Submission No 373

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Mr Phillip Atkin

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Submission Regarding Dingo Conservation in National Parks

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to express my concerns regarding proposals to increase protections for dingoes within our national parks and the potential impacts these decisions may have on neighbouring farming communities.

I run HUNT4U, a business that works directly with farmers to help mitigate livestock losses caused by wild dogs. Through this work, I regularly see the impacts these animals have on sheep, calves, goats and other livestock. I would argue that many people advocating for broad protection of these wild dogs have not been directly involved in livestock management and may not fully appreciate the scale of the issue or the realities faced by producers. While there is understandable public support for conserving native wildlife, broad protection of all wild canids can be an idealistic approach if it does not account for the impacts experienced by farming communities.

From my experience working with landholders and managing wild dogs, I believe the situation on the ground is often very different from the public perception. Many people picture dingoes as native, shy animals that pose little risk. However, the animals affecting livestock around many farming districts bordering national parks are wild canids that are responsible for significant livestock losses and ongoing emotional and financial hardship for farming families.

Regardless of whether individual animals are classified as dingoes, wild dogs or hybrids, the reality for producers is that they attack sheep, calves, goats and other livestock. These attacks frequently result in prolonged suffering, with animals being injured, left alive with severe wounds, or killed and left uneaten. The financial losses are substantial, but the animal welfare impacts on livestock are equally significant.

If these populations receive increased protection without practical management measures, the burden will fall directly on farmers whose properties border national parks. These producers are already experiencing the highest levels of conflict with wild dogs and would likely see increased stock losses and greater economic pressure.

Current management programs, including coordinated baiting, do provide some benefit and can help reduce breeding success and population pressure. However, in many areas these measures alone are not sufficient. Additional, science-based management strategies are needed to ensure livestock can be protected while balancing conservation objectives.

Based on my observations in the field, many of the animals now present differ noticeably from the traditional image of a pure dingo. As shown in the photographs I have attached, many exhibit characteristics that warrant further scientific investigation. I believe there needs to be additional research into these wild dog populations, including their genetics, behaviour and ecological role.

It is also important to consider that, if hybridisation is occurring, broadly protecting all wild dog populations may unintentionally contribute to the dilution of genetically distinct dingo populations, potentially impacting the long-term integrity of the species that conservation efforts are intended to protect. This is another reason why further scientific study is needed.

If research demonstrates that distinct wild dog populations exist which differ from conservation-priority dingo populations, consideration should be given to whether they require a separate management classification. This would allow conservation efforts for genetically significant dingo populations to continue while also enabling effective management of wild dogs that are causing significant impacts to agriculture.

I respectfully ask that any future conservation decisions carefully consider the experiences of farmers, livestock producers and contractors working on the ground. Effective conservation and productive agriculture should not be viewed as opposing goals. A balanced approach, supported by sound science, practical management and ongoing research, is essential to protect both our native ecosystems and the livelihoods of regional communities.

Thank you for considering my submission.

Yours sincerely,

Phillip Atkin
HUNT4U