

**Submission
No 277**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into the Management of Dingoes in National Parks

Submitted by: Lionel Currie

Traditional Owner: Yugambeh

I am a Yugambeh man who has worked as a ranger for more than 20 years across New South Wales and other parts of Australia. Throughout my career I have worked alongside Aboriginal communities, government agencies and land managers in caring for Country through fire management, cultural land management and environmental conservation. My work has given me the opportunity to observe ecosystems over long periods and to understand how healthy Country depends on maintaining the relationships between all living things.

From both my cultural perspective and my professional experience, dingoes are an integral part of Australia's natural environment. They are not simply another animal to be controlled; they are a native apex predator with significant cultural, ecological and spiritual importance. For many Aboriginal peoples, dingoes are part of our stories, our responsibility to Country and our understanding of ecological balance.

Traditional Owners have cared for Country for thousands of generations by understanding that every species has a role. Cultural burning, seasonal knowledge and careful observation have enabled Aboriginal people to maintain healthy landscapes over millennia. Today, governments are increasingly recognising the value of Indigenous fire management. The same respect should be given to Aboriginal knowledge about the ecological role of dingoes and their importance in maintaining healthy Country.

Throughout my years as a ranger, I have seen firsthand how wildlife populations, vegetation, fire regimes and ecosystem health are interconnected. Healthy Country cannot be managed by looking at one issue in isolation. Removing apex predators has consequences that extend well beyond the loss of individual animals and can alter the balance of entire ecosystems.

One of the most significant concerns I have observed during my career is the impact of 1080 poisoning on dingo pack structure. In my experience, 1080 poisoning does not simply remove individual animals; it can fracture entire family groups. When alpha males or breeding adults are killed, the social structure of the pack is disrupted. Dingoes live in organised family groups where experienced adults lead the pack, defend territory, teach younger animals and raise their pups. Removing these key animals weakens the stability and long-term viability of the pack.

Stable dingo packs play an important role in regulating their own populations, maintaining territories and fulfilling their ecological role as apex predators. When family groups are broken apart, younger and less experienced animals can disperse, altering natural behaviours and creating broader ecological consequences. From my observations over more than two decades working on Country, maintaining stable family groups provides better ecological outcomes than broad-scale poison programs that indiscriminately remove breeding animals.

Current management practices that rely heavily on poison baiting and widespread lethal control do not adequately recognise the complexity of dingo social behaviour, their ecological function or their cultural significance to Aboriginal people. These approaches risk undermining both ecosystem resilience and the cultural responsibilities that Traditional Owners hold in caring for Country.

Aboriginal knowledge is founded on understanding relationships—between people, animals, plants, water and fire. Our responsibility is not simply to manage individual species but to maintain balance across the whole landscape. That knowledge has been developed through thousands of years of observation and should be recognised as an essential part of environmental decision-making.

I respectfully recommend that the Inquiry:

- End the indiscriminate killing of dingoes across NSW national parks.
- Recognise dingoes as a culturally significant native species rather than managing them primarily as wild dogs.
- Ensure Traditional Owners and Cultural Custodians are genuine partners in all decisions relating to dingo management on Country.
- Expand Indigenous-led Caring for Country programs that combine cultural knowledge with contemporary environmental science.
- Cease the targeting of dingoes with 1080 poison baiting and other broad-scale lethal control methods within National Parks, particularly where these practices disrupt dingo family structures, ecological processes, and biodiversity. Prioritise evidence-based, non-lethal management strategies that protect both ecosystem health and the conservation role of dingoes.
- Support long-term research that integrates Aboriginal ecological knowledge with western science to better understand the role of stable dingo populations in maintaining healthy ecosystems.
- Recognise the knowledge and experience of Aboriginal rangers as an important source of evidence in developing future conservation and wildlife management policy.

After more than 20 years working as a ranger across diverse landscapes, I firmly believe that the future of conservation lies in genuine partnerships with Aboriginal people. Caring for Country requires us to protect the natural relationships that sustain healthy ecosystems. Dingoes are an important part of those relationships. Protecting stable dingo populations is not only about conserving a native species—it is about protecting healthy Country, respecting Aboriginal knowledge and ensuring future generations inherit landscapes that remain balanced and resilient.