

**Submission
No 274**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Miss Lisa Ashby

Date Received: 17 July 2026

To the Committee,

My name is Lisa Ashby and I have been researching dingoes for about four years, with a focus on a NSW population over the last two years during a Masters by Research with the University of Technology Sydney. I appreciate this opportunity to share my recommendations for the Committee's consideration on the Dingoes in national parks in New South Wales .

I am based in the Blue Mountains, and my Masters research was conducted in the Blue Mountains National Park using camera traps to document dingoes. The Blue Mountains branch of National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) provided me access to several years of camera trap data that I added to be deploying my own camera traps for one year.

Based on my observations and research, I respectfully offer the following recommendations for the Committee's consideration.

In place of lethal control measures:

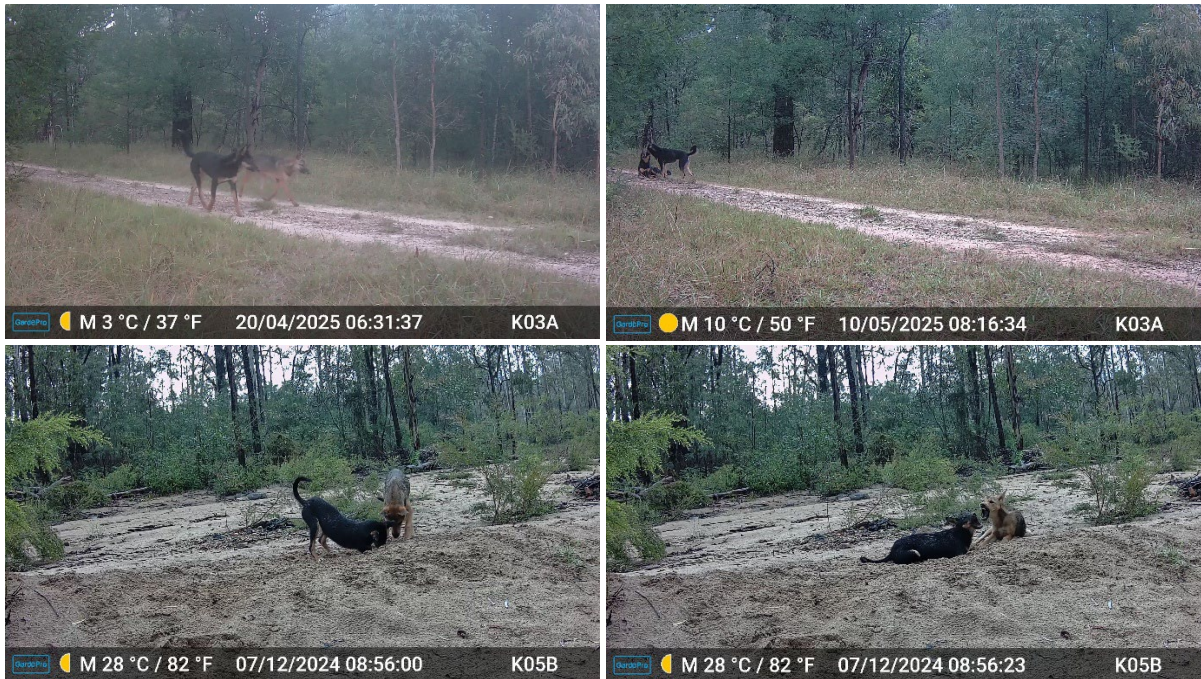
1. Prioritise education and behaviour modification as the primary response to increasing human–dingo interactions, with lethal control used only where there is clear evidence that other measures have failed and public safety cannot otherwise be managed.
2. Increase visitor education about the presence of dingoes at campgrounds and other high-use recreation areas before visitors arrive.
3. Provide consistent guidance on appropriate behaviour around dingoes across all NSW national parks where dingoes are present.
4. Support long-term research and monitoring of dingo populations to improve understanding of dingo behaviour, social organisation, and the factors that contribute to conflict.

Management should not have to choose between protecting people and protecting dingoes. Good science, long-term monitoring and effective visitor education can reduce situations where that choice arises in the first place.¹

The dingoes living in the Blue Mountains study area had not been subjected to lethal control for many years and therefore they provided a rare opportunity to study the social dynamics of an unmanaged community. I recorded four socially and spatially distinct families, where more than half of the individuals were puppies, and most of them disappeared before reaching one year old – likely due to mortality.

During the first year of their lives, some pups I observed became involved in group hunts and group-based travel but were also foraging and exploring independently. In one litter, three males and one female retained close bonds with their parents well past their first birthday, while the other two females were more independent, travelling as a pair or on their own.

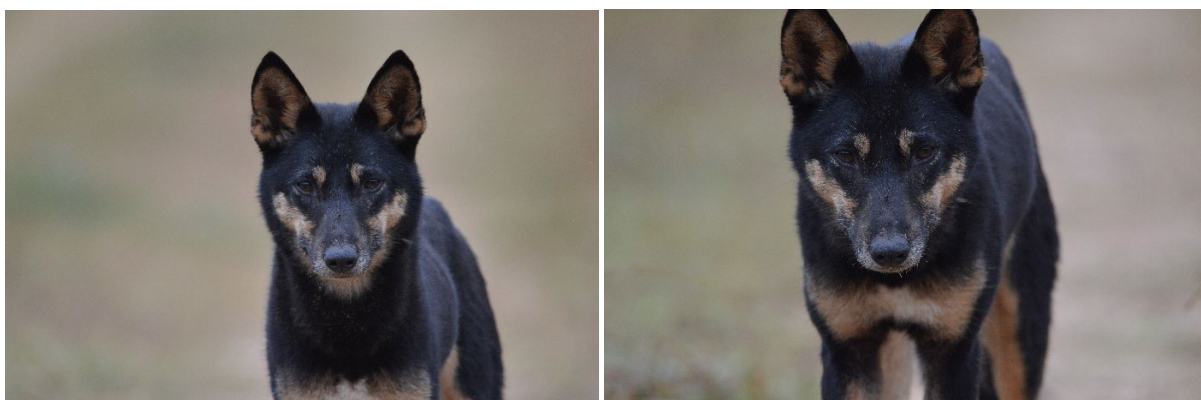
¹ These recommendations are not intended as criticism of NPWS or the difficult decisions its staff are sometimes required to make. I am extremely grateful to the Blue Mountains branch of NPWS for supporting my research. Without their willingness to collaborate, this research would not have been possible. Throughout my project, I found NPWS staff to be dedicated to both conservation and public safety.



These images show some of the siblings from the litter referred to above. Top left: sisters Guac and Soot travelling together. Top right: Guac wagging her tail as she greets are resting brother, Red. Bottom left and right: Guac and her sister, Dust, digging and playing as pups.

One of the more independent females, “Guacamole” (Guac), began to spend time at a campground, which sat within the family’s territory. She was seen foraging for insects and hunting kangaroos there but also investigated human visitors and their belongings.

During this period of her life, I encountered Guac apparently asleep on a firetrail that I was intending to drive along. I stopped the vehicle and set up a camera and tripod to watch her. After a few moments of watching me with half-lidded eyes, she sat up, scratched, and began walking towards me. As she approached, I backed away from the tripod and stood to the side of the trail to let her pass. She stopped and sniffed the tripod, and she was so close that I could smell her. She turned around and walked back along the firetrail, glancing back only once before walking into thick bush.



Guac approaches the tripod. She is picking up my scent, and I’m picking up hers – wet dirty dog!

At no point during this encounter did I fear this dingo. I knew who she was, and I knew how to act around her. At just 1 year old she was still as curious as a puppy, and her exposure to humans meant that she was not as fearful as other dingoes. We were both calm, quiet, and interested in the other, yet she retained a wariness of me, and I of her.

Unfortunately, the humans she encountered at the campground did not understand her. As Guac's interactions with campers increased, NPWS determined that she represented an unacceptable risk to public safety and she was killed.

From both an animal welfare and conservation perspective, I regarded Guac's death as a preventable loss. She was a healthy, young dingo that was beginning the transition to adulthood. At the time, there was no information available to the public (e.g. signage) that let visitors know that they were entering the territory of a dingo family, and they were, of course, fearful of the dingo they encountered. Guac paid for that fear with her life.

Since Guac's death, a sign has been installed at the campground advising visitors that dingoes are present and providing guidance on how to minimise the likelihood of negative interactions. In speaking with campers since its installation, I have observed what appears to be a positive change in awareness. For example, simply knowing that dingoes are present prepares visitors to hear their howls at night.

However, I believe education needs to begin *before* visitors arrive at campgrounds and other high-use recreation areas. People should understand that dingoes are a natural part of many NSW national parks and that, by visiting these places, they are entering their home. Providing practical guidance on how to behave around dingoes (as is done with snakes) should be viewed as a core component of visitor safety and wildlife conservation, rather than a response after conflict has already occurred.

Many countries that support populations of wolves, bears, coyotes and other large carnivores invest in visitor education. They recognise that coexistence depends not only on managing wildlife, but also on preparing people to behave appropriately in shared landscapes. I believe the same approach should be taken for dingoes in NSW.

Throughout my research, one comment has been repeated more than any other: "I didn't know there were dingoes in the Blue Mountains."

For me, that statement highlights one of the greatest challenges facing dingo conservation. We cannot expect visitors to coexist safely and responsibly with dingoes if they are unaware that dingoes live there in the first place. Better education will not eliminate every conflict, but it has the potential to reduce fear, improve public safety, and decrease the need for lethal management of healthy wild dingoes.

I hope that the Committee will consider these recommendations as practical measures to improve coexistence between people and dingoes in NSW national parks. Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this inquiry, and for considering the observations drawn from my research.

Yours sincerely,

Lisa Ashby