

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

Submission to the Inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales, 2026

Dear Members of the NSW Legislative Council Animal Welfare Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission to the Inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales.

I write this submission as a Gundungurra woman with ancestral connections to Country in and around the Burratorang Valley and Blue Mountains. I grew up in the Blue Mountains and have regularly spent time on Country and in national parks there and elsewhere in NSW. I am involved in a collaborative research project with Murrindiyarr Aboriginal Corporation and NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water investigating the role of native and introduced predators on Country. I work as a researcher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health and wellbeing. This combination of experience informs my submission.

Mirrigang/Binure/Warragul/Dingoes are highly significant culturally, ecologically, and for human health and wellbeing—they should be protected, not subject to lethal control.

Dingoes are highly significant to Gundungurra people, including my family. Gundungurra language has multiple words describing dingoes—including Mirrigang, Binure, Warragul—which is indicative of their cultural importance. Dingoes feature in Gundungurra Dreaming narratives and cultural lore, conveying important messages about surviving, navigating, and caring for Country, and the importance of kinship, loyalty, sharing, and balance. Dingoes are important in and of themselves, and for their ecological and cultural roles on Country—for example maintaining balance in food webs, which ensures the thriving of other culturally important species. Dingoes help reduce grazing pressure through managing populations of medium-to-large native herbivores such as wallabies and kangaroos, and they help control invasive species such as foxes and cats through predation and competition. This has flow on effects that help maintain populations of small mammals and ground-dwelling birds (including those preyed on by foxes and cats), protect vegetation, and prevent soil erosion.

As a Gundungurra person, I have a responsibility to care for my ancestral Country. Country is not just land, but the interrelationships between land, waters, skies and all the living and non-living things that comprise and depend on land, water, skies, and each other. Humans are part of Country, not separate from it. If Country is not healthy, people cannot be healthy. If people care for Country, Country will care for people. Caring is not just something one feels, it is an active reciprocal practice of nurturing; it involves monitoring and ensuring the ongoing health and functioning of Country. Dingoes are part of Country. Dingoes need to be respected, cared for, and enabled to fulfil their important ecological and cultural roles on Country. This is essential not only for the health and functioning of Country, but also the wellbeing of people who are connected to Country, people who depend on Country for their livelihoods, and all those who depend on the 'ecosystem services' Country provides (i.e. everyone).

Current legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks related to dingoes constrain my ability to care for my ancestral Country. Substantial parts of Gundungurra Country are within national parks or in areas I am typically excluded from accessing due to zoning as Special/Controlled Areas, or under the control of private landholders. Aside from this physical exclusion, the legal status of dingoes also constrains the ability to care for dingoes as kin. Combined with the General Biosecurity Duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015*, the classification of dingoes as 'wild dogs' and 'pest' animals means that land managers are required to prevent the spread of dingoes. This situation encourages the broadscale killing of dingoes, as witnessed in the extensive use of 1080 poison in national parks, which causes needless suffering to dingoes and other animals, while having questionable efficacy in terms of protecting livestock in neighbouring areas. These legal and policy settings make it impossible for me to protect dingoes from enduring such suffering, as practices that cause this suffering are not only legal but encouraged and perpetuated by government agencies. I recently witnessed the bodies of three deceased dingoes which had been deliberately strung up hanging from poles inside the fence of a privately held property surrounded by national park, readily visible from a public road. This was deeply distressing to see kin treated with such cruelty and disdain. The practice of hanging deceased bodies on public display is reminiscent of the treatment of Aboriginal people, including Gundungurra people, captured and killed by colonial forces in Appin in 1816, whose bodies were hung from nearby trees to strike terror into survivors. It is highly concerning that in contemporary Australia it is not illegal to kill dingoes, nor hang their bodies for public display.

The classification of dingoes as 'wild dogs' and 'pest' animals is problematic for multiple reasons, including being unethical, culturally disrespectful, and ecologically unwise. The extensive use of lethal control causes unnecessary suffering to dingoes and other animals and is contrary to the objectives of biodiversity conservation. Removing apex predators and indiscriminately introducing toxins to the environment causes ecological harm and imbalance, and may have perverse unintended consequences in terms of increasing grazing pressure and undermining livestock production in adjacent areas.

Being able to connect with and care for Country is an important contributor to Aboriginal peoples' health and wellbeing. This is recognised in the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2021–2031*. Being prevented from connecting with and caring for Country, including dingoes and other native species, is harmful to the health and wellbeing of Gundungurra and other Aboriginal peoples. The NSW Government is a Party to the current National Agreement on Closing the Gap, which has several target areas that are undermined by the current policy settings in relation to dingoes, including:

- Target 15 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people maintain a distinctive cultural, spiritual, physical and economic relationship with their land and waters.
- Target 16 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and languages are strong, supported and flourishing.
- Target 14 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy high levels of social and emotional wellbeing.
- Target 1 - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people enjoy long and healthy lives.

Current legislative, regulatory, and policy settings relating to dingoes are contrary to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), particularly Article 11 (right to practise culture and customs) and Article 18 (right to conservation of vital animals, and right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health), among others.

I strongly oppose lethal control of dingoes. I urge the NSW Government to:

- recognise the ecological and cultural importance of dingoes, through legal protection within national parks and elsewhere;
- invest in coexistence strategies and non-lethal management approaches (e.g. guardian animals, flagging, fencing, etc);
- deliver evidence-informed, culturally respectful education campaigns about dingoes (including dispelling prevalent myths about hybridisation and coat colours), and their ecological importance and benefits;
- involve local Aboriginal knowledge holders in co-management of national parks;
- embed holistic ecosystem-based management principles and practices (rather than single-species approaches) in national parks; and
- invest in ongoing monitoring of dingo populations and support research into their impacts on biodiversity and the health of Country.

Current legislative, regulatory, and policy frameworks related to dingoes are neither sustainable, ethical, ecologically sound, nor in the long-term best interests of the people of NSW.

Dingoes are highly significant culturally and ecologically, they should be protected under legislation, treated with the utmost respect and care, and enabled to thrive.

The health of Country, and therefore the health of people, depends on healthy dingoes.