

# TRANSCRIPT

## LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL ENVIRONMENT AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

### **Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria**

Melbourne—Thursday, 17 June 2021

*(via videoconference)*

#### **MEMBERS**

Ms Sonja Terpstra—Chair

Mr Clifford Hayes—Deputy Chair

Dr Matthew Bach

Ms Melina Bath

Dr Catherine Cumming

Mr Stuart Grimley

Mr Andy Meddick

Mr Cesar Melhem

Dr Samantha Ratnam

Ms Nina Taylor

#### **PARTICIPATING MEMBERS**

Ms Georgie Crozier

Mr David Davis

Dr Tien Kieu

Mrs Beverley McArthur

Mr Tim Quilty

**WITNESSES**

Ms Lyn Watson, Director and Founder, and

Ms Melinda Browning, Spokesperson, Australian Dingo Foundation.

**The CHAIR:** I declare open the Legislative Council Environment and Planning Committee public hearing for the Inquiry into Ecosystem Decline in Victoria. Please ensure that mobile phones have been switched to silent and that background noise is minimised.

I would like to begin this hearing by respectfully acknowledging the traditional custodians of the various lands which each of us are gathered on today and pay my respects to their ancestors, elders and families. I particularly welcome any elders or community members who are here today to impart their knowledge of this issue to the committee or who are watching the broadcast of these proceedings. I would also like to welcome any members of the public who may be watching these proceedings via the live broadcast as well.

At this point I will take the opportunity to introduce the committee members to you. My name is Sonja Terpstra; I am the Chair of the Environment and Planning Committee. With us via Zoom we have Mr Clifford Hayes, who is the Deputy Chair; Dr Samantha Ratnam; Mr Stuart Grimley; Dr Matthew Bach; Mr Andy Meddick; and Mr Cesar Melhem. We may have other committee members joining us a little bit later on as well.

All evidence that is taken today is protected by parliamentary privilege as provided by the *Constitution Act 1975* and further subject to the provisions of the Legislative Council standing orders. Therefore the information you provide during the hearing is protected by law. You are protected against any action for what you say during this hearing, but if you go elsewhere and repeat the same thing, those comments may not be protected by this privilege. Any deliberately false evidence or misleading of the committee may be considered a contempt of Parliament.

All evidence is being recorded. You will be provided with a proof version of the transcript following the hearing. Transcripts will ultimately be made public and posted on the committee's website.

So if I could please just get both of you to state for the Hansard record your name and any organisation you are appearing on behalf of.

**Ms WATSON:** I am Lyn Watson, and I am appearing on behalf of the Australian Dingo Foundation.

**Ms BROWNING:** And Melinda Browning, appearing on behalf of the Australian Dingo Foundation.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thank you. And with that, I will welcome you to make your opening comments. If you could please keep it to a maximum of 10 minutes, that will allow plenty of time for committee members then to ask questions of you. I will give you a bit of a heads-up as we approach the end of that time. So with that, Mel and Lyn, I will hand over to you. If I could just remind all committee members to please keep their microphones on mute.

**Visual presentation.**

**Ms WATSON:** While we are grateful and excited to have this opportunity to give direct evidence to the panel, not since 2012 have we been invited to contribute to any inquiry. In considering any joint food gathering ventures, wise First Nations American councils always asked, 'Who speaks for wolf?' before a decision was made. Modern Australia would do well to also incorporate such altered democracy given that this sharing of the environment is the same question that this panel is here to consider. Today, we speak for dingo. Indeed, dingo probably eclipses wolf as the most politicised species on the planet. After the years-long process that led to the declaration of the dingo as threatened in Victoria, back in 2008, without any of the required consultation it took just three individuals just 5 minutes each, every five years or so, via a secretive auditing council to unprotect it. This has escalated to a reintroduction of rotable bounties, the resumption of cruel trapping and baiting, and the introduction of aerial baiting. There is something very political about that. It actually trashes the very aims of the *Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act*.

Our own First Nations storylines paint cooperative shared existence with the largest quadruped placental mammal and land predator, the only other competing carnivore to evolve on this continent prior to 1400 AD and possibly as long as 18 000 years ago. That adds up to native. Twenty years of sleuthing by us has revealed

that there is actually zero evidence to support the Victorian-age assumption that dingoes were introduced by humans and came here by boat. Next slide.

ADF exists to seek the facts surrounding this truly amazing species and, whatever revelations may result, to educate according to those facts and not to slavishly rehash myths and fantasy. We have collaborated to date on over 25 published, peer-reviewed studies with the help of the now 50 dingoes resident at our Dingo Discovery Sanctuary and Research Centre. We have just scratched the surface. ADF must raise their own funds and have a loan taken on the role that was actually the responsibility of the state upon the threatened species declaration—to devise an action management plan to guarantee the continuation of the species in our ecosystem. It was to achieve those same aims that our charity was formed and entered into the federal register of environmental organisations in 2007.

For my part, I will just lift a corner of the veil that the dingo so cleverly hides behind. The observations we have made during 36 years of close 24/7 contact with them could never have been casually discerned and have rarely been observed in the wild. Dingoes are really cryptic. European persecution has probably contributed greatly to that. Among our list of world universities to visit for research, Yale, Harvard and Boston College have conducted cognitive research and concluded that Australia's dingo is probably the most intelligent canid species on the planet. This is the first fundamental fact that sets it apart from being or ever having been in any way other than cursory appearance a mere dog. There are countless other skeletal and biological differences now documented and even more yet to be discovered in research.

My chapter today is entitled 'The love life of the dingo, or why there is no such thing as a wild dog'. The commonly regurgitated statement that dingoes breed regularly with dogs is another fallacy. In fact the myth of hybridisation can now be shown scientifically to be just that—myth. Since the breakthrough of SNP technology in DNA testing I no longer walk in fear that Australia's wild dingo is or will end up as a feral hybrid so long as nature is doing the selection. That means also that humans should cease interfering with social stability. At DDC we can provide social conditions to mimic those of nature, and while we do not deny that it is a theoretical or in vitro possibility, wild-living, socially adjusted, territorially stable dingoes simply do not or will not breed readily with domestic dogs. Why? Well, for one, unlike the true wild dingo which has no body odour, dogs are odorous. Dogs have sebaceous glands on trunk and feet which cause this. We know that our dingoes dislike smelly dogs; they will avoid them or banish them in most natural cases year round. One small example, dingoes do not need to have young with smelly feet that will leave tracks that hunting dogs can trail to secret hideaways.

Secondly, the female dingo is capable of conception on only one or two days in a year governed by natural biorhythms based the hours of daylight on the retina. Due to the sheer difficulty of making a living in the harsh conditions found on our continent all forms of wildlife must conserve energy. Both male and female dingoes are fertile only during the annual breeding season. This occurs in the window from the autumnal equinox in March to the shortest day in June. A female dingo will only allow breeding and will only ovulate when she has a bonded partner. Alone she cannot raise a litter. She needs to be assured that her mate will be with her for the entire gestation, birth, shared rearing and teaching of any cubs, and that requires at least nine months—in fact it means for the life of the dingo. This bond must be present and is formed in the months and weeks leading up to the breeding season. She will test his stamina, his loyalty and his hunting skills before they make a den together.

These social factors are critical for the survival of any wild-living dingo population. It is nature's form of marriage. A casual, coincidental doggy acquaintance just cannot match the needs of crucial timing and the need for a bond. Domesticated dogs have totally lost the bonding and sharing capacity, and it is a rare one today that can even hunt for sustenance. They cannot establish generationally. If on those one or two days cohabiting does ever occur in the wild or in marginal areas between a dingo female and a randy dog, any resulting single-parent cubs will starve before they can make it to be juveniles, and certainly they will never make it to breeding age. Genetically they can have but one half of the quota of hardwired, instinctive skills or physical traits. A dingo mother cannot simply lactate and hunt simultaneously. No social stability simply means no survival of young; nature is a harsh arbiter.

Dingo responses to environmental or climactic conditions are also fascinating. It is my considered opinion that any dingo female readily breeding with a domestic dog will have that situation forced on her by captivity, but she will also need to have socially bonded with that mate for her to release ova and conceive. In my opinion,

any true 50-50 hybrids therefore will have resulted from captive conditions. This explains why so few hybrids arise in DNA analysis of wild samples. It also explains why there are no wild dogs in Tasmania or in New Zealand or indeed anywhere else. It negates the very term 'wild dog'. So the take-home message from me therefore is: forget the term 'wild dog'. Canids that live independently of human resources in the Australian wild are dingoes and deserve the nobility earned by their sheer survival ability and their strictly functional form. Similarly, no wolf could survive in Australia. We will be underscoring all of this when we introduce you to the real, live, pure dingo Pumbah when I promise that you will witness for yourselves that my claims are valid. Thank you for your time, and I will hand over to Mel.

**Ms BROWNING:** Next slide, please. Can I just check we are on the 'Australia's native apex land predator' slide?

**The CHAIR:** Yes. Just give us a second. They are just having a look. What slide number is it?

**Ms BROWNING:** Sorry?

**The CHAIR:** What slide number do you want? Six?

**Ms BROWNING:** It says 'Apex native land predator'. So I will start, yes?

**The CHAIR:** If you can tell us the slide number, it might be more helpful. Do you know the slide number?

**Ms BROWNING:** Yes. Slide 5.

**The CHAIR:** No. 5?

**Ms BROWNING:** Yes.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Perfect.

**Ms BROWNING:** Dingoes are Australia's native apex land predators. Australia's native wildlife has survived and thrived for thousands of years under the protection of dingoes, shaped by nature to fulfil the critical role of apex predators and providing ecosystem resilience and stability. They pick off the old, the weak and the diseased, ensuring genetically strong and healthy populations of prey species. Next slide.

There is ample evidence in Australia and globally of the rewilding of apex predators transforming degraded landscapes back to ecological health, regulating not only their own populations but those of their prey species. There is zero evidence anywhere in the world of successful, long-term ecosystem restoration projects in a broad landscape by the use of poisons. Next slide.

From an Indigenous perspective the Olkola Aboriginal Corporation state:

Since getting Country back in 2014 we have stopped 1080 baiting and the results are showing—the Dingo—boss of Olkola Country ... is making a comeback and that is good news for his mate Alwal—the endangered golden shouldered parrot and Olkola totem.

Dingoes are also the dreaming animal of the Paruku IPA's Mulan mob, where both night parrots and bilbies are still present in the landscape. Dingoes are attributed with protecting critical habitat from overgrazing as well as suppressing feral foxes and feral cats. Next slide.

In the context of a broad landscape dingoes are 24/7 pest controllers, and they are unmatched by time-consuming and expensive poisons, trapping and baiting and shooting that only serve to create a temporary disturbance in population numbers. Next slide.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** This video shows a lone dingo at full pace hunting feral pigs, one of Australia's worst feral animals. Next slide.

Dingoes have a Palaeolithic digestive system, with a strong preference for lean protein as they do not produce the enzymes required to digest fatty meats such as lamb. At 13 to 20 kilograms dingoes require only 350 to 500 grams of food per day. Next slide, and play the video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** Dingoes may look like dogs but they act like cats—incredibly agile, wary, aloof and independent, with the intelligence to rival some primates and as flexible as a snake on legs. They are skilled problem solvers, with one report of a captive dingo learning to open the ring-pull on a tin of sardines. Next slide.

When asked, ‘Can dingoes change rivers?’ David Pollock from Wooleen Station in WA said:

Sure they do. Rivers rely on trees to slow them down otherwise no water reaches the flood plains. In the presence of high goat numbers, you get no new generation of trees. Without dingoes the rivers become big drains.

Next slide, and play the video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** We are now up to slide 14. Angus Emmott of Noonbah Station states:

Just on our property, Noonbah, I’ve documented well over 500 plant species and up to 188 bird species, adding up to 321 vertebrate species in total.

Next slide, and play the video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** Next slide. Dr Kylie Cairns’s yet unpublished emerging research is continuing to find irrefutable evidence that pure dingoes are persisting in the wild in Victoria. Next slide.

The graph shows that the relative livestock losses from different predator types really just prove that foxes, crows and roaming domestic dogs pose a far greater threat than dingoes. Next slide.

When all things are considered, lamb and sheep deaths due to predation are low. Death by exposure kills a reported 15 million lambs per year across Australia. A study in Hamilton, Victoria, found the major causes of lamb losses were exposure, starvation and dystocia, with foxes amounting to just 9 per cent, and clearly dingoes are less of a problem than foxes.

Dingoes have been extirpated from 79 per cent of the Victorian landscape, and when you consider they are actively killed on private land and in buffer zones, their protected areas amount to just 6.5 per cent of the Victorian landscape. Next slide.

Decades of lethal control have tipped in favour of foxes, so we just have to question why we are still killing dingoes in favour of foxes, with a bounty on the head of a dingo of \$120 and a fox \$10. Next slide.

This map roughly shows the areas where dingoes are persisting—if you can click through on this slide—and wild dog control is currently being undertaken, which amounts to about 21 per cent of the remaining Victorian landmass. If you click through, you will see that the red areas are the high sheep producing areas, with the dot points showing where dingoes are killed as wild dogs in Victoria. Keep clicking through.

To date, the killing of dingoes has been largely out of sight and out of mind, and yet we need to ask ourselves: as a civilised society, is the killing of dingoes humane, effective and justified? This lactating mother was indiscriminately killed by a trophy hunter with no concern for her dependent cub waiting for her at their den. Next slide. Please click the video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** Barbarically, it is currently legal for dingoes to be trapped for up to 72 hours, in pain and distress, with dingoes known to chew their own foot off to escape. Next slide, and please click the overlay.

What would this young Myrtleford couple say to their children when they stumble across this gruesome scene? It is a shot, scalped and gutted dingo dumped on the side of the road. Next slide.

Research by the Arthur Rylah Institute has demonstrated that 1080 aerial baiting tips the predator balance in favour of feral cats. Next slide.

We have to ask ourselves: are dingoes actually safe in protected zones? Our research has determined that dingoes find fox baits palatable. They will sniff out and dig up fox baits. Two milligrams of 1080 poison will kill an adult dingo. Fox baits contain 4 milligrams of 1080, hence an adult dingo will die from just eating one fox bait. The dingo below died from a suspected fox bait deep within a Victorian national park. Please play this next video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** Next slide. Please play the video.

**Video shown.**

**Ms BROWNING:** Next slide. It is our opinion that non-lethal methods of livestock protection need to be the first form of defence with broadscale baiting and trapping banned. There are successful solutions available, but urgent investment is needed in developing and trailing new initiatives. And the ADF has a lot of successful initiatives that are looking very promising.

Next slide, 'A Last Word', if you can click through. If it is living wild, looks like a dingo and acts like a dingo, then you can guarantee it is functioning as a dingo and performing the critical role of apex predator. Broadscale lethal control must cease, and targeted lethal control should be a last resort.

Next slide. The Australian Dingo Foundation would strongly endorse the following actions: let us call them what they are—they are dingoes, not wild dogs; let us enact the flora and fauna guarantee dingo action statement; let us remove the order in council that unprotects dingoes in buffer zones and hence remove the bounty and cease all wild dog broadscale activity; let us put some money behind some livestock protection initiatives; and we absolutely support the dingo rewilding project. Thank you.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Thanks very much, Mel and Lyn, for that presentation. Now we will move to questions. I might throw to Andy Meddick for the first questions.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Thank you, Chair. Thank you, Lyn, and thank you, Mel, for that presentation. Boy does this bring up a whole heap of questions that I think we probably will not have time for because we will have to get to a number of the members of the committee. I just wanted to concentrate, if I may, on a couple of areas. They are well known the effects of 1080 poison in terms of its abject cruelty and its indiscriminatory nature. I am concerned about what is going to happen when we bait in areas—anywhere, for that matter—with 1080 poison in terms of specifically going after dingoes. If that program is successful in that area, what evidence is there of other apex predators moving in, such as cats and foxes? Do their numbers actually increase in those areas once the dingo is removed?

And also I would like to go down the path of asking: if we are to trial or look at the reintroduction of dingoes, where would you suggest as an area for a trial, for instance? What type of monitoring would be involved? Who would you suggest undertakes that—because there are obviously specialists in all types of different fields here that we can use—and do we need a quite dramatic education program out in the regions of the different markings of dingoes, because different areas have different types of dingo? Like, the alpine dingo looks different from a plains dingo, for instance. We know that, but a lot of the public and I think a lot of landowners would not realise that as well and may then well confuse them with domesticated dogs that have become free living rather than a dingo. I know that is a lot to unpack, but can you go down those paths for me for a bit?

**Ms BROWNING:** Well, I might start on the 1080 and then hand over to Lyn for the rest. Certainly it is just crazy to think that we can do a rewilding project and leave 1080 in the system, because dingoes are so susceptible, as you heard. Also they are very susceptible to secondary poisoning. So even if you are poisoning a rabbit, they will certainly die from eating a poisoned rabbit carcass. So you cannot do a dingo rewilding project without removing 1080 from the landscape—that is a given. Also, look, we would absolutely support the Gariwerd project. We would love to be involved with the Indigenous. I think that they are a wonderful source of how to manage country, and certainly with the combined expertise of people like Lyn Watson, sitting next to me, and our wonderful Indigenous mob, that would be a wonderful collaboration. I will hand over to Lyn, if she wants to add anything there.

**Ms WATSON:** Well, initially, you know, we have had a few scouts out there in the area, and we think that there are areas a long, long way away from any farming. Dingoes do not need a big territory if there is a rabbit warren there, because they have farmed those rabbits. They will not go far. They are not interested in sheep;

they prefer lean meat. They need to be given a chance. We need to be doing surveys, and we need to be accountable in all of it. We are only too happy to get involved. We do have some knowledge which I think needs to be out there, but of course as far as the education of the general public, I would go, 'Give us a chance'. We do as much as we can here at the sanctuary. We are here for the dingoes. We can only have 20 people at a time, but every session we run is packed and everybody goes away raving, so we would love the opportunity to get on a broader scale of education. We do have a schools education program, which is highly acclaimed—you can get that through Dingo Whiskers. Andy, I cannot remember all your questions.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Just the first one, Lyn, which was about when we removed the dingo from the landscape. You talked about dingoes obviously being an apex predator and controlling other animals in the landscape. I am curious about what evidence there is when we have removed dingoes from a particular area, whether that is by 1080 baiting or shooting, is there an increase in the population, then, of cats and foxes? Because we know they are opportunistic and that they tend to move into other areas, but if we remove the dingo, then do we open those areas up for that invasion of those species?

**Ms WATSON:** Absolutely, and it is down. The Arthur Rylah Institute has already studied this and has concluded that cats get the best chance when that happens, because there is nothing to get those animals. What else is there? We only have one apex predator in Australia. There has always only been one, and that has been the dingo.

**Ms BROWNING:** There is absolutely a whole body of scientific evidence, and it is irrefutable that if you take the dingoes out, which are beneficial to the environment and provide stability in residence, you get overrun with feral cats and foxes. It is just so detrimental, and the whole trophic cascade and ecological collapse is all very well documented as well.

**Mr MEDDICK:** Thank you so much. Thank you, Chair. If there is room at the end, then I will ask some other questions, but I am happy to hand over to other members of the committee.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Andy. Just so everyone knows, this session will finish at 11 o'clock. I know members will have many questions, and I will just encourage members to submit their questions on notice if we run out of time on this, because I know we have all got lots of questions; it was a very detailed presentation. I will go to Mr Grimley next. No, he is not there. I might go to Mr Hayes then.

**Mr HAYES:** Thanks, Chair. Thanks very much, Lyn. I just wanted to ask: basically, just following on from what you were saying before about invasive species and the effects of dingoes, is there any research being done as to what impact repopulating dingo numbers would have on introduced species? I know you are keen to remove the 1080 poisoning. Would that then be another factor assisting that idea of not needing any other sort of control if we repopulated with dingoes. I just wonder if there is any research or you could give us any guidance on that.

**Ms WATSON:** Well, the Wooleen Station evidence which we presented is irrefutable. He is just absolutely over the moon that where he has left the dingoes alone, where he used to see 30 foxes they have disappeared, gone completely out of the landscape. And what has happened is that it has gone all the way down to the grass, and everything has benefited from the disappearance of those mesopredators, which take out animals which keep the rest of our ecosystem going.

**Mr HAYES:** Would that apply to rabbits and cats as well?

**Ms WATSON:** Well, I think we have to accept rabbits are going to be here. Cats are a very, very difficult species to remove in any aspect. They have tried so many ways, and the cats just keep increasing. The dingo is the only thing that can suppress or deter cats, but they have killed them. There is a study that was done at Arid Recovery. They put 17 cats in a very, very large and fenced enclosure with two dingoes, and of those 17 cats, all, except for one collar and one cat, were killed. So the dingo is adept at it and does not like the cat there, but also has a bit of an appetite for cat as well.

**Ms BROWNING:** And just following on from what Lyn has said, if you talk to say David Pollock from Wooleen Station, whose book is well worth reading—*The Wooleen Way*—or Angus Emmott, who is a published researcher, from Noonbah Station, both of those pastoralists will tell you that the big benefit of dingoes is keeping down grazing pressure, so you get much better vegetation outcomes, and on both those

broadacre properties they have incredible biodiversity. There is a rare turtle species on Noonbah called the Cooper Creek turtle—or it is actually the Emmott turtle, named after the Emmott family. David Pollock on Wooleen describes that all the turtle tracks are coming back now the foxes have gone, the feral cats have gone and the vegetation cover is there. So everything just seems to be rebalancing itself.

**Mr HAYES:** Thanks, Melinda. Thanks, Lyn. Thanks, Chair. I will leave it at that.

**The CHAIR:** Thanks, Mr Hayes. Next question to Dr Bach.

**Dr BACH:** Chair, many thanks. That was a fascinating presentation. And I confess at this stage I do not have any further questions. I know other members do, so I might hand over to them. Thank you though, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** No problem. Mr Grimley.

**Mr GRIMLEY:** Thanks, Chair, and thank you, Lyn and Mel, for your presentation. My question is in relation to the hybrid discussion that you were having about dingoes. Correct me if I am wrong, but I think you said that there is a myth about the dingo hybrid, and I am interested just to draw a bit more information out of that. The reason behind this query is that I spent a number of years in the Western Australian central desert in Ngaanyatjarra lands there for about three years, and the camp dogs are quite prolific out there in the remote communities. It is not unusual for the camp dogs to head out into the wild, and in my travels especially with some of the elders out there we came across a lot of dogs that looked very, very similar to dingoes. The elders anecdotally said, ‘They’re probably a cross between a dingo and a camp dog that’s gone a bit wild’. I just wonder if you have any ideas around that sort of observation that I have made in my time. Would that be correct in your eyes, or is it maybe something else that is going on?

**Ms WATSON:** I would say it is possible. But if it looks a lot like a dingo and it weighs under 20 kilograms and it is doing the role of a dingo, then it is going to be more than three-quarters if you follow through our DNA studies. But we do know from many thousands of samples from Western Australia, from the area that you talk of or wherever they are in Western Australia, that there are miniscule numbers of animal testing samples from the wild that come up as even having any dog ancestry at all. I mean, really a dog has to be so special. It has to have human help if it is going to survive in those conditions. My presentation was based on the animal—that it has no access to human resources, and I assure you, dingoes just do not want it. They prefer to do all their own work. That is why they never became domesticated—because they did not follow the Aboriginals. When the Aboriginals moved off to the bunya nuts or the festivals, they stayed and minded their territory, because territory is their number one instinct, I believe, even more so than the instinct to procreate. I would have to go back to all of that. But, yes, those things are said. Unless the true DNA is known, it is just what people say anyway. But anyway, it is a good opportunity for us to say that we do know from the DNA testing of the animals in those areas that there is miniscule dog hereditary there.

**Mr GRIMLEY:** Wonderful. Thank you. Thanks, Chair.

**The CHAIR:** Ms Bath—looks like she might have just dropped out there for a second. Dr Cumming, do you have a question? We have got about 4 minutes left.

**Dr CUMMING:** Thank you, Chair, and it is only a quick one. Thank you for your presentation. From listening to your presentation are you suggesting that we should be encouraging more breeding of dingoes? That is my only question.

**Ms WATSON:** Absolutely not. They should be left to do their own thing. The interference with dingoes by humans just adds up to human selection. Dingoes are a product of Australia and natural selection, and that is how it should stay.

**Dr CUMMING:** Just to tease that out, my understanding is that obviously there is human interference to make sure that we have got the right amount of dingoes. I am just wondering if there should be a certain amount of breeding to make sure that pure dingoes are continuing on.

**Ms WATSON:** Well, that is absolutely one of the reasons why we exist here—at Australian Dingo Foundation—to actually make sure that we keep a diverse set of breeding lines of dingoes against the day when they are all dead, like the thylacine. So, yes—not a lot of it, though; it does not need to be a lot. What we need to do is keep a few families.

**Ms BROWNING:** Can I add to that, Catherine? I think our perspective is we want to stop the persecution. So let us not let our wild dingo population go the way of the thylacine. Let us stop the persecution. We have got a kind of back-up insurance population here at the dingo foundation, but our aim is to stop the killing.

**The CHAIR:** Great. Well, thank you. I just note, because we were running late this morning, we might move on. The next witness is with us in the Zoom waiting room. I would just like to thank you both very much, Mel and Lyn, for your fantastic presentation. I have got millions of questions; I am sure other people do. But as I said, I will encourage committee members to please provide those questions on notice to you, and the secretariat will be in touch with you to provide those. So thank you very much again, Lyn and Mel.

**Witnesses withdrew.**