

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Animal Liberation

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**SUBMISSION TO THE NSW LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ANIMAL
WELFARE COMMITTEE**

Dingoes in national parks in New South Wales

SUBMITTED BY Animal Liberation

DATE 17 July 2026

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Animal Liberation consents to this submission being published.

Acknowledgement of Country

Animal Liberation acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters across New South Wales and recognises their continuing connections to Country, culture, community and animals. We pay respect to Elders past and present. We acknowledge that dingo relationships, knowledge, names and responsibilities are diverse, place-based and held by particular peoples. This submission does not seek to speak for First Nations communities. The Committee should give primary weight to evidence from Traditional Owners and ensure that any reform is designed through properly resourced, place-based First Nations leadership and consent.

About Animal Liberation

Animal Liberation is an independent, not-for-profit animal rights organisation founded in 1976. Our mission is to permanently improve the lives of all animals through legislation, consumer advocacy, action and education. We advocate for the rights of all species, expose cruelty and regulatory failure, and seek transparent, enforceable laws that recognise animals as sentient individuals with interests of their own.

Our position on dingo management begins with a principle that is often absent from pest-management policy: a dingo is not merely a genetic unit, an ecological service, a biosecurity risk or an input into agricultural cost calculations. Each dingo is a sentient individual capable of fear, pain, social attachment, play, learning and distress. Their intrinsic value does not depend on genetic “purity”, economic usefulness or whether their ecological effects can be quantified in a particular landscape.

Animal Liberation also recognises that sheep, cattle, guardian animals and companion animals are sentient. A defensible policy cannot protect one group of animals solely as commercial assets by subjecting another group to poisoning, trapping or shooting. The public task is to prevent harm through coexistence, husbandry, exclusion, support and accountability - not to normalise the deliberate infliction of suffering.

Animal Liberation’s central submission

NSW should end routine lethal control of dingoes in national parks, protect dingoes in law irrespective of ancestry thresholds, and replace the current conflicted “wild dog” framework with First Nations-led, science-informed and independently accountable conservation and coexistence policy.

Executive summary

New South Wales cannot credibly describe national parks as places for the conservation of nature while routinely deploying poison and utilising other lethal control techniques to kill dingoes residing within them. The current framework is legally and ethically incoherent. Dingoes are excluded from ordinary protection as native mammals under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*, grouped with “feral” and roaming domestic dogs under the administrative label “wild dog”, and subjected to control under biosecurity policy. At the same time, the National Parks and Wildlife Service (‘NPWS’) states that dingoes should be conserved in lower-risk areas so they can fulfil their natural ecological role. Conservation language therefore coexists with routine lethal operations on the same estate.

The scale of those operations is substantial. In answers to the NSW Parliament, NPWS reported that over 1.2 million baits containing sodium mono-fluoroacetate (‘1080 poison’) were deployed in the national parks estate over the three (3) financial years from 2022-23 to 2024-25. Over the same period, 334 dingoes or “wild dogs” were trapped or shot in parks. The stated cost of baits and aircraft alone was approximately \$7.5 million, excluding labour. Yet NPWS also reported no estimate of dingo or wild-dog numbers in national parks, no formally designated dingo conservation areas, no dedicated conservation expenditure, no dingo research grants, and only \$2,700 spent on DNA testing in 2022-23 followed by nil expenditure in the next two years (NSW Parliament 2025a).

This is not evidence-led conservation. It is high-volume killing conducted without a population baseline, without designated statutory refuges, without transparent outcome measures and without an animal welfare regulator independent of the agencies commissioning or carrying out the control.

The scientific assumptions underlying the framework have also changed. Genome-wide studies show that older microsatellite-based assessments substantially overestimated recent domestic-dog ancestry in many free-roaming canids, especially in south-eastern Australia. Recent research indicates that most are predominantly dingo in ancestry, while also demonstrating regional variation and the need for careful, non-binary language. Ancient DNA shows that major population structure was present thousands of years before European colonisation. The scientific response should not be a new “purity” threshold for deciding which animals may live. It should be protection of dingo populations and individuals, regionally informed genetic monitoring, and abandonment of a label that treats all free-living canids as disposable “pests”.

A substantial body of ecological research indicates that dingoes can regulate herbivores and mesopredators and can influence broader ecosystem processes. Animal Liberation accepts that these effects are context-dependent and should not be overstated as universal. That scientific caution does not justify routine killing. It supports the opposite: precautionary protection, local monitoring and adaptive management rather than blanket assumptions that removal is benign.

The cultural case for reform is equally compelling. The 2026 Garli study from Barkindji Country in Kinchega National Park documents a dingo deliberately buried nearly 1,000 years ago, apparently cared for during life and ritually remembered for generations. It is powerful NSW-specific evidence of deep relationships between Aboriginal peoples and dingoes.

However, a single study cannot substitute for living cultural authority. Future policy must be co-designed and co-governed with the Traditional Owners of each Country, with compensated participation, protection of cultural and genetic data, and meaningful decision-making power.

Animal Liberation acknowledges the losses experienced by some landholders and the suffering of sheep and other animals attacked by free-living canids. Those harms must be addressed. They do not create a moral or evidentiary licence to lethally control dingoes in national parks. Practical alternatives exist, including well-designed exclusion fencing, secure birthing areas, active husbandry, guardian animals subject to strict welfare safeguards, deterrence, rapid response and properly funded coexistence extension services. The NSW Government should redirect a material share of current lethal-control expenditure into making these measures accessible and effective.

The current Committee has an opportunity to replace a system built around an imprecise label and routine killing with one grounded in sentience, contemporary genetics, cultural authority, ecological caution, transparency and coexistence. Animal Liberation asks it to do so clearly and without delay.

Key findings

Finding	Animal Liberation's conclusion
Legal contradiction	Dingoes are excluded from ordinary native mammal protection while NPWS policy simultaneously recognises conservation and ecological objectives. The contradiction must be resolved in favour of enforceable protection.
Science has improved	Genome-wide and ancient-DNA research materially revises older assumptions about widespread recent dog hybridisation. "Wild dog" is not an adequate scientific or conservation category.
Killing without baselines or oversight	More than 1.2 million 1080 baits were deployed in parks over three (3) years despite no NPWS population estimate and no formally designated conservation areas.
Welfare regulation gap	APVMA registration is not a finding that 1080 poison is humane. Humaneness is not a decision criterion under the Agvet Code, while compelling contemporary literature concludes that 1080 poison should not be considered humane.
Cultural authority	First Nations knowledge and governance must be embedded through place-based authority, not treated as a consultation exercise after management decisions are made.
Coexistence is practical	Landholder support, exclusion, husbandry, deterrence and welfare-assured guardian programs can reduce predation and should replace routine lethal control.

Recommendations

Animal Liberation recommends that the NSW Government:

- 1. Legally protect dingoes.** Amend the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* and associated instruments so dingoes receive statutory protection as native animals throughout NSW, with particularly strong protection in national parks and other conservation reserves;
- 2. End ancestry-based disposability.** Ensure protection applies irrespective of a genetic “purity” threshold. Genetic ancestry may inform conservation planning, but it must never determine whether an individual may be poisoned or killed;
- 3. Replace the “wild dog” framework.** Require evidence-based identification and prohibit the use of “wild dog” as a catch-all justification for dingo control in conservation areas;
- 4. Stop routine lethal control in national parks.** Immediately suspend aerial 1080 baiting and broadscale poison programs targeting dingoes in the national parks estate, and legislate a phase-out of routine poisoning, trapping and shooting. Any response to an immediate and serious human-safety risk must be exceptional, independently authorised, publicly reported and use the least harmful available method;
- 5. Establish statutory dingo conservation areas.** Designate connected core conservation areas and buffer zones across relevant bioregions, including areas adjoining agricultural land where coexistence investment is required. Conservation status must be mapped, enforceable and protected from routine baiting;
- 6. Create First Nations-led governance.** Establish a compensated, appropriately resourced, place-based governance model through which Traditional Owners hold decision-making authority over dingo conservation and management on Country. Protect cultural knowledge, cultural intellectual property and Indigenous data sovereignty;
- 7. Adopt non-lethal-first duties.** Amend biosecurity strategy and operational policy so prevention, exclusion and non-lethal mitigation are mandatory first responses in and adjacent to national parks. The General Biosecurity Duty must not operate as an automatic duty to kill;
- 8. Create a public control register.** Publish timely, searchable and downloadable records of all dingo or free-living canid management operations, including precise management area, dates, authorisation, methods, bait quantities, purpose, expenditure, monitoring, animals found dead or injured, non-target incidents, complaints, consultation and measured

outcomes;

9. Require independent welfare oversight. Establish an Independent Office of Animal Welfare with statutory authority to audit, approve, investigate and publicly report on government animal-control programs, including the power to inspect records, compel information and issue enforceable directions;

10. Strengthen poison incident accountability. Create a central mandatory incident database for suspected target and non-target poisonings, require recovery and necropsy where practicable, improve public warnings, and provide an independent complaint and review pathway;

11. Measure outcomes rather than inputs. Require management plans to report whether verified predation and conflict were reduced, not merely the number of baits deployed, area treated or animals killed. Programs that cannot demonstrate net benefit and acceptable welfare outcomes must cease;

12. Review the framework within three (3) years. Require an independent statutory review of the new system after three (3) years, with public reporting to Parliament and direct participation by First Nations representatives, animal-welfare experts, ecologists, geneticists, landholders and community members.

1. Introduction and guiding principles

The inquiry's terms of reference correctly bring together genetics, law, ecology, culture, existing programs and future management. These issues cannot be separated. The label applied to an animal affects the law that governs them; the law determines whether they may be killed; the method of killing creates welfare and non-target risks; and management choices can disrupt ecological and cultural relationships.

Animal Liberation supports a framework based on six principles:

- **Sentience and intrinsic value:** Dingoes matter as individuals, not only because they may provide ecosystem services or possess a particular genome;
- **Protection as the default in protected areas:** A national park should be a refuge from routine human persecution. Lethal intervention must not be ordinary management;
- **Scientific precision:** Policy must use contemporary genetic and ecological evidence, acknowledge uncertainty, and avoid absolute claims in either direction;
- **First Nations authority:** Cultural knowledge is not an optional data source. Traditional Owners must shape and govern decisions on their Country;
- **Coexistence and prevention:** Government should invest first in preventing conflict and protecting all animals from harm, rather than treating poisoning as the default;
- **Transparency and independent accountability:** The public must be able to see where, why and how animals are controlled, what suffering and non-target harm occurred, what outcomes were achieved and who authorised the operation.

The ethical problem with pest language

The word “pest” does not describe an animal’s biology. It describes a human judgement about conflict with land use, commerce or policy. Once applied, it often removes the animal from ordinary moral consideration and makes their suffering administratively invisible. The term “wild dog” compounds that problem by collapsing dingoes, feral domestic dogs, roaming owned dogs and animals of mixed ancestry into a single killable category.

Animal Liberation does not deny that individual free-living canids can attack sheep or other animals. We reject the inference that an entire class of sentient animals may therefore be subjected to indiscriminate or landscape-scale lethal control. Management should respond to verified risk, location and behaviour, not to a broad label.

2. Term of reference (a): genetic status and the distinction between dingoes and dogs

Contemporary genetics materially revises older assumptions

For many years, management in south-eastern Australia was influenced by small-marker microsatellite studies interpreted as showing extensive recent hybridisation between dingoes and domestic dogs. Genome-wide research has substantially changed that picture. Cairns et al. (2023) analysed hundreds of thousands of single nucleotide polymorphisms and found limited evidence of domestic-dog admixture in wild dingoes, with earlier approaches having substantially overestimated admixture, particularly in south-eastern Australia. The study identified multiple geographically structured dingo populations rather than a single homogeneous continental population.

Ancient-genome research strengthens the point. Souilmi et al. (2024) analysed dingoes between approximately 400 and 2,746 years old and found that major population structure seen today had already emerged several thousand years ago, before European domestic dogs were introduced. The research also found distinctive relationships between ancient coastal NSW dingoes and New Guinea singing dogs. Contemporary populations therefore cannot accurately be characterised as merely recent post-colonial dog-dingo mixtures.

The 2026 palaeogenomic-informed analysis by Ravishankar et al. provides a further refinement. It confirms that most free-living canids are predominantly dingo while showing that estimates of European-dog ancestry vary by region and analytical baseline. It identifies colonial-era admixture associated with human activity and supports regionally informed conservation rather than simplistic national purity categories. Osuna-Mascaró et al. (2026) likewise highlights environmental drivers and evolutionary consequences of dog introgression.

The correct policy conclusion

New genetic evidence does not justify replacing one arbitrary threshold with another. It justifies ending the assumption that free-living canids are disposable “wild dogs”, improving regionally informed monitoring, and protecting dingo populations and individuals regardless of whether some domestic-dog ancestry is detected.

Protection must not depend on “purity”

A purity threshold is scientifically unstable. Results depend on reference populations, marker sets, analytical methods and the point in time chosen as a baseline. It is also ethically indefensible. An animal with 92 per cent dingo ancestry is no less capable of fear or pain than an animal assessed at 94 per cent. Nor does a modest degree of historical introgression erase ecological function, social relationships or cultural value.

An ancestry threshold would create perverse management incentives: it could encourage killing before testing, justify lethal control in regions with higher historical admixture, and divert scarce

resources from habitat, population viability and coexistence. Genetic testing should be used to understand population structure and guide conservation, not to issue death sentences.

Distinguishing dingoes from domestic dogs in practice

Law and operations should distinguish three (3) matters that are presently blurred:

- dingo populations and free-living individuals whose ancestry and behaviour are consistent with long-established wild populations;
- genuinely wild domestic dogs living independently of people; and
- owned or recently escaped domestic dogs, which require companion-animal identification, containment and rehoming responses.

No field identification method is perfect. The consequence of uncertainty in a protected area should therefore be protection and non-lethal response, not presumptive killing. Where identification is relevant, it should combine context, behaviour, morphology, microchip checks and validated genome-wide testing. It should not rely on coat colour, appearance, local assumption or an unverified “wild dog” report.

3. Term of reference (b): legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks

A legally anomalous and internally conflicted framework

NSW guidance states that all native mammals except the dingo are protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. The dingo therefore occupies an exceptional position in the State's principal biodiversity legislation. Within national parks, section 45 of the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* generally prohibits harming animals, and the Act defines harm to include poisoning, trapping, injuring and killing. In practice, authorised government control programs operate through statutory duties, licences and policy settings that permit lethal action.

The *Biosecurity Act 2015* imposes a 'general duty' on persons dealing with biosecurity matter or carriers to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risk so far as reasonably practicable. The legislation does not itself require poisoning. However, the present strategy and regional planning architecture treats "wild dogs", including dingoes, as priority 'pest' animals and makes lethal control a routine means of demonstrating action.

At the same time, the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022-2027 and the NPWS Wild Dog Policy recognise dingo conservation. NPWS states that control should be concentrated where risks are greatest and not undertaken in lower-risk areas so dingoes can fulfil their natural ecological role. This is an important acknowledgment, but it remains weak, discretionary and operationally opaque. Parliamentary answers show there are no formally designated dingo conservation areas, no dedicated conservation staff and no identifiable conservation expenditure, even while hundreds of thousands of baits are deployed each year.

Why the present balance is not adequate

A policy aspiration to "balance" killing and conservation is not equivalent to legal protection. The current framework fails because:

- the dingo is excluded from ordinary protection under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act*;
- the same administrative category covers dingoes, mixed-ancestry animals and domestic dogs;
- conservation areas are not formally designated, mapped or legally insulated from lethal control;
- decision-making is dispersed across environment, agriculture, Local Land Services ('LLS'), contractors and regional groups;
- the public cannot readily evaluate the evidence, animal-welfare assessment or measured outcome for each operation; and

- the agency undertaking lethal control is not subject to independent animal-welfare oversight with enforceable powers.

Required legislative reform

NSW should amend the *Biodiversity Conservation Act* to add dingoes to the protected-animal framework or create equivalent, explicit statutory protection. The legislation should recognise dingoes as native wildlife for protection and management purposes without making protection conditional on a purity percentage. It should also require the Minister to establish dingo conservation areas and population objectives based on bioregional science and First Nations governance.

The *Biosecurity Act* and subordinate policy should be amended or clarified so the General Biosecurity Duty cannot be interpreted as a routine obligation to kill dingoes in conservation areas. A person should discharge the duty through prevention and non-lethal risk reduction wherever reasonably practicable. Lethal control should not be treated as evidence of compliance merely because it was undertaken.

Animal Liberation further recommends the establishment of an Independent Office of Animal Welfare. Responsibility for promoting agricultural production and commissioning lethal control creates an institutional conflict when the same system is expected to assess animal suffering. Independent oversight should include approval standards, audits, complaint investigation, publication powers and the ability to stop operations that fail legal, welfare or transparency requirements.

4. Term of reference (c): ecological role

Dingoes can perform important top-predator functions

A substantial body of peer-reviewed literature indicates that dingoes can influence the abundance, behaviour and distribution of herbivores and smaller predators. Reviews and field studies report associations between dingo presence and reduced fox activity, altered herbivore pressure, vegetation responses and broader trophic effects (Glen et al., 2007; Letnic et al., 2012). These mechanisms are plausible and important, particularly where stable dingo social groups occupy large territories.

The ecological value of dingoes should not be reduced to a promise that they will always increase biodiversity. Effects differ with climate, habitat, prey availability, land use, social structure and the intensity of human control. The Commonwealth Threatened Species Scientific Committee did not prioritise a proposed national key threatening process listing for dingo removal in 2024 because it considered the data insufficiently consistent to support a generalised national assertion. That caution should be accurately represented.

The correct conclusion is not that dingoes lack ecological value. It is that management should be context-sensitive, monitored and precautionary. Where evidence is uncertain, broadscale removal from a protected area risks disrupting ecological relationships before their local function is understood. The burden of proof should fall on those proposing lethal intervention, not on the animals whose lives and social systems will be destroyed.

Stable social groups and management disturbance

Dingoes are socially complex. Pack structure, territoriality, breeding and dispersal affect how individuals use landscapes and interact with livestock and other predators. Removing individuals can alter group composition and create vacant territories, although the magnitude and direction of these effects vary. Policy should therefore stop assuming that fewer dingoes automatically means less conflict or better biodiversity outcomes. Monitoring must consider social and behavioural consequences, not only population reduction.

Ecology is not the source of moral worth

Animal Liberation relies on ecological evidence because it is relevant to the inquiry and to responsible land management. We nevertheless reject the implication that dingoes deserve protection only if they can be proven to benefit other species. Animals are not required to justify their existence through services to humans or ecosystems. A scientifically uncertain ecological role cannot become an ethical permission to inflict prolonged suffering through poison.

5. Term of reference (d): cultural significance for First Nations peoples

The Committee must hear cultural authority directly

Dingo relationships are held within living, diverse and place-based First Nations cultures. The Committee should centre the evidence and recommendations of Traditional Owners, Elders, Aboriginal organisations and First Nations researchers, and should not treat a general government consultation process as a substitute for authority on Country.

Recent NSW research underscores why this is essential. Koungoulos et al. (2026) report the Garli burial in Kinchega National Park on Barkindji Country. The dingo was deliberately buried nearly 1,000 years ago in a midden that continued to be added to for approximately 500 years. Skeletal evidence indicates the male dingo lived to an advanced age for a wild dingo and survived healed injuries, consistent with care. The research was undertaken at the request of the Menindee Aboriginal Elders Council and with Barkindji custodians as research partners.

The study is not merely an historical curiosity. It demonstrates the inadequacy of a policy framework that can regard a dingo in a national park as a priority 'pest' while that animal may also be part of enduring kinship, totemic, cultural and Country-based responsibilities. It also shows why generic notices about a baiting program cannot constitute meaningful cultural engagement.

From consultation to authority

Parliamentary answers describe Aboriginal consultation for NPWS baiting as dependent on local arrangements and relationships. That flexibility may sometimes support good practice, but it provides no consistent minimum standard, no transparent account of whose consent was sought, and no guarantee of influence over the final decision. A First Nations-led framework should include:

- compensated participation and decision-making authority for the relevant Traditional Owners;
- free, prior and informed consent for research access, genetic sampling, data use and publication of culturally sensitive information;
- Indigenous data sovereignty and protection of cultural intellectual property;
- support for Aboriginal ranger programs and community-led monitoring;
- place-based dingo names, knowledge and protocols where communities choose to share them; and
- a prohibition on treating consultation as notification after a baiting decision has already been made.

6. Term of reference (e): impacts of current policies and programs

The scale of lethal control is not matched by evidence or accountability

The official data provided to Parliament reveal a profound imbalance between killing and conservation. NPWS deployed over 400,000 baits containing 1080 poison in the national parks estate in 2022-23, over 420,000 in 2023-24 and over 370,000 in 2024-25. In the same years, 160, 106 and 68 dingoes or “wild dogs” were trapped or shot in parks. Bait and aircraft expenditure was approximately \$2.3 million, \$2.5 million and \$2.7 million respectively, excluding labour. These figures do not tell the Committee how many dingoes consumed bait, how long they suffered, how many dependent young were affected, how many non-target animals died, or whether verified predation fell because of each program.

NPWS simultaneously advised that it has no estimate of dingo or wild-dog abundance in NSW national parks; has no formally designated dingo conservation areas; spent nil on dingo conservation areas or conservation efforts in the three years asked about; offered no grants for dingo research or conservation; and spent only \$2,700 on DNA testing in 2022-23, with nil expenditure in the following two years. Twelve NPWS samples were tested in 2022-23 and all were reported as 100 per cent dingo (NSW Parliament 2025a).

A program cannot credibly claim to balance control with conservation when the State cannot state the population being conserved, the formal area in which conservation takes priority, or the resources allocated to achieving it. The current system measures activity - baits, aircraft and treated area - more readily than it measures welfare, population viability or conflict reduction.

The animal welfare impacts of 1080 poison

Sodium mono-fluoroacetate disrupts cellular energy metabolism. Poisoned mammals may experience vomiting, disorientation, vocalisation, convulsions, respiratory distress, collapse and periods of consciousness before death. The precise course varies by species and dose, but uncertainty about subjective experience is not evidence of humaneness. Sherley’s review of available evidence concluded that 1080 poison should not be considered humane (Sherley 2007).

The APVMA’s continued registration of 1080 poison must not be misrepresented as a welfare endorsement. The APVMA review was triggered in part by concerns about non-target poisoning and confirmed that non-target poisoning occurs. It did not reach a conclusion that 1080 poison is humane because animal humaneness is not a specific decision criterion under the Agvet Code. Registration therefore answers a different regulatory question from the one this Committee must answer: whether NSW should deliberately inflict this suffering on sentient animals in protected areas.

Animal Liberation’s answer is no. National parks should not be routine poison-distribution zones. The State should end aerial 1080 poison baiting first because it is broadscale and makes individual targeting, carcass recovery and outcome verification especially difficult, then complete a rapid transition away from ground baiting and other routine lethal methods targeting dingoes.

Non-target animals and public risk

The APVMA recognises that non-target poisoning occurs and that dogs are the most commonly reported non-target casualties. Labels and pesticide control orders seek to reduce risk through placement rules, notifications, signage and recovery requirements. These controls cannot eliminate the danger. Baits can remain toxic, animals can move them, signs can be missed or inaccurate, and poisoned carcasses may not be found. The absence of a detected carcass is not evidence that no animal was poisoned.

The State should establish a central mandatory register of suspected poison incidents and make reporting accessible to veterinarians, wildlife carers, land managers and the public. Where practicable, carcasses should be recovered and independently tested. Complaints, investigations, findings and enforcement outcomes should be published. Current fragmented systems make the full toll unknowable.

Impacts on sheep and landholders

Animal Liberation acknowledges that predation can cause injury, fear and death to sheep and other animals, and can cause financial and psychological distress to landholders. ABARES research documents significant economic and non-market impacts and emphasises coordination across land tenures. Those realities should be taken seriously rather than dismissed.

They should also be described ethically. Sheep are not only 'units' of agricultural loss. They are sentient animals whose suffering matters. Poisoning dingoes after attacks does not undo that suffering and may not prevent future incidents. A policy genuinely concerned with animal welfare should prioritise measures that prevent encounters, provide supervision during vulnerable periods and reduce risk before an attack occurs.

The NSW Government has historically subsidised lethal control and the infrastructure surrounding it. Comparable commitment is required for coexistence. Landholders should not be expected to bear transition costs alone, particularly at park boundaries where public conservation objectives create shared responsibilities.

7. Term of reference (f): future management, Indigenous knowledge and leadership

A non-lethal, prevention-focused framework

The choice is not between poison and inaction. A credible reform package should combine multiple preventive measures suited to the property, terrain, animal species and local dingo ecology. These may include:

- rapid removal of carcasses and other attractants;
- non-lethal deterrents and aversive conditioning subject to welfare assessment;
- livestock guardian dogs or other guardian animals where appropriate, with training, veterinary care, adequate numbers, safe containment and protection from poisons;
- rapid-response advice following verified incidents; and
- financial assistance and transition payments linked to documented preventive plans.

Australian research indicates livestock guardian dogs can substantially reduce predation and can be cost-effective in extensive systems, although effectiveness depends on adequate numbers, training and management (van Bommel and Johnson, 2012, 2023). Guardian dogs are themselves sentient animals. They must not be treated as disposable equipment or placed in landscapes where 1080 poison exposure is foreseeable. Programs should include breeding and sourcing standards, desexing decisions appropriate to welfare and conservation, veterinary support, retirement plans, containment and monitoring of impacts on wildlife.

Dingo Coexistence Extension Service

NSW should establish a dedicated public extension service for properties adjoining national parks and other dingo habitat. Multidisciplinary teams should include animal welfare specialists, First Nations rangers, ecologists, veterinarians, fencing and husbandry advisers, and people with lived experience of landholder conflict. The service should provide site assessments, grant applications, training, follow-up and transparent evaluation.

Funding should be drawn initially from a redirection of existing 1080 poison bait and aircraft expenditure. The three-year direct cost disclosed for NPWS bait and aircraft - approximately \$7.5 million excluding labour - demonstrates that meaningful transition funding is available if policy priorities change.

Place-based conservation and adaptive management

Every relevant park or connected group of parks should have a Dingo Conservation and Coexistence Plan. Plans should be co-governed with Traditional Owners and should include population objectives, genetic monitoring, connectivity, social-group monitoring, identified conflict interfaces, preventive measures, public reporting and clear prohibitions on routine lethal control.

Adaptive management must not become an indefinite licence for experimentation on animals. Any intervention should have a defined objective, evidence threshold, welfare assessment, time limit, monitoring protocol and stopping rule. Failure to demonstrate benefit should result in cessation, not automatic continuation.

8. Term of reference (g): related matters

Sentience should be explicit in law and policy

NSW animal and biodiversity law remains fragmented and often values animals according to ownership, species, location or economic use. Dingoes expose the consequences of that fragmentation. The same animal can be described as native wildlife, ecological regulator, cultural relation and priority pest, with the final label determining whether their suffering is considered. NSW should enact an overarching statutory recognition of animal sentience and require public authorities to consider the interests and welfare of affected animals in decision-making.

Independent Office of Animal Welfare

Animal Liberation has long advocated for an Independent Office of Animal Welfare. Dingo control demonstrates why it is needed. Agencies with biosecurity, agricultural or operational objectives should not be the sole arbiters of whether a control method is necessary, humane or effective. An independent office should:

- develop binding welfare standards for government control programs;
- review and approve high-risk methods and broadscale operations;
- audit compliance and outcome data;
- investigate incidents and complaints;
- maintain the public register recommended in this submission;
- advise Parliament independently of agriculture and environment portfolios; and
- have enforcement and stop-work powers where animals face unjustified suffering.

Transparency is a precondition of public trust

The public should not have to assemble baiting notices, regional plans, parliamentary questions and scattered agency pages to understand what is being done to animals on public land. A modern disclosure system should be searchable, current, archived and reusable. It should show both planned operations and completed outcomes. Sensitive cultural or species-location information can be protected without withholding basic accountability about public expenditure and lethal action.

Research ethics and data governance

Genetic and ecological research should be independently funded, methodologically transparent and governed by appropriate animal ethics. Sampling must minimise harm. Data involving First Nations Country or cultural knowledge must be controlled in accordance with community decisions and Indigenous data-sovereignty principles. Public agencies should not use research participation as a pathway to identify populations for killing.

9. Implementation pathway

Animal Liberation proposes the following staged transition. The timetable is deliberately practical while recognising that continued routine poisoning is not ethically acceptable.

Period	Priority action	Required output
0-3 months	Immediate protection	Suspend aerial 1080 poison targeting dingoes in the NPWS estate; prohibit new broadscale programs; preserve records; publish all current plans and notices in one register.
0-6 months	Governance and review	Establish an interim First Nations-led advisory and decision body; commission independent legal, welfare and operational reviews; introduce the dingo-protection amendment bill.
3-12 months	Coexistence transition	Launch boundary-property grants and extension teams; map provisional conservation areas and conflict interfaces; begin independent population and genetic baselines.
6-18 months	End routine lethal control	Complete phase-out of routine 1080 poison, trapping and shooting targeting dingoes in national parks; commence statutory conservation plans and public outcome reporting.
1-3 years	Institutional reform	Establish the Independent Office of Animal Welfare; finalise connected conservation areas; expand First Nations ranger and research programs; evaluate coexistence outcomes.
At 3 years	Statutory review	Table an independent review in Parliament assessing animal welfare, dingo populations, conflict, cultural governance, expenditure, transparency and compliance.

Proposed statutory decision test

If the Government retains any power to authorise intervention against an individual dingo, legislation should require the decision-maker to be satisfied, on published evidence, that:

- there is a specific, immediate and serious risk, not a general regional assumption;
- the animal or animals involved have been identified with reasonable confidence;
- prevention and non-lethal measures have been implemented and documented;
- the proposed response is the least harmful available option;
- animal welfare, cultural and ecological impacts have been independently assessed;
- the authorisation is time-limited and geographically narrow;
- monitoring, incident reporting and public disclosure are mandatory; and
- the authorisation can be reviewed by the Independent Office of Animal Welfare.

Animal Liberation does not support routine lethal exceptions for livestock protection. The purpose of the test is to ensure that any residual emergency power is confined to genuinely exceptional human-safety circumstances and cannot recreate the present system under new language.

Conclusion

The current framework asks the public to accept a contradiction: dingoes should be conserved where risk is low, yet no formal conservation areas, population estimate or dedicated conservation expenditure are identified, while hundreds of thousands of poison baits are deployed in protected areas each year. That is not balance. It is lethal control with a conservation qualification attached.

The science no longer supports treating free-living canids in NSW as presumptively feral domestic dogs. The law does not adequately reflect the dingo's status as native wildlife, a culturally significant animal and a sentient individual. The operational system does not provide the transparency, welfare scrutiny or outcome evidence expected when government deliberately kills animals on public land.

Animal Liberation asks the Committee to recommend a decisive change in direction: protect dingoes in law; end routine lethal control in national parks; centre First Nations authority; fund coexistence; use contemporary genetics without purity-based killing; publish complete operational data; and establish independent animal-welfare oversight.

National parks should be places of refuge, not routine killing grounds.

NSW has the evidence, the policy tools and the financial capacity to choose coexistence. The remaining question is whether it will recognise that the lives and suffering of dingoes matter. Animal Liberation urges the Committee to answer yes.

Appendix: official operational and expenditure data

The following figures are drawn from the NSW Government's answer to Legislative Council Question 4620, addressed to the Environment portfolio and answered on 3 November 2025. They relate to the national parks system and illustrate the scale of lethal control alongside identified conservation and data gaps.

Measure	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Ground-deployed 1080 baits	27,776	30,310	34,746
Aerially deployed 1080 baits	380,986	391,614	344,148
Total 1080 baits	408,762	421,924	378,894
Dingoes / “wild dogs” trapped or shot	160	106	68
Approximate bait cost	\$1.2m	\$1.2m	\$1.1m
Approximate aircraft/equipment cost	\$1.1m	\$1.3m	\$1.6m
DNA testing spend	\$2,700	Nil	Nil
NPWS DNA samples tested	12 (100% reported dingo)	Nil	Nil
Dingo conservation-area expenditure	Nil	Nil	Nil
Dingo conservation expenditure	Nil	Nil	Nil

Three-year totals: 1,209,580 1080 baits; 334 animals trapped or shot; approximately \$7.5 million in disclosed bait and aircraft/equipment costs, excluding labour. NPWS also reported no population estimate, no formally designated dingo conservation areas, zero dedicated conservation staff and no NPWS grants for dingo research or conservation.

Longer-term NPWS baiting data

For calendar years 2020 to September 2025, NPWS reported 1,755,757 baits specifically recorded as targeting “wild dogs”. The annual figures were 314,807 (2020), 265,634 (2021), 335,979 (2022), 327,513 (2023), 286,175 (2024) and 225,649 to the end of September 2025. These are inputs, not verified numbers of dingoes killed or conflicts prevented.

References

A full list of references is available upon request.