

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Organisation: Coona Partnership

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Submission to the NSW Legislative Council Inquiry into the treatment and cultural and ecological significance of dingoes in National Parks

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Executive summary - Key Points

- Wild dog management is essential to protect livestock welfare, farm businesses and the economic sustainability of regional communities adjoining National Parks.
- Existing coordinated wild dog management programs involving National Parks, Local Land Services and neighbouring landholders have delivered significant reductions in livestock losses and improved animal welfare outcomes.
- Any recommendations that reduce the ability of public land managers to undertake strategic wild dog management risk reversing decades of successful collaboration and increasing impacts on livestock producers.
- Contemporary genetic research confirms that wild-living dogs in NSW exist along a continuum of dingo and domestic dog ancestry, particularly in eastern Australia, and current management programs have not been shown to increase hybridisation or compromise the long-term genetic integrity of dingo populations.
- Recent scientific reviews conclude there is no consistent evidence that reducing wild dog control will automatically improve biodiversity or that current management programs are causing widespread ecological harm.
- Recent scientific reviews also clearly concluded that there is no experimental evidence demonstrating that dingoes have the capacity to control feral cat and fox populations.
- The current legislative framework appropriately manages dingoes through biosecurity and pest management legislation, recognising both their ecological role and the ongoing need to manage impacts on agriculture and biodiversity.
- Independent reviews by the NSW Natural Resources Commission have consistently found that the priority should be improving coordination and increasing the effectiveness of pest animal management - not reducing management effort.
- Acknowledge that First Nations people have a wide range of views and cultural significance related to Dingoes and a range of other native species within NSW National parks, and these views need to be taken into consideration at the local level rather than assuming a single Indigenous perspective.
- The Inquiry should ensure that any recommendations maintain the capacity for coordinated, landscape-scale wild dog management and do not shift the costs of dingo conservation onto livestock producers, farming families and regional communities.

Recommendations to the Inquiry Committee

1. Retain the current capacity of National Parks and other public land managers to undertake strategic wild dog/dingo management.
2. Maintain the nil-tenure approach to coordinated landscape-scale wild dog management.
3. Ensure management decisions continue to be based on contemporary scientific evidence and local impacts.
4. Strengthen coordination, resourcing and investment in coordinated wild dog management programs, consistent with the findings of the NSW Natural Resources Commission.
5. Avoid recommendations that increase livestock losses, compromise animal welfare or transfer the costs of dingo conservation onto regional landholders.

Introduction

I appreciate the opportunity to provide a submission to this Inquiry. My family has operated in this district for 90 years and our property is located within close proximity of Paroo Darling National Park.

For many years, coordinated wild dog management undertaken by National Parks, Local Land Services and neighbouring landholders has helped reduce livestock losses, improve animal welfare and support the viability of farming businesses across New South Wales. I am concerned that recommendations arising from this Inquiry could unintentionally weaken these successful arrangements.

For people living and working in regional communities, this is not simply a discussion about wildlife conservation. It is a matter of livestock welfare, farm business viability, community wellbeing and the future sustainability of agricultural enterprises operating alongside public lands.

Over many years, governments, National Parks, Local Land Services, producer organisations and landholders have invested significant time and resources into developing coordinated wild dog management programs. These programs have helped reduce livestock losses, improve animal welfare outcomes and support the viability of farming businesses across many parts of New South Wales.

Producers are concerned that recommendations arising from this Inquiry could weaken the coordinated management arrangements that have taken decades to establish. I believe the Inquiry must carefully consider the practical consequences of any recommendations that reduce the capacity of public land managers and neighbouring landholders to manage the current and ongoing impacts of wild dog attacks on livestock and biodiversity.

This submission is informed by personal experience, the National Wild Dog Action Plan, the NSW Wild Dog Strategy, independent reviews conducted by the NSW Natural Resources Commission, and contemporary scientific research into dingo ecology, genetics and management.

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

There has been considerable discussion about whether the wild-living dogs found in NSW are pure dingoes, hybrids or domestic dogs.

Recent DNA research has significantly improved our understanding of this issue. Scientists using ancient dingo DNA have shown that many previous studies underestimated the amount of domestic dog ancestry present in some populations because they did not have access to pre-European dingo DNA for comparison.

The latest research demonstrates that dingo populations in eastern Australia, including much of eastern NSW, generally contain higher levels of domestic dog ancestry than populations in inland and remote parts of Australia. Researchers believe this pattern largely reflects the long history of European settlement, agricultural development and domestic dog populations in eastern Australia.

Importantly, recent studies have found no evidence that current wild dog management programs are increasing hybridisation or damaging the genetic integrity of dingo populations. Long-term monitoring has shown that dingo populations can remain genetically stable despite ongoing management activities.

The research also demonstrates that dingo ancestry exists along a continuum rather than as a simple distinction between "pure dingoes" and "domestic dogs". Most wild-living dogs retain substantial dingo ancestry, even where varying levels of domestic dog ancestry occur.

From a livestock producer's perspective, the most important issue is not whether a wild-living dog is classified as a dingo, hybrid or wild dog. The important issue is whether it is causing impacts on livestock, wildlife or neighbouring properties.

(b) Legislative, regulatory and policy frameworks governing the management of dingoes

The current legislative and policy framework reflects decades of practical experience managing wild dog impacts across Australia.

The NSW Biosecurity Act 2015, NSW Wild Dog Strategy and National Wild Dog Action Plan all recognise a simple reality: wild dogs do not recognise property boundaries.

These frameworks were not developed in response to theoretical concerns. They were developed because governments, producers and land managers experienced first-hand the consequences of ineffective or uncoordinated management.

A key principle underpinning these frameworks is the nil-tenure approach, which recognises that all land managers share responsibility for managing impacts regardless of whether land is publicly or privately owned.

For many producers, this principle has been fundamental to the success of coordinated management programs.

Dingoes and the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act

An important issue for the Inquiry is that dingoes are not recognised as protected native fauna under the NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.

Unlike many native mammals, birds and reptiles, dingoes are specifically excluded from the Act's definition of protected animals.

This reflects the long-standing complexity surrounding the taxonomic status of dingoes, their ability to interbreed with domestic dogs and the widespread occurrence of varying levels of domestic dog ancestry in many contemporary populations.

Recent genomic research has reinforced this complexity. While studies confirm that dingoes have existed in Australia for thousands of years and developed distinct population structures before European settlement, they also demonstrate varying levels of domestic dog admixture across many modern populations, particularly in eastern Australia.

The current legislative framework therefore manages dingoes primarily through biosecurity and pest management frameworks rather than threatened species legislation.

This is consistent with the fact that:

- dingoes are not listed as threatened under NSW legislation;

- dingoes are not listed as threatened under Commonwealth legislation;
- dingoes remain widespread across Australia;
- recent genetic research demonstrates that many contemporary populations contain varying levels of domestic dog ancestry.

Any recommendation that fundamentally alters the current management framework should carefully consider these legislative and scientific realities.

(c) The ecological role of dingoes in National Parks

Recent reviews of the scientific literature demonstrate that the ecological role of dingoes is complex and highly dependent on local conditions.

While some studies suggest dingoes may suppress foxes and feral cats under certain circumstances, other studies have found little or no effect. Scientists continue to debate how frequently these interactions occur and whether they consistently produce biodiversity benefits.

Importantly, recent reviews have concluded that there is currently no strong experimental evidence demonstrating that dingo control consistently results in increases in foxes and feral cats across all landscapes.

Likewise, there is no evidence that simply increasing dingo numbers will automatically improve biodiversity outcomes everywhere.

Many coordinated pest management programs delivered across NSW use an integrated approach targeting wild dogs, foxes, feral cats and feral pigs. These programs can provide important biodiversity benefits by reducing the impacts of multiple pest species simultaneously.

This issue is particularly important because some public commentary suggests that reducing wild dog management will automatically improve biodiversity outcomes. The available scientific evidence does not support such a broad conclusion.

Management decisions should therefore be based on local evidence, measured impacts and demonstrated outcomes.

D) the cultural significance of dingoes for First Nations communities

Under the NSW Biosecurity Act 2015, all land managers, including National Parks and Wildlife Service, have a General Biosecurity Duty to manage wild dog impacts and prevent harm to neighbouring lands. Wild dog management programs are implemented through Regional Strategic Pest Animal Management Plans and Local Wild Dog Management Plans, which require collaboration across land tenures and stakeholders.

These planning processes provide opportunities for first nations communities and traditional owners and local aboriginal land councils to contribute local cultural knowledge and identify culturally significant values associated with dingoes and the landscapes in which they occur. This allows management

programs to consider local cultural perspectives, including important story places and other areas of cultural significance.

Importantly, Aboriginal cultural views regarding dingoes are diverse and vary between communities. A locally based planning approach is therefore appropriate, ensuring cultural values are recognised while balancing statutory biosecurity obligations, biodiversity conservation objectives and the protection of other culturally significant species and landscapes.

For this reason, decisions about dingo management are best made at the local level, where cultural values, environmental outcomes and the needs of landholders can all be considered together, rather

(e) Impact of current government policies and programs

From the perspective of many livestock producers and wild dog management groups, current coordinated management programs have delivered substantial benefits.

The coordinated management undertaken by National Parks, Local Land Services, producer groups and neighbouring landholders has reduced livestock losses, improved animal welfare outcomes and supported the viability of agricultural businesses across many parts of NSW.

Findings of the NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews

The NSW Natural Resources Commission has undertaken a number of independent reviews into pest animal management on public lands.

These reviews were commissioned by government and funded by NSW taxpayers to assess whether pest management programs were effectively protecting biodiversity, agricultural production and neighbouring communities.

Importantly, the NRC reviews did not conclude that there was excessive pest animal management occurring on National Parks.

Instead, the reviews consistently identified concerns that:

- pest management was often not undertaken at a sufficient scale;
- management effort varied between regions;
- coordination between land managers could be improved;
- neighbouring landholders continued to experience significant impacts from pest animals originating from public lands.

These findings are highly significant because they suggest that the challenge facing government agencies is improving management effectiveness rather than reducing management effort.

Many producers are concerned that recommendations arising from this Inquiry may be inconsistent with the findings of these independent reviews.

(g) Other related matters

My greatest concern is that recommendations arising from this Inquiry could weaken the ability of National Parks and other public land managers to undertake effective wild dog management.

Such an outcome would place livestock enterprises, animal welfare and regional communities at considerable risk.

The National Wild Dog Action Plan was developed collaboratively by governments, conservation agencies, scientists and livestock industries, demonstrating that effective wild dog management and conservation are not mutually exclusive objectives.

The findings of the NSW Natural Resources Commission reviews reinforce this principle. Those reviews repeatedly highlighted the need for stronger coordination and more effective management rather than reductions in management effort.

Many local wild dog management groups have spent decades building partnerships between National Parks, Local Land Services and private landholders. These partnerships have delivered significant reductions in livestock losses and improved outcomes across large landscapes.

Weakening these arrangements risks undoing decades of progress.

For many sheep and goat enterprises operating adjacent to National Parks, effective wild dog management is not simply desirable—it is essential for ongoing viability.

Without effective management:

- livestock losses increase;
- animal welfare impacts increase;
- management costs increase;
- productivity declines;
- confidence to invest declines;
- some enterprises may become economically unviable.

The Inquiry should ensure that any recommendations do not unintentionally transfer the costs of dingo conservation onto livestock producers, farming families and regional communities.

Conclusion

As a livestock producer and member of a regional community that lives with wild dog impacts every day, I am concerned that this Inquiry may lead to recommendations that weaken existing wild dog management arrangements on public lands.

The available scientific evidence does not demonstrate that current management programs are threatening the long-term persistence of dingoes in New South Wales, increasing hybridisation or causing population collapse.

In contrast, there is substantial evidence demonstrating that wild dogs continue to impose significant economic, social and animal welfare impacts on livestock enterprises.

Independent reviews conducted by the NSW Natural Resources Commission have repeatedly identified a need for stronger coordination and more effective pest animal management across land tenures.

I therefore urge the Committee to exercise caution before recommending any changes that may reduce the capacity of National Parks and other land managers to undertake strategic wild dog management.

For many producers, this is not an abstract policy issue. It is about whether farming businesses can continue to operate successfully alongside public lands into the future.

The challenge before the Committee is not whether dingoes should be conserved, but how conservation can be balanced with the practical responsibility to protect livestock, regional livelihoods and animal welfare. The current coordinated management framework provides that balance and should be strengthened, not weakened.

Appendix 1 – Key References

Legislation and Policy

1. NSW Biosecurity Act 2015.
2. NSW Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016.
3. NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027.
4. National Wild Dog Action Plan 2020–2030.

Independent Reviews

5. Natural Resources Commission (2009). *Review of Pest Animal Management in NSW National Parks*.
6. Natural Resources Commission (2016). *Audit of NSW Government Progress Implementing Pest Animal Management Recommendations*.
7. Natural Resources Commission. *Review of Pest Animal Management on Public Lands in NSW* (most recent review).

Scientific Literature

8. Allen, B.L. (2026). *Myths, Furphies and Red Herrings Associated with Dingo Ecology and Management*.
9. Souilmi, Y. et al. (2024). *Ancient Genomes Reveal Over Two Thousand Years of Dingo Population Structure*.
10. Ravishankar, S. et al. (2026). *Paleogenomics-Informed Inferences of European Dog Admixture Enables Scalable Dingo Conservation*.
11. Stephens, D. et al. (2023). *Stable Dingo Population Structure and Purity Over 11 Years of Lethal Management*.
12. Castle, G. et al. (2021). *Terrestrial Mesopredators Did Not Increase After Top-Predator Removal in a Large-Scale Experimental Test of Mesopredator Release Theory*.
13. Castle, G. et al. (2023). *Stuck in the Mud: Persistent Failure of the Science to Provide Reliable Information on the Ecological Roles of Australian Dingoes*.
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15. Pacioni, C. & Stephens, D. (2026). *Population Dynamics and Evolutionary History of the Dingo*.