

## Media Statement

9 April 2025

# Victorian Government must step back so Traditional Owners can manage dingo culturally

A Victorian Government dingo decision that may have breached Aboriginal peoples' legal rights must be rectified by enabling Traditional Owner management of culturally significant species, regardless of the outcome of a legal challenge to the decision, says the state-wide body that advocates for the rights and interests of Victorian Traditional Owner groups.

The validity of an order that permits the killing of native dingoes across a large portion of Victoria – despite their cultural significance and vulnerability to extinction – will be challenged in Supreme Court proceedings commenced today.

Federation of Victorian Traditional Owner Corporations CEO Paul Paton says the proceedings' focus on Aboriginal rights to practice culture and connect with Country reiterate the important role Traditional Owners play as custodians of healthy Country.

“For tens of thousands of years people and dingo have peacefully co-existed in the landscape, with dingo as hunting companion, protector and kin to many Traditional Owner groups,” he says.

“Dingo helps Traditional Owners fulfil our obligations to care for Country, by maintaining a balance of species that reflects the needs and values of a healthy cultural landscape.”

The Federation has consistently advocated for an approach to species management that centres Traditional Owner groups' holistic worldviews and the centrality of Country – as a dynamic, interconnected tapestry of culture and ecology, not merely a set of separated species or land tenure types.

The [Cultural Landscapes Strategy](#), developed by Victorian Traditional Owners in a process facilitated by the Federation in 2019-20, provides a framework for cultural management of Country that would restore traditional knowledge and centre cultural practice, for better environmental and social outcomes for everyone.

A cultural landscapes view of dingo management would recognise the apex predator's role in the landscape: managing kangaroo and wallaby populations, ensuring adequate grass provides food and shelter for insects and smaller animals, and providing kinship and companionship to people.

The Federation has consistently advocated for partnership with Traditional Owner groups to jointly make decisions for culturally significant species in the cultural landscape.

“If Traditional Owners were respected as genuine partners in decision-making for culturally significant species, we'd see our rights recognised and expressed – not the subject of court proceedings,” says Mr Paton.

“I call on the Victorian Government to step back, respect our cultural authority and obligations to Country, and enable Traditional Owners to implement a cultural landscapes approach to managing Country.”

– 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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