

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Toorale Joint Management Committee

Date Received: 16 July 2026



NSW Legislative Council
Animal Welfare Committee

Sent through online submission

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into Dingoes on NSW National Parks

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments and input into the current inquiry into Dingoes in NSW National Parks. The Toorale Joint Management Committee is a partnership between the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (Bourke Area) and the Kurnu Baakandji People for the management of the Toorale National Park & State Conservation Area, located at the junction of the Baaka (Darling) and Warriku (Warrego) Rivers in North-Western NSW. We provide the following comments on Dingoes.

General – Aboriginal Cultural Significance of Dingoes to Aboriginal People:

Note the following information has been generated from a search on AI gptchat.

Spiritual significance

For many Aboriginal cultures, dingoes are more than animals—they are ancestral beings connected to the **Dreaming** (or Dreamtime), the foundational stories that explain the creation of the land, people, animals, and laws. In some traditions, dingoes are creator beings or ancestors who shaped landscapes, established sacred sites, or taught important cultural laws. Because each Aboriginal Nation has its own stories and language, the role of the dingo varies across Australia.

Totemic importance

In many Aboriginal communities, the dingo is a **totem**. A totem is a spiritual connection between a person, family, or clan and a particular animal or natural feature.

People with a dingo totem may have responsibilities to:

- Protect and care for dingoes.
- Respect places associated with them.
- Pass on stories and knowledge about them.
- Avoid harming or eating the animal, depending on cultural law.

Totems reinforce the connection between people, Country, and all living things.

Connection to Country

Dingoes are seen as part of the natural balance of Country. Aboriginal knowledge recognises that dingoes:

- Help regulate populations of kangaroos and smaller predators.



- Contribute to healthy ecosystems.
- Reflect the wellbeing of Country through their presence and behaviour.

This ecological understanding aligns with modern scientific research showing that dingoes can play an important role as apex predators in Australian ecosystems.

Companions and hunting partners

For thousands of years, dingoes lived alongside Aboriginal people. They were:

- Hunting companions that helped track and capture game.
- Guardians who alerted camps to danger.
- Companions that provided warmth by sleeping beside people, especially children, on cold nights.

Archaeological evidence suggests this close relationship has existed for at least 3,000–5,000 years.

Stories and teaching

Dingoes feature in oral traditions, songs, dances, and artworks. These stories often teach:

- Respect for nature.
- Proper behaviour and kinship responsibilities.
- Survival skills.
- Moral lessons about cooperation, loyalty, or consequences for breaking cultural law.

These teachings are passed down through generations.

Contemporary significance

Today, many Aboriginal communities continue to advocate for recognition of the dingo's cultural importance. This includes:

- Protecting culturally significant dingo populations.
- Recognising Traditional Ecological Knowledge in conservation.
- Supporting management practices that respect both biodiversity and Aboriginal cultural values.

Summary

For many Aboriginal peoples, the dingo is:

- A spiritual ancestor or Dreaming being.
- A totemic animal with cultural responsibilities.
- A companion and hunting partner.
- A teacher through stories and ceremonies.
- An important part of maintaining healthy Country.

It's important to remember that Aboriginal Australia comprises hundreds of distinct Nations and language groups, each with its own cultural traditions. There is no single Aboriginal belief about dingoes; their significance varies from one community to another while sharing common themes of respect, kinship, and connection to Country.



Information on Dingoes to some Aboriginal groups in NSW:

The Kurnu Baakandji and Barkandji People of western NSW call the Dingo '**garli**' in our language. The Dingo is a brother, a sister, or part of our family. They are a living form of a loved one who has passed. Non-Aboriginal people may think of this as re-creation. Dingoes are very smart and clever, even suggesting they are perhaps maybe clever people who have special powers and high level of knowledge and understanding.

The Dingo was a companion to our people. They were kept amongst our people to comfort the children, to hunt for food, to control numbers of other native animals and in time introduced feral animals such as cats, foxes, pigs.

Some Oral Histories by Kurnu Baakandji Elders:

Elsie Hawkins 2011: Elsie – **garli**, that's our talk, **garli** ... The Aboriginal people kept these things [in balance]... by going out with their **garli**, never had no guns or nothing to shoot anything, we only had our **garli** to kill our food (meat) with. We never went hungry, if we couldn't find an emu or a kangaroo, or anything, the **garli** would always catch a rabbit, or a pig, we never ever touched, we never killed goats, we never killed sheep, we always being little kids that knew what we were doing.

Badger Bates 2025: About the Kilpara and Muckwara moiety thing, Eaglehawk and Crow, I'm Muckwara ... one of our special totems is a dingo, **garli**, and that's my brother or sister. You know from the Muckwara side, the Eagle side, the Wedgetail side, the totem. I told Phillip, my boy ... about the dingo and what they got to do to protect it and what it is to me. And they seen the dingo one day [at Mutawintji] and they pointed him out, ... I just nodded and said yeah, I seen the Eagle flying around so I knew where the dingo was. So, I just said well they **family**. You see dingoes on the rocks at Mutawintji ... carved [engraved] and that... there is one rock [engraving] there where Uncle George [Dutton] told the story about this fella had these dingoes and he was a mighty hunter you know. Granny Bates a Barkindji Elder totem is Dingo. Dingoes remain culturally significant even in areas where they no longer are present.

Cultural Significance of Dingoes on the South Coast

Dingoes are depicted in artwork in rockshelters. In places, songlines or storylines. Some family groups have as their totem the Dingo. For those family groups they have a responsibility to look after and care for the Dingo. Dingoes connect those family groups to the cultural landscape, to country on the South Coast and up in the mountains. This makes it difficult when others see Dingoes as problems.

<https://connectsci.au/az/article/41/3/296/266178/A-statement-on-the-cultural-importance-of-the>
the

A specific example of the cultural significance of the Dingo was at the completion of a repatriation of some Aboriginal ancestral remains back to Blue Waterhole in Kosciuszko National Park. When the repatriation was finished and many of the Aboriginal community



had departed, a lone Dingo howl was heard. Aboriginal elders at the time indicated that the spirit is home it was time to leave.

Cultural Significance of Dingoes at The Rock Nature Reserve

The Rock (Kengal) Nature Reserve is managed by the NSW National Parks & Wildlife Service. It is also a declared Aboriginal Place under Section 84 of the NPW Act 1974. Oral history records indicate that the Dingo is significant for the area.

Kengal Aboriginal Place is a Dreaming place, a lookout, and a ceremonial site for the Wiradjuri Aboriginal people and descendants. Kengal was created by Baiame (Biamai), the creator in Wiradjuri culture and traditional law. According to local oral histories, Biamai was sent to the Wiradjuri to teach the people how to make fire and spears. Oral histories say that when settlers arrived in the area, they said something which made Biamai (the creator) go away. Baiame left his male and female dingo companions who still today lay in wait for Baiame's return, forming the Rock Hill-Kengal in the physical landscape.

<https://www.hms.heritage.nsw.gov.au/App/Item/ViewItem?itemId=5062904>

Cultural Significance of Dingo Skeletal Remains near Menindee

Skeletal remains of a 1000 year old Dingo '*garli*' at Kinchega National Park were significant to Barkandji people because the remains were in a shell midden which had been continually added to by the local Barkandji people. This practice suggested that *garli* was being cared for to ensure that the remains do not become exposed and eroded from the site.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03122417.2026.2650909#d1e440>

<https://www.sydney.edu.au/news-opinion/news/2026/05/19/ancient-dingo-burial-site-reveals-first-nations-bond-archaeology.html>

Should you require any further information please call me on 0458456384 or email

Yours faithfully,

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