

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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

I am writing to support a more humane, evidence-based approach to the management of dingoes in New South Wales national parks.

Dingoes are native Australian animals and an important part of the ecosystems in which they live. As apex predators, they help maintain ecological balance by regulating the abundance and behaviour of other animals. This can reduce excessive grazing pressure from herbivores and limit populations of introduced predators such as foxes and feral cats.

The loss or suppression of an apex predator can have consequences throughout an ecosystem. When predators are removed, prey populations may increase beyond sustainable levels, placing greater pressure on vegetation, habitats and other native species. Smaller introduced predators may also become more abundant when they are no longer being suppressed by a larger predator.

Tasmania provides a useful cautionary comparison. Since the extinction of the thylacine, Tasmania has had no surviving large terrestrial apex predator equivalent to the dingo. The state continues to face significant challenges associated with abundant browsing animals and expanding populations of introduced species. While ecological systems are complex, Tasmania demonstrates why the removal of a top-order predator should not be viewed as having no wider consequences.

Killing dingoes may therefore disrupt the very ecological processes that national parks are intended to preserve. It may also leave governments and landholders relying on continued culling to control populations that would otherwise be influenced naturally by predators. Dingo management should consider the health of the entire ecosystem, rather than assessing dingoes only according to the animals they may kill.

I am also concerned that dingoes continue to be poisoned, trapped and shot within protected areas. Dingoes are intelligent and social animals capable of experiencing pain, fear and distress. These methods can cause prolonged suffering and may also harm animals beyond their intended targets. Poison baits can be consumed by non-target wildlife, while traps can injure or kill native animals and domestic animals that encounter them.

Broadscale lethal control should not be treated as the default response, particularly in national parks. Any proposed control program should be independently assessed for its necessity, ecological consequences, animal welfare impacts and risks to non-target species.

Dingoes also hold deep cultural significance for many First Nations peoples. Traditional Owners should have a meaningful leadership role in decisions about dingo management, and their knowledge, values and cultural responsibilities should be respected in the development of future policy.

Where conflict occurs, the NSW Government should prioritise practical coexistence measures. This should include greater support for improved fencing, livestock guardian animals, better husbandry practices and other measures that protect livelihoods without requiring widespread killing. Any lethal intervention should be strictly limited, independently justified and considered only after appropriate non-lethal options have been attempted.

I ask the Committee to recommend that the NSW Government:

1. End routine and broadscale lethal control of dingoes in national parks.
2. Recognise dingoes for their ecological, cultural and intrinsic value.
3. Consider the wider consequences that suppressing an apex predator can have for prey populations, introduced predators, vegetation and biodiversity.
4. Assess and publicly report the impacts of poisoning and trapping on non-target species.
5. Invest in independent research and transparent monitoring of dingo populations and management programs.
6. Ensure First Nations peoples have a meaningful leadership role in dingo policy and management.
7. Expand funding and practical support for effective non-lethal coexistence measures.

National parks should provide genuine protection for native wildlife and the ecological relationships that sustain it. NSW has an opportunity to replace outdated persecution with a more humane and scientifically informed approach that recognises dingoes as an important part of functioning Australian ecosystems.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Faithfully,
Tom Raeder