

**Submission
No 394**

INQUIRY INTO DINGOES IN NATIONAL PARKS IN NEW SOUTH WALES

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Submission to the Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales

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Executive Summary

Protecting landscapes and biodiversity is not simply a matter of reserving land; it requires governments and land managers to actively care for the environments entrusted to them. Healthy ecosystems, productive agricultural land and resilient regional communities are all outcomes of responsible stewardship rather than passive preservation.

This submission has been prepared from the perspective of a farmer and grazier living and working in Central West New South Wales. It combines practical land management experience with scientific literature, government policy, legislation and parliamentary evidence to examine the management of dingoes within National Parks and the broader responsibilities of government in managing public land.

The central conclusion of this submission is straightforward.

The issue before this Inquiry is not whether dingoes should exist within New South Wales. Nor should it be whether biodiversity conservation should remain a priority. Rather, in my view, it is whether governments are effectively managing public land in a manner that fulfils their existing statutory responsibilities while balancing biodiversity conservation, biosecurity, animal welfare, Aboriginal cultural values and the legitimate interests of neighbouring landowners.

Throughout this submission, the evidence demonstrates that New South Wales already possesses a comprehensive legislative and policy framework for managing these competing interests. The challenge is therefore not one of legislative deficiency, but of implementation, accountability and stewardship. Good public policy requires governments to actively manage public land, fulfil their statutory obligations and measure success through practical outcomes rather than policy intent alone.

The evidence also demonstrates that discussions surrounding dingoes cannot be viewed solely through the lens of conservation biology. Decisions regarding wild canid management influence livestock welfare, threatened species, biosecurity, farming families, neighbouring landowners and public confidence in the stewardship of public land. These outcomes are interconnected and should not be considered in isolation.

Similarly, recent advances in genetic research have significantly improved scientific understanding of Australia's wild canids and will continue to strengthen management and future planning. However, genetics alone cannot determine operational management. Effective policy must also consider demonstrated impacts, ecological evidence, local conditions and the practical realities of managing complex landscapes across New South Wales.

A recurring theme throughout this submission is stewardship. Public land is not simply reserved for future generations; it is entrusted to governments for active management. As the National Parks estate expands, so too do the responsibilities associated with managing biosecurity risks, invasive species, bushfire, threatened species, visitor infrastructure and neighbouring landowner, and broader district, impacts. The Committee should therefore consider whether the operational capacity of government has expanded at the same pace as the public estate itself.

The recommendations contained in this submission do not seek to diminish the ecological or cultural significance of dingoes. Rather they are intended to strengthen public confidence by improving stewardship, accountability and evidence-based decision-making.

Key Principle

Good conservation requires good management.

Healthy ecosystems, productive agricultural land, strong biosecurity, responsible stewardship and resilient regional communities are complementary outcomes. Long-term conservation depends upon governments actively managing public land, meeting their statutory responsibilities and working collaboratively with neighbouring landowners.

Committee Question

As the National Parks estate continues to expand, has the Government's operational capacity to actively manage that land - including pest animals, weeds, bushfire, threatened species and private landowner impacts - expanded at the same rate?

Why This Matters

This Inquiry presents an opportunity to move beyond the increasingly polarised debate surrounding dingoes and instead examine a broader question of public land stewardship.

The evidence presented throughout this submission demonstrates that the legislative framework required to balance conservation, biosecurity, animal welfare and community interests already exists. The challenge is ensuring that those responsibilities are consistently implemented, adequately resourced and transparently measured.

The recommendations that follow are therefore directed towards improving the stewardship of public land, strengthening public confidence in conservation and ensuring that environmental, agricultural and community outcomes are achieved together rather than in competition.

1. Introduction

1.1 Purpose of this Submission

This submission has been prepared from the perspective of a farmer and grazier living and working in Central West New South Wales.

Like many farming families, my livelihood depends upon healthy landscapes, productive agricultural land, reliable water resources and the welfare of the livestock entrusted to my care. Every day requires balancing agricultural production with environmental stewardship, biosecurity responsibilities and the long-term sustainability of the land. Those responsibilities have provided me with a practical understanding of how environmental policy operates beyond legislation, scientific literature and government strategy.

Over recent years, I have participated extensively in government consultation processes relating to biodiversity conservation, biosecurity, environmental reform and major infrastructure affecting regional New South Wales. Through this work I have examined legislation, government policy, parliamentary evidence and scientific literature while observing how those frameworks are implemented in practice across both public and private land.

Accordingly, this submission draws upon four complementary sources of evidence:

- practical land management experience;
- scientific and peer-reviewed research;
- legislation and government policy; and
- parliamentary evidence and government reporting.

Each provides an important perspective. Scientific research explains ecological processes. Legislation establishes responsibilities. Government policy provides the framework for implementation. Practical experience demonstrates how those arrangements operate on the ground. Effective public policy is strongest when these sources of knowledge are considered together rather than in isolation.

The purpose of this submission is not to advocate for one stakeholder group at the expense of another. Rather, it is to assist the Committee by examining how existing legislation, scientific evidence and practical land management experience can collectively inform balanced, evidence-based policy for the management of dingoes within National Parks.

Throughout this submission, I have sought to identify both the strengths of the current framework and the areas where implementation, accountability and the evidence base could be strengthened. The recommendations that follow are therefore directed towards improving public land management rather than advancing a predetermined outcome.

Key Principle

Good public policy is informed by both scientific evidence and practical experience. Neither should be considered in isolation.

1.2 The Author's Perspective

I believe one of the strengths of this submission is that it has been prepared by someone whose understanding of these issues comes not solely from academic literature or policy documents, but from lived experience.

I am a farmer and grazier in Central West New South Wales. Like many farming families, my livelihood depends upon healthy landscapes, reliable seasons, productive soils and the welfare of the livestock entrusted to my care – those I breed and raise to produce food and fibre.

Every management decision made on our property requires balancing agricultural production with environmental stewardship, biosecurity responsibilities and the long-term sustainability of the land. After all, the viability of my business, and our future, depends on it.

Farmers do not have the luxury of considering these issues in isolation. Water management influences biodiversity and farm viability. Fire management affects both threatened species and agricultural production. Weed control supports conservation outcomes as well as farm productivity. Predator management has implications for livestock welfare, native fauna, neighbouring landowners and community confidence. Good land management requires these issues to be considered together.

This practical perspective has shaped the way I have approached this submission. It has also reinforced an important principle: successful environmental policy is never achieved through legislation alone. Its success ultimately depends upon implementation, cooperation and the willingness of those responsible for managing land to work towards common outcomes.

I do not claim to represent every farmer, every conservation organisation or every rural and regional community. However, I do represent the perspective of someone who lives with the practical consequences of these policy decisions every day. That perspective deserves to sit alongside scientific research, government policy and ecological evidence when decisions are made regarding the future management of dingoes within New South Wales.

Committee Question

How can governments develop effective policy for managing public land without giving appropriate weight to the practical knowledge of those who live and work alongside it every day?

Why This Matters

The Committee will receive evidence from scientists, conservation organisations, government agencies, industry groups and members of the public. Each perspective is valuable.

The purpose of this submission is to contribute another equally important source of evidence: the practical experience of someone responsible for managing land, protecting livestock and meeting the environmental and biosecurity responsibilities that accompany agricultural production.

The recommendations that follow are informed by both practical experience and the available scientific evidence. Together, they seek to identify ways in which public land management can better balance biodiversity conservation, animal welfare, biosecurity and the interests of neighbouring communities.

2. The Central Issue Before the Inquiry

Public discussion surrounding dingoes has increasingly been presented as a conflict between biodiversity conservation and agricultural production. While this characterisation attracts attention, it oversimplifies the issue before the Committee and risks diverting attention from the broader responsibilities of government in managing public land.

This Inquiry is not being asked to determine whether dingoes should exist within New South Wales. Nor is it required to choose between biodiversity conservation and productive agriculture. Both are legitimate public interests recognised within existing legislation and government policy.¹

Rather, the central question before the Committee should be:

How should New South Wales manage public land in a manner that protects biodiversity, fulfils statutory biosecurity obligations, safeguards animal welfare and maintains the confidence of neighbouring landowners and regional communities?

When the issue is considered in these terms, many of the apparent conflicts begin to disappear.

Existing legislation already recognises that environmental protection, biosecurity and responsible land management are complementary rather than competing objectives. Likewise, the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy acknowledges that effective outcomes depend upon coordinated action across public and private land, while recognising the ecological significance of dingoes and the need to minimise unacceptable impacts arising from wild dog activity.² Accordingly, the question before this Inquiry is not whether management should occur, but how that management can be undertaken in a manner that is evidence-based, proportionate and accountable.

Throughout this submission, four broad themes consistently emerge.

First, governments have a responsibility to actively steward the public land entrusted to their care.

Secondly, decisions relating to wild canid management have consequences extending well beyond conservation biology, affecting livestock welfare, biosecurity, neighbouring landowners, threatened species and rural communities.

Thirdly, contemporary scientific research has substantially improved understanding of dingo and wild dog genetics and ecology, but also demonstrates the importance of adaptive, landscape-specific management rather than universal approaches.

¹ Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Animal Welfare, *Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales – Terms of Reference*, Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW).

² NSW Department of Primary Industries, *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Wild Dog Policy*.

Finally, the effectiveness of any management framework should be judged by measurable outcomes rather than policy intent alone.

These themes form the foundation of the chapters that follow.

Rather than considering ecological, agricultural and social issues separately, this submission examines how they interact and how government policy can better integrate these responsibilities to achieve enduring environmental and community outcomes.

Key Principle

The question before this Inquiry is not whether dingoes should exist. It is whether New South Wales is effectively managing public land in a manner that balances biodiversity, biosecurity, animal welfare, agricultural productivity and community confidence.

Committee Question

If the existing legislative framework already requires governments to balance conservation, biosecurity and responsible land management, should the primary focus of this Inquiry be improving implementation rather than fundamentally changing that framework?

Why This Matters

The way in which the Committee defines the issue will inevitably shape the recommendations that follow.

If the Inquiry is approached primarily as a debate about the protection or control of a single species, broader questions concerning public land stewardship, statutory responsibility and practical land management risk receiving insufficient attention.

Conversely, if the Inquiry considers dingo management within the broader context of stewardship, biosecurity, animal welfare and government accountability, it is more likely to identify practical recommendations capable of improving both conservation outcomes and public confidence.

The remaining chapters of this submission examine these issues through four complementary perspectives:

- stewardship of public land;
- livestock welfare and farming communities;
- legislative and government responsibility; and
- contemporary scientific evidence.

Together, they demonstrate that effective management is not achieved by favouring one objective over another, but by recognising that environmental, agricultural and community outcomes are fundamentally interconnected.

3. Stewardship Should Guide this Inquiry

The management of dingoes within National Parks should not be considered in isolation. It forms part of a broader question concerning how governments steward the public land entrusted to their care.

For generations, conservation has often been measured by the extent of land reserved within the National Parks estate. Protected areas are unquestionably an essential component of biodiversity conservation, providing refuge for native species, protecting important ecosystems and preserving Aboriginal cultural heritage. However, reservation alone is not conservation.

Public land continues to require active, ongoing management if environmental, cultural and community objectives are to be achieved. Declaring land protected does not remove the need to manage invasive species, weeds, bushfire, disease, visitor impacts or interactions with neighbouring landowners. In many respects, reservation increases those responsibilities rather than diminishing them.

Accordingly, this Inquiry provides an opportunity to consider not simply the future management of dingoes, but the broader principles that should underpin stewardship of public land throughout New South Wales.

3.1 Stewardship Requires Active Management

Stewardship is more than the preservation of land. It is the responsible management of land for the benefit of present and future generations.

Good stewardship recognises that landscapes are dynamic rather than static. Ecosystems continually respond to fire, rainfall, drought, predation, grazing pressure, invasive species and human management. Effective conservation therefore depends upon understanding these interactions and responding adaptively as conditions change.

This principle has long been recognised in Australian land management. Aboriginal land management practices, including cultural burning and the deliberate management of landscapes over many thousands of years, demonstrate that human stewardship has always formed part of Australia's environmental history.³

Modern conservation continues this tradition through different tools, including biodiversity conservation, ecological restoration, invasive species management, fire management and adaptive wildlife management. While the methods have evolved, the underlying principle remains unchanged: healthy landscapes require active stewardship.

3.2 Stewardship Extends Beyond Conservation

Governments responsible for managing public land have obligations extending beyond biodiversity conservation alone.

National Parks must also be managed in ways that:

- fulfil statutory biosecurity obligations;
- minimise the spread of invasive species and weeds;
- contribute to effective bushfire management;
- protect threatened species and ecological communities;
- respect Aboriginal cultural heritage;
- provide safe public access and visitor experiences; and
- minimise unreasonable impacts upon neighbouring landowners.

These responsibilities are not separate from conservation. They are essential components of it.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 establishes a General Biosecurity Duty requiring all land managers, including public authorities, to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks so far as is reasonably practicable.⁴ Likewise, the National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 and associated management policies establish responsibilities extending beyond preservation alone, recognising that National Parks require active management to achieve their intended environmental outcomes.⁵

³ Gammage, B. *The Biggest Estate on Earth* (2011), Pascoe, B. *Dark Emu* (2014), Australia State of the Environment Report 2021.

⁴ *Biosecurity Act 2015* (NSW), General Biosecurity Duty.

⁵ *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW), NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service policies and plans of management.

The effectiveness of conservation should therefore be measured not only by the area of land reserved, but by how well that land is managed.

3.3 Measuring Success Through Outcomes

Public policy should ultimately be judged by measurable outcomes rather than stated intentions.

For wildlife management, this means evaluating whether management arrangements are achieving the objectives established by legislation and government policy.

Relevant measures may include:

- biodiversity outcomes;
- threatened species recovery;
- livestock welfare;
- biosecurity performance;
- reduction of unacceptable impacts;
- good relationships with neighbouring private landholdings;
- public confidence in government land management; and
- collaboration across land tenures.

No single indicator can adequately measure stewardship. Instead, governments should adopt an integrated approach that recognises environmental, agricultural and social outcomes as complementary measures of success.

Throughout this submission, it is argued that the current legislative framework already provides an appropriate basis for achieving these outcomes. The greater challenge lies in ensuring that implementation, resourcing and accountability consistently deliver them.

Key Principle

Protected land is not necessarily well managed land. The true measure of conservation is stewardship.

Committee Question

Should the effectiveness of National Parks be measured primarily by the amount of land reserved, or by the environmental, biosecurity and community outcomes achieved through its ongoing management?

Why This Matters

The recommendations arising from this Inquiry will influence more than the future management of dingoes. They will help define how New South Wales approaches the stewardship of public land more broadly.

If stewardship is understood as active, accountable and evidence-based management, then biodiversity conservation, biosecurity, livestock welfare and neighbouring landowner interests need not be viewed as competing objectives. Instead, they become complementary outcomes of responsible public land management.

The remaining chapters examine these responsibilities in greater detail by considering livestock welfare, farming communities, legislative obligations, ecological evidence and government accountability. Together, they demonstrate that long-term conservation depends not only upon protecting landscapes, but upon managing them well.

The principle of stewardship provides the framework through which the evidence presented in the following chapters should be considered. The discussion now turns to the practical consequences of wild dog management decisions for livestock welfare, farming communities, biodiversity conservation and

public land management. Together, these chapters examine whether current policy is delivering the outcomes expected of responsible stewardship.

4. Livestock Welfare Must Be Central to this Inquiry

4.1 Animal Welfare Extends Beyond Native Wildlife

It is significant that this inquiry is being undertaken by the Legislative Council Animal Welfare Committee.

While much of the public discussion surrounding dingoes has focused on biodiversity conservation and ecosystem function, the Committee's consideration must also extend to the welfare of domestic animals that depend entirely upon human care.⁶

Livestock are sentient animals. Like native wildlife, they are capable of experiencing pain, fear, distress and prolonged suffering.⁷ Their welfare therefore deserves equal consideration throughout this inquiry. This should not be viewed as a conflict between the welfare of dingoes and the welfare of livestock.

Rather, it reflects a fundamental principle of animal welfare:

Good animal welfare policy seeks to minimise unnecessary suffering wherever reasonably practicable, regardless of whether the animal is wild or domesticated.

Unfortunately, discussions surrounding dingoes frequently reduce livestock losses to economic statistics. Sheep become numbers. Calves become financial losses. Yet every sheep, calf or goat killed during a wild dog attack is an individual sentient animal capable of experiencing prolonged fear, pain and distress before death. Recognising this does not diminish the welfare of dingoes. It simply acknowledges that animal welfare extends beyond wildlife conservation.

Key Principle

Animal welfare should not depend upon whether an animal is wild or domesticated. The objective of good policy is to minimise avoidable suffering for all sentient animals.

4.2 Livestock Producers Have Legal and Ethical Responsibilities

Livestock producers do not simply have economic responsibilities. They also have significant legal and ethical obligations.

The Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW) makes it an offence to commit acts of cruelty or fail to take reasonable steps to prevent unnecessary pain or suffering.⁸ Similarly, the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep and the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle require livestock producers to take reasonable steps to protect animals from disease, injury, predation and other avoidable risks.⁹

Farmers therefore have both a legal duty and a moral obligation to protect the animals under their care. However, these obligations become significantly more difficult to fulfil where predator populations originating from public land are not effectively managed. It is fundamentally inequitable to require livestock producers to satisfy stringent animal welfare obligations while reducing the capacity of government agencies to manage known predator risks on land under their own control.

Animal welfare responsibilities should apply consistently across all land tenures.

⁶ Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 7 – Animal Welfare, *Inquiry into Dingoes in National Parks in New South Wales – Terms of Reference* (2026).

⁷ Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep (2016); Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle (2016); World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH), *Terrestrial Animal Health Code – Animal Welfare*.

⁸ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (NSW), particularly Parts 2 and 2A.

⁹ Animal Health Australia (2016), *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep*; Animal Health Australia (2016), *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle*.

Case Study: The Reality of a Single Wild Dog Attack

In 2023, South Australian livestock producers experienced a series of severe wild dog attacks that highlighted the devastating animal welfare consequences of even a single incursion. Following one attack, South Australia's Principal Biosecurity Officer explained that it was "not unusual to see a single dog or pair of dogs maul 20 to 30 sheep." Rather than killing for food alone, wild dogs commonly exhibit recognised surplus killing behaviour, repeatedly chasing and attacking multiple animals before feeding.¹⁰

Many sheep are not killed immediately. Instead, they are left with extensive bite wounds, torn udders, exposed muscle, fractured limbs and severe stress injuries. Animals that survive the initial attack frequently require euthanasia due to the extent of their injuries, while others later succumb to infection, flystrike or complications associated with shock.

The impact extends well beyond the immediate death toll. Surviving sheep often abandon or abort lambs, suffer reduced fertility, lose weight or fail to thrive and experience prolonged behavioural stress. A single night can therefore result not only in significant livestock losses but also widespread and avoidable animal suffering.

This case illustrates why proactive predator management is fundamentally an animal welfare issue, not merely an economic one.

4.3 Wild Dog Attacks Are Among the Most Severe Animal Welfare Events Experienced by Livestock

Unlike many livestock diseases or production losses, wild dog and dingo attacks are frequently prolonged, violent and traumatic. Government publications, veterinary literature and industry reports describe injuries including:

- severe tearing of skin and muscle;
- multiple bite wounds;
- evisceration;
- broken limbs;
- extensive blood loss;
- fatal infection following attacks;
- prolonged shock;
- exhaustion following sustained pursuit;
- orphaned lambs and calves; and
- animals requiring immediate euthanasia because recovery is impossible.¹¹

Many animals die slowly after escaping into dense vegetation where they cannot be located immediately. Others survive the initial attack only to succumb later from infection, dehydration or internal injuries. From an animal welfare perspective, these are among the most severe forms of suffering experienced by extensively grazed livestock.

4.4 The True Welfare Impact Is Greater Than Official Statistics Suggest

Published livestock loss figures generally record only animals confirmed to have been killed. They rarely capture:

- animals that disappear and are never recovered;
- animals that later die from infection;
- unborn lambs lost through abortion;
- mismothering;
- orphaned young;

¹⁰ ABC Rural (2023), *Sheep mauled in wild dog attacks*. (Quote from South Australia's Principal Biosecurity Officer).

¹¹ Fleming, P.J.S. et al. (2014), *Managing the Impacts of Dingoes and Other Wild Dogs*; NSW Department of Primary Industries, wild dog management publications; Wicks, S. et al. (2014), ABARES.

- reduced conception rates;
- chronic stress;
- reduced weight gain and/or production;
- reduced milk production;
- or injuries sustained by working dogs protecting livestock.¹²

Consequently, official livestock loss statistics almost certainly underestimate the true welfare impacts associated with wild dog predation.

The Committee should therefore exercise caution when comparing reported livestock deaths with claimed ecological benefits. The absence of recorded deaths does not necessarily indicate the absence of significant animal suffering.

Evidence Snapshot

An ABARES national assessment found that landholders experiencing wild dog attacks lost around 100 livestock each year, with a further 65–70 animals injured on average. This means that for approximately every ten livestock killed, a further six to seven survive the initial attack injured, many requiring treatment or euthanasia because of the severity of their wounds. ¹³

4.5 Prevention is the Most Humane Form of Animal Welfare

One of the strongest justifications for continued wild canid management is that effective early intervention often prevents far greater suffering. Allowing predator populations to increase until widespread livestock attacks occur benefits neither conservation nor animal welfare.

Early intervention:

- reduces the number of livestock attacked;
- reduces prolonged suffering;
- reduces the need for intensive control programs;
- limits conflict between conservation and agriculture;
- improves community acceptance of conservation; and
- enables management to focus on individual problem animals before broader impacts occur.

This approach is entirely consistent with modern animal welfare principles. Preventing suffering is almost always preferable to responding after suffering has already occurred.

Committee Question

Can a policy that knowingly increases the likelihood of prolonged livestock suffering be regarded as consistent with the objectives of an Animal Welfare Committee?

4.6 Broadening the Committee's Perspective

Historically, debates surrounding dingoes have focused predominantly on conservation biology. This inquiry provides an opportunity to broaden that discussion. Animal welfare includes the welfare of dingoes, livestock, working dogs, threatened native fauna and the wellbeing of the people responsible for caring for those animals.

A management framework that reduces unnecessary suffering across all of these groups is more likely to achieve enduring public confidence than one which prioritises a single species in isolation. Ultimately, good animal welfare is **not** measured by the absence of predator control. It is measured by the extent to which avoidable suffering is prevented. That principle should guide every recommendation arising from this inquiry.

¹² Wicks, S. et al. (2014), *An Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Wild Dogs in Australia*; Ecker, S. et al. (2016); relevant NSW Local Land Services guidance on wild dog impacts.

¹³ Wicks, S., Mazur, K., Please, P., Ecker, S. & Buetre, B. (2014). *An Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Wild Dogs in Australia*. Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES), Department of Agriculture.

Key Principle

The welfare implications of wild dog attacks should not be understated. Every sheep, goat or calf subjected to prolonged pursuit, mauling or stress experiences suffering that responsible land managers have both an ethical and statutory obligation to minimise.

While economic losses are significant, they are secondary to the immediate welfare consequences for the animals involved. Effective wild dog management is therefore not simply a matter of agricultural productivity - it is a matter of animal welfare, biosecurity and responsible stewardship.

Why This Matters

This inquiry is being undertaken by the Legislative Council Animal Welfare Committee. For that reason, the Committee's assessment should extend beyond the ecological role of dingoes to consider the welfare consequences experienced by all affected animals.

Livestock are sentient animals deserving of protection from avoidable suffering. Well executed dingo management does not ignore this. Rather, it reinforces the principle that responsible management should seek to minimise suffering wherever reasonably practicable while balancing ecological, agricultural and community outcomes.

5. A Farmer's Perspective – Living with Wild Dogs

5.1 Practical Experience is an Important Form of Evidence

Scientific research, legislation and government policy are all essential components of good decision-making. However, they should not be considered in isolation from the practical knowledge of the people who manage these landscapes every day.

Farmers, graziers, Local Land Services officers, professional trappers, Aboriginal land managers, veterinarians and rural communities collectively possess decades - often generations - of experience observing the interaction between wildlife, livestock and changing landscapes.¹⁴

They observe:

- changes in predator activity;
- seasonal movements;
- livestock behaviour;
- wildlife abundance;
- bait uptake;
- tracks and signs;
- and the movement of animals across public and private land.

Much of this knowledge develops long before formal scientific monitoring detects emerging trends.

Local knowledge should not replace scientific evidence. Equally, scientific evidence should not displace practical experience. The strongest management decisions are those informed by both.¹⁵

It is from that perspective that I make this submission. I do not write as a wildlife biologist or academic researcher. I write as someone who has accepted the responsibility of protecting livestock while managing land that supports both agricultural production and native biodiversity.

¹⁴ NSW Department of Primary Industries (2022), *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*; Fleming, P.J.S. et al. (2014), *Managing the Impacts of Dingoes and Other Wild Dogs*.

¹⁵ Australian Pest Animal Strategy 2017–2027; Local Land Services wild dog management guidance.

My experiences are not unique. They reflect the reality faced by many farming families throughout regional New South Wales.

Key Principle

Science tells us what is happening. Local knowledge often tells us when it starts happening. Effective management depends upon both.

5.2 A Local Response to an Emerging Threat

In 2019, neighbouring properties within our district began experiencing sheep losses consistent with wild dog predation. Like many livestock producers, our first response was not to immediately assume the cause. Instead, we investigated. Remote cameras were installed within an isolated area of scrub located on our property.

Although the scrub provides suitable refuge for wildlife, it is almost entirely surrounded by privately owned agricultural land and is not connected to extensive timbered landscapes. Despite its relatively isolated nature, the cameras identified a large German Shepherd-type wild dog regularly moving through the area.

Its presence demonstrated an important lesson. Wild dogs do not require vast areas of continuous bushland to establish themselves. Even relatively small remnants of vegetation can provide refuge from which surrounding livestock enterprises may be threatened.

Recognising that the issue extended beyond individual property boundaries, neighbouring landowners established a local pest animal group.

Rather than expecting government alone to solve the problem, we accepted responsibility for our own role in protecting livestock. Together we:

- formed a coordinated pest animal group;
- jointly funded the engagement of a professional wild dog trapper;
- invested our own resources into the program; and
- ensured local capability by undertaking accredited wild dog trapping training.

My partner, together with another local farm worker, successfully completed accredited wild dog trapping training so that our district would be better prepared should further incursions occur.

The professional trapper successfully captured one young yellow wild dog within the scrub. Despite considerable effort, however, the larger German Shepherd-type animal recorded by our cameras was never trapped.

That experience reinforced another important lesson. Wild dog management is rarely straightforward. Even experienced professional trappers cannot guarantee that every animal will be removed. Successful management depends upon persistence, local knowledge, cooperation and early intervention.

Case Study – Shared Responsibility in Practice

This experience demonstrates what coordinated wild dog management looks like on the ground.

Local landowners:

- investigated the problem;
- shared information;
- contributed financially;
- engaged professional expertise;
- undertook accredited training; and
- continued monitoring long after the immediate threat had passed.

Rather than relying solely on government, neighbouring landowners accepted responsibility for protecting their own livestock. Effective wild dog management is built on partnership - not blame.

5.3 Successful Management Is Often Invisible

Following this coordinated management effort, our district has not experienced further wild dog problems associated with that particular area that I am aware of. Some may interpret that outcome as evidence that the original concern was overstated. I respectfully suggest the opposite. The absence of further attacks is not evidence that the risk never existed. It is evidence that early intervention was successful, and vigilance in monitoring ensures that is possible.

Successful predator management is often invisible. When attacks are prevented:

- there are no photographs of injured livestock;
- no distressed producers searching for missing animals;
- no compensation claims;
- and no headlines reporting losses.

There are simply healthy animals remaining where they belong.

Ironically, successful management can create the perception that management was unnecessary precisely because it prevented the harm from occurring. The Committee should be cautious of this reasoning. The absence of recent attacks may indicate successful management rather than the absence of wild canids.

Evidence Snapshot

The success of preventative management is often measured by events that never occur. Healthy livestock, reduced conflict and the absence of attacks are outcomes of effective management - not evidence that management is unnecessary nor ongoing.

5.4 Vigilance Never Ends

Although our immediate local situation improved, the responsibility to remain vigilant has never disappeared. Predator management is not a problem solved once. It is an ongoing responsibility requiring continual monitoring and cooperation.

More recently, I have received reports from members of the local community regarding continuing concerns about wild dog activity within surrounding districts. These include reports of:

- a hunter whose pig dog was reportedly attacked by a pack of wild dogs while hunting; and
- increasing wild dog activity around the Coolah district, with concerns expressed by local landowners regarding the management of surrounding public land.

I did not personally witness these incidents and therefore cannot independently verify every detail. However, that is not the point. The significance lies in the fact that similar concerns continue to be raised by multiple people who live and work in these landscapes every day.

Repeated local observations should not be dismissed simply because they originate outside formal scientific monitoring programs. Instead, they should trigger further investigation.

Community observations often provide the earliest indication that predator populations or movement patterns may be changing.

5.5 Shared Responsibility Is the Foundation of Effective Management

Perhaps the strongest lesson from my own experience is that effective wild canid management depends upon shared responsibility.

Local landowners accepted responsibility. We organised ourselves. We invested our own money. We engaged professional expertise. We undertook additional training. We remained vigilant long after the immediate threat appeared to have passed. We did not wait for someone else to act. It is therefore

reasonable to expect that government agencies responsible for managing public land demonstrate the same commitment.

The Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) recognises that preventing, eliminating or minimising biosecurity risks is a shared responsibility.¹⁶ That principle should apply equally to farmers and public land managers.

Conservation and agriculture are most successful when governments and neighbouring landowners work together. They are least successful when responsibility is transferred from one party to the other, or completely ignored.

Committee Question

If neighbouring landowners are expected to invest their own time, money and expertise in managing wild canids, should government agencies managing adjoining public land not be expected to demonstrate the same level of commitment?

Why This Matters

This chapter is not intended to suggest that personal experience should replace scientific evidence. Rather, it demonstrates that practical experience provides an important source of evidence that complements formal research.

The most effective wild canid management programs combine local knowledge, scientific monitoring and coordinated action across land tenures. Ignoring any one of these sources of knowledge risks poorer management decisions and reduced confidence among the communities most directly affected.

6. The Hidden Cost – Mental Health and the Wellbeing of Farming Families

6.1 Wild Dog Impacts Extend Far Beyond Livestock Losses

When governments assess the impacts of wild dogs, attention is often directed towards measurable economic losses. Reports commonly quantify:

- the number of sheep and/or goats killed;
- calves lost;
- veterinary expenses;
- fencing repairs;
- baiting programs;
- and the cost of professional control.¹⁷

These impacts are significant. However, they represent only part of the true burden carried by farming families. There is another cost that is far more difficult to quantify. It is the psychological burden of living with the constant possibility that livestock under your care may be brutally attacked without warning.

Unlike machinery failures, fluctuating commodity prices or seasonal conditions, wild dog attacks are not simply financial events. They are deeply personal experiences involving the suffering of animals for which farmers accept both legal and moral responsibility.¹⁸ For many producers, that responsibility extends well beyond the balance sheet.

Key Principle

Wild dog attacks do not end when the livestock die. For many farming families, the emotional and psychological impacts continue long after the immediate incident has passed.

¹⁶ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), ss 21–22 (General Biosecurity Duty).

¹⁷ Wicks, S., Mazur, K., Please, P., Ecker, S. & Buetre, B. (2014). *An Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Wild Dogs in Australia*. ABARES Research Report 14.4.

¹⁸ Animal Health Australia (2016). *Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Sheep; Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Cattle*.

Evidence Snapshot

The NSW Government acknowledges that the impacts of wild dog attacks extend beyond livestock losses alone, stating: *"Attacks on livestock can lead to substantial financial losses and cause significant emotional distress for landholders."*¹⁹

This acknowledgement is significant. It recognises that the consequences of wild canid predation are not solely economic or agricultural – they also affect the psychological wellbeing of farming families. The emotional burden of repeated livestock attacks is therefore recognised by the Government itself and should be considered alongside ecological, cultural and conservation objectives when developing future wild dog management policy.

6.2 Farmers Carry a Duty of Care

Livestock producers accept that caring for animals is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of farming. Every producer understands that illness, injury and natural disasters cannot always be prevented. Predator attacks are different. They frequently leave farmers feeling that they have failed in their duty to protect the animals entrusted to their care, even where every reasonable precaution has been taken.²⁰

This burden should not be underestimated. For many producers, discovering livestock that have been chased, mauled or left dying is not simply another business expense. It is a deeply confronting experience. Many vividly remember:

- where the attack occurred;
- the condition of the animals;
- and having to euthanise livestock to end their suffering.

Those memories do not disappear simply because compensation has been paid or the immediate incident has ended.

6.3 The Burden Does Not End When the Attack Ends

One of the greatest misconceptions surrounding wild canid management is that the impact finishes once the attack is over. For many farming families, the opposite is true. Following an attack:

- stock are checked more frequently;
- remote cameras are installed;
- boundary fences are inspected repeatedly;
- neighbours exchange sightings;
- professional trappers are contacted;
- coordinated baiting programs are organised;
- lambing and calving become periods of heightened anxiety.

Every barking dog heard at night becomes a potential threat. Every missing lamb raises immediate concern. Every fresh set of tracks after rain is investigated. The emotional burden arises not only from the attack itself, but from the constant uncertainty about whether another attack will occur. This heightened vigilance becomes part of everyday life. It impacts every other part of life – relationships, productivity, decision making and sleep.

Evidence Snapshot

ABARES has recognised that wild dogs impose significant social and psychological costs in addition to economic losses. These impacts include increased stress, anxiety, reduced quality of life and uncertainty regarding the future viability of affected farming enterprises.²¹

6.4 Australian Research Confirms These Impacts

The psychological impacts experienced by livestock producers are well documented in Australian research.

¹⁹ NSW Government. (2025). *Wild dog control*. Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development.

²⁰ *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979* (NSW); Animal Health Australia, Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines.

²¹ Wicks, S., Mazur, K., Please, P., Ecker, S. & Buetre, B. (2014). *An Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Wild Dogs in Australia*. ABARES Research Report 14.4.

The Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences (ABARES) concluded that wild dogs impose significant social, psychological and economic costs on farming businesses. Importantly, ABARES recognised that many of these impacts cannot be easily quantified but nevertheless represent genuine consequences of wild dog predation.²²

Subsequent peer-reviewed research by Ecker et al. (2016) examined the psychological impacts experienced by livestock producers following repeated wild dog attacks. Using recognised psychological assessment tools, the study identified elevated levels of:

- intrusive thoughts;
- avoidance behaviours;
- hypervigilance;
- ongoing anxiety; and
- psychological distress.²³

These responses were not simply reactions to financial loss. Rather, they reflected repeated exposure to traumatic events involving animals for which producers were directly responsible.

The authors concluded that the psychological burden of repeated wild dog attacks warrants greater recognition within future policy development.²⁴

Research Highlight

"Constantly chasing dogs" was the title chosen by Australian researchers to describe the lived experience of producers dealing with repeated wild dog attacks.²⁵

That phrase captures an important reality: **the impacts of wild canid predation are ongoing rather than isolated incidents.**

6.5 Successful Management Prevents Invisible Harm

One of the greatest challenges in assessing the mental health impacts of wild dogs is that successful management prevents harm that is never recorded. When coordinated baiting, trapping and surveillance prevent attacks:

- livestock are not killed;
- compensation is not sought;
- media reports are never written;
- and the stress that would otherwise have been experienced is never measured.

In many respects, the greatest success of coordinated wild canid management is the suffering that never occurs. This applies equally to livestock and to the farming families responsible for their care.

The absence of reported attacks should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that management is unnecessary. It may instead demonstrate that existing management programs are functioning as intended.

6.6 Mental Health Is Also a Community Issue

Wild dog impacts rarely affect only one property. When attacks occur, concern spreads rapidly through surrounding districts. Neighbours begin checking livestock more frequently. Community baiting days are

²² Wicks, S., Mazur, K., Please, P., Ecker, S. & Buetre, B. (2014). *An Integrated Assessment of the Impact of Wild Dogs in Australia*. ABARES Research Report 14.4.

²³ Ecker, S., et al. (2016). *Constantly chasing dogs: Assessing landholder stress from wild dog attacks on livestock using quantitative and qualitative methods*. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 23(4), 353–368.

²⁴ Ecker, S., et al. (2016). *Constantly chasing dogs: Assessing landholder stress from wild dog attacks on livestock using quantitative and qualitative methods*. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 23(4), 353–368.

²⁵ Ecker, S., et al. (2016). *Constantly chasing dogs: Assessing landholder stress from wild dog attacks on livestock using quantitative and qualitative methods*. *Australasian Journal of Environmental Management*, 23(4), 353–368.

organised. Conversations at stock sales, local meetings and field days increasingly focus on sightings, losses and management.

Producers postpone holidays. Families alter routines. Entire districts become more vigilant. This collective vigilance reflects the resilience of rural communities. It also demonstrates that the psychological burden of wild canids extends well beyond individual landowners.

6.7 Policy Decisions Have Human Consequences

The Committee's recommendations will influence not only ecological outcomes but also the daily lives of people living and working alongside, and in the same district as National Parks.

If predator management becomes less effective and livestock attacks increase, the consequences will not be limited to higher stock losses. They are also likely to include:

- increased psychological distress;
- reduced confidence in farming enterprises;
- greater labour demands;
- financial uncertainty;
- strain on farming families;
- and declining confidence in public land management.

These consequences deserve consideration alongside biodiversity outcomes.

Committee Question

If policy decisions increase the likelihood of repeated livestock attacks, has sufficient consideration been given to the documented psychological impacts on the farming families responsible for those animals?

6.8 The Welfare of People and Animals Cannot Be Separated

Good animal welfare depends upon people who are capable of providing effective care. Likewise, rural communities depend upon confidence that governments are fulfilling their own responsibilities.

This inquiry therefore presents an opportunity to recognise an often-overlooked reality. Wild canid management is not solely about predator ecology. It is also about:

- livestock welfare;
- producer wellbeing;
- public confidence;
- biosecurity;
- stewardship;
- and the long-term sustainability of rural communities.

Recognising these broader impacts does not diminish the importance of dingo and wild dog management. Rather, it acknowledges that successful management must also consider the people who live and work alongside these landscapes every day.

A management framework that protects biodiversity while reducing avoidable suffering - for livestock, wildlife and farming families alike - is far more likely to achieve enduring public confidence than one that overlooks the human dimension of conservation.

Why This Matters

The evidence is clear that the impacts of wild canids extend well beyond livestock losses.

Repeated attacks can affect the psychological wellbeing of producers, alter the way farming families live and work, and influence confidence in public land management. These impacts should not be regarded as secondary considerations.

If the Committee's objective is to improve animal welfare, it must also recognise the wellbeing of the people legally and ethically responsible for caring for those animals. Supporting farming families and protecting biodiversity are complementary objectives that are best achieved through effective, coordinated and proactive dingo and wild dog management.

7. The Legislative Framework Already Provides the Answers

7.1 Existing Legislation Already Recognises the Need for Active Management

One of the recurring questions throughout this inquiry seems to be whether the management of dingoes within New South Wales National Parks should fundamentally change.

Before considering new legislative approaches, it is important to recognise that New South Wales already has a comprehensive statutory framework governing biosecurity, public land management, biodiversity conservation, National Parks and animal welfare.²⁶

When these statutes are read together, a consistent principle emerges. **Government is not simply responsible for conserving public land. Government is responsible for actively managing public land.** That responsibility extends to managing recognised biosecurity risks, including dingoes and wild dogs.

The challenge before this Committee is therefore **not** whether New South Wales requires an entirely new legislative framework. Rather, it is whether existing statutory obligations are being fully implemented.

Key Principle

The issue is not a lack of legislative authority. The issue is whether existing legislative responsibilities are being consistently fulfilled.

7.2 The Biosecurity Act 2015 Establishes a Positive Duty to Act

The Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) is the principal legislation governing biosecurity risks within New South Wales. Unlike many environmental statutes that confer discretionary powers, the Biosecurity Act establishes positive legal obligations.²⁷

Sections 21 and 22 establish the General Biosecurity Duty (GBD). The legislation requires that any person who deals with - or ought reasonably to know they are dealing with - a biosecurity matter or carrier posing a biosecurity risk must ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, that the risk is:

- prevented;
- eliminated; or
- where prevention or elimination is not reasonably practicable, minimised.²⁸

This is one of the most significant legislative provisions relevant to this inquiry. The Act does not merely authorise government to respond to biosecurity risks. It requires action.

²⁶ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW); National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW); Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979 (NSW); Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth); Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth).

²⁷ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly ss 18–22 (General Biosecurity Duty and shared responsibilities).

²⁸ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly ss 18–22 (General Biosecurity Duty and shared responsibilities).

Importantly, the obligation is preventative. It exists **before** harm occurs - not merely after livestock have been attacked. This preventative philosophy is central to modern biosecurity practice. Managing wild canids only after widespread livestock losses occur is difficult to reconcile with the preventative intent of the Act.

7.3 The General Biosecurity Duty Applies Equally to Public and Private Land

A common misconception is that farmers bear primary responsibility for managing wild canids while government agencies simply assist where resources permit. That is **not** what the legislation provides.

The General Biosecurity Duty applies broadly to persons dealing with biosecurity risks. The Act does not exempt public land managers. Accordingly, responsibilities extend across all land tenures, including:

- National Parks and Wildlife Service;
- Forestry Corporation of NSW;
- Local Land Services;
- local councils;
- Crown land managers;
- and private landholders.²⁹

The Biosecurity Act also makes clear that:

- more than one person may owe the same duty;
- one person's duty does not remove another's;
- and responsibility cannot simply be transferred to another party.³⁰

This is a critical principle.

The existence of neighbouring private land does not diminish the responsibilities of government agencies managing public land. Equally, farmers cannot rely solely upon government action to discharge their own obligations. Biosecurity is a **shared responsibility**. That shared responsibility is one of the cornerstones of the Biosecurity Act.

Committee Question

If neighbouring farmers remain subject to a continuing General Biosecurity Duty, on what basis should public land managers be expected to meet a lesser standard?

7.4 Wild Dogs Are Already Recognised as a Biosecurity Risk

The significance of the Biosecurity Act becomes even clearer when considered alongside the NSW Government's own policy framework.

The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027 identifies wild dogs as a priority pest animal because of their impacts on:

- livestock;
- agricultural production;
- biodiversity; and
- community wellbeing.³¹

The Strategy also recognises that:

- wild dogs are managed within the framework established by the Biosecurity Act;
- coordinated management across public and private land is essential; and
- occupiers of all land tenures are expected to take practical measures to minimise impacts.³²

²⁹ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly ss 18–22 (General Biosecurity Duty and shared responsibilities).

³⁰ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly ss 18–22 (General Biosecurity Duty and shared responsibilities).

³¹ NSW Department of Primary Industries (2022), *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*.

³² NSW Department of Primary Industries (2022), *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*.

This is an important point.

Current government policy already acknowledges that:

- wild canids create recognised biosecurity risks;
- coordinated management is necessary;
- public land managers have responsibilities; and
- neighbouring landowners have responsibilities.

Nothing within the Strategy suggests that National Parks should become refuges from active management. To the contrary, it repeatedly emphasises cooperation across land tenures.

7.5 National Parks Are Managed Landscapes

The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW) is sometimes viewed solely as legislation protecting conservation values. That interpretation is incomplete. The Act establishes a framework for the **management** of parks so that their natural and cultural values are protected for present and future generations.³³

Protection requires management. Indeed, the National Parks and Wildlife Service routinely undertakes prescribed burning, weed control, threatened species recovery, visitor management, pest animal control, infrastructure maintenance, track maintenance, erosion control and habitat restoration.

These activities recognise an important reality. National Parks are not static landscapes. They require continual intervention if conservation objectives are to be achieved.

Wild canid management should be viewed in exactly the same way. It is not an exception to conservation. It is one component of responsible stewardship.

Evidence Snapshot

Every National Park already requires active management. Fire. Weeds. Pest animals. Visitor impacts. Threatened species. Infrastructure.

Wild dog management is one element of this broader stewardship responsibility - not an exception to it.

7.6 Conservation Legislation Does Not Override Biosecurity Obligations

Some submissions may argue that increased protection for dingoes should become the dominant consideration within National Parks.

However, none of the legislation examined for this submission supports such an interpretation. Neither the:

- *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)*;
- *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)*;
- nor the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*

removes the obligation to manage recognised biosecurity risks.^{34 35 36}

These statutes operate together. Conservation and biosecurity are complementary statutory objectives. They should not be viewed as competing legal responsibilities. The challenge for government is to implement both.

³³ *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)*.

³⁴ *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)*.

³⁵ *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (NSW)*.

³⁶ *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth)*.

7.7 The Commonwealth Framework

The Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) establishes Australia's principal framework for protecting matters of national environmental significance.³⁷ It supports biodiversity conservation, threatened species protection and environmental assessment. However, it does **not** prescribe the routine management of wild canids within New South Wales National Parks.

Similarly, the Biosecurity Act 2015 (Cth) primarily regulates Australia's national biosecurity system, particularly border biosecurity and nationally significant pest and disease threats.³⁸

Routine predator management remains predominantly a State responsibility. New South Wales has already accepted that responsibility through its own legislation and policies.

7.8 Evidence-Based Policy Requires Adequate Government Data

The Government's own responses to Questions on Notice in the NSW Parliament demonstrate that significant evidence gaps remain in the information available to support future wild dog and dingo policy.

Despite extensive operational management programs, the Government has confirmed that there is currently no publicly available estimate of the wild dog or dingo population within NSW National Parks through the Agriculture portfolio, with that aspect of the question referred to the Minister responsible for National Parks.³⁹

At the same time, the Government continues to collect genetic information from wild canids across New South Wales. However, it has acknowledged that more recent DNA results have not been collated or provided to participating stakeholders because funding has not been available for technical staff to undertake data cleaning, analysis and reporting.⁴⁰

This highlights an important issue for the Committee. Good policy requires more than collecting data. It requires governments to analyse, interpret and publish that information in a timely manner. If the evidence base itself remains incomplete, decisions regarding future management arrangements inevitably become more uncertain.

Before any significant changes are made to wild canid management within National Parks, the Government should ensure that sufficient resources are available to complete ongoing genetic analysis, population monitoring and public reporting.

7.9 Legislative Consistency Requires Practical Implementation

One issue deserves careful consideration. If government significantly reduced wild dog management within National Parks while retaining the statutory obligations imposed by the Biosecurity Act, an obvious question arises. **How will public land managers continue to satisfy their General Biosecurity Duty where wild canids remain recognised biosecurity risks?**

Before any significant policy change is implemented, government should clearly demonstrate:

- how statutory obligations will continue to be met;
- how livestock welfare will be protected;
- how neighbouring landowners will be safeguarded;
- how biodiversity outcomes will be monitored; and
- how agencies will remain accountable for management outcomes.

³⁷ *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999* (Cth).

³⁸ *Biosecurity Act 2015* (Cth).

³⁹ NSW Legislative Council, Question on Notice No. 601 (Question 18), Answer received 4 November 2025.

⁴⁰ NSW Legislative Council, Question on Notice No. 601 (Question 13), Answer received 4 November 2025.

Key Principle

Good legislation achieves little without good implementation.

7.10 The Challenge Is Implementation - Not Legislation

The legislative framework governing wild canid management in New South Wales is comprehensive. The challenge is not an absence of law. The challenge is ensuring that existing responsibilities are consistently implemented.

Legislation alone does not manage dingoes and wild dogs. People do. Successful outcomes depend upon:

- adequately resourced public land managers;
- coordinated action across land tenures;
- effective monitoring;
- timely intervention;
- meaningful consultation with neighbouring landowners and broader communities; and
- accountability for management outcomes.

These are the principles already embedded within New South Wales legislation. The recommendations arising from this inquiry should strengthen those principles - not diminish or replace them.

Ultimately, the law already points us towards the answer. Government has both the authority and the responsibility to conserve public land while actively managing the biosecurity risks arising from it. Those objectives are not contradictory. They are complementary.

Why This Matters

This chapter demonstrates that the central issue before the Committee is not legislative deficiency but legislative implementation. The existing statutory framework already requires governments to manage biosecurity risks, conserve biodiversity and actively steward public land.

The inquiry therefore presents an opportunity to strengthen accountability, transparency and implementation - not to weaken the existing balance between conservation and biosecurity.

8. Wild Dogs, Dingoes and Genetics – Contemporary Science, Remaining Questions and the Need for Better Evidence

8.1 Contemporary Science Does Not Remove the Need for Management

A significant development in the dingo debate over recent years has been the improvements in whole-genome sequencing.^{41 42}

Advances in genetics do not remove the need for practical wildlife management. Nor do they answer every question relevant to this inquiry. Rather, they should be considered alongside ecological monitoring, livestock impacts, biosecurity obligations and local knowledge to inform balanced, evidence-based policy.

Importantly, the practical implications of this research have also been considered by the NSW Department of Primary Industries' Vertebrate Pest Research Unit under the leadership of Dr Peter Fleming.

While recognising the importance of the new genetic research, the Vertebrate Pest Research Unit has consistently maintained that the findings do not fundamentally alter the operational principles underpinning the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027.⁴³ This is because operational wild

⁴¹ Cairns, K.M., et al. (2023). *Genome-wide variant analyses reveal new patterns of admixture and population structure in Australian dingoes*. *Molecular Ecology*, 32, 4133–4150.

⁴² University of Sydney. (2023). *New DNA Testing Shatters Wild Dog Myth*.

⁴³ NSW Department of Primary Industries. *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*.

canid management is based primarily upon an animal's **behaviour and impacts**, rather than its precise genetic ancestry. Whether a livestock attack is carried out by:

- a genetically pure dingo;
- a dingo with historical domestic dog ancestry;
- a hybrid; or
- a feral domestic dog,

the consequences remain the same. Livestock experience the same pain and suffering. Farmers experience the same financial loss and mental anguish. The same biosecurity obligations arise.

Accordingly, while genetics are essential for conservation planning, operational management must continue to respond to demonstrated impacts. This is entirely consistent with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy and represents a balanced approach that recognises both conservation and practical land management.

8.2 The Research was Designed to Study Dingo Genetics - Not Estimate Australia's Wild Canid Population

The 2023 study by Cairns et al. analysed tissue, blood and buccal samples collected from **307 wild and 84 captive dingoes** from locations across Australia.⁴⁴

This is an excellent dataset for investigating the evolutionary history and genetic structure of dingoes. However, it was **not designed to estimate the genetic composition of every wild canid population across Australia**, nor was it intended to determine the proportion of dingoes, hybrids and feral dogs within every region. These are fundamentally different scientific questions.

The study should therefore be interpreted for what it is - a landmark investigation into dingo genetics - rather than as a complete description of all free-ranging wild canids throughout Australia.

8.3 Geographic Representation Remains Uneven

The published sampling map accompanying Cairns et al. illustrates that the majority of samples originated from eastern New South Wales, coastal Queensland, northern Australia and parts of Western Australia.⁴⁵

By comparison, central New South Wales appears to have been either unsampled or only very sparsely represented, while relatively few samples originated from the far west of New South Wales. This observation should not be interpreted as criticism of the research. Rather, it highlights an important limitation that the authors themselves acknowledge through the scope of their study.

Australia contains an extraordinary diversity of environments, including alpine regions, coastal forests, tablelands, western rangelands, fragmented agricultural landscapes and semi-arid environments. It cannot automatically be assumed that genetic patterns identified in one region necessarily represent populations occurring hundreds or thousands of kilometres away.

Future whole-genome sampling from currently under-represented regions - including central and western New South Wales - would further strengthen scientific understanding of the distribution and genetic composition of Australia's wild canids.

Committee Question

If central and western New South Wales have been only sparsely represented in published genomic studies, should state-wide policy assume those regions have the same genetic composition as areas that have been sampled more intensively?

⁴⁴ Cairns, K.M., et al. (2023). *Genome-wide variant analyses reveal new patterns of admixture and population structure in Australian dingoes*. *Molecular Ecology*, 32, 4133–4150.

⁴⁵ Cairns, K.M., et al. (2023). *Genome-wide variant analyses reveal new patterns of admixture and population structure in Australian dingoes*. *Molecular Ecology*, 32, 4133–4150.

8.4 Existing Monitoring Programs are Not Being Fully Utilised

A concerning finding arising from the NSW Government's parliamentary responses is that DNA information already collected is not always being analysed and reported.

The Government advised that DNA results collected after the 2022–23 reporting period had not been collated or distributed because funding had not been available for technical staff to undertake data cleaning, analysis and reporting.⁴⁶

This represents a missed opportunity. Every genetic sample collected from a wild canid contributes to a better understanding of:

- regional genetic variation;
- population connectivity;
- management priorities;
- and long-term management outcomes.

Collecting this data but failing to analyse and publish the results limits their value for both conservation and operational management. Investment in monitoring should therefore include not only field sampling but also the technical capacity required to analyse, interpret and publicly report the findings.

Evidence Gap

The NSW Government continues to collect wild dog DNA samples, yet has acknowledged that more recent results have not been analysed or reported because of insufficient funding for technical staff.

Evidence-based policy requires more than collecting information - it requires governments to analyse it, publish it and use it to evaluate management outcomes.

8.5 Genetics is Advancing Faster than Population Ecology

One of the most striking findings arising from preparation of this submission is that Australia's investigation into wild canid genetics has advanced far more rapidly than its understanding of wild canid populations. Today, researchers can identify subtle differences in ancestry using sophisticated whole-genome sequencing. Yet governments remain unable to answer some of the most fundamental wildlife management questions.

To my knowledge there is currently **no reliable estimate of the total wild dog or dingo population in either New South Wales or Australia.**⁴⁷ Similarly, there is no comprehensive state-wide estimate of:

- regional population density;
- long-term population trends;
- carrying capacity;
- movement between public and private land;
- or the effectiveness of management programs.

Consequently, Australia now possesses increasingly detailed information about what wild canids are genetically, while still lacking comprehensive information about **how many animals exist, where they occur, whether populations are increasing or declining, and whether current management is achieving its objectives.**

⁴⁶ NSW Legislative Council. *Questions on Notice No. 601 – Wild Dog DNA Testing and Dingo Management* (Questions 13–18), answered 4 November 2025.

⁴⁷ NSW Legislative Council. *Questions on Notice No. 601 – Wild Dog DNA Testing and Dingo Management* (Questions 13–18), answered 4 November 2025.

Evidence Gap

Australia has invested considerable effort in understanding the genetics of wild canids, yet we still cannot answer one of the most fundamental wildlife management questions – approximately how many animals actually exist.

Good conservation requires both **genetic science** and **population science**. Without reliable estimates of abundance, distribution and trends, it is impossible to objectively measure the success of either conservation or management programs.

9. Effective Management Prevents Harm

9.1 The Objective of Wildlife Management is to Prevent Harm

One of the greatest challenges facing this Inquiry is that public discussion surrounding dingoes is increasingly framed as a choice between stronger protection or widespread removal. As I see it, that characterisation oversimplifies the issue and distracts from the more important question before the Committee.

The purpose of wildlife management is not to maximise or minimise the abundance of a particular species. Its purpose is to manage wildlife in a manner that prevents environmental, agricultural and community impacts while fulfilling the statutory responsibilities placed upon land managers.

This principle already underpins the management of many native species throughout Australia. Governments routinely intervene where individual animals or local populations create unacceptable risks to biodiversity, livestock, public safety or neighbouring landowners. Such intervention does not diminish the ecological or cultural significance of those species. Rather, it reflects the practical reality that stewardship sometimes requires active management.

The same principle should apply to dingoes and other wild canids.

The question before this Inquiry should therefore not be whether management should occur. Management is already recognised as an essential component of responsible public land stewardship. The question should be whether current management arrangements are allowing governments and land managers to intervene effectively, consistently and early enough to prevent unacceptable impacts from occurring.

That approach is entirely consistent with the preventative principles underpinning the Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), which requires biosecurity risks to be prevented, eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable. It is also consistent with the NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027, which seeks to reduce the impacts of wild dogs through coordinated, cross-tenure management rather than reacting only after widespread damage has occurred.^{48 49}

Key Principles

The objective of wildlife management is not to maximise or minimise animal numbers. It is to prevent unacceptable harm through active, proportionate and evidence-based management.

The purpose of active management is not to respond to unacceptable impacts after they occur; it is to reduce the likelihood of those impacts occurring in the first place.

9.2 Active Wildlife Management is a Normal Part of Conservation

Active management does not mean that a species lacks ecological or cultural value. Governments routinely manage protected native animals where population density, individual behaviour or local conditions create serious animal welfare, environmental, agricultural or public safety impacts or concerns. For example:

⁴⁸ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly the General Biosecurity Duty (ss 22–23), requiring biosecurity risks to be prevented, eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

⁴⁹ NSW Department of Primary Industries, *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*; NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Wild Dog Policy*.

- New South Wales operates regulated commercial and non-commercial kangaroo management programs. The NSW Government states that the principal objective is conservation, while regulated quotas, licensing and monitoring are used to ensure management remains sustainable and humane.⁵⁰
- Flying-foxes remain protected native animals, but management actions may be authorised under licences or an approved code of practice where camps create significant conflict with communities.⁵¹
- Saltwater crocodiles are protected in the Northern Territory, but problem animals may be trapped or removed where they present an unacceptable risk to public safety.⁵²

These examples demonstrate an important conservation principle. **Protection of a species does not require every individual animal to remain unmanaged under all circumstances.**

There is no reason why the same principle should not apply to all wild canids.

Evidence Snapshot

Kangaroos: conserved through monitored populations, regulated quotas and licensed control.

Flying-foxes: protected, with authorised camp-management measures where serious conflict arises.

Crocodiles: protected while problem animals may be removed to protect people.

Conservation and active management are complementary - not contradictory.

9.3 Effective Management Requires Early Intervention

Responsible wildlife management should always seek to prevent harm rather than respond only after significant damage has occurred.

Once repeated livestock attacks, predatory behaviour or other unacceptable impacts become established, management becomes more difficult, more costly and frequently requires broader intervention than would otherwise have been necessary.

Early, targeted management can:

- prevent livestock deaths and injuries;
- reduce the likelihood of repeated predatory behaviour;
- protect vulnerable native fauna where impacts are demonstrated;
- maintain community confidence;
- reduce the need for more intensive control measures later; and
- support more humane, targeted and effective outcomes.

Management decisions should therefore be based upon demonstrated impacts rather than assumptions about genetics, ideology or fixed population targets.

Where unacceptable impacts are occurring - or where there is credible evidence that they are likely to occur - timely intervention is consistent with good stewardship, sound biosecurity and responsible wildlife management.

Waiting until widespread damage has already occurred is inconsistent with the preventative approach established by the Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) and undermines both animal welfare and public confidence in government land management.⁵³

⁵⁰ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2024), *Kangaroo Management in New South Wales*; NSW DCCEEW (2025), *Understanding Kangaroo Management in New South Wales*; NSW DCCEEW (2025), *NSW Commercial Kangaroo Management Program: 2026 Quota Report*.

⁵¹ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2023), *Flying-fox Management*; NSW DCCEEW, *Flying-fox Camp Management Code of Practice*.

⁵² Northern Territory Government, *Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile in the Northern Territory of Australia*; Northern Territory Government, *Crocodile Protection and Be Crocwise*.

⁵³ *Biosecurity Act 2015* (NSW), particularly the General Biosecurity Duty (ss 22–23), requiring biosecurity risks to be prevented, eliminated or minimised so far as is reasonably practicable.

Committee Question

Is it more humane and environmentally responsible to intervene early and proportionately, or to wait until attacks become widespread and substantially greater control is required?

Why This Matters

This Inquiry should not be viewed as a choice between protecting dingoes and controlling dingoes.

The more fundamental question is whether New South Wales is applying the same principles of active, preventative and evidence-based wildlife management to wild canids that it already applies to many other native species.

Good stewardship does not wait for unacceptable impacts to become entrenched before action is taken. It seeks to identify emerging risks, respond proportionately and prevent avoidable harm.

That approach is consistent with the principles of stewardship, animal welfare and biosecurity that underpin this submission and with the statutory responsibilities already imposed upon public and private land managers throughout New South Wales.

10. Mesopredation, Ecological Function and the Limits of Current Science

10.1 Dingoes Play an Important Ecological Role

One of the strongest arguments advanced in support of increased protection for dingoes is their role as Australia's largest terrestrial predator.

A substantial body of ecological research suggests that, in some landscapes, dingoes contribute to ecosystem function through their interactions with prey species, herbivores and smaller predators.^{54 55} This concept has become central to modern discussions surrounding wild canid management. It deserves consideration. However, it should also be considered carefully. Like many ecological theories, its application is more nuanced than is sometimes reflected in public debate.

The scientific question is not whether wild canids influence ecosystems. They clearly do. The more important question is: **Under what circumstances do those ecological interactions occur, and how should they influence management decisions?** That distinction is fundamental.

Key Principle

The ecological role of dingoes should be recognised.

The ecological effects of dingoes should not be assumed to be identical across every landscape.

10.2 Understanding Mesopredator Release

Much of the current discussion centres upon the concept of **mesopredator release**. Mesopredators are medium-sized predators, including foxes and feral cats. The theory proposes that apex predators - including dingoes - may suppress mesopredator populations through mechanisms such as:

- direct predation;
- competition;
- territorial exclusion;
- behavioural modification; and
- altered patterns of habitat use.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Wallach, A.D., Johnson, C.N., Ritchie, E.G. & O'Neill, A.J. (2010). *Predator control promotes invasive dominated ecological states*. Ecology Letters.

⁵⁵ Allen, B.L., Allen, L.R., Engeman, R.M., Leung, L.K.P. & others. Reviews of dingo ecological function and predator interactions (including critiques of universal mesopredator release models).

⁵⁶ Wallach, A.D., Johnson, C.N., Ritchie, E.G. & O'Neill, A.J. (2010). *Predator control promotes invasive dominated ecological states*. Ecology Letters.

Where apex predators decline, mesopredator populations may increase or become more active, potentially increasing predation on native mammals, reptiles and birds. This is a well-recognised ecological hypothesis supported by a substantial body of international and Australian research. Numerous Australian studies have investigated whether wild canids perform this ecological function. Some have identified evidence consistent with mesopredator suppression, particularly within arid and semi-arid environments. Others have reported weaker, inconsistent or context-dependent relationships.^{57 58}

The existence of mesopredator release as an ecological process is not seriously disputed. The extent to which it occurs across all landscapes, however, remains an active area of scientific research.

Evidence Snapshot

Mesopredator Release

Apex predator increases



Reduced fox activity (*sometimes observed*)



Reduced cat activity (*less consistently observed*)



Potential improvement in some native species



Outcome depends upon local conditions

- habitat
- rainfall
- prey abundance
- fire history
- grazing
- human land use
- other predators

The science supports a hypothesis - not a universal rule.

10.3 Ecological Relationships Are Context-Dependent

Perhaps the most consistent conclusion emerging from recent ecological literature is that predator interactions are highly context-dependent.^{59 60}

Predator populations do not exist in isolation. Their relationships are influenced by:

- rainfall;
- drought;
- vegetation structure;
- habitat connectivity;
- fire history;
- prey abundance;
- livestock grazing;
- agricultural fragmentation;
- disease;
- human disturbance;
- competition among predators.

Consequently, ecological relationships observed within one landscape cannot automatically be assumed to occur elsewhere. This is particularly relevant in New South Wales. The State encompasses:

⁵⁷ Wallach, A.D., Johnson, C.N., Ritchie, E.G. & O'Neill, A.J. (2010). *Predator control promotes invasive dominated ecological states*. Ecology Letters.

⁵⁸ Allen, B.L., Allen, L.R., Engeman, R.M., Leung, L.K.P. & others. Reviews of dingo ecological function and predator interactions (including critiques of universal mesopredator release models).

⁵⁹ Allen, B.L., Allen, L.R., Engeman, R.M., Leung, L.K.P. & others. Reviews of dingo ecological function and predator interactions (including critiques of universal mesopredator release models).

⁶⁰ Ritchie, E.G. & Johnson, C.N. (2009). *Predator interactions, mesopredator release and biodiversity conservation*. Ecology Letters.

- alpine environments;
- coastal forests;
- tablelands;
- western rangelands;
- fragmented agricultural landscapes;
- conservation reserves;
- peri-urban environments.

These landscapes differ profoundly. Accordingly, management strategies should also differ. One ecological model cannot reasonably describe every landscape across New South Wales.

10.4 The Scientific Evidence Is Not Uniform

Public discussion sometimes implies that increasing wild canid populations will inevitably:

- reduce fox numbers;
- suppress feral cats;
- improve biodiversity; and
- enhance ecosystem function.

The scientific literature does not support such universal conclusions. Some Australian studies have reported negative relationships between wild canids and foxes. Others have found that foxes continue to coexist with wild canids. Evidence regarding feral cats is even more variable. Some studies suggest behavioural avoidance. Others report little measurable change in cat abundance or predation pressure.^{61 62}

Importantly, the NSW Government adopts a similarly balanced position. Its published guidance acknowledges that wild canids may have both beneficial and detrimental ecological effects depending upon local circumstances. Wild canids may suppress some introduced predators and herbivores. Equally, they may prey upon threatened native fauna or contribute to declines in vulnerable species. The Government explicitly recognises that these outcomes vary between ecosystems and should not be generalised across the State.⁶³

This balanced position reflects the current scientific evidence.

Committee Question

If the ecological effects of wild canids differ between landscapes, should management also be allowed to differ between landscapes?

Key Principle

**Healthy ecosystems are rarely driven by a single species.
Good conservation manages the whole system.**

10.5 Landscape-Scale Evidence Should Guide Policy

One concern arising from the current debate is the assumption that findings from one region should determine management throughout New South Wales. Adaptive environmental management suggests otherwise.

Before significantly altering wild canid management within any National Park, government should understand:

- wild canid abundance;
- fox abundance;
- feral cat abundance;
- threatened species trends;

⁶¹ Allen, B.L., Allen, L.R., Engeman, R.M., Leung, L.K.P. & others. Reviews of dingo ecological function and predator interactions (including critiques of universal mesopredator release models).

⁶² Fleming, P.J.S., Ballard, G., Allen, B.L. et al. *Managing the Impacts of Dingoes and Other Wild Dogs* (CSIRO/NSW DPI).

⁶³ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water. **Wild Dogs** (current guidance on ecological roles and impacts).

- prey availability;
- livestock attack history;
- movements across tenure boundaries;
- ecological objectives specific to that landscape.

Without this information, it is difficult to predict whether management changes will produce the anticipated ecological outcomes. Policy should therefore be based upon demonstrated landscape-scale evidence rather than general assumptions.

10.6 Livestock Welfare Remains Part of the Ecological Equation

Even where wild canids may provide ecological benefits, those potential benefits do not remove the impacts experienced by neighbouring landowners.

A single management decision may simultaneously:

- reduce fox activity;
- increase livestock attacks;
- benefit one threatened species;
- disadvantage another;
- alter grazing pressure;
- increase costs for neighbouring farmers.

Good public policy must evaluate all of these outcomes together.

Conservation gains should not be measured independently of:

- livestock welfare;
- biosecurity obligations;
- producer wellbeing;
- neighbouring landowner impacts.

A balanced approach considers the entire landscape.

Why This Matters

Mesopredator release is one of the most influential concepts in contemporary wild canid ecology. It deserves careful consideration. However, the weight of current evidence indicates that predator interactions are highly context dependent and should not be assumed to operate uniformly across all ecosystems.

The Committee therefore has an opportunity to support a genuinely evidence-based approach - one that recognises the ecological role of wild canids while requiring landscape-specific monitoring, adaptive management and ongoing evaluation before broad policy changes are implemented.

11. Stewardship of the National Parks Estate

11.1 Conservation Is More Than Acquiring Land

According to NSW DCCEW, the expansion of the New South Wales National Park estate represents a substantial and continuing public commitment to conserving biodiversity, protecting cultural heritage and securing significant landscapes for future generations.⁶⁴

Acquiring land and changing its legal classification is only the beginning of conservation. Every additional hectare also creates enduring responsibilities for:

- pest animal control;
- weed management;
- fire prevention and response;

⁶⁴ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, *New Parks and Changes to Parks; National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974* (NSW).

- threatened-species recovery;
- boundary fencing;
- roads and fire trails;
- erosion and water management;
- visitor safety;
- cultural heritage protection;
- biosecurity; and
- engagement with neighbouring communities.

Declaring land a National Park does not, by itself:

- improve biodiversity;
- remove feral predators;
- control weeds;
- maintain fences;
- reduce fire risk;
- restore threatened species;
- prevent erosion;
- or protect neighbouring properties from biosecurity risks.

These outcomes depend upon active, adequately funded and accountable management.

Without that management, reservation remains an administrative act rather than a demonstrated conservation outcome.

Key Principle

Reservation protects land from some forms of development. Stewardship determines whether its environmental condition actually improves.

11.2 The Reserve System Has Expanded Dramatically

Official parliamentary data records substantial growth in the New South Wales reserve system over recent decades. The combined area reserved specifically as National Parks and state conservation areas increased as follows:

Year	National Parks and State Conservation areas
1980	2,499,892 hectares
1990	3,249,350 hectares
2000	4,336,656 hectares
2010	5,987,265 hectares
2022	6,563,232 hectares

These figures show that the two principal reserve categories grew by approximately **4.06 million hectares**, or about **163%**, between 1980 and 2022.⁶⁵

The broader NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service estate is larger because it also includes other reserve categories and lands administered by NPWS.

The NSW Government reported that the broader estate covered:

Financial year	Broader NPWS estate
2015–16	7,161,659 hectares

⁶⁵ NSW Parliament, Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 853, 24 October 2022, Question 9932, providing combined areas for national parks and state conservation areas in 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2022.

Financial year	Broader NPWS estate
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2020–21	7,499,206 hectares
2021–22	7,774,215 hectares
2022–23	8,260,835 hectares
2023–24	8,296,768 hectares
2024–25	8,441,994 hectares

The broader estate therefore increased by approximately **1.28 million hectares**, or almost **18%**, between 2015–16 and 2024–25.⁶⁶

These two historical series should not be directly combined without qualification because they measure different categories of land. Nevertheless, both demonstrate the same underlying reality: **The area for which NPWS carries management responsibility has expanded substantially and continues to grow.**

In 2024–25 alone, the NSW Environmental Trust reported that eight properties totalling approximately **104,817 hectares** were added through its land acquisition program.⁶⁷ This expansion may secure important habitats and cultural values. It also creates permanent and recurring management obligations that continue long after the purchase has been announced.

11.3 Conservation Obligations Increase with Every Acquisition

Every new National Park or reserve addition creates long-term responsibilities.

Newly acquired properties may contain:

- established wild dog populations;
- feral pigs, goats, deer, foxes and cats;
- invasive weeds;
- ageing or inadequate fencing;
- dams, tracks and former pastoral infrastructure;
- erosion and disturbed land;
- altered fire regimes;
- threatened species requiring intervention;
- cultural sites;
- and boundaries shared with productive agricultural land.

These conditions do not disappear when ownership changes. Indeed, former pastoral or forestry properties may require substantial initial investment before conservation objectives can be realised.

The NSW Government's own announcements concerning recent acquisitions recognise this reality. Following major additions in north-western NSW, the Government stated that NPWS would undertake planning and work including feral animal control and fire management.⁶⁸ This confirms that acquisition is followed by a second and more enduring responsibility: effective management.

The cost of purchasing land is therefore only the first cost. The Committee should also consider:

- establishment costs;
- recurrent staffing;
- pest and weed programs;
- infrastructure maintenance;
- fire management;
- monitoring;
- and the consequences for adjoining landowners.

⁶⁶ NSW Parliament, Legislative Council Questions and Answers No. 686, 25 February 2026, Question 7573, *NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service Estate*.

⁶⁷ NSW Environmental Trust (2025), *Annual Information Statement 2024–25*.

⁶⁸ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water (2025), *Three Stations Added to the National Park Network in North-West NSW*.

Conservation obligations do not diminish when land enters the reserve system. In fact, I'd go so far as to say they increase.

11.4 Public Land Must Not Become a Source of Biosecurity Risk

The Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW) establishes a shared responsibility to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks so far as is reasonably practicable.⁶⁹ That principle applies across land tenures. If a private landowner knowingly allowed weeds, feral pigs, deer or wild canids to repeatedly move onto neighbouring properties without taking reasonable action, there would rightly be concern about whether that landowner was meeting their biosecurity responsibilities. Government should be held to the same standard.

Public ownership should not reduce public responsibility. It should reinforce it. Neighbouring farmers should not be required to carry disproportionate costs because pest animals or weeds are moving from government managed land. Nor should private landowners be expected to compensate indefinitely for inadequate management beyond their boundaries through:

- additional fencing;
- trapping;
- baiting;
- veterinary costs;
- livestock losses;
- increased surveillance;
- or repeated weed control.

The responsibility is shared. Shared responsibility must apply in practice - not only in policy documents.

Committee Question

Would government accept repeated pest-animal or weed incursions from a private property without requiring the owner to act? If not, why should neighbouring landowners be expected to accept the same impacts when they originate from public land?

11.5 National Parks Do Not Exist in Isolation

Ecological and biosecurity processes do not stop at park boundaries. Wild canids do not recognise cadastral lines. Nor do foxes, feral pigs, deer, goats, invasive weeds, fire, floodwater, erosion, or disease.

National Parks form part of broader landscapes containing farms, forests, travelling stock reserves, Crown land, roads, towns, waterways and other conservation areas. Management must therefore operate across those boundaries.

The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027 emphasises coordinated management across public and private land because isolated control is vulnerable to reinvasion and inconsistent participation.⁷⁰ A program cannot be regarded as wholly successful if it protects values within a park by transferring increasing costs and risks onto surrounding properties.

Likewise, a conservation strategy that relies upon neighbouring landowners absorbing livestock losses, fencing costs and additional pest management is unlikely to retain enduring community support.

The relevant management unit is the landscape - not merely the tenure boundary.

⁶⁹ Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW), particularly ss 18–22.

⁷⁰ NSW Department of Primary Industries (2022), *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy 2022–2027*.

11.6 Inadequate Management Also Harms Native Wildlife

The consequences of inadequate management are not confined to agriculture. National Parks may protect habitat from clearing or development, but native species within those parks remain exposed to active threats.

Feral cats and foxes prey on native mammals, reptiles and birds. Feral pigs damage wetlands, disturb soil, spread weeds and consume native animals. Deer and goats damage vegetation and compete with native herbivores. Inappropriate fire regimes can remove ground cover, hollows, food resources and refuge habitat, and/or create a higher and more severe fire risk. Invasive weeds may alter vegetation structure and fire behaviour. Wild dogs and dingoes may also prey upon native fauna, with ecological effects differing according to species, abundance and landscape context.⁷¹

The Government's establishment of intensively managed feral predator free areas within National Parks further demonstrates that legal reservation alone is insufficient to recover some threatened species. These programs depend upon exclusion fencing, predator removal, reintroductions and continuing monitoring.⁷²

Active intervention is therefore not contrary to conservation. It is already central to some of the State's most important conservation programs.

Evidence Snapshot

A park boundary can prevent clearing.

It cannot, by itself:

- remove wild canids, foxes or cats;
- control pigs or deer;
- restore habitat;
- protect threatened species;
- or manage fire.

Protected status creates an opportunity for conservation. Active stewardship determines the outcome.

11.7 Conservation Success Should Be Measured by Outcomes

Government announcements commonly emphasise:

- hectares acquired;
- the number of new reserves;
- additions to existing parks;
- and the habitats brought into the system.

These are important measures of acquisition activity. They are not, by themselves, measures of ecological success.

A stronger performance framework would ask:

- What was the environmental condition of the land when acquired?
- Which pest animals and weeds were present?
- What establishment work was required?
- Has ecological condition improved?
- Are threatened species recovering?
- Have priority weeds declined?
- Are pest populations being reduced?
- Are fire risks being effectively managed?
- Are boundary fences and access tracks maintained?

⁷¹ NSW Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water, *Wild Dogs*; NSW Invasive Species Plan and relevant NPWS pest-management guidance.

⁷² NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service, *Return of Threatened and Declining Species Program*.

- Have impacts on neighbours increased or decreased?
- Is the Government meeting its biosecurity obligations?
- What recurrent expenditure is required to sustain those outcomes?

These indicators measure stewardship rather than ownership. They also make it possible to distinguish between land that has merely been acquired and land that is achieving measurable conservation outcomes.

Key Evidence

Expanding the National Parks estate also expands the Government's responsibility to understand what is happening within it.

11.8 Stewardship Requires Long-Term Investment

Every acquisition should be accompanied by a transparent assessment of the resources required to manage it. That assessment should include:

- initial establishment costs;
- recurrent field staffing;
- pest and weed programs;
- boundary fencing;
- road and fire-trail maintenance;
- monitoring;
- threatened-species programs;
- fire management measures;
- cultural heritage management;
- and consultation with adjoining landowners.

Without adequate recurrent investment, expanding the estate may dilute the resources available to manage existing parks.

The critical policy question is therefore not merely: **Can government afford to acquire this land?** It is: **Can government afford to manage it effectively in perpetuity?**

The NSW Government has not published sufficiently consistent and disaggregated information to demonstrate whether staffing, recurrent operational funding and pest management capacity have increased proportionately with the rapid expansion of the estate. That information gap should itself concern the Committee.

Conservation responsibility and land management does not end when the purchase contract is signed. It begins there.

11.9 Adjoining Landowners Should Be Treated as Partners

Many farmers living beside National Parks strongly support maintaining a healthy environment. They:

- retain remnant vegetation;
- establish new tree plantings;
- protect waterways;
- control weeds and pests;
- preserve habitat;
- maintain fences; and
- manage erosion.

They also possess detailed knowledge of:

- seasonal wildlife movement;
- fire behaviour;

- water flows;
- pest incursions;
- historic land use;
- and changing conditions along park boundaries.

These landowners should not be treated simply as stakeholders to be notified after decisions are made. They should be recognised as partners. Their observations should inform:

- pest-management plans;
- fire planning;
- boundary management;
- access arrangements;
- monitoring;
- and assessments of whether park-management decisions are affecting surrounding land.

Scientific expertise and local knowledge are not competing sources of evidence. Effective stewardship requires both.

11.10 Expansion Must Not Outpace Management Capacity

The continued expansion of the National Park estate should not be treated as an objective in its own right. Before acquiring additional land, governments should demonstrate that they have the resources, staffing and operational capacity to effectively manage the land already under their care.

Effective stewardship requires more than increasing the area of land reserved. It requires the capacity to manage biosecurity risks, reduce bushfire hazards, control weeds and pest animals, protect threatened species, maintain essential infrastructure and meet statutory obligations to neighbouring landowners.

The question is therefore not simply whether more land should be added to the National Park estate, but whether existing public land is being managed to an acceptable standard. Across regional New South Wales, many National Parks, roadsides, travelling stock reserves and other public lands provide visible examples of unmanaged weeds, pest animals and declining maintenance. These are not isolated issues - they raise legitimate questions about whether existing management responsibilities are already exceeding available resources.

Until governments can demonstrate that existing public land is being actively and effectively managed, further expansion of the National Park estate should cease.

Why This Matters

Public confidence in conservation depends not on the number of hectares reserved, but on how well those hectares are managed. Expanding the National Park estate without the resources to effectively manage it risks undermining biodiversity, increasing biosecurity and bushfire risks, compromising animal welfare and shifting those consequences onto neighbouring landowners. Good stewardship must come before further expansion.

This inquiry should therefore assess dingo management within the broader question of whether government has the capacity, resources and accountability systems required to steward the public estate effectively.

Conservation should be measured not by the amount of land acquired, but by the environmental and community outcomes achieved after acquisition.

12. Lessons from Western Australia - Evidence Must Precede Policy Change

12.1 New South Wales Should Learn from the Experience of Other Jurisdictions

One of the strengths of responsible public policy is the ability to learn from decisions made elsewhere. Governments should not be required to repeat mistakes that have already occurred in other jurisdictions. Equally, where reforms have delivered demonstrable environmental, cultural or agricultural benefits, those successes should inform future decision making.

For that reason, recent developments concerning dingoes and wild dog management in Western Australia are highly relevant to this inquiry. The Western Australian experience should not be overstated. As at July 2026, Western Australia has **not** enacted a state-wide legislative reform removing dingoes from the declared pest framework.

Wild dogs - including dingoes - remain declared pests under the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA). The State's formal policy remains to control all wild dogs, including dingoes, in and near livestock-grazing areas, while generally leaving dingoes undisturbed elsewhere.⁷³ However, Western Australia is now actively reconsidering elements of that framework.

At the same time, decisions affecting control on particular jointly managed conservation lands have created immediate concern among adjoining livestock producers. That combination makes Western Australia an important contemporary case study for New South Wales. It demonstrates how quickly uncertainty can arise when conservation objectives, cultural values, biosecurity duties and livestock protection are not resolved before changes occur on the ground.

Key Principle

New South Wales does not need to wait for avoidable consequences before asking the difficult questions.

Baseline evidence, legal clarity and safeguards for neighbouring landowners should precede - not follow - any reduction in wild canid management.

12.2 The Current Western Australian Legal Position

Wild dogs are declared pests throughout Western Australia under section 22 of the Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA). The declared pest framework covers dingoes, dingo hybrids and feral domestic dogs.⁷⁴

At the same time, dingoes are recognised as native wildlife under the Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA). An exemption allows them to be controlled where required for biosecurity purposes without the usual wildlife licensing requirements.⁷⁵

The Western Australian Government currently states that its policy is:

- to control wild dogs, including dingoes, in and near livestock-grazing areas; and
- to leave dingoes undisturbed in other areas.⁷⁶

12.3 The 2026 Parliamentary Motion

On 13th May 2026, the Western Australian Legislative Council debated and supported a motion calling upon the Cook Government to:

⁷³ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

⁷⁴ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

⁷⁵ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

⁷⁶ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

1. investigate ending the classification of dingoes as pests under Western Australian biosecurity legislation; and
2. investigate ending widespread government-funded 1080 poison baiting and strychnine foothold trapping of dingoes.⁷⁷

The motion did not itself change the law. It required investigation.

The Minister for Agriculture and Food stated that the Government did not oppose the motion because it sought an inquiry rather than an immediate prohibition. The Government subsequently referred the regulatory status of wild dogs, including dingoes, and associated control methods to the Biosecurity Council of Western Australia.⁷⁸

In June 2026, the Minister confirmed that:

- the Government continued to support wild dog control;
- the Biosecurity Council would investigate the treatment of wild dogs and dingoes as declared pests;
- control measures intended to reduce livestock impacts would also be examined; and
- input was expected from a broad range of stakeholders.⁷⁹

This is important for the present inquiry. Western Australia has not yet reached a final policy position. Nor has it produced long term evidence demonstrating the consequences of a state-wide change. New South Wales should therefore avoid portraying Western Australia as proof that one particular policy has already succeeded or failed. The more defensible lesson is that proposed changes to a long-established management framework create significant legal, operational and community questions that should be resolved before implementation.

Evidence Snapshot - What Has and Has Not Changed in WA

What has not changed:

- Dingoes and other wild dogs remain declared pests under WA biosecurity legislation.
- The State formally supports continued control in and near livestock areas.
- Government funding for wild dog management continues.

What is under review:

- Whether dingoes should remain within the declared-pest framework.
- Whether 1080 baiting and strychnine trapping should continue in their present form.
- How cultural, ecological, agricultural and welfare considerations should be balanced.

What has changed locally:

- Wild dog control ceased across parts of jointly managed Wheatbelt conservation land after relevant permits were not renewed.

12.4 The Wheatbelt Case

The most immediate practical development occurred not through state-wide legislative amendment, but through land management decisions affecting jointly managed conservation areas.

In July 2026, it was reported that permits previously allowing the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association to bait and trap wild dogs across approximately **340,000 hectares** of conservation land in the Dalwallinu, Morawa and Perenjori districts had not been renewed.⁸⁰ The land is jointly managed by the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions and a Yamatji joint-management body.

⁷⁷ Parliament of Western Australia, Legislative Council, *Dingoes—Motion*, Hansard, 13 May 2026.

⁷⁸ Parliament of Western Australia, Legislative Council, Question 542, *Wild Dog Action Plan*, Hansard, 17 June 2026; Legislative Council, Question 421, 14 May 2026.

⁷⁹ Parliament of Western Australia, Legislative Council, Question 542, *Wild Dog Action Plan*, Hansard, 17 June 2026; Legislative Council, Question 421, 14 May 2026.

⁸⁰ ABC News, "Wheatbelt farmers warn dingoes will 'wreak havoc' on sheep after dog culls stopped", 2 July 2026, including statements from the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

The Department stated that dingoes hold significant cultural importance for Yamatji traditional owners and that the joint-management body had not supported ongoing dingo baiting on the jointly managed estate.⁸¹

The affected land reportedly represented approximately:

- **20% of the area** managed by the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association; but
- around **80% of its wild dog control effort**.

The reserves are located inside the State Barrier Fence, within the broader region containing most of Western Australia’s sheep flock.⁸²

This is not yet evidence that livestock attacks have increased. The change is too recent for that conclusion. It is, however, evidence of a significant management alteration occurring before its consequences for surrounding livestock enterprises can be assessed.

That alone should concern the Committee.

Where established control is withdrawn across hundreds of thousands of hectares, neighbouring producers should not be expected to wait for livestock to be mauled before risk assessments, monitoring arrangements and response protocols are established.

Case Study — A Change Without a Measurable Baseline

Wild dog control ceased across approximately **340,000 hectares** of jointly managed Wheatbelt conservation land in July 2026.

At the time of the change, the publicly available information did not identify:

- a published baseline dingo population;
- a published livestock-risk assessment;
- a publicly available monitoring framework;
- thresholds that would trigger renewed control;
- a compensation arrangement;
- or a clear rapid-response protocol for adjoining producers.

The lesson for New South Wales is simple: management should not be reduced first and evaluated after losses occur.

12.5 Existing Western Australian Data Demonstrates the Value of Continuity

Evidence presented during the Western Australian parliamentary debate provides an instructive example of the relationship between coordinated control and reported livestock losses.

During the May 2026 debate, figures attributed to the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association recorded reported stock losses from wild dogs as follows:

Year	Reported stock losses
2018	469
2019	337
2020	133
2021	35
2022	52
2023	173
2024	80

⁸¹ ABC News, “Wheatbelt farmers warn dingoes will ‘wreak havoc’ on sheep after dog culls stopped”, 2 July 2026, including statements from the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.
⁸² ABC News, “Wheatbelt farmers warn dingoes will ‘wreak havoc’ on sheep after dog culls stopped”, 2 July 2026, including statements from the Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association and the Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions.

Year	Reported stock losses
2025	8

The parliamentary contribution stated that the increase to **173 losses in 2023** coincided with a period when control permits had expired and replacement permits were delayed. Following the restoration of permits, reported losses declined to 80 in 2024 and eight in 2025.⁸³

These figures were presented in parliamentary debate rather than a peer-reviewed evaluation. They should therefore be treated as reported program data - not as definitive proof of causation. Other factors may also have influenced livestock numbers and reported attacks. Nevertheless, the pattern is sufficiently significant to warrant investigation. It supports three important propositions:

1. low reported losses may reflect successful control rather than the absence of risk;
2. interruptions to coordinated management may be followed by increased losses; and
3. permit continuity is an operational issue with direct consequences for regional biosecurity programs.

New South Wales should not ignore that evidence.

Committee Question

Before any potential reduction of wild canid management in any NSW National Park, will the Government be able to demonstrate the baseline population, attack history, expected consequences, monitoring arrangements and intervention thresholds for that specific landscape?

12.6 Western Australia Has Invested Heavily in Wild Dog Control

Western Australia's existing approach is not based on an assumption that wild dog impacts are minor. The State has invested in:

- recognised biosecurity groups;
- professional control activities;
- the State Barrier Fence;
- baiting and trapping programs;
- research;
- and funding support for landholders.^{84 85}

The original Western Australian Wild Dog Action Plan 2016–2021 was accompanied by a \$19.94 million government investment intended to reduce the economic and social effects of wild dogs and protect livestock industries.⁸⁶

In May 2026, WA parliamentary estimates evidence indicated that **\$3.44 million per annum** was available through to 2029–30 for wild dog management activities, including:

- repairs and maintenance of the State Barrier Fence;
- control activities undertaken by recognised biosecurity groups on government-managed land; and
- research into best-practice control.⁸⁷

The WA Government also estimates wild dog stock losses in the State's rangelands alone at approximately **\$25 million per year**.⁸⁸ These figures demonstrate the scale of the issue. They also demonstrate why

⁸³ Parliament of Western Australia, Legislative Council, *Dingoes—Motion*, Hansard, 13 May 2026, reported Central Wheatbelt Biosecurity Association stock-loss figures for 2018–2025.

⁸⁴ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

⁸⁵ Parliament of Western Australia, Estimates Committee, 21 May 2026, evidence concerning annual wild dog action-plan funding through 2029–30.

⁸⁶ Government of Western Australia, *Wild Dog Action Plan to Protect and Grow Industry*, media statement, 14 November 2016.

⁸⁷ Parliament of Western Australia, Estimates Committee, 21 May 2026, evidence concerning annual wild dog action-plan funding through 2029–30.

⁸⁸ Western Australian Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, *Wild Dogs in Western Australia: Declared Pest; Biosecurity and Agriculture Management Act 2007 (WA); Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 (WA)*.

changes to established control arrangements require rigorous analysis. A government does not invest this level of funding in fencing, baiting, trapping and coordinated management unless the underlying impacts are substantial.

12.7 Consultation Must Occur Before Decisions Take Effect

The Western Australian developments illustrate the difference between consultation and notification.

Neighbouring landowners and biosecurity groups should not first learn that established control has ceased after permits have already expired or decisions have effectively been made. Meaningful consultation should occur while alternatives remain available. Before reducing management, government should consult:

- adjoining landowners;
- recognised biosecurity groups;
- traditional owners;
- public land managers;
- veterinarians;
- local governments;
- livestock organisations;
- ecologists;
- and professional pest controllers.

Consultation should address not only whether protection is desirable, but how the resulting risks will be managed. That includes:

- alternative control methods;
- monitoring;
- fencing;
- rapid response;
- funding;
- compensation;
- and review mechanisms.

Consultation that does not allow these practical matters to affect the outcome is not meaningful consultation.

12.8 Baseline Evidence Must Come Before Reform

One of the strongest lessons for New South Wales is the importance of collecting baseline evidence before policy changes occur.

Before any changes in control in any National Park, the NSW Government should establish:

- dingo or wild dog population indicators;
- fox and feral cat abundance;
- threatened-species trends;
- livestock attack history;
- trap and baiting effort;
- movement across public–private boundaries;
- neighbour complaints;
- economic impacts;
- and existing management expenditure.

Without baseline information, government cannot determine whether a later change is an improvement or a failure. The absence of such data creates a serious accountability problem.

If livestock losses increase, government may dispute whether the change caused them. If biodiversity improves, government may be unable to demonstrate why. If nothing changes, the public may never know

whether the reform achieved its intended purpose. Policy should be capable of evaluation before it is implemented.

Key Principle

A management experiment without a baseline, measurable objectives or intervention thresholds is not adaptive management. It is unmanaged risk.

12.9 Compensation and Cost-Shifting Must Be Addressed

Perhaps the most important fairness issue is who bears the financial consequences of increased wild dog or dingo protection. Where government reduces control to pursue ecological or cultural objectives, neighbouring farmers may face:

- livestock losses;
- veterinary costs;
- additional fencing;
- increased surveillance;
- professional trapping;
- lost production;
- and psychological distress.

Those costs should not be treated as an incidental private consequence of a public policy decision. If government materially increases the risk, it should establish a framework for:

- verifying losses;
- compensating affected producers;
- funding additional prevention;
- and reviewing the decision where impacts exceed agreed thresholds.

Public conservation benefits should not be financed through uncompensated private losses.

12.10 It Is Too Early to Claim Definitive On-Ground Outcomes

The Western Australian review and the Wheatbelt permit changes are extremely recent. There has not yet been sufficient time to determine their long-term effects on:

- wild canid populations;
- livestock attacks;
- native species;
- public confidence;
- or the viability of coordinated control.

The Committee should resist claims from either side that Western Australia has already conclusively proven the success or failure of greater dingo protection. It has not.

What Western Australia has already demonstrated is:

- the uncertainty created when legal classifications are reconsidered;
- the conflict that may arise when established control is interrupted;
- the importance of permits and cross-tenure cooperation;
- the need to reconcile cultural values with neighbouring land uses;
- and the danger of changing management before safeguards are publicly established.

Those are valuable lessons even before long-term outcome data becomes available.

12.11 The Lesson for New South Wales

The purpose of examining Western Australia is not to criticise another jurisdiction. It is to learn from a live policy debate before New South Wales makes any of its own decisions.

The WA experience demonstrates that wild canid management affects far more than predator ecology. It influences:

- livestock welfare;
- Aboriginal cultural values;
- biodiversity;
- regional employment;
- biosecurity;
- public confidence;
- government expenditure;
- and the legitimacy of public-land management.

New South Wales should therefore proceed cautiously.

Any changes or reduction in wild canid management should occur only after:

1. baseline evidence has been collected;
2. ecological and livestock-risk assessments have been completed;
3. statutory obligations have been addressed;
4. adjoining landowners have been meaningfully consulted, and involved in the decision-making process;
5. control alternatives have been tested;
6. monitoring and reporting have been established;
7. intervention thresholds have been agreed;
8. responsibility for costs and compensation has been resolved.

That is not resistance to conservation. It is evidence-based policy.

Why This Matters

Western Australia has not yet abandoned wild dog control or removed dingoes from its declared-pest framework. However, its current review and the cessation of control across parts of jointly managed Wheatbelt conservation land demonstrate how quickly uncertainty and conflict can arise when the consequences of policy change are not resolved in advance. New South Wales has the benefit of examining those developments before altering its own framework.

The central lesson is clear: **Do not reduce management first and attempt to measure the consequences later.** Evidence, consultation, safeguards and accountability must come before reform.

13. Conclusion

Throughout this submission, one central proposition has been consistently advanced: **good conservation requires good management.**

The evidence I have provided this Inquiry for consideration demonstrates that the central issue is not the absence of legislation, policy or scientific knowledge. It is whether the responsibilities that already exist are being consistently implemented, adequately resourced and transparently measured.

New South Wales already has a comprehensive legislative framework. The Biosecurity Act 2015 establishes a General Biosecurity Duty applying across all land tenures. The National Parks and Wildlife Act requires public land to be actively managed. The NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy recognises that effective management depends upon coordinated action across public and private land. The challenge before this Committee is therefore one of implementation, accountability and stewardship.

This submission has demonstrated that the consequences of management decisions extend far beyond ecology alone. They affect animal welfare, biosecurity, threatened species, bushfire risk, invasive species, neighbouring landowners, farming families and public confidence in the management of public land. These outcomes are interconnected. Failure in one area inevitably affects the others.

It has also demonstrated that private landowners already accept significant responsibilities. Farmers invest their own time, money and expertise to meet their legal obligations, protect the animals in their care and manage biosecurity risks on their own properties. It is therefore reasonable to expect government agencies managing public land to be held to the same standard of stewardship and accountability.

The management of wild canids is one practical measure of whether those responsibilities are being effectively discharged. Decisions regarding their management should reflect the same principles that underpin all responsible public land management: active stewardship, proportionate intervention, prevention of harm and accountability for measurable outcomes.

As the National Parks estate continues to expand, so too do the responsibilities that accompany it. Every additional hectare creates an ongoing obligation to manage biosecurity risks, invasive species, weeds, bushfire, threatened species, infrastructure and neighbouring landowner impacts. Expanding the reserve system without ensuring sufficient resources, staffing and operational capacity risks weakening both conservation outcomes and public confidence.

This Inquiry presents an opportunity to strengthen that stewardship. Rather than viewing the management of wild canids as a choice between competing interests, the Committee has an opportunity to recommend a framework that is scientifically informed, legally sound, culturally respectful, environmentally responsible, economically practical, compassionate towards all affected animals, responsive to regional communities and accountable for measurable outcomes.

Ultimately, the success of this Inquiry should not be judged by the number of recommendations it makes or by changes to protection status. It should be judged by whether its recommendations leave New South Wales with healthier landscapes, stronger biosecurity, better managed public land, improved animal welfare and greater confidence that governments are meeting the responsibilities entrusted to them.

The true measure of conservation is not how much land governments own, how many policies they publish or how many species are listed for protection. It is whether the landscapes entrusted to their care are demonstrably healthier because of their stewardship.

Public land should set the benchmark for stewardship in New South Wales. If governments cannot demonstrate that existing public land is being effectively managed, expanding the responsibilities of the public estate will not solve the problem - it will simply expand it.

Good conservation is not measured by intentions. It is measured by outcomes.

14. Recommendations

The evidence considered throughout this submission demonstrates that New South Wales does not need to choose between wild canid management, livestock protection, biodiversity, Aboriginal cultural values and productive agriculture. It does, however, need a management framework that is practical, transparent, adequately resourced and accountable for its outcomes.

These recommendations are not directed towards the eradication of dingoes. They seek to ensure that wild canids are carefully managed while governments retain the capacity - and accept the responsibility - to prevent negative impacts on livestock, native wildlife, neighbouring landowners and regional communities.

Accordingly, I respectfully recommend that the Committee recommend to the New South Wales Government the following.

14.1 Management Objective and Legislative Responsibility

Recommendation 1 - Reaffirm the General Biosecurity Duty of Public Land Managers

That the NSW Government formally confirm that all public land managers, including the National Parks and Wildlife Service, remain subject to the General Biosecurity Duty under the *Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW)*. Public ownership must not reduce public responsibility. Government agencies should be required to prevent, eliminate or minimise biosecurity risks arising from land under their control to the same standard expected of private landowners.

Recommendation 2 - Prevent Dingo Policy from Weakening Existing Biosecurity Obligations

That no future dingo and/or wild dog policy, conservation strategy, park management plan or operational direction be permitted to displace, dilute or avoid obligations imposed under the *Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW)*. Any proposed policy change should include published legal advice explaining how public land managers will continue to fulfil their statutory duties.

Recommendation 3 - Retain Clear Authority to Preventative Management of Wild Canids

That NSW legislation and policy continue to support the timely, proportionate and evidence-based management of wild canids in accordance with the preventative principles of the *Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW)*.

Management should not be limited to circumstances where unacceptable impacts have already occurred. Rather, authorised officers and land managers should retain the ability to undertake reasonable, evidence-based intervention where there are credible indicators that unacceptable impacts are likely to occur if management is delayed.

Intervention may be justified where there is credible evidence of:

- emerging or repeated livestock predation;
- unacceptable biosecurity risks;
- serious animal welfare concerns;
- threats to public safety or domestic animals;
- significant impacts on vulnerable native fauna; or
- other circumstances where early action is necessary to prevent unacceptable harm.

Genetic classification alone should not preclude proportionate management where intervention is reasonably necessary to prevent, minimise or respond to unacceptable impacts.

14.2 Evidence Before Policy Change

Recommendation 4 - Require Independent Assessment Before Reducing Control

That no significant reduction, suspension or cessation of wild canid management within a National Park (or any other public land) occur unless it is first supported by an independent and publicly available assessment addressing:

- dingo and wild dog population indicators;
- ecological consequences;
- threatened-species impacts;
- fox and feral cat interactions;
- livestock-attack risk;
- animal-welfare impacts;
- biosecurity obligations;
- effects on neighbouring landowners;
- Aboriginal cultural values;
- economic impacts;
- available alternative control methods;
- and the operational capacity required to respond if adverse consequences emerge.

Policy should be based on evidence collected before the change - not explanations produced after damage occurs.

Recommendation 5 - Establish Mandatory Baseline Data

That baseline data be collected before any major change to wild canid management.

At a minimum, baseline monitoring should include:

- dingo and wild dog population indicators;
- livestock attacks and unexplained stock losses;
- fox and feral cat abundance;
- threatened-species trends;
- baiting and trapping effort;
- neighbour complaints;
- cross-boundary movement;
- existing management expenditure;
- and current biodiversity condition.

Without a reliable baseline, government cannot demonstrate whether a policy change has succeeded or failed.

Recommendation 6 - Establish Intervention Thresholds Before Management Reduction is Considered

That every proposal to reduce control establish clear and publicly available intervention thresholds before implementation. These thresholds should specify when management must be reconsidered or reinstated, including where there is:

- an increase in verified livestock attacks;
- repeated movement onto adjoining properties;
- attacks on working or companion dogs;
- increased threats to vulnerable native fauna;
- failure to achieve claimed ecological benefits;
- or a material increase in complaints and biosecurity risks.

Government should not wait for widespread losses before acting.

Recommendation 7 - Require Independent Post-Implementation Review

That every significant change to wild canid management be independently reviewed every 12 months. The review should assess ecological outcomes, livestock impacts, animal welfare, costs, community confidence and compliance with statutory obligations.

Where outcomes deteriorate, corrective action should be mandatory rather than discretionary.

14.3 Retaining Effective Management Tools

Recommendation 8 - Retain the Full Suite of Lawful Control Methods

That NSW retain access to the full suite of lawful and approved wild dog management tools, including:

- coordinated 1080 baiting;

- PAPP where authorised and appropriate;
- professional trapping;
- targeted shooting;
- exclusion fencing;
- camera surveillance;
- GPS monitoring;
- DNA analysis;
- guardian animals and other non-lethal measures;
- and coordinated landscape-scale programs.

No effective management tool should be removed without evidence that an equally effective, practical and humane alternative is available.

Recommendation 9 - Select Methods According to Local Risk and Evidence

That management methods be selected according to:

- local ecology;
- livestock risk;
- terrain;
- conservation values;
- animal behaviour;
- land tenure;
- operational feasibility;
- animal-welfare considerations;
- and the best available evidence.

A single state-wide control method will not be appropriate in every landscape.

Management should be evidence-driven, not ideology-driven.

Recommendation 10 — Maintain Professional Trapping Capacity

That the NSW Government maintain and expand access to experienced professional wild canid trappers, particularly in high-risk areas adjoining National Parks and other public land.

Funding should support:

- rapid deployment;
- specialist training;
- mentoring and succession planning;
- coordinated reporting;
- and local capability where individual problem animals evade baiting.

Professional trapping should not become available only after losses have become severe.

Recommendation 11 - Protect Continuity of Cross-Tenure Control Programs

That permits, approvals and funding required for coordinated control programs be managed so that avoidable administrative delays do not interrupt established baiting, trapping or surveillance.

Any proposed suspension or non-renewal should be notified well in advance and accompanied by:

- consultation;
- a risk assessment;
- alternative arrangements;
- and a transition plan.

Biosecurity programs should not fail because permits expire before replacements are issued.

14.4 Transparent Reporting

Recommendation 12 - Require Annual Reporting to Parliament

That the Minister report annually to Parliament on:

- implementation of the *NSW Wild Dog Management Strategy*;
- compliance with the *Biosecurity Act 2015 (NSW)*;

- trends in livestock attacks;
- public land management activities;
- population and genetic monitoring;
- biodiversity outcomes;
- expenditure;
- unresolved complaints;
- and any areas where management objectives were not achieved.

Public accountability should not depend on individual parliamentary questions or freedom-of-information applications.

14.5 Animal Welfare and Farmer Wellbeing

Recommendation 13 - Make Livestock Welfare a Mandatory Policy Consideration

That livestock welfare be expressly incorporated into every future dingo and wild dog policy, risk assessment and public land management decision.

Assessment should include:

- animals killed;
- animals injured;
- prolonged suffering;
- shock and infection;
- abortions;
- mismothering;
- orphaned young;
- stress caused by chasing;
- reduced condition and production;
- and attacks on working dogs and horses.

Livestock must not be treated merely as financial losses.

Recommendation 14 - Recognise and Monitor Producer Mental-Health Impacts

That the NSW Government formally recognise the documented mental-health impacts of repeated wild canid attacks and incorporate producer wellbeing into policy design and evaluation.

Monitoring should consider:

- psychological distress;
- hypervigilance;
- increased workload;
- family strain;
- reduced confidence in farming;
- and the cumulative burden of repeated attacks.

Human impacts should not be dismissed as secondary to ecological outcomes.

14.6 National Parks Stewardship and Resourcing

Recommendation 15 – Demonstrate Stewardship Before Further Expansion

That the NSW Government place a temporary pause on the acquisition of additional land for National Parks or other forms of public conservation reservation until it can demonstrate that the existing public conservation estate is being effectively managed and that sufficient operational capacity exists to responsibly manage any further expansion.

Recommendation 16 - Audit Whether NPWS Capacity Has Kept Pace with Estate Growth

That an independent state-wide audit examine whether NPWS staffing, recurrent funding and operational capacity have kept pace with the substantial expansion of the National Parks estate.

The audit should report, by region:

- estate area;
- field staffing;

- staffing per million hectares;
- pest and weed expenditure;
- wild canid management effort;
- fire management resources;
- boundary fence condition;
- track and access condition;
- threatened species commitments;
- and complaint response performance.

The Government should be required to demonstrate that it can manage the land it already controls.

Recommendation 17 - Require Fully Costed Management Plans for New Park Acquisitions

That every major National Park acquisition or reserve addition be accompanied by a publicly available and fully costed management plan.

The plan should address:

- wild canids;
- foxes;
- feral cats;
- pigs;
- deer;
- goats;
- weeds;
- fire risk management and fire-fighting;
- fencing;
- access;
- infrastructure;
- cultural heritage;
- threatened species recovery;
- and neighbouring landowner impacts.

The purchase price should never be presented as the full cost of conservation.

Recommendation 18 - Do Not Expand the Estate Without Recurrent Management Funding

That no major public land acquisition proceed unless long-term recurrent funding has been identified and committed for its effective management.

Government should not continue expanding the reserve system while expecting existing staff and budgets to absorb permanent new responsibilities.

Acquisition without management capacity risks converting conservation ambition into unmanaged liability.

Recommendation 19 - Measure National Park Performance by Outcomes

That National Park performance be measured through:

- ecological condition;
- threatened species recovery;
- pest and weed reduction;
- fire preparedness;
- infrastructure condition;
- boundary impacts;
- biosecurity compliance;
- and community confidence.

Hectares acquired should be reported as an input - not as proof of conservation success.

Recommendation 20 - Establish Minimum Standards for Park Neighbour Interfaces

That NPWS establish enforceable minimum standards for land adjoining farms and other private properties, including:

- boundary-fence maintenance;
- pest-animal surveillance;
- weed control;
- response times;
- consultation;
- fire access and preparedness;
- and notification of management changes.

The interface between public and private land should be treated as a priority management zone.

14.7 Consultation, Local Knowledge and Shared Responsibility

Recommendation 21 - Require Consultation Before Decisions Are Made

That genuine and meaningful consultation occur before any change to dingo and wild dog management is approved.

Consultation should include but not be limited to:

- adjoining landowners;
- the local community;
- Aboriginal communities;
- Local Land Services;
- local councils;
- livestock industries;
- conservation organisations;
- scientists;
- veterinarians;
- and professional pest controllers.

Government should publish how feedback influenced the final decision.

Notification after a decision has effectively been made is not consultation.

Recommendation 22 - Give Local Knowledge Formal Evidentiary Status

That observations from farmers, graziers, Aboriginal land managers, professional trappers, park staff, hunters, veterinarians and Local Land Services officers be formally recorded and incorporated into monitoring and review.

Local knowledge should complement scientific evidence rather than be dismissed as anecdotal.

Repeated community reports should trigger investigation.

Recommendation 23 - Recognise Farmers as Conservation Partners

That NSW policy formally recognise farmers and graziers as conservation partners whose cooperation is essential to biodiversity, biosecurity and landscape management.

This recognition should be reflected through:

- early involvement in planning;
- genuine consideration of local evidence;
- joint monitoring;
- practical support;
- and fair treatment where public policy creates private costs.

Farmers should not be treated merely as parties to be notified.

14.8 Compensation and Accountability for Consequences

Recommendation 24 - Establish a Transparent Compensation Framework

That a compensation framework be established where government decisions to reduce predator management materially contribute to verified livestock losses or increased prevention costs.

Compensation should cover, where appropriate:

- livestock killed or euthanised;
- veterinary costs;

- additional fencing;
- professional trapping;
- surveillance;
- lost production;
- and other reasonable costs directly resulting from the policy change.

Public conservation benefits should not be funded through uncompensated private losses.

Recommendation 25 - Require Immediate Review Where Losses Increase

That any verified increase in livestock attacks following a reduction in public land control trigger an immediate formal review.

The review should determine:

- whether the management change contributed to the increase;
- whether control should be reinstated;
- what additional safeguards are required;
- and what compensation is payable.

Government should not require affected landowners to endure years of losses before acknowledging that a policy has failed.

Recommendation 26 - Establish Clear Complaint and Response Standards

That NPWS and other public land managers establish mandatory response standards for reports involving:

- active livestock attacks;
- repeated wild dog sightings near boundaries;
- attacks on working or companion dogs;
- failed fencing;
- or other urgent biosecurity concerns.

Reports should be acknowledged promptly, investigated, recorded and resolved within published timeframes.

Recommendation 27 — Create Independent Review Rights

That landowners be able to seek independent review where they believe a public land manager has:

- failed to meet its biosecurity obligations;
- inadequately investigated repeated attacks;
- failed to implement an agreed management plan;
- or transferred unreasonable risks onto private land.

Accountability should not depend upon the same agency reviewing its own performance.

APPENDIX A — PHOTOGRAPHS AND SUPPORTING EVIDENCE

Screenshot from SIX Maps shows Dunedoo, my property “Curragundi”, and the scrub area known as the Three Brothers where the wild dogs have been caught on camera and the young dog was trapped in 2019.



Below is a series of photos of both the German Shepherd type wild dog and the young yellow wild dog in the Three Brothers scrub area from late April to early July 2019 (photos are dated, taken from trail cameras set up in the scrub area for the purpose of monitoring the wild dog situation).











2019-06-10 9:36:37 PM M 5/5

13°C



2019-06-22 11:09:04 PM M 1/6

-1°C





Young wild dog trapped and shot by professional trapper in the Three Brothers scrub area
9th July 2019.

