Submission No 331

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Craig Mitchell

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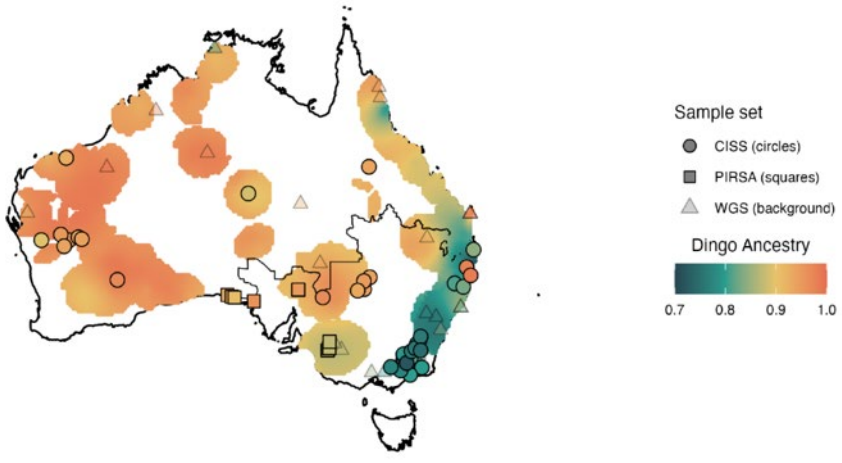
Inquiry into dingoes in national parks in New South Wales
TERMS OF REFERENCE
(1) That the Animal Welfare Committee inquire into and report on the treatment and the cultural and ecological significance of dingoes in national parks in New South Wales, and in particular:
(a) the genetic status of dingoes, the distinction between dingoes and dogs and recent research into the genetic profile of NSW dingoes

- Dingoes represent an ancient lineage of dogs that arrived in Australia approximately 3,000–5,000 years ago and subsequently developed distinct genetic, behavioural and ecological characteristics (Jackson et al. 2017; Souilmi et al. 2024).
- Australia's most renowned and respected taxonomic authorities recognise dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids as belonging to the same biological species, *Canis familiaris*, reflecting their shared ancestry and ability to interbreed (Australasian Mammal Taxonomic Consortium 2024).
- Large-scale genetic surveys have demonstrated widespread historical hybridisation between dingoes and domestic dogs across Australia, particularly in south-eastern regions (Stephens et al. 2015, Osunu-Mascaro et al.2026, Scarsbrook et al 2025).
- Research to extract ancient dingo DNA (Souilmi 2024) has now provided a pre-European reference sample by which to compare the genetics of modern dingoes and wild living dogs.
- Recent studies have found that in the absence of an ancient dingo reference sample the whole genome SNP analysis of Cairns et al. (2024) underestimated European domestic dog ancestry, by incorrectly treating historically admixed/crossbreed populations as "pure" dingoes, due to comparisons with captive bred dingoes that likely already contained historical European domestic dog ancestry. (National Wild Dog Action Plan Pilot Dingo DNA study, Osunu-Mascaro et al 2026, Scarsbrook et al 2025, Ravishankar et al. 2026).
- Recent genetic studies using pre-European ancient dingo DNA as the reference for comparison indicates that many NSW populations contain approximately 20–28% European domestic dog ancestry while remaining predominantly dingo-derived (National Wild Dog Action Plan Pilot Dingo DNA study, Osunu-Mascaro et al 2026, Scarsbrook et al 2025, Ravishankar et al. 2026).



- Current evidence suggests that historical settlement patterns and domestic dog interactions have had a far greater influence on dingo genetics than contemporary management programs (Stephens et al. 2023; National Wild Dog Action Plan Pilot Dingo DNA study; Ravishankar et al. 2026).
- The National Wild Dog Action Plan and associated scientific literature support management based on demonstrated impacts rather than ancestry alone because genetic status does not reliably predict ecological function or livestock predation risk (National Wild Dog Action Plan 2020–2030; Allen et al. 2015).

(b) the legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes in New South Wales in national parks

- The Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) provides the primary legislative mechanism for managing wild dogs across all land tenures and imposes a General Biosecurity Duty on public and private land managers.
- The National Parks and Wildlife Service has the same obligation as neighbouring landholders to minimise biosecurity risks where wild dogs cause impacts (Biosecurity Act 2015; NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027).
- Dingoes are not currently listed as a native under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW).
- The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy adopts a risk-based and impact-based management approach rather than one based on genetic ancestry.
- Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans support coordinated cross-tenure management and recognise wild dogs as a priority pest animal in many NSW regions (NSW DPI 2022).
- NSW national parks created the Nil/Cross tenure management approach in order to deliver effective and targeted wild dog management on the perimeter of public estate while maintaining significant areas for dingo conservation within National Park (Hunt 2005).
- Current legislative arrangements seek to balance biodiversity conservation, cultural values, livestock protection and community wellbeing through integrated land management approaches (Natural Resources Commission 2016).

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in national parks

- Dingoes occupy the role of a large terrestrial predator and undoubtedly contribute ecological functions, through predation, competition and scavenging (Allen et al. 2013).
- Claims that dingoes consistently suppress foxes and feral cats and generate broad biodiversity benefits through trophic cascades remain controversial and are not strongly supported by the most rigorous experimental studies (Allen et al. 2013; Castle et al. 2021; Castle et al. 2023).

- Experimental field-based studies have repeatedly failed to demonstrate population-level increases in foxes or feral cats following reductions in dingo abundance (Allen 2026, Castle et al. 2021, Castle et al. 2023).
- Fielded based research has consistently demonstrated that dingoes do not surprises ferals cats or foxes to level that would confer any predation benefits to native fauna populations (Allen 2026, Castle et al. 2023).
- Dingoes are themselves predators of a wide range of native fauna, including numerous threatened species such as bilbies, rock-wallabies, potoroos and koalas (Doherty et al. 2015).
- Multiple threatened species recovery plans in identify wild dog predation as a threat requiring active management in NSW, including those for the Brush-tailed Rock-wallaby, Long-footed Potoroo and Bilby (DCCEEW 2022; Threatened Species Scientific Committee).
- NSW research demonstrates that strategic predator control programs can coexist with threatened species conservation and may provide benefits through reductions in wild dog and dingoes but also reduction in fox abundance and predation pressure (Fleming & Ballard 2018; Claridge & Mills 2007, Claridge et al 2021; Körtner 2007).
- The available evidence supports adaptive, site-specific predator management rather than assumptions that increased dingo abundance will automatically improve biodiversity outcomes (Allen 2026).

(d) the cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

- Dingoes hold significant cultural value for many Aboriginal communities as totems, companions, spiritual beings and participants in Dreaming stories and cultural traditions.
- Archaeological evidence from NSW demonstrates a long-standing cultural relationship between Aboriginal peoples and dingoes extending back thousands of years.
- Aboriginal cultural perspectives on dingoes are diverse and vary between Nations, landscapes and communities rather than representing a single statewide position.
- Indigenous land management traditions are based on holistic concepts of caring for Country that balance obligations across multiple culturally significant species and ecological values (Australian State of the Environment Report 2021).
- Many native species potentially affected by dingo predation, including koalas, quolls, kangaroos and emus, also possess significant cultural value for Aboriginal communities.
- Existing NSW pest animal management planning processes already provide mechanisms for Aboriginal consultation and participation through local planning and reserve management frameworks.

(e) the impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in national parks

- Current NSW management programs provide a balanced framework that supports biodiversity conservation, livestock protection, biosecurity obligations and community wellbeing.
- The NSW Natural Resources Commission's Review of Pest Animal Management identified wild dogs as one of the highest-priority pest animal issues affecting regional communities adjoining public lands (NRC 2016).
- The review found that inadequate wild dog management contributes to significant livestock losses, animal welfare impacts and reduced confidence in public land management.
- Current management programs are targeted, strategic and focused on reducing impacts rather than broadscale suppression or eradication in NSW National Parks (NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027).
- Evidence from coordinated public-private management programs from NSW Wild Dog Associations demonstrate a significant reduction in attacks by wild dogs when effective and targeted nil tenure programs are delivered. pers comm NSW LLS.
- Scientific evidence indicates that contemporary wild dog management has not resulted in regional population collapse, loss of ecological function or reduced viability of dingo populations in NSW (Stephens et al. 2023).
- Integrated predator management programs continue to provide important biodiversity benefits that cannot be achieved through reliance on dingoes alone (Allen 2026, Allen et al. 2013; Fleming & Ballard 2018).

(f) dingo management including opportunities for incorporation of Indigenous knowledge and leadership in dingo conservation in national parks, and

- Dingo conservation is already occurring across extensive areas of NSW, including national parks, conservation reserves, State forests and private lands.
- Current management frameworks allow dingo conservation and targeted wild dog impact management to occur concurrently and are consistent with the objectives of the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027.
- There is no evidence that current management programs are placing the long-term viability of dingo populations in NSW at risk (Stephens et al. 2023; Ravishankar et al. 2026).
- Opportunities exist to strengthen Aboriginal participation in dingo monitoring, research, cultural landscape management, advisory committees and local wild dog management planning.
- Indigenous ecological knowledge can contribute valuable local insights into dingo ecology, cultural values and landscape management.
- Existing Local Wild Dog Management Plans provide practical mechanisms for incorporating Aboriginal knowledge and participation at a local scale.
- Management should remain flexible and locally responsive, recognising that ecological conditions, cultural values and community expectations vary across NSW.

- Dingo conservation and wild dog impact management are not mutually exclusive objectives and can be achieved simultaneously through adaptive, evidence-based management.

(g) any other related matters.

1080 poison, a comment by James Jackson. BVSc Hons, Chair RPAC Northern Tablelands.

Sodium fluoroacetate (1080) is widely used in Australia for the control of wild dogs and foxes. Although there is no specific antidote once a lethal dose has been absorbed, the poison has an important advantage in Australian conditions: it is relatively selective. Many native species, including quolls and several other marsupials, have evolved a comparatively high tolerance to fluoroacetate because the compound occurs naturally in some Australian plants. By carefully calibrating the amount of 1080 used in meat baits, pest species such as wild dogs and foxes, which are far more susceptible to the toxin, can be effectively targeted while reducing the risk to many native animals.-

Concerns are sometimes raised about the apparent humaneness of death from 1080 because poisoned animals may exhibit paddling movements, muscle spasms and low-level vocalisations. However, published research indicates that these outward signs do not necessarily reflect conscious suffering. As fluoroacetate disrupts cellular energy production by blocking the citric acid (Krebs) cycle, brain function rapidly deteriorates, leading to loss of awareness and responsiveness before death. Reports of accidental human poisonings in which patients have survived also suggest that affected individuals typically have no memory of the period during which severe neurological signs occurred. While no poison can be regarded as ideal, the available evidence indicates that the visible convulsive activity associated with 1080 poisoning is likely to occur after consciousness has been substantially impaired, meaning the external appearance may overstate the level of suffering experienced by the animal.

https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/animal-welfare/article/abs/is-sodium-fluoroacetate-1080-a-humane-poison-the-influence-of-mode-of-action-physiological-effects-and-target-specificity/3DF77FEA05E18C6A908514D8C03BC0AD

Fencing.
Boundaries between working farms and National Parks have in the past been very porous, thus the importance of nil tenure dog/pest animal control. Over the past few years, exclusion fencing has become much more effective. This means that at some stage in the near future, how you manage dogs/dingos on your side of the fence will not impact those on the other side. At that stage, the only animals being impacted by your decisions will those under your management. Until then, please be aware that your decisions are impacting the welfare of my animals.