

**Submission
No 358**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Dear Animal Welfare Committee

Experts have warned that the government's 1080 poison bait program could wipe out dingoes entirely.

Dingoes are shot, trapped, and poisoned, despite their cultural significance to many traditional custodians and their sentence. I am very concerned as to what is happening to dingoes in NSW right now. As an Australian wild dog species that has existed for years with First Nations People they are deserving of protection.

Being labelled as a 'pest' has been a convenient label used by landholders and farmers to support this cruel program. Presently, dingoes are considered "pests" under biosecurity legislation and are legally trapped, poisoned and shot with the intent to prevent predation on farm animals, but while undoubtedly cruel to dingoes, these methods are also often ineffective. Modern, humane alternatives like guardian animals and other deterrents now exist to protect livestock without killing dingoes. Deterrents are more effective than killing and benefit farmers, animals and the natural environment.

As an apex predator, dingoes play a valuable ecological role in helping to regulate ecosystems by naturally suppressing introduced predators such as foxes and cats.

This sustained cruelty program of lethal management authorised by the state government and supported strongly by the farmer/landholder group has targeted dingoes unfairly. The fact that dingoes are unprotected under NSW law because they have been determined as 'wild dogs' is firstly wrong, and secondly this incorrect classification supports this mass extermination program is also morally wrong. Native animals deserve better than this treatment. They are not wild feral dogs when they have been part of Indigenous People's lives for 4,000 years according to the NSW Government website 'Environment and Heritage'. These are the following issues that I hope will be addressed by the Animal Welfare Committee.

- I believe dingoes deserve **full protection** under NSW law. The current exemption from the Biodiversity Conservation Act is unjustifiable, and this inquiry I sincerely hope will recognise that the Dingo is an Australian dog and not a feral wild dog. They are the **ONLY** native animal not protected under the Biodiversity Conservation Act in NSW
- Dingoes are a native dog and were here before Australia was even colonised. They should and must be protected under NSW law.
- I have serious concerns for the welfare of dingoes in NSW National Parks, who are continually poisoned by the use of 1080 poison, baiting, trapping, and shooting. Many dingoes languish in caught steel traps for days with painful suffering limbs before they are tracked down and shot. Is this what decision makers prescribe is humane?
- As a NSW resident, the cruel treatment of dingoes in our National Parks is unacceptable. Dingoes deserve protection under NSW law, and the current cruel approach to managing them does not reflect the values of a compassionate community. The public's expectations of how animals should be treated has been raised in recent years. We expect as honest taxpaying citizens, the state government listen to what the community want especially in regard to raising animal welfare standards in factory farming, the dairy industry, the greyhound and racing industry, the poultry and egg laying industry, the cattle industry, piggeries, animals used in entertainment and experimentation, breeding and the impounding of companion animals, to list a few. I am strongly opposed to the cruelty of any form of lethal management, unless it is to humanely euthanise because of pain and suffering of the animal.
- Dingoes have lived for thousands of years in Australia alongside Aboriginal Peoples. The ongoing persecution of dingoes in these spaces concerns me deeply. As native animals they deserve better treatment than extermination sanctioned by the NSW Government, simply to satisfy the vested interests of farmers and landholders.
- Thousands of baits are laid out to poison dingoes in National Parks each year in NSW, and landowners can shoot, trap and poison dingoes without needing a licence. Because the government considers Australia's only native dog as a 'wild dog', we have no idea how many dingoes are killed each year. There is no reliable recent population data on the dingo. This is very concerning, as the ongoing killing and suffering of Dingoes is edging this native species closer to extinction in the wild.

- Australia's apex predator, a vital cog in NSW's fragile ecosystem and important in Indigenous culture, deserves better than a silent walk to extinction. This much-maligned, extraordinary animal needs to be protected and respected now, and relabelled not to benefit farmers and landholders but to recover Dingo populations so that the Dingo, that is native wildlife, our Australian dog can contribute to a healthy and functioning ecosystem by controlling feral animal populations.

Terms of Reference

(a) the genetic status of dingoes, the distinction between dingoes and dogs and recent research into the genetic profile of NSW dingoes

There have been recent developments in dingo genetics research and how current management frameworks do not reflect contemporary science. Dingoes have an important ecological function to perform to maintain healthy ecosystems. Lethal control on dingo families negatively impacts their stability as a family unit. Dingoes are NOT domestic dogs living in the wild, they are native dogs that have been here for thousands of years.

- Research indicates that lethal control methods such as poisoning, trapping and shooting can disrupt stable dingo pack structures, and increasing social instability. Modern conservation science increasingly recognises that ecological function - including the role of dingoes as apex predators - is an important consideration alongside genetics when assessing wildlife populations.
- Dingoes differ from domestic dogs in several important ways, including their ecological role, social structure, breeding patterns, and behaviour. Australia does not have an established continent-wide population of feral domestic dogs living independently across ecosystems, and it is now widely understood that the **wild canids** occupying these landscapes are dingoes performing important ecological functions.
- Earlier genetic research on Australia's **wild canids** relied on only 23 genetic markers and heavily influenced many dingo management that remain in place today. This research has been ongoing and the current laws have not kept pace with science. Contemporary genetic research now uses thousands of markers that has led to changed scientific understanding of wild canids in Australia. Recent studies indicate that overwhelmingly, wild-living canids in Australia **ARE** dingoes. Interbreeding between dingoes and domestic dogs is uncommon with a 2023 genetic analysis of 307 wild canid samples which found NO evidence to support active dingo-dog hybrid populations. In NSW most of the 103 wild canid samples that were analysed showed 93% contemporary dingo ancestry. These dogs retain the ecological traits and ecosystem function of Dingoes, including their role as apex predators.
- The latest published genetic research in naming the distinctive canids that breed in the wild in Australia are 'dingoes' ([Cairns et al. 2021](#)).
- Dingoes and domestic dogs gone wild, differ in several key respects, including: the dingoes' ecological role as apex predators in Australian ecosystems, versus human-associated domestic species that have become 'wild dogs'; their different social structures- dingoes have stable, family-based packs whereas domestic dogs turned wild have opportunistic groupings; breeding patterns where dingoes only breed annually once a year versus multiple breeding cycles in domestic dogs and the dingoes co-operative hunting behaviour patterns, their territoriality and wild-adapted behaviours as opposed to 'wild dogs' who function on their own and are not territorial.
- In the Rangeland Journal Volume 44 Issue 3 December 2022-"Dingoes have an unusual history and a somewhat debated status in Australia. Dingoes probably arrived in Australia ~4000 years ago, moving from islands to the north of Australia... their status as a full species, subspecies or breed remains debated... recent genetic assessments have shown that the great majority of wild canids killed in Australia are totally or largely from dingo genetic stock. Industry and some government bodies have in recent years deliberately stopped calling the animals that are killed 'dingoes', instead labelling them as 'wild dogs' ([Meat & Livestock Australia 2022](#); [Kreplins et al. 2019](#)). This label incorrectly suggests to many graziers and to the general public that dingoes are not being killed, but only domestic dogs that have formed feral populations, or hybrids between

dingoes and dogs, are targeted ([van Eeden et al. 2021](#)). This is a shameful intentional practice of mislabelling that distorts the truth, and that is that dingoes are purposely still being killed by the Government under a false term of 'wild dogs' to hide the real truth as to what is actually occurring.

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

- There MUST be a clear distinction made between wild dogs and native dogs- the dingo. The current legislation is wrong because the current classification of dingoes is incorrect. Dingoes must be correctly classified based on the current up to date science, that defines them as wild-living canids in Australia. They therefore MUST be managed under policy frameworks in NSW and approaches that recognise dingoes as ecologically important native wildlife.
- In NSW , the term 'wild dog' is an umbrella term used to collectively refer to dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids. There is no distinction between roaming or stray dogs and dingoes under current legislation. This MUST be corrected and defined properly based on the updated genetic research.
- Dingoes are the **ONLY** native mammal specifically exempt from protections under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 because they have been incorrectly classified. The NSW Government is strongly advised to correct this error. Because they are considered as a feral domestic dog or wild dog which they are not, this incorrect labelling permits the use of lethal control across National Parks and on landholder's properties as they are viewed as a 'pest.' In the Introduction of the Central Tablelands Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plan 2024-2028, Point 1.4 Page 6 'What is considered a pest animal?' It says, "Pest animals can be considered as any species (other than native species) that present a biosecurity risk." Dingoes are a native species, they are therefore NOT a biosecurity risk, therefore they have been incorrectly labelled as a 'pest'.
- Dingoes (under the term 'wild dog') are classified as priority pest animals under these Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans developed by Local Land Services. This incorrect mislabelling loophole acts as a legal avenue for government agencies and public and private land managers to control this native wildlife that is wrongly labelled as a 'wild dog' throughout all these LLS Management Plans. It even states on Page 6 that the "term 'wild dog' refers to all wild-living dogs (*Canis familiaris*) and includes dingoes, feral domestic dogs and the hybrid descendants. "There is considerable interest in dingo conservation in Australia, including concerns about their genetic integrity and preserving their ecological roles." The government recognises these points concerning the dingo's genetics and important ecological role but refuses to accept this information. And then in the next statement reverts back to the "NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy and National Wild Dog Action Plan to promote a balance between managing wild dogs in areas where they have negative impacts and preserving their ecological roles in designated conservation areas." The NSW Government is strongly advised to clearly clarify the difference between wild dogs and our native dog the Dingo, and stop using these terms interchangeably in government policy. **They are two different species.** The government must refer to the recent scientific data and their differences (breeding patterns, social structures and behaviours) between dingoes that are native dogs and wild feral dogs. They must use up-to-date current genetic information to differentiate that **dingoes are wild canids and NOT wild dogs, or feral domestic dogs or hybrid descendants.**
- The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) undertake dingo ('wild-dog') control on public conservation land in order to meet its 'General Biosecurity Duty' under the Biosecurity Act 2015 to manage pest animals, and align with the priorities set out in the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy. Again NPWS are mislabelling dingoes as 'wild dogs' and using this as a loophole to manage them under the definition of a 'pest' when they are a **native dog species** and therefore cannot be considered as a pest.
- Information obtained under the Government Information (Public Access) Act 2009 revealed that more than 1.5 million 1080 poison baits targeting dingoes were deployed by New South Wales Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) between 2020 and 2025. **NPWS are killing our native dog species that should be protected under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.**

- Current policy settings continue to manage dingoes within broad pest management frameworks despite contemporary ecological and genetic research recognising dingoes as an ecologically important native species.

(c) the ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

Dingoes have an ecological importance as apex predators and their role in maintaining healthy ecosystems within National Parks.

- Dingoes are Australia's only 'native canid' and are recognised as an important apex predator and keystone species. There is evidence that dingoes significantly reduce the level of unmanaged grazing by feral and native herbivores.
- Poisoning, trapping, and shooting can destabilise dingo family groups and territorial structure, and therefore negatively impact the health of the environment.
- Dingoes regulate naturally populations of kangaroos and wallabies, reducing grazing pressure on landscapes. They actually assist farmers naturally. Where fencing is used it has shown that dense populations of kangaroos consistently occur on the side of such fences from where dingoes have been eradicated. Whereas where Dingoes are still present, much sparser populations of other grazing herbivores are noted. ([Caughley et al. 1980](#); [Pople et al. 2000](#); [Letnic et al. 2009](#)).
- Dingoes have eradicated introduced goats reducing pressure on vegetation. Previously dense feral goat populations were reported to have disappeared over large regions of the southern rangelands of Western Australia since the return of dingoes ([Pople and Froese 2012](#)), with estimated reductions from 1 million in 2005 to 150,000 in 2011 ([Western Australian Wild Dog Action Group 2016](#))
- Dingoes suppress and in some cases eradicate foxes and feral cats through territorial competition and predation, easing pressure on smaller native wildlife.
- Research suggests that stable dingo populations may suppress fox populations more effectively than poison baiting programs alone.
- Dingoes also contribute to the suppression of pigs, reducing pressure on landscapes.
- The presence of dingoes influences the behaviour and movement of herbivores and other animals, reducing pressure on vegetation communities.
- The removal of apex predators can destabilise ecosystems, contributing to vegetation decline, habitat degradation and increased pressure on threatened native species.

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

There is a cultural importance of dingoes to First Nations communities, including their role in lore, kinship, Songlines, storytelling and Caring for Country practices. Cultural Custodians have a connection to dingo. The National First Nations Dingo Declaration, which was written by Traditional Owners outlines a strong cultural perspective on dingoes. This declaration opposes the cruel targeting by killing, poisoning, and trapping of dingoes. The presence of the Dingo ensures healthy ecosystems. Using the term 'wild dog' is a complete misrepresentation of the Dingo simply to justify their killing. These actions disrespect First Nations Peoples culture.

- Dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many Cultural Custodians across NSW and the wider continent.
- Dingoes are connected to stories, dance, art, lore, kinship systems and cultural responsibilities to Country.
- Many Cultural Custodians consider dingoes to be protectors, teachers and part of healthy Country.

- The 2023 First Nations Dingo Forum brought together 100 Traditional Owners from 20 nations across Australia and led to the development of the National First Nations Dingo Declaration.
- The declaration calls for a **new** approach centred around “**Caring for Dingoes on Country**” and greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management.
- Oral histories and archaeological research show that Cultural Custodians buried companion dingoes, with evidence that these animals were given intentional burials consistent with ancestral or ceremonial practices.

(e) the impact of current government policies and programs for the management of dingoes in National Parks

There are ecological, genetic, cultural and animal welfare impacts associated with current dingo management programs in NSW National Parks.

- Current management programs rely on lethal control methods including 1080 poison baiting, trapping and shooting. These are all violent and cause much suffering and pain for Dingoes.
- Lethal control can disrupt stable dingo family groups and pack structures.
- Removal of dingoes causes trophic cascade. In dingo management, a **trophic cascade** refers to the chain reaction that occurs when an apex predator like the Dingo, is removed or heavily controlled. This causes unintended consequences down the food web.
- Removal of dingoes from ecosystems leads to increases in introduced predators (foxes thrive) and herbivore pressure on landscapes- overgrazing by kangaroos and wallabies.
- Trapping of dingoes raises serious welfare concerns for the time the animal remains in the trap, unable to access food, water or shelter. It is simply inhumane and cruel.
- Current management programs do not adequately reflect contemporary ecological science or cultural perspectives relating to dingoes. Cultural respect of First Nations People’s and genuine listening to their voices on this issue is vitally important and has been essentially ignored.
- Current management of dingoes in National Parks is largely focused on agricultural protection **not** biodiversity outcomes. There has to be a major shift in the government’s focus here as all industry rely on a healthy nature to effectively operate.
- No funding is allocated for research and development into non-lethal coexistence strategies for agricultural properties neighbouring National Parks.

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

The Government should provide opportunities for greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management and conservation across NSW National Parks.

- Many Cultural Custodians report feeling excluded from decisions relating to dingo management on their Country.
- First Nations peoples have cared for dingoes and Country for thousands of years, maintaining deep, ongoing relationships that continue to support healthy landscapes and biodiversity outcomes that benefit **all** Australians. In complete contrast industry destroys healthy landscapes in order to make higher profits that benefit only them at a cost to nature and communities.
- Indigenous knowledge systems hold detailed, place-based understanding of dingo behaviour, ecology, and their role in broader ecosystem function, complementing and strengthening western scientific approaches.

- Across NSW, Indigenous ranger groups are increasingly leading, monitoring and trying to manage programs for dingoes on Country, providing important on-ground insights into populations and behaviour. Their participation and insight is valued and the government is encouraged to increase the involvement of Indigenous rangers so as to improve the health of Country.
- This leadership is particularly significant given existing gaps in comprehensive, statewide data on wild dingo populations.
- Cultural Custodians are increasingly advocating for Indigenous-led approaches to dingo conservation and management, including expanded roles in National Park governance and decision-making.
- Strengthening the role of Cultural Custodians in decision-making processes would improve cultural, ecological, and conservation outcomes, with flow-on benefits for ecosystem health and biodiversity.
- **Co-management approaches** with NPWS offer a practical framework to integrate Indigenous knowledge systems with western science in National Parks management, improving both governance and on-ground effectiveness.
- The principles outlined in the National First Nations Dingo Declaration provide a relevant foundation to inform future policy development and support more inclusive and effective dingo management approaches. Please utilise this pathway and access more involvement from First Nations Peoples.

(g) any other related matters.

- Changes to dingo management within National Parks may create concern or uncertainty for neighbouring landholders in relation to predation on farmed animals. This is only to be expected. The Government is urged to support the development, accessibility, and broader adoption of effective non-lethal predator deterrents. By providing clear information on the government website, personal newsletters to affected landholders and invitations to face- to -face discussion and webinars the farmers would feel supported by the government.
- There is currently **no** extension services to support landholders to implement non-lethal predator deterrent strategies in NSW. Funding currently utilised for broad-scale 1080 baiting of dingoes and trapping and shooting in National Parks could be re-directed to support neighbouring landholders with coexistence extension services. This could be the role of NPWS. Non-lethal predator deterrent strategies should be the focus of a progressive government not a government still in the past using outdated methods that clearly are not working for the Dingo or the environment.
- The Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre -Guardians Dogs –“Best Practice Manual for the use of Livestock Guardian Dogs” has shown that guardian dogs have been proven effective at reducing or eliminating predation on livestock by dingoes. They also provide other benefits to landholders including deterring macropods (kangaroos and wallabies) from grazing paddocks, protection from foxes and protection from birds of prey. Livestock guardian dogs should not be confused with herding dogs, as they perform different roles. Page 10, “Livestock guardian dogs have been bred to be inoffensive to stock in their appearance (for example, they have floppy ears) and behaviour. They avoid direct confrontation with livestock, do not show ‘eye’ or stalk behaviour, and generally are very calm around farm stock. Those traits allow these dogs to integrate themselves with groups of livestock, be accepted by them and live amongst them. Guardian dogs are not as highly trainable as herding dogs, and make their own decisions. They are independent of humans, and were bred to live and work with livestock unsupervised.” Page 11, “Worldwide, livestock guardian dogs are among the oldest and most numerous of the working dog breeds, even though in Australia they are relatively unknown and most breeds are unavailable or rare.” I encourage the NSW Government to research in this field and reach out to trainers overseas and establish training centres for these dogs in NSW to support NPWS rangers to then impart their knowledge to support farmers to protect their farm animals in a more natural way using man’s best friend. NPWS instead of killing dingoes could give our native dogs -our Dingo a reprieve to restore the balance of nature and attend to keeping the feral animal population contained as their primary role.

- There is widespread anecdotal evidence from landholders that donkeys are effective guardians against canid predators. There is a strong opportunity for the NSW Government to support more robust trials into the use of livestock guardian donkeys to support properties neighbouring National Parks. In an ABC article published in August 2023 “NSW farmers are using donkeys to protect livestock from wild dogs.. and there was a 300 per cent jump in demand for donkeys” said a donkey supplier. Farmers had reported "instant success" with the introduction of these guardian donkeys. Donkeys are family orientated and care for livestock like their family. Donkeys are known for their natural defensive behaviour, but still need some training in their role and also being cared for by the farmer. Donkeys show an incredible bond with livestock and to protect them. Unfortunately, the Government has not spread this knowledge to NSW farmers as to the benefits in having these donkeys on the property to protect their farm stock. There is a lack of information on guardian animals, especially donkeys in particular, and this could be the reason why more farmers were not utilising them. This is a missed opportunity by the NSW Government to be progressive and support farmers with this information.
- Investment is needed into research, development and scaling of coexistence strategies in NSW that ensures landholder interests are protected and dingoes can be retained in the environment to function properly in their important ecological role.

I am opposed to animal cruelty and Dingoes have been misrepresented with false labelling and mercilessly targeted to condone this attack on them. They deserve protection as **wild canids or Australian dingoes**.

I support the following **recommendations**

1. An end to dingo killing within NSW National Parks to protect the ecological function of dingoes and support biodiversity conservation.
2. Greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in decision-making and place-based management regarding dingoes in National Parks to ensure the cultural significance of dingoes is reflected in legislation and management.
3. Financial support and extension services for landholders surrounding National Parks to implement non-lethal coexistence strategies, ensuring their interests are protected and dingoes can be maintained in the environment.
4. **From an animal welfare** perspective, dingoes are sentient animals, and the cruelty of current management practices, including 1080 poisoning, baiting, trapping, and shooting, cannot be justified. I urge the committee to recommend full legislative protection for dingoes and the immediate end of all harmful and lethal control methods.

Thank you

Janice Haviland