Submission No 305

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Planning and Environment
NSW Parliament
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To the Committee,

Please accept my submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales.

I make this submission as an individual community member, volunteer wildlife carer, dingo carer and someone with practical experience assisting dingo-related research.

My submission argues that dingoes in NSW national parks should be recognised and protected as native animals with ecological and cultural significance, rather than managed primarily through “wild dog” pest-control frameworks.

I respectfully urge the Committee to recommend stronger protection for dingoes in national parks, an end to broad lethal control within protected areas, greater recognition of First Nations knowledge and leadership, and a shift toward evidence-based coexistence that supports both biodiversity conservation and targeted livestock protection.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Daniela Osiander

Submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales

Submitted by: Daniela Osiander as an individual community member
Inquiry: Dingoes in national parks in New South Wales
Position: Stronger protection for dingoes as native animals and biodiversity champions

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Opening statement

I welcome the opportunity to make a submission to the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales. I am writing as an individual who cares deeply about Australia's native wildlife, the integrity of our national parks, and the responsibility governments have to protect the living systems that make these places irreplaceable.

My submission strongly argues that dingoes should receive better protection in NSW national parks. National parks should be places where native animals are valued, where ecological relationships are respected and preserved, and where management decisions are guided by conservation, not by outdated attitudes that treat dingoes as pests rather than as essential members of the Australian environment.

Summary of key recommendations

I respectfully ask the Committee to recommend a clear shift in how dingoes are recognised and managed in NSW national parks. The key recommendations of this submission are that:

- Dingoes in NSW national parks should be recognised and protected as native animals with ecological and cultural significance.
- NSW legislation and policy should be amended so dingoes are not managed primarily through "wild dog" pest-control frameworks.
- Broad lethal control of dingoes in national parks, including routine baiting, trapping and shooting, should end.
- Public funding should be redirected away from broad aerial and ground baiting campaigns and toward targeted livestock protection, farmer education, predator-appropriate husbandry, guardian animals, fencing, carcass management and compensation for verified dingo losses.
- Management should prioritise the maintenance of stable dingo packs and territories because social stability supports ecological function, genetic integrity and conflict reduction.
- Indigenous knowledge, First Nations leadership and the principles of the National First Nations' Dingo Declaration should be embedded in dingo conservation and management.
- National park management should recognise dingoes as biodiversity allies that can help suppress foxes and feral cats, protect threatened native species and maintain ecological processes.
- Dedicated funding should be allocated to dingo research and long-term monitoring, including population numbers, pack structures, genetic diversity,

territory stability and changes over time, so management decisions are based on evidence rather than assumptions.
- Any lethal control near or within protected areas should be publicly justified, evidence-based, targeted, time-limited, independently reviewed and transparently reported.

My background and experience with dingoes

I moved to Australia from Germany 26 years ago, drawn by this country's unique environment, extraordinary biodiversity and wild places. Australia's world-class landscapes and wildlife were a major reason I chose to make my life here, and over time my appreciation for them has deepened into a strong personal commitment to conservation.

Since moving to Australia, I have worked as a volunteer wildlife carer. I also volunteered for five years with Taronga Conservation Society Sydney as a carnivore and primate keeper and animal observation volunteer. For the past 12 years, I have also worked as a dingo carer, providing foster care for Sydney Dingo Rescue and, over the years, adopting three rescue dingoes. These experiences have given me direct, practical insight into carnivore behaviour generally and dingoes specifically as intelligent, sensitive and highly adapted native animals. They have also shown me how damaging public misunderstanding and poor policy language can be for individual animals and for the species as a whole.

My connection to dingoes is also informed by research experience. I have assisted with dingo research, including work associated with Dr Neil Jordan's research on dingo populations in Myall Lakes National Park. I have also worked as a research assistant for Dr Bradley P. Smith, Central Queensland University, contributing to his work on dingoes in the Great Sandy Desert. These experiences have reinforced my view that dingoes must be understood through evidence, ecology and lived knowledge, rather than through fear-based assumptions.

I was also deeply honoured that Dr Bradley P. Smith gave me the opportunity to read a pre-publication draft and provide feedback on his excellent book *Canis dingo: Understanding Australia's Apex Predator*, published by CSIRO Publishing in 2026. The book draws on two decades of scientific research, historical records and firsthand fieldwork to examine the dingo's ecological and cultural significance, its contested legal and political identity, and the consequences of how Australia chooses to manage its apex predator (Smith, 2026). In my view, reading this book should be considered essential for everyone involved in this inquiry because it directly addresses the myths, policy confusion, ecological evidence and coexistence questions at the heart of dingo management in New South Wales.

Why dingoes matter

Dingoes are not simply another animal living in national parks. They are Australia's largest terrestrial predator and can act as a biodiversity regulator. The scientific literature explains that "the maintenance or restoration of species interactions is a major priority in the global conservation of biodiversity" and that apex predators can increase diversity by limiting prey and competitors in ways that "cascade through several trophic levels." In the Australian context, Glen, Dickman, Soulé and Mackey (2007) found that dingoes can affect mesopredators such as red foxes and feral cats, as well as herbivores such as rabbits, and that these effects "often benefit populations of native prey, and diversity and biomass of vegetation."

This matters because many native species do not only need land to be set aside in a national park; they rely on functioning ecological relationships. Letnic, Koch, Gordon, Crowther and Dickman (2009) found that dingo removal was linked to "increased activity of herbivores and an invasive mesopredator, the red fox," as well as "the loss of grass cover and native species of small mammals." The same study predicted that "reintroducing or maintaining dingo populations would produce a net benefit for the conservation of threatened native mammals" across more than 2.42 million square kilometres of Australia. In plain terms, keeping dingoes on the landscape can help protect smaller native mammals by reducing the ecological pressures that arise when herbivores and mesopredators increase unchecked.

Further research shows that the benefits of dingoes can extend beyond individual species to whole ecosystem structure. Colman, Gordon, Crowther and Letnic (2014) found that where dingoes were poisoned there was "greater activity of herbivorous macropods and feral cats," "sparser understorey vegetation" and "lower abundances of native rodents." Morris and Letnic (2017) also showed that removing dingoes can trigger trophic cascades that extend from herbivores to vegetation and even the soil nutrient pool, with kangaroos more abundant where dingoes were rare and stronger grazing effects on vegetation and soil nutrients. These findings show why dingoes should be understood as ecosystem engineers as well as predators.

A particularly important recent example comes from the Great Sandy Desert. Research on the endangered night parrot in the Ngururrpa Indigenous Protected Area found that dingoes were the predator species detected most frequently in night parrot roosting habitat, while feral cats and foxes were only occasionally detected. Predator scat analysis also found that feral cats were a staple prey item for dingoes at night parrot sites. The authors concluded that dingoes are common in night parrot habitat, regularly eat feral cats, and recommended that predator control around night parrot habitat should be limited to methods that do not harm dingoes (Ngururrpa Rangers et al., 2024). This is highly significant: in one of the world's most important remaining

strongholds for one of Australia's rarest birds, dingoes appear to be acting not as a threat to conservation, but as allies in protecting a species at risk of extinction.

Other research also supports the conclusion that dingoes can help protect threatened native species by suppressing introduced predators. Dickman, Glen and Letnic (2009) examined the Western Division of New South Wales and argued that restoring dingoes could benefit small and medium-sized native vertebrates by suppressing foxes and feral cats. They estimated that 70 out of 80 threatened vertebrate species in that region could benefit from the mesopredator-suppression effects of dingo re-establishment. While any reintroduction or protection strategy must be carefully planned and monitored, this research shows the potential scale of the conservation benefit: dingoes may protect not just one threatened species, but whole assemblages of vulnerable native animals.

More recent work in south-eastern Australia also found that dingoes may be more effective than poison-baiting campaigns at suppressing foxes. Hunter and Letnic (2022) found that fox activity was typically higher at sites where dingoes were baited and dingo activity was lower, concluding that removal of dingoes may be "counter-productive for biodiversity conservation" because it may lead to higher fox activity. This is directly relevant to threatened species conservation because foxes are a major predator of many small and medium-sized native mammals, ground-nesting birds and reptiles.

My own experience reinforces this research. Even my rescue dingoes, who are exceptionally peaceful and affectionate with people and domestic dogs, are highly effective predators of invasive species. On our rural property in the last month alone, they killed two foxes, both practically instantaneously. In my research-related work analysing camera trap footage, I have also personally observed dingoes regularly killing feral cats. These observations are significant because foxes and cats are among the most destructive invasive predators affecting Australian native wildlife, and they also create real costs and risks for farmers. Foxes directly prey on lambs; Greentree, Saunders, McLeod and Hone (2000) found that fox predation was the probable cause of death for up to 5.3% of examined lamb carcasses in south-eastern Australia. Cats also spread diseases that affect livestock, including toxoplasmosis, with cat-dependent diseases estimated to cost Australian agriculture at least $12 million annually and the sheep industry identified as the worst affected sector. At a landscape scale, healthy dingo populations are likely to provide a level of

Figure 1: Dingo with feral cat. Camera trap footage from my work with Dr Bradley P. Smith in the Nyangumarta Indigenous Protected Area, Great Sandy Desert. Source: Nyangumarta Rangers.

continuous, targeted pressure on foxes and cats that human control programs, even with significant effort and funding, are unlikely to replicate.

This should change how dingoes are discussed in agricultural as well as conservation policy. If dingoes are suppressing foxes and cats—two introduced species that damage biodiversity, kill native wildlife, prey on lambs and spread disease—then dingoes should be recognised as allies in the fight against those problem species. It is deeply counterproductive to target the native predator more heavily than the invasive predators it can help control. Stable dingo packs should be celebrated and protected as part of a broader strategy for biodiversity recovery and more predator-appropriate farming.

Dingoes may also provide an important natural control pressure on feral goats, which is especially relevant to national parks and conservation lands in western New South Wales where goat numbers and impacts can be severe. NSW Government material recognises feral goats as both a major agricultural and environmental pest, noting that they compete with livestock and some native animals for pasture, contribute to land degradation, damage vegetation, compete with native animals and threaten Aboriginal cultural sites. These are precisely the kinds of impacts national parks are meant to prevent or reduce: degradation of native vegetation, pressure on native fauna, erosion of ecological processes and damage to cultural values. The same NSW species information notes that large numbers of goats do not occur in areas where dingoes are abundant. Recent research from the Western Australian rangelands provides further support for this ecological relationship: Jestrimski, van Eeden, Crowther, Dickman and Newsome (2026) found that a sustained decline in feral goat populations coincided with dingo re-establishment and was not explained by goat control, goat prices or rainfall. This is significant because it suggests that stable dingo populations could assist feral goat control, reduce grazing pressure and support biodiversity and ecosystem recovery in rangeland national parks and other protected landscapes, including areas of western NSW where goats are rampant.

I therefore describe dingoes as biodiversity champions not as a slogan, but as a reflection of their ecological function. By helping regulate herbivores, influencing introduced predators, supporting vegetation recovery and contributing to the persistence of native mammals, dingoes help national parks operate as living ecosystems rather than as fragmented reserves where key ecological processes have been removed. Protecting dingoes is therefore not only about protecting one native animal; it is about protecting the conditions that allow many other native species to survive.

National parks should uphold native wildlife protection

The purpose of national parks should include the protection of native animals, natural processes and biodiversity. It is inconsistent with that purpose for dingoes to be subject to lethal management in places that are meant to conserve native ecosystems. If dingoes are native animals and play a key ecological role, then their protection should be a core value in national park management.

This is not only a moral or ecological argument; it is consistent with the statutory purpose of national parks in New South Wales. The *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* identifies the conservation of nature as a core object of the Act, including the conservation of "habitat, ecosystems and ecosystem processes" and "biological diversity at the community, species and genetic levels." It also requires those carrying out functions under the Act to give effect to the public interest in protecting the values for which land is reserved. Plans of management for reserved land must also consider biodiversity conservation, including habitat, ecosystems and threatened species populations, the maintenance of natural processes, the rehabilitation and reinstatement of natural processes, and the identification and mitigation of threatening processes (National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)). Protecting dingoes in national parks is therefore not a departure from the purpose of national parks; it is a direct expression of that purpose.

Current approaches that classify or manage dingoes under broad "wild dog" frameworks risk obscuring their identity, significance and ecological value. This language matters. As Dr Bradley P. Smith argues in *Canis dingo: Understanding Australia's Apex Predator*, the dingo has become entangled in myth, law and livestock conflict, and the way Australia defines the animal has real consequences for whether dingoes are protected or killed (Smith, 2026). When a native animal is labelled primarily as a pest, it becomes easier to justify killing it and harder to recognise its role in Country, biodiversity and ecological resilience.

The need to move away from lethal control

I am concerned that lethal control methods, including poisoning, trapping and shooting, undermine the values that national parks should represent and can be counterproductive even on their own terms. Dingoes are socially complex animals. Stable packs maintain territories, regulate breeding through social structure, and can reduce the movement of unfamiliar animals through occupied country. When lethal control removes adult dingoes, especially breeding adults, it can fracture pack structure, create vacant territories, weaken breeding suppression within the group, and

invite dispersing adolescent dingoes from surrounding areas into the space that has been opened.

This matters because the animals that move into disrupted areas may be younger, less experienced and less socially regulated. In that situation, lethal control may increase instability rather than solve conflict. It may also create conditions in which livestock predation increases: stable resident dingoes may know their territory and rely more predictably on wild prey, while disrupted or recolonising animals may be more likely to test vulnerable livestock. Lee Allen (2000) found that "the fundamental assumption" that reducing predator numbers will reduce livestock predation was "incorrect" in beef production areas in northern and western Queensland, and that calf loss was "higher and occurred more frequently in baited areas compared to non-baited areas."

There is also a conservation concern that lethal control may contribute to genetic and social disruption over time. Although recent genomic research shows that many dingo populations retain far more dingo ancestry than previously assumed, some low levels of historical hybridisation in certain populations may plausibly be linked to periods of intensive control that fractured stable packs and reduced the availability of socially established pure dingoes. Even where a particular study does not find accelerated hybridisation in one region, the precautionary principle should apply in national parks: management should not deliberately destabilise dingo populations when stability is important for conservation, behaviour, genetic integrity and ecological function.

Management should focus on coexistence, prevention and evidence-based, targeted responses rather than broad lethal programs. Where there are genuine conflicts at park boundaries or near communities, the first response should be non-lethal and practical: improved education, secure waste and food management, responsible visitor behaviour, predator-smart livestock husbandry, guardian animals, fencing where appropriate, carcass management, support for neighbouring landholders, and site-specific planning informed by ecological science and Indigenous knowledge.

Cultural significance and Indigenous leadership

Any future framework for dingo protection in NSW national parks must recognise that dingoes also hold cultural significance for First Nations peoples. Decisions about dingoes should not be made through a narrow pest-control lens. Indigenous knowledge, leadership and place-based decision-making should be central to conservation and management approaches.

Respecting dingoes means respecting the long relationships between dingoes, Country and First Nations communities. National parks should be places where this cultural

significance is acknowledged and where management is shaped by people with deep knowledge of Country.

The National First Nations' Dingo Declaration, developed at the National Inaugural First Nations Dingo Forum in Cairns in 2023 and signed by more than 20 First Nations groups, should be central to this inquiry. The Declaration states that the dingo is deeply sacred to First Nations peoples, is family, and is part of identity, totems, Dreaming, lore/law, customs, ceremonies, art, dances, songs and Songlines. It describes the dingo as "Boss of Country" and recognises that its presence helps keep natural systems in balance (National First Nations' Dingo Declaration, 2023).

The Declaration's core principles align strongly with this submission. It rejects the term "wild dog" because it diminishes the dingo, misrepresents the animal, justifies killing and disrespects culture. It states that dingoes are genetically, physically and behaviourally different from domestic dogs and must not be treated as such. It opposes lethal control, stating that First Nations peoples "do not, and have never, approved the killing of Dingoes" and that "killing Dingoes is killing family." It calls for an immediate stop to lethal management and advocates for a different model: caring for Dingoes on Country (National First Nations' Dingo Declaration, 2023).

Importantly, the Declaration calls for dingoes to be recognised in legislation as a culturally significant and protected native species, and for management to combine traditional knowledge with evidence-based practice, focusing on peaceful coexistence between dingoes and all stakeholders. It also calls for First Nations peoples to have a voice and the capacity to apply culture in all matters relating to dingoes. These principles should guide any recommendation made by this inquiry about dingoes in national parks (National First Nations' Dingo Declaration, 2023).

Responding to flawed arguments used against dingo protection

A stronger dingo protection framework must confront flawed arguments with scientific evidence. The key question is not whether dingoes fit a politically convenient label, but what the best available research shows about their ecological role, genetic identity and management. Dr Bradley P. Smith's *Canis dingo: Understanding Australia's Apex Predator* is particularly relevant here because it brings together scientific research, historical evidence, Indigenous perspectives, policy analysis and field experience to examine the dingo's origins, ecological role, contested identity, hybridisation myths and pathways to coexistence (Smith, 2026). The scientific literature supports recognising dingoes as ecologically important native apex predators whose protection should be strengthened in NSW national parks.

Argument 1: “Dingoes are not native”

The claim that dingoes are not native because their ancestors likely arrived with people thousands of years ago is too simplistic and should not guide conservation policy. Scientific literature consistently identifies the dingo as Australia’s apex terrestrial predator and recognises its ecological role. Glen, Dickman, Soulé and Mackey (2007) wrote that “emerging evidence points increasingly towards the dingo” as “a strongly interactive species that has profound effects on ecosystem function.” They further explain that, by influencing prey and competitor species, apex predators “can increase the diversity of systems” through effects that “cascade through several trophic levels.”

This evidence matters for national parks because the dingo is not merely present in the landscape; it helps shape ecological relationships within it. Colman, Gordon, Crowther and Letnic (2014) found that where dingoes were poisoned there was “greater activity of herbivorous macropods and feral cats,” “sparser understorey vegetation” and “lower abundances of native rodents.” Their conclusion was that dingo removal can produce ecological cascades and that dingoes once exerted “ubiquitous top-down effects across Australia.” On this evidence, describing dingoes as though they are recent invasive pests is scientifically misleading.

Argument 2: “Dingoes are just hybrids”

The argument that dingoes are merely hybrids is also not supported by the best recent genetic research. Cairns, Crowther, Parker, Ostrander and Letnic (2023) used a genome-wide test and reported that previous studies “significantly overestimated the prevalence of dingo-dog mixes in the wild.” Their research found that wild dingo populations had “far less dog ancestry than suggested by prior genetic studies” and that in New South Wales and Queensland “most animals were found to be pure dingoes.”

More recent genomic work is even stronger. Weeks, Kriesner, Bartonicek, van Rooyen, Cairns and Ahrens (2025) explicitly tested the dingo-dog hybridisation claim and concluded: “We found no evidence of introgression between dingoes and domestic dogs and show that previous work has likely mischaracterized shared ancestral genetic variation as evidence for hybridization.” They also state that the dingo “still represents a unique lineage on a pathway towards speciation.” This directly disrupts the use of the “hybrid” argument as a justification for denying dingoes protection. Smith’s recent synthesis of dingo science and policy also identifies hybridisation myths as one of the central ways in which dingo protection has been weakened in public debate and management frameworks (Smith, 2026).

There is also a broader problem with the way “purity” is sometimes used in this debate. The presence of a small amount of ancestry from another closely related lineage does

not erase an animal's identity, ecological role or conservation value. A useful comparison is modern humans: genomic research shows that many people today carry a small percentage of Neanderthal DNA, often around 1–4% in people with ancestry outside Africa, yet this has never sensibly led society to question their humanity (Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History, 2024). In the same way, it is unreasonable to suggest that a dingo with a small percentage of domestic dog ancestry automatically ceases to be a dingo, especially where that animal behaves as a dingo, occupies dingo habitat, contributes to dingo social structures and performs the ecological role of a dingo.

Argument 3: "Lethal control is the only practical statewide option"

The argument that dingoes can only be managed through lethal control across the state is not supported by the research. Wallach, Ritchie, Read and O'Neill (2009) found that lethal control can have impacts that are not captured by simple population counts. Their study concluded that "control severely fractures social groups" and that "the effect of control on abundance was neither consistent nor predictable." They warned that management of large social predators must consider social stability to ensure "their conservation and ecological functioning." This is central to livestock conflict: if control fractures packs without predictably reducing dingo abundance, then it may remove the very social stability that keeps territories occupied, breeding structured and movement predictable.

Research on livestock predation also challenges the assumption that lethal control reliably reduces losses. Allen's (2000) assessment of predator control effectiveness found that reducing dingo numbers did not necessarily reduce predator impact and that, in monitored beef production areas, calf loss was higher and occurred more frequently in baited areas than in non-baited areas. Allen concluded that "control programs should be assessed by measuring impact rather than changes in predator numbers" and that "the assumption that a direct relationship exists between predator numbers and impact is not valid for dingoes in beef production areas."

This evidence is consistent with the biological mechanism described above. Lethal control can create vacant territories, disrupt stable breeding pairs, weaken the normal social suppression of breeding within dingo packs, and attract dispersing young dingoes from surrounding areas. These incoming animals may be less experienced, less socially constrained and more likely to take risks around livestock. In this way, lethal control can become part of the problem it claims to solve: it can create instability, recolonisation and cycles of conflict that lead to more livestock losses, not fewer.

Research on coexistence also shows that non-lethal pathways are available and should be prioritised, particularly in and around protected areas. Boronyak and Jacobs (2023)

describe a transition away from "routine lethal management of dingoes" toward coexistence based on "preventive non-lethal innovations," targeted research, capacity building, policy reform, public awareness, and greater involvement of Indigenous Australians in wildlife management decisions. Smith likewise emphasises practical, non-lethal approaches to carnivore management and argues that dingo policy must move beyond myth-driven conflict narratives toward evidence-based coexistence (Smith, 2026). This provides a practical evidence-based alternative to the assumption that killing dingoes across landscapes is the only workable option.

These scientific findings should guide the Committee's recommendations. The evidence does not support treating dingoes as non-native invaders, dismissing them as hybrids, or defaulting to broad lethal control. Instead, the research supports a conservation framework that recognises dingoes as ecologically significant native apex predators, protects them within national parks, and uses targeted, non-lethal coexistence strategies wherever possible.

Historical management and industry influence

A further issue for this inquiry is the historical management framework that has shaped dingo policy in New South Wales and across Australia. There is a serious paradox in the way governments and conservation agencies have approached dingoes: the very institutions responsible for protecting native wildlife and national park values have often allowed dingo management to be dominated by agricultural biosecurity priorities, particularly the interests of livestock industries and the wool sector.

This is visible in the language and structure of wild dog management frameworks. The *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027* states that its overarching aim is "to reduce the negative impacts of wild dogs" and that wild dog management plans assist land managers, regional groups, industry and government to manage wild dogs, improve profitability and sustainability, and meet biosecurity duties. It also defines "wild dogs" to include dingoes, feral domestic dogs and hybrids (Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development NSW, 2022). This framing places a native apex predator inside an agricultural pest-control framework from the outset.

The National Wild Dog Action Plan is similarly framed around coordinated management of "wild dogs" to reduce their impacts, while Australian Wool Innovation describes wild dogs, foxes and pigs as major threats to the wool industry and states that its activities follow the National Wild Dog Action Plan. The original 2014 National Wild Dog Action Plan was published by WoolProducers Australia and compiled through a steering committee that included WoolProducers Australia, livestock peak bodies, government representatives and pest management interests (WoolProducers Australia, 2014; Australian Wool Innovation, n.d.). That history matters. It shows that the policy

architecture for dingo management has been deeply shaped by production-industry concerns rather than by the primary question that should guide national parks: how should a native apex predator be protected so that it can fulfil its ecological and cultural role?

In my view, this reflects an outdated and colonial mindset toward dingoes: one that sees the landscape primarily as a production space and treats native predators as obstacles to be removed. That mindset may have historical roots in pastoral expansion and sheep protection, but it should not be allowed to dictate conservation policy inside national parks. National parks are not extensions of agricultural production systems. They are public conservation estates established to protect biodiversity, native animals, ecological processes and cultural values.

It is not acceptable for anti-dingo assumptions inherited from pastoral history to continue shaping the management of dingoes in protected areas. The wool industry and other livestock interests have legitimate concerns about livestock protection on private land, and those concerns deserve practical support. However, they should not be permitted to override the conservation mandate of national parks, especially when the scientific evidence shows that dingoes can support biodiversity, suppress invasive predators, regulate herbivores and help maintain ecosystem function.

This inquiry should therefore examine not only individual control practices, but also the governance problem behind them. If dingo policy continues to be designed mainly through "wild dog" frameworks driven by agricultural risk, then dingoes will continue to be treated as pests even in places where their protection should be a conservation priority. A modern framework must separate dingo conservation in national parks from livestock-industry pest control, recognise First Nations perspectives, and give ecological science at least equal weight to agricultural economics.

The Committee has an opportunity to correct this historical imbalance. It can recommend that dingo management in NSW national parks no longer be dictated by old "wild dog" control assumptions, but instead be grounded in biodiversity conservation, dingo protection, cultural respect and evidence-based coexistence.

Recommendations

1. Recognise dingoes in NSW national parks as native animals with ecological and cultural significance.
2. Amend NSW legislation and policy so dingoes in national parks are recognised and protected as native animals with ecological and cultural significance, rather than being managed primarily through "wild dog" pest-control frameworks.

3. Reject policy language that treats dingoes as merely introduced, merely hybrid, or indistinguishable from feral domestic dogs.
4. End broad lethal control of dingoes in national parks, including routine baiting, trapping and shooting.
5. Redirect public funding away from broad, untargeted aerial and ground baiting programs and toward targeted livestock protection, farmer education, predator-appropriate husbandry, guardian animals, fencing, carcass management and compensation for verified dingo losses.
6. Prioritise the maintenance of stable dingo packs and territories, recognising that social stability is important for ecological function, genetic integrity and reducing conflict.
7. Replace lethal management with non-lethal, evidence-based coexistence strategies wherever possible.
8. Ensure Indigenous knowledge and leadership are embedded in dingo conservation and management decisions.
9. Develop clear policies that distinguish dingoes from feral domestic dogs and avoid language that erases their native identity.
10. Invest in ecological research, monitoring and public education so that communities understand the role dingoes play in biodiversity protection.
11. Allocate dedicated funding for dingo research and long-term monitoring, including population numbers, pack structures, genetic diversity, territory stability and changes over time, so management decisions are evidence-based and adaptive.
12. Support neighbouring landholders with practical non-lethal tools to reduce conflict while allowing dingoes to remain protected within national parks.
13. Require any decision to use lethal control near or within protected areas to be publicly justified, evidence-based, targeted, time-limited and independently reviewed.
14. Require transparent public reporting of dingo control activities in and around national parks, including location, purpose, justification, non-lethal alternatives considered, target species, monitoring results and ecological impacts.

Closing statement

Dingoes belong in national parks. They are part of Australia's natural heritage and part of the living fabric of Country. If national parks cannot be places where native apex predators are protected and allowed to fulfil their ecological role, then we must ask what values those parks are truly upholding.

I urge the Committee to recommend stronger protection for dingoes in NSW national parks, a decisive shift away from lethal control, and a future management framework

grounded in biodiversity conservation, cultural respect, ecological science and coexistence. I also urge all members and advisers involved in this inquiry to read Dr Bradley P. Smith's *Canis dingo: Understanding Australia's Apex Predator*, because it provides a timely and evidence-based account of exactly the scientific, cultural and policy questions this inquiry must confront (Smith, 2026). Protecting dingoes is not a fringe issue. It is a test of whether we are willing to protect native animals not only when they are easy to love, but when their role in nature challenges us to think more deeply about balance, responsibility and respect.

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