their use is continuing to spread between Australian farmers through informal information sharing¹².

The study also identified barriers that limit successful uptake. Some farmers discontinued guardian dogs because their business circumstances changed, while others experienced unwanted dog behaviour, inadequate training or conflict with neighbours¹¹. Guardian dogs require careful selection, bonding, training and ongoing management, particularly during their first two years¹². Some may roam beyond property boundaries or display behaviours that reduce their effectiveness if problems are not identified and addressed early¹².

These findings highlight why government support is important. Guardian dogs should not simply be purchased and supplied to farmers without continuing assistance. A dedicated program should provide property assessments, advice on selecting an appropriate breed and number of dogs, support during bonding and training, help with behavioural problems, and guidance on managing interactions with neighbours, wildlife and other dogs. Proper support would improve animal welfare and reduce the risk that the method is abandoned because of avoidable difficulties.

Existing lethal control programs can themselves pose a risk to guardian dogs. The study found that some working dogs died after being poisoned or shot during predator control operations¹². Ending baiting would protect working guardian dogs as well as dingoes. During the transition away from lethal control, landholders, NPWS, Local Land Services and neighbouring properties must communicate about existing baited areas to prevent further guardian dog deaths. A transition towards non-lethal management would protect guardian dogs as well as dingoes.

Guardian dogs will not be appropriate for every property, and they should form part of a broader coexistence program rather than being presented as a universal solution. Other measures may include improved fencing, secure enclosures for vulnerable farm

animals, changes to birthing practices, active shepherding, attractant and carcass management, deterrent devices and rapid responses to emerging conflict. The most appropriate combination will depend on the species and scale of the farming enterprise, landscape, husbandry system and nature of the risk.

Government should support this transition through an independent coexistence extension service, demonstration properties, grants for upfront costs and long-term monitoring. Initial investment should prioritise properties adjoining national parks and other areas where maintaining stable dingo populations is ecologically and culturally important. Monitoring should consider farm animal losses, producer costs and labour, animal welfare, dingo activity and the performance of different preventive measures over time.

Effective coexistence requires sustained investment and long-term planning. Resources currently directed towards repeated broad-scale lethal control could instead support practical measures that prevent losses and address landholder concerns while allowing dingoes to remain in national parks and fulfil their ecological and cultural roles. This would advance both agricultural and conservation objectives.

Recommendation: Establish and fund a dedicated NSW predator coexistence service, prioritising properties adjoining national parks. The service should provide independent property assessments, technical advice, demonstration projects, financial assistance and long-term support for measures such as guardian dogs, improved husbandry and exclusion infrastructure.

Conclusion

This inquiry presents NSW with an opportunity to correct a longstanding contradiction in the management of dingoes. Dingoes are native animals with important ecological functions and profound cultural significance, yet they remain expressly excluded from the protections afforded to every other native mammal under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. Within national parks, they are managed primarily as biosecurity threats and routinely poisoned, trapped and shot.

The evidence examined in this submission demonstrates that this approach is no longer defensible. Contemporary genetic research shows that free-living canids in NSW are overwhelmingly dingoes, not domestic dogs or hybrids. Ecological research

shows that dingoes can suppress foxes and cats, regulate herbivore populations and contribute to ecosystem function. Their removal can destabilise family groups, weaken these ecological relationships and exacerbate the hybridisation risks that lethal control is sometimes claimed to address.

The animal welfare consequences are equally clear. The National Code of Practice acknowledges that 1080 poisoning can cause hyperexcitability, vocalising, retching, collapse, convulsions and respiratory failure. Trapping and shooting also carry serious risks of injury, distress and prolonged suffering, including the death of dependent pups following the loss of a breeding female. These harms cannot be reconciled with the conservation purpose of national parks or contemporary expectations for the treatment of sentient native animals.

Current management also causes cultural harm. For many First Nations peoples, dingoes are kin and are inseparable from Country, culture and custodial responsibilities. Reform must therefore extend beyond improved consultation. Relevant Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians should hold meaningful decision-making authority and be properly resourced to lead or co-design dingo conservation, on-Country monitoring and coexistence initiatives.

Protecting dingoes does not require the concerns of neighbouring landholders to be disregarded. It requires government to take greater responsibility for helping prevent conflict. A dedicated NSW predator coexistence service should provide landholders with property-specific advice, financial assistance and long-term support for measures including guardian dogs, improved husbandry and exclusion infrastructure. This would provide a more durable and equitable response than repeated lethal control.

Humane World for Animals therefore urges the Committee to recommend:

- Recognition of dingoes as protected native mammals under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016
- An end to poisoning, trapping and shooting dingoes within NSW national parks
- Replacement of the term “wild dog” with terminology that accurately distinguishes dingoes from domestic dogs
- A properly resourced, First Nations-led framework for Caring for Dingoes on Country

- Long-term monitoring of dingo population health, family stability and ecological outcomes
- Sustained government investment in non-lethal coexistence support for neighbouring landholders.

Together, these reforms would replace an outdated pest-control model with an approach that protects dingoes, respects First Nations cultural authority, supports landholders and restores the conservation purpose of the NSW national park estate.

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Driving toward the greatest global impact, we aim to achieve the vision behind our name: a more humane world.



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