

## Media Statement

25 September 2024

# Traditional Owners must be at the heart of managing culturally significant native species

The Victorian Government must commit to joint decision-making with Traditional Owners for culturally significant species following its decision to allow the continued killing of dingoes across north-east Victoria, says the state-wide body that advocates for the rights and interests of Victorian Traditional Owner groups.

“People and dingoes have peacefully co-existed for thousands of years, which could continue if Traditional Owner groups are recognised and respected as genuine partners in decision-making for culturally significant species, including dingo,” says Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations CEO Paul Paton.

The Federation is disappointed the Victorian Government has today maintained an unprotection order across Victoria’s north and north-east that allows the killing of a culturally significant and vulnerable native animal – against the explicit wishes of many Traditional Owner groups, and against the current science that debunks the myth that wild dingoes are hybridised feral dogs.

“The Victorian Government hasn’t listened to the science, it hasn’t listened to the Traditional Owners who have called for the native dingo’s protection, and it hasn’t listened to its own commitment to Traditional Owners’ self-determination and decision-making,” says Mr Paton.

In relying only on the Wildlife Act to make their dingo decision, without appreciating or applying the broader principles provided for in the Flora and Fauna Guarantee Act – which classifies dingo as a threatened species in the first place – the environment and agriculture ministers have avoided the need to give proper consideration to Traditional Owners’ rights and interests, including by facilitating their participation in decision-making.

“This decision was a missed opportunity to recognise the rights of Traditional Owners and partner genuinely in decision-making for culturally significant species,” says Mr Paton.

The Federation calls on the Victorian Government to now centre Traditional Owner groups’ knowledge and role at the heart of managing culturally significant species, including dingo, and urges the Government to build the evidence base about dingo and ensure ongoing decision-making better reflects the needs and values of a healthy cultural landscape.

– ENDS –

### About the Federation

The Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations is the Victorian state-wide body that convenes and advocates for the rights of Traditional Owners while progressing wider social, economic, environmental and cultural objectives. It was established in 2013 by Traditional Owner Corporations who recognised they could be stronger together in advancing shared interests in policy, economic opportunity and caring for Country.

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