

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW
SOUTH WALES**

Name: Name suppressed

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

Introduction

I am a former New South Wales resident of more than 35 years and have over 40 years of professional experience as a biologist and environmental manager, primarily in government roles. I have a long-standing interest in dingo ecology, conservation and management.

Because dingo populations extend across state borders, their conservation is a national issue requiring coordinated and complementary management across jurisdictions. NSW has a unique opportunity to lead by example in response to this inquiry.

I respectfully provide the following information and recommendations to the New South Wales Legislative Council's Animal Welfare Committee.

Executive Summary

This submission recommends that dingoes in New South Wales national parks be recognised and managed as ecologically and culturally significant native wildlife rather than primarily through pest-management frameworks.

Contemporary genetic research demonstrates that dingoes remain genetically distinct from domestic dogs, that recent hybridisation is uncommon, and that wild-living canids in Australia are overwhelmingly dingoes. Current scientific evidence also supports the ecological role of dingoes as apex predators and recognises their deep cultural significance for many First Nations peoples.

Current legislative and management frameworks continue to treat dingoes as pest animals under the umbrella category of "wild dogs", resulting in extensive lethal-control programs on public conservation land and across other tenures in NSW. This submission argues that these frameworks are increasingly inconsistent with contemporary genetic, ecological and conservation science.

Accordingly, this submission recommends that New South Wales:

- recognise dingoes as a native species requiring full protection and conservation management
 - replace broad-scale lethal control with targeted, evidence-based management
 - support non-lethal coexistence measures for neighbouring landholders
 - strengthen the involvement of Cultural Custodians in decision-making
 - ensure future policy is guided by contemporary ecological, genetic and cultural evidence.
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Background to the Terms of Reference:

(a) Genetic Status of Dingoes

Recent genomic studies consistently demonstrate that:

- Dingoes are genetically distinct from domestic dogs.
- Dingoes have been part of Australian ecosystems for thousands of years.
- Distinct regional dingo lineages and sub-populations occur across Australia.
- Contemporary wild-living canids in Australia are overwhelmingly dingoes.
- First-generation dingo-dog hybrids represent only a very small proportion of wild canids.
- There is no evidence of established continent-wide populations of free-living feral domestic dogs occupying Australian ecosystems.
- Where dog ancestry occurs within dingo populations, it is minor and predominantly the result of historical rather than recent interbreeding.
- Modern conservation science increasingly considers ecological function, population viability and conservation outcomes alongside genetic ancestry.

The collective findings of contemporary genomic research indicate that policy frameworks based on assumptions of widespread hybridisation or extensive feral dog populations should be reassessed considering current scientific evidence.

The term “wild dog” remains problematic because it combines dingoes, free-roaming domestic dogs and hybrids under a single label despite significant, important ecological, cultural and genetic differences. Consistent terminology that correctly distinguishes dingoes would improve policy, management and public understanding.

(b) Legislative, Regulatory and Policy Frameworks

In New South Wales, the term “wild dog” is used as an umbrella classification encompassing dingoes, domestic dogs and their hybrids and does not adequately distinguish dingoes as Australia’s only native canid.

Dingoes are uniquely excluded from protections otherwise available to native mammals under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 and continue to be managed primarily through pest-animal frameworks. These arrangements support extensive lethal-control programs across public conservation lands and other tenures in NSW.

Current policy settings continue to treat dingoes predominantly as pest animals despite increasing scientific recognition of their ecological importance, cultural significance and role within Australian ecosystems. A modern policy framework should better reflect contemporary evidence and clearly distinguish dingoes from free-roaming domestic dogs.

(c) Ecological Role of Dingoes in National Parks

Dingoes are Australia's only native canid and function as both an apex predator and a keystone species. Research indicates that dingoes contribute to ecosystem health by:

- regulating populations of large herbivores
- influencing animal behaviour and movement patterns
- suppressing invasive predators such as foxes and cats
- contributing to the control of invasive species including goats and pigs
- supporting biodiversity through trophic regulation.

Evidence also suggests that stable dingo populations may suppress fox populations more effectively than poison-baiting programs alone. The removal of apex predators can destabilise ecosystems and contribute to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened native species.

(d) Cultural Significance for First Nations Peoples

Dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many Cultural Custodians throughout New South Wales and Australia.

They are connected to:

- lore and kinship systems
- Songlines and storytelling traditions
- Caring for Country practices
- cultural responsibilities to land and community.

Many Cultural Custodians regard dingoes as protectors, teachers and an important component of healthy Country.

The 2023 First Nations Dingo Forum and resulting National First Nations Dingo Declaration highlighted strong support for approaches centred on Caring for Dingoes on Country and greater involvement of Traditional Owners in management decisions.

Archaeological evidence indicates that companion dingoes were sometimes afforded intentional burials, demonstrating their longstanding cultural significance within many Aboriginal societies.

(e) Impact of Current Government Policies and Programs

Evidence-based management should seek to balance livestock protection with the conservation of dingoes as ecologically and culturally significant native wildlife.

Priority policy objectives should include:

- managing dingoes as a protected native species of ecological and cultural importance
- undertaking statewide population monitoring and threat assessments
- supporting genetic resilience and landscape connectivity
- prioritising non-lethal management approaches
- limiting lethal control to exceptional circumstances where no practical alternatives exist
- increasing the involvement of Cultural Custodians in management and decision-making
- supporting neighbouring landholders through coexistence programs and extension services.

Recommendations:

Naming and Genetics

1. Recognise dingoes as a distinct native species and refer to them by the scientific name *Canis dingo*.
2. Replace the term “wild dog” with more accurate terminology in legislation, policy and public communication.
3. Shift management objectives from genetic purity toward genetic resilience, population viability and ecological function.
4. Improve landscape connectivity to support long-term genetic recovery and population health.

Legislative and Regulatory Reform

1. Classify dingoes as native animals under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.
2. Remove dingo pest-animal status from relevant legislation and policy.
3. Provide full protection for dingoes within national parks.
4. Ensure dingo management complies with contemporary animal-welfare standards.

Policy and Management

1. Establish dingo conservation as a core priority of the NSW Government.
2. Undertake a statewide population assessment and conservation-status review.
3. Introduce a moratorium on broad-scale lethal control while conservation status is assessed.
4. Develop a NSW Dingo Coexistence Plan based on science, transparency, Indigenous knowledge and coexistence strategies.
5. Support neighbouring landholders through funding and extension services for non-lethal management approaches.
6. Reduce reliance on poisoning programs that adversely affect dingoes and ecosystem function.
7. Promote informed and respectful dingo-human interactions through education and awareness programs.

Cultural Custodianship

1. Ensure meaningful involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo-related legislation, policy development and place-based management throughout New South Wales.

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