

**INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW  
SOUTH WALES**

**Name:** Name suppressed

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# **Submission to the NSW Animal Welfare Committee Inquiry into the Treatment and Cultural and Ecological Significance of Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales**

## **Introduction**

### ***Academic Research and Fieldwork***

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission to the NSW Animal Welfare Committee Inquiry into the treatment and cultural and ecological significance of dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales.

My submission is informed by my academic research and conservation work investigating non-lethal approaches to managing human–carnivore interactions globally, including approaches to dingo and livestock coexistence across Victoria, Queensland and New South Wales. As part of this work, I have interviewed government representatives, landholders, and sheep and cattle producers to better understand the challenges associated with dingo management and the effectiveness of coexistence strategies.

This work has demonstrated that protecting livestock and conserving dingoes are not mutually exclusive goals. There are opportunities to support landholders while maintaining the ecological role of dingoes through evidence-based, non-lethal approaches. This can be accessed here:

<https://peerj.com/articles/21265/>.

### ***Current and Future Approaches***

NSW currently manages dingoes primarily through pest management frameworks, including lethal control methods such as 1080 baiting, trapping and shooting. While protecting agricultural production is an important consideration, broad-scale lethal control can disrupt stable dingo family groups and create social instability within populations. The removal of established pack members can alter social structures, increase the movement of unfamiliar individuals into territories, and potentially increase opportunities for hybridisation with domestic dogs.

Trapping also raises significant animal welfare concerns due to the stress and suffering experienced by animals while confined. My research and ongoing conservation work in Australia has examined practical alternatives to lethal control. Through interviews with government workers, livestock producers and landholders managing sheep and cattle enterprises, I have found strong interest in non-lethal approaches where these methods are practical, supported and suited to local conditions.

These approaches include livestock guardian animals, sound and visual deterrents, improved fencing, changes to husbandry practices, and education and extension programs. However, many landholders require greater access to information, training and support to successfully implement these strategies.

Any changes to dingo management must recognise the concerns of neighbouring landholders, particularly those managing livestock. My research has shown that many producers are willing to consider coexistence approaches when they have access to effective tools, reliable information and practical support. Government investment should focus on improving access to non-lethal predator deterrents and extension services.

Livestock guardian animals including donkeys, dogs and llamas have demonstrated effectiveness in reducing livestock losses from canid predators, while other approaches, including improved fencing and guardian animals, warrant further research and support. Redirecting some resources currently allocated to broad-scale lethal control toward coexistence programs would provide long-term benefits for landholders, biodiversity and ecosystem health.

### **Species Status and Legal Protections**

Management decisions should recognise dingoes as native wildlife rather than treating them solely as pest animals. Dingoes are Australia's only native canid and have evolved as an important component of Australian ecosystems.

Current dingo management frameworks in NSW continue to rely on the broad classification of "wild dogs", which combines dingoes, domestic dogs and hybrids. This approach does not reflect contemporary science or the ecological differences between these animals.

Dingoes are distinct from domestic dogs in their behaviour, social organisation, breeding patterns and ecological role. Through my field observations and research, I have documented clear differences in social behaviour, territorial dynamics and ecological interactions between dingoes and domestic dogs within Australian landscapes. I have also observed how native species have co-evolved alongside dingoes and respond to their presence within ecosystems.

Recent advances in genomic research using hundreds of thousands of genetic markers indicate that Australia's wild-living canids are predominantly dingoes, with hybridisation occurring at relatively low levels in stable populations. Research undertaken in NSW has similarly demonstrated that most sampled wild canids have very high levels of contemporary dingo ancestry. Recognising these differences is essential for developing management approaches that are scientifically accurate and ecologically appropriate.

### **Socio-ecological Role of Dingoes and Eco-Tourism**

Dingoes play an important role as apex predators and keystone species. They influence ecosystem health by regulating herbivore populations, reducing grazing pressure and maintaining predator-prey relationships within landscapes. Dingoes also suppress introduced predators, including foxes and cats, through territorial competition and predation. Their presence can provide significant benefits for threatened species and biodiversity conservation.

The removal or disruption of dingo populations can have unintended consequences, including altered predator dynamics, increased herbivore pressure and ecosystem imbalance. Maintaining functioning predator relationships is an important component of ecosystem conservation.

National Parks should be managed to protect ecological processes, and dingo management should consider their important role in maintaining healthy ecosystems. Beyond their ecological value, dingoes also provide significant social and economic benefits through nature-based tourism. As an iconic Australian species, dingoes attract substantial interest from domestic and international visitors, contributing to wildlife tourism experiences, regional economies and community engagement with protected landscapes. In locations where dingoes are present, they are a major attraction for visitors seeking authentic Australian wildlife experiences and contribute to the broader economic value generated by National Parks and conservation areas. Maintaining healthy dingo populations therefore provides ecological, cultural and economic benefits.

### **Cultural Significance and Indigenous Leadership**

Dingoes hold deep cultural significance for many First Nations communities across Australia, including NSW. They are connected to Country, kinship systems, cultural responsibilities, stories, Songlines and ceremony. The National First Nations Dingo Declaration highlights the importance of "Caring for Dingoes on Country" and calls for greater involvement of Cultural Custodians in dingo management and conservation. Indigenous knowledge systems provide valuable understanding of dingo behaviour, ecology and relationships with Country. Future management approaches should ensure Cultural Custodians have meaningful involvement in decision-making, monitoring and conservation programs.

### **Conclusion**

Dingoes are an important part of Australia's natural and cultural heritage. Contemporary science increasingly demonstrates that wild-living Australian canids are predominantly dingoes with essential ecological functions.

A future approach to dingo management in NSW should move beyond outdated pest-control frameworks and incorporate contemporary science, animal welfare principles, Indigenous knowledge and practical coexistence approaches.

Through investment in non-lethal solutions and collaborative management, NSW can better support biodiversity conservation while also addressing the legitimate concerns of rural communities and livestock producers.

## **Recommendations**

I recommend that the NSW Government:

1. Review dingo management policies to reflect contemporary genetic research and distinguish dingoes from domestic dogs and hybrids.
2. Recognise dingoes as native wildlife with important ecological and cultural values.
3. Reduce reliance on broad-scale lethal control within National Parks and invest in evidence-based coexistence strategies.
4. Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and leadership into dingo conservation and management.
5. Establish extension services and funding programs to assist landholders in adopting effective non-lethal predator management approaches.
6. Support further research into non-lethal deterrent methods and their effectiveness across different livestock systems and landscapes.