

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Paddy Pallin Foundation

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Submission to the Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in NSW

Paddy Pallin Foundation

The Paddy Pallin Foundation thanks the Standing Committee for the opportunity to make this submission, and views the establishment of this committee of inquiry as timely given the growing scientific consensus regarding the importance of Dingoes to Australian ecosystems and Indigenous cultures.

1. Executive Summary

The Paddy Pallin Foundation views Dingoes, Australia's largest land predator, as vital to the health and stability of NSW ecosystems. As a keystone species, Dingoes regulate large herbivore populations, suppress invasive species, and maintain biodiversity. Dingoes also hold deep cultural and practical significance for Indigenous peoples across Australia, often considered family, hunting companions and sacred beings.

Despite their ecological and cultural importance, Dingoes in NSW National Parks are subjected to indiscriminate killing. This practice undermines ecosystem integrity and ignores growing scientific evidence supporting the Dingo's crucial role as an apex predator. Dingoes are classified as a native species in all Australian jurisdictions (except Tasmania).

We submit that the Standing Committee should recommend the protection of the Australian Dingo in NSW National Parks, ensuring their long-term survival to maintain ecological function and cultural heritage.

2. About the Paddy Pallin Foundation

A legacy built in the bush

Paddy Pallin founded his bushwalking equipment business in 1930. Paddy was an early member of the Sydney Bushwalking Club, and was part of the 1932 campaign to save Blue Gum Forest from logging, marking the beginning of the establishment of the Blue Mountains National Park. From that experience he drew his conservation conviction: that wild places need passionate advocates, and that the people most likely to become those advocates are the ones who actually go into the bush.

Over the proceeding decades, Paddy and his family built the family company across Australia, selling everything Australian bushwalkers needed to get into the bush. During this time he also wrote Australia's first bush etiquette guide, helped establish the Federation of Bushwalking Clubs NSW, founded The River Canoe Club and The Bush Club, and in the 1950s became a founding member and first president of the collective that established the National Parks Association of NSW (NPA) in 1957. The NPA went on to campaign for and

win the creation of the National Parks and Wildlife Service and the gazettal of the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1967 — the legislative foundation this inquiry now operates under.

The Paddy Pallin Foundation was formally constituted in 2007 by Paddy's son, Rob Pallin, and Rob's wife, Nancy Pallin. Today, the Foundation helps community groups protect the Australian bush through a wide range of community and science-led projects including bush regeneration, the Paddy Pallin Science Grants (Royal Zoological Society) and other environmental initiatives.

The Dingo 2030 Network

The Foundation established the Dingo 2030 Network initiative as a flagship in 2025. The Network is a coalition of scientists, conservation advocates, and Indigenous partners working to align government policy with ecological science under the position that Dingoes should be conserved in Australian protected areas due to their ecological and cultural role in the landscape. The Network operates dingonetwork.org.au, curates interactive baiting maps built from spatial data obtained from and within Government, alongside a library of Government documents on Dingo management. It is supported by peak environmental organisations in Victoria, New South Wales, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory. The Network seeks to foster collaboration and information sharing to help Dingo advocates and the wider public be more informed about the nature of Dingo management in National Parks and the scientific basis for their conservation.

The Dingo 2030 Network Vision

To secure the long-term survival and ecological function of the Dingo in Australian protected areas, Dingoes must thrive as an essential component of healthy and balanced ecosystems and Australian Indigenous cultures. Formal recognition of Dingoes as protected wildlife in Australian protected areas should be realised, and indiscriminate killing of Dingoes ended.

The Dingo 2030 Network Policy Commitments

- By 2030, the Network seeks a commitment from both government and industry to:
- Recognise the Australian Dingo as an apex predator that plays a vital role in maintaining biodiversity and ecosystem balance, and as an animal of deep cultural significance to Australian Indigenous peoples.
- Cease indiscriminate killing of Dingoes and secure their protection within Australian protected areas, particularly along the Great Eastern Ranges.
- Promote public education and awareness highlighting the ecological and cultural significance of Dingoes as Australian wildlife.
- Foster collaboration between scientists, conservation organisations, Indigenous people, and supportive landholders to drive meaningful policy change in relation to recognition, conservation and knowledge about Dingoes and their ecosystems.

3. Legislative and Regulatory Framework (*ToR b*)

A national park system that doesn't protect its apex predator

The Dingo is legally recognised as a native species in every Australian jurisdiction except Tasmania. Despite their mainland recognition as a native species, under Schedule 5 of the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW), Dingoes are explicitly excluded from the definition of "protected animals." By stripping them of this status, NSW allows widespread poisoning of the species. In recent years this has been done under the misnomer catch-all category of "wild dogs" within the Biosecurity Act 2015, legally defining them as a priority pest subject for mandatory eradication by landholders (including in National Parks).

It is useful here to examine the regime used to protect Dingoes in NSW prior to 2017. Before 1 July 2017, 'wild dog' control in NSW ran under the Local Land Services (Wild Dogs) Pest Control Order 2015 (Part 10, LLS Act 2013). It split all NSW land into Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 lands. Schedule 1 (most private and agricultural land) carried a general destruction obligation, meaning that occupiers had to eradicate 'wild dogs'. Schedule 2 was a defined list of public land (some national parks, nature reserves, state conservation areas, state forests, and crown land) where that obligation could instead be met through 'wild dog' management plans balancing control and conservation. Core conservation land had an effective statutory carve-out.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 ended this regime. It repealed Part 10 of the LLS Act and replaced the whole Schedule system with the General Biosecurity Duty, a single, tenure-blind duty to prevent and minimise risk from 'wild dogs' that applies the same management regulations to National Park land as it does to agricultural land. The removal of legislated protection for Schedule 2 lands means that whatever conservation-minded management policy that may happen to arise today is purely agency policy.

This legislative regression and confusion between the species classification of Dingoes and 'wild dogs' in NSW fuels a direct operational clash between state agencies with fundamentally opposing mandates. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is legislatively bound to conserve biodiversity under the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974, whereas Local Land Services (LLS) enforces strict agricultural pest-management duties. This structural conflict is heavily skewed by the National Wild Dog Action Plan (NWDAP). As an industry-funded, livestock-focused framework, the NWDAP promotes a "nil-tenure" model that routinely overrides conservation objectives, promoting and assisting in the funding for lethal 1080 baiting deep into public National Park land.

Consequently, Dingoes do not receive formal protection inside NSW National Parks, rendering these supposed wildlife sanctuaries mere pest-control buffer zones for agricultural interests. To rectify this ecological failure, NSW should amend the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 to reinstate the Dingo's status as a protected native species and establish strict statutory boundaries to end lethal control within National Park land.

4. Genetic Status of Dingoes in NSW (ToR a)

What the science says, and what government data reveals

In recent years genetic science has fundamentally revised understanding of Dingo genetic identity in NSW, yet this new evidence has not been reflected in how the NSW Government manages Dingo populations on National Park land. Next-generation SNP (single nucleotide polymorphism) testing developed by Dr Kylie Cairns and colleagues at UNSW, using close to 195,000 genetic markers, found that across combined NSW and Queensland samples (n=171), 59% of animals tested were Dingoes and a further 18% were historical Dingo backcrosses with over 93% Dingo ancestry. Only two individuals showed less than 70% Dingo ancestry. Nationally, a 2021 study of over 5,000 wild-caught samples found that 99% were Dingoes or Dingo-dominant hybrids, with true feral dogs and first-cross (50/50) hybrids essentially absent from the wild population. The distinction the science now draws is clear, and it does not support "wild dog" as the operative category for the animals subject to control programs in NSW National Parks.

The Committee should note that NPWS itself has confirmed, in Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 617 (3 November 2025), that it holds no estimate of Dingo and wild dog numbers in NSW National Parks. NPWS is directing lethal control, including aerial baiting across roughly a million hectares of park land, without the population baseline that would be a basic prerequisite for evidence-based wildlife management in any other context. These baiting transects can be seen in the maps attached to this submission.

Underlying these problems is a failure of nomenclature. NSW legislation and program design continue to group Dingoes, hybrids (of which there are very few), and feral dogs (which are almost non-existent) under the single composite term of 'wild dog.' Given what the genetics now shows, this is a mislabel that permits a native apex predator to be killed under a policy framework designed for introduced pest species. Cairns and colleagues have explicitly called for the retirement of the term 'wild dog' from legislation and public language, in favour of terms that the science actually supports. The Committee has an opportunity, through this Inquiry, to recommend the correction of this mislabel and bring NSW policy into line with the scientific evidence.

For further evidence on the genetic makeup of the NSW Dingo population, we refer to the submission made to this inquiry by Dr Kylie Cairns of the University of NSW.

5. Ecological Role of Dingoes in National Parks (ToR c)

Removing the top apex predator in core conservation areas

Dingoes occupy the apex position of the mainland food web, and their suppression triggers a well-documented trophic cascade. Research led by Professor Mike Letnic (UNSW Centre for Ecosystem Science), studying the effect of the dingo-proof fence in north-western NSW, showed that where Dingo numbers were low, kangaroo and other herbivore populations rise sharply, driving overgrazing that degrades understorey vegetation, damages soil structure, and undermines habitat for smaller fauna. Dr Thomas Newsome (University of Sydney), working with Letnic and colleagues, has further argued in the peer-reviewed literature that this suppression of mesopredators (foxes and cats) and herbivores by Dingoes is a genuine,

ecologically significant effect in Australian landscapes. Further material on this subject can also be found in Dr Bradley Smith's recent book "Canis Dingo, Understanding Australia's Apex Predator", where these issues are discussed in depth.

The Dingo 2030 Network's spatial analysis of aerial baiting operations across the Eastern Ranges National Parks in NSW has illustrated the scale of this baiting inside the reserve system itself: over 38,000 km of baiting runs were identified, treating an estimated 925,000 hectares within National Parks. This is roughly 11% of the NSW National Parks estate. It must be said that these numbers represent deep, systematic penetration of lethal control into land explicitly gazetted for conservation and wilderness level protection. Maps of baiting inside these National Parks can be found in Appendix A.

For further evidence on the ecological impact of Dingo suppression in NSW National Parks, we refer to the submission made to this inquiry by Professor Mike Letnic of the University of NSW.

6. Cultural Significance for First Nations Communities (*ToR d*)

The cost to Indigenous people: consultation in name only

As will be established in more depth by other submissions to this inquiry, there is deep relational significance between Dingoes and First Nations peoples across NSW, as family members, hunting companions, and beings connected to spirituality.

The Dingo 2030 Network's Indigenous partners, notably the Murrindiyarr Aboriginal Corporation and Minyumai Rangers, have both expressed the view that baiting programs are often conducted in NSW National Parks without meaningful Indigenous consultation or consent, and that where Indigenous views are sought, they are frequently dismissed or selectively drawn upon to satisfy predetermined NSW Government policy outcomes. The experience of the Murrindiyarr Aboriginal Corporation in the southern Blue Mountains National Park, an area which the Network has worked closely with the Corporation on, illustrates this pattern.

Since approximately 2021, the Corporation has made repeated attempts to obtain information regarding Dingo baiting operations conducted over its traditional lands, land which falls within the southern Blue Mountains National Park estate and holds deep cultural significance connected to the presence of Dingoes. These attempts have included direct liaison with NPWS field officers, correspondence with NSW Government officers, engagement through the Yerranderie Committee, and representations to the Environment Minister's office. Across each of these channels, the Corporation has sought the same basic information sought by this submission more broadly: maps and data showing where, when, and how baiting has occurred on Country for which it holds cultural authority and responsibility.

What has resulted, rather than access, has been a pattern that can fairly be characterised as obstruction at the operational level and deflection at the ministerial level. Requests directed to field staff have been met with administrative delay or redirection to other agencies; requests escalated to the Minister's office have been met with general assurances rather than the specific baiting maps and data sought. Several years on, the Corporation has still

not obtained the information necessary to fully understand the extent to which a culturally significant species is being poisoned on Country for which it holds custodial responsibility.

This case study is illustrative, not exceptional. It demonstrates that the barriers to transparency documented elsewhere in this submission are experienced most acutely, and for the longest duration, by the Traditional Custodians the current consultation framework is nominally designed to serve. The Committee should treat the Corporation's experience as evidence that existing consultation and information-access mechanisms are not fit for purpose.

7. Impact of Current Government Programs (ToR e)

What is done, what we don't know, and what Government documents show

Aerial baiting operations in National Parks are delivered jointly by NPWS and Local Land Services, supplemented by NSW and Commonwealth grant funding (Q&A 617). From our Foundation's interactions with NSW Government representatives, the stated rationale for this activity falls into two categories: protecting agricultural production assets on land adjoining park boundaries, and conserving vulnerable native species from Dingo predation. These require different evidence bases, and neither is well supported by the scientific or stock loss data made available to the public. NSW Government agencies do not appear to properly validate or collate livestock loss data used to justify baiting. Losses are not systematically verified or cross-checked against other causes of stock mortality. Nor is it clear what proportion of claimed losses occur near National Park boundaries, as opposed to properties well removed from any credible Dingo range originating in the park.

The NSW Government's own spatial data produced under the GIPA Act shows the scale of this activity. There have been 378,894 baits deployed between January 2024 and October 2025, of which 344,148 were delivered by aircraft, across 38,030 km of mapped aerial transects.

What this activity has not produced is any baseline against which success could be measured. There is no published estimate of the target Dingo population, no independent evaluation of outcomes, no government genetic studies on the Dingo populations it is targeting, and no public register of baiting locations, quantities, or dates.

The Dingo 2030 Network's own mapping of the Department's spatial data fills part of this gap. It shows baiting treated approximately 925,000 hectares of National Park land (11.3% of the estate), including 394,826 hectares of declared Wilderness (18.9% of NSW's Wilderness estate), with 71% of that area baited more than once. Critically, the spatial data shows baiting is not confined to park perimeters or buffer zones adjoining agricultural land, but extends deep into park interiors and wilderness areas — further undermining the agricultural protection rationale as an explanation for the extent of the program.

Aerial baiting targets Dingoes across National Parks, including declared Wilderness Areas, without a population baseline to establish whether it is working, and without the transparency needed to assess what it is destroying. Given the direct tension between baiting and the parks' conservation mandate, activity on this public conservation land should meet a higher evidentiary bar than on private agricultural land. At minimum, verified loss data, geographic

analysis linking losses to park proximity, and public disclosure of baiting data to allow scrutiny of proportionality should be provided. Set against 2025 canine predation losses of 1,759 sheep, or less than 0.007% of the state flock (Meat and Livestock Australia), the proportionality of this activity warrants careful Committee scrutiny.

8. Recommendations for reform (*ToR f*)

The Paddy Pallin Foundation submits that the inquiry recommend that the NSW Government:

1. Establish statutory protections for Dingoes in NSW National Parks, removing Dingo management decisions in National Parks from individual NSW Government agencies.
2. End broadscale 1080 Dingo baiting within NSW National Parks and declared NSW Wilderness Areas.
3. Formally distinguish Dingoes from 'wild dogs' in relevant NSW legislation and management frameworks.
4. Commission an independent population size and genetic census of NSW National Park Dingo populations.
5. Establish a standardised, geographically consistent dataset of verified livestock predation losses, recording location, date, species, and cause of death for each incident, so losses can be mapped and assessed against proximity to National Park boundaries before baiting is authorised.
6. Establish a First Nations co-management framework for Dingoes in National Parks.
7. Require all NSW agencies to maintain and publicly publish a baiting program register (locations, methods, dates, quantities) of Dingo baiting programs on public lands.

9. Annexures

Annexure A: Dingo 2030 Network baiting maps — GIS extracts showing program geography in NSW National Parks for 2024 to 2025 period.

Annexure B: Relevant Legislative Council Q&A 617 responses (NPWS Dingo/wild dog data, November 2025)

Annexure C: Meat and Livestock Australia Fast Facts 2025

Annexure D: Dingo 2030 Network member organisations