

PROCEDURE ON THE MANAGEMENT OF DINGOES IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS AND COUNCIL MANAGED SPACES IN HAWKS NEST

Adopted by MANEX
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Background:

Dingoes/ wild dogs (hereafter referred to as "*dingoes*") are sometimes encountered within Hawks Nest village and the surrounding natural areas, including Bennetts Beach, Yacaaba Peninsula and Jimmys Beach.

The frequency of sightings of dingoes in and near Hawks Nest is likely to be influenced by the proximity of the area to the extensive Myall Lakes National Park system. Dingoes in Myall Lakes National Park are considered to be of special conservation value due to their ecological function (as a top or apex predator) and their apparent genetic integrity.

To some visitors or residents, an observation of a dingo can be a positive and uplifting natural wildlife experience. To others, an observation of a dingo can be a negative experience due to a fear of perceived or actual risk.

The dingo can represent a serious threat to human safety. The risk of threat to human safety escalates when dingoes are habituated (ie. lose their fear of humans) and particularly when they are

encouraged to interact with humans by calling to them or feeding them. The sequence of events from human feeding of dingoes to serious aggression or an attack can be quite a rapid process; sometimes only a matter of days.

Because the risk of dingo aggression to humans escalates due to human behaviours associated with feeding and habituation, there will be an active emphasis on community education and awareness programs locally in the application of this Procedure.

The risk of negative dingo interactions with the public may increase during certain times of the year or seasons, such as during and after dog whelping (as young dogs may enter towns and camping areas).

There is a need for active dingo awareness and management in residential Hawks Nest and nearby public spaces. Ideally, this process should be compatible with and complement dingo management procedures employed by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service within Myall Lakes National Park.

This procedure sets out management activities for dingoes in the residential areas and Council-managed spaces in and near Hawks Nest. It has been developed following consultation with relevant agencies, including NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Hunter Local Land Services, as well as through review and recognition of local dingo management experiences dating back to at least the 1990's. Internally, this procedure has been informed by the Natural Systems and Compliance sections.

Dingoes in towns and other public areas excluding National Parks, Crown Lands that are not under Council's care and control and State Forests are within Council's area of responsibility. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service manages dingoes on national park estates.

Dingo management objectives:

Council will manage dingoes in residential areas and Council-managed spaces in Hawks Nest in accordance with the following objectives:

- *Dingo management procedures will recognise the positive values of dingoes and respect the opinions and sensitivities of the general public, and*
- *Dingo management procedures will be prescriptive and consistent. They will be responsive to and informed by observations of behaviour patterns, and*
- *Dingo management will seek to remove animals that show patterns of aggressive behaviour prior to that prior to that dingo becoming a significant or unacceptable risk to the general public, and*
- *Dingo management procedures will complement procedures adopted by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in Myall Lakes National Park, and*
- *Lethal dingo control techniques will be effective, humane and ethical.*

Our management objectives require good data collation, including identification of individual dogs and records of behaviours. Behaviour-management shall be based on behaviour patterns that are associated with menacing or aggressive domestic dogs, as set-out in the relevant legislation.

Dingo management procedures:

MidCoast Council will maintain a register of dingo sightings and interactions within residential areas and Council-owned or controlled lands via an active Smartsheet and will encourage the community to report details of all sightings and interactions.

For each report, details that identify the individual animal will be recorded (such as distinguishing colour patterns, etc). Also, the behaviour of the dingo will be described and will be attributed to a behaviour class:

- **Class 1 behaviour:**
 - Ignoring people; carrying out its own behaviours
 - Shying away from people

- **Class 2 behaviour:**
 - Approaching people in an unaggressive or curious manner

- **Class 3 behaviour:**
 - Stealing food from attended human sources (barbecues, picnics, tents, etc)
 - Following a person without aggression
 - Acting aggressively towards an unattended pet dog

- **Class 4 behaviour:**
 - Stalking, bailing, lunging at, chasing or circling people with an aggressive intent
 - Approaching people in an aggressive manner (nipping, growling, snarling, baring teeth, dominance-behaviour, aggressive posturing (standing tall in the hind legs, tail up and curled, ears either folded back or held forward, head down, staring, etc)
 - Attacking or biting people without provocation
 - Attacking or biting an attended pet without provocation

Once a dingo behaviour threshold is exceeded by any individual dog which suggests that there is an escalating and unacceptable public risk then the dog will be controlled.

The behaviour Class 1 is the level of behaviour that MidCoast Council hopes local dingoes will display. No action will be taken on dingoes exhibiting class 1 behaviours.

Behaviour Class 2 is considered a common and not unacceptable behaviour for dingoes. While this can be intimidating to some community members, no actions will be taken on dingoes exhibiting only Class 2 behaviours.

Behaviour Class 3 is a dingo in a state of transition to escalating risk. Dingoes demonstrating this behaviour will be identified and closely monitored.

Class 3 dingoes should be managed by some form of hazing (eg. capture using leg-hold or cage traps, sedation (with a gas-propelled rifle and dart), ear-tagged for ease of identification for monitoring purposes and released). This action may cause the subject animal to be more fearful of humans and change their escalating behaviours. This action requires special statutory approval or a supervised trial and can not be implemented at this time.

Behaviour Class 4 dingoes are significantly escalated behaviours that represent an unacceptable safety risk.

Dingoes exhibiting Class 4 behaviours will be lethally controlled. The dingo will be trapped (leg-hold or cage trap), sedated, transported to a secure location and humanely euthanized. The control action would be via a professional pest controller or qualified Council or government officer. Trapping and re-location is not considered an option for Class 4 behaviour dingoes. Dingoes with aggressive-tendencies towards people do not tend to unlearn this behaviour and are expected to represent a continued and ongoing risk.

Controlled and captured dingoes shall have satisfactory material collected that would enable genetic testing to determine the extent (where possible) of hybridisation with domestic dog genes.

Any opportunity to attach remote satellite tracking devices to captured and released dogs will be undertaken (funds permitting or association with relevant research partner) to enable a greater understanding of the patterns of dingo movements.

Any opportunity to collaborate with research institutions around non-lethal behaviour changes in wild dogs should be pursued.

After each community report, the behaviour exhibited by the dingo would be attributed a Behaviour Class 1 - 4 by a panel comprising Council's Senior Ecologist and a Ranger.

There will be costs associated with the implementation of this procedure including staff costs in-kind of administration, training and accreditation costs, costs of material purchase and costs of signage installation and maintenance.

In this regard, the training, accreditation and equipping of Council staff in trapping, dart gun sedation, ear-tagging, lethal control and other control techniques would be highly beneficial and cost-effective. The execution of the procedure requires immediate response to dingoes demonstrating Class 4 behaviours, which means a reliance on contractors would be sub-optimal.



Associated education campaign:

The success of the Dingo Management Procedure depends on active and accurate reporting of dingo behaviour by the general public, which in turn required a strong and consistent education campaign.

Such a program will involve:

- New signage (public areas)
- New brochure
- Liaison with communications teams in Council and NPWS

A key and major element of the education campaign will be based on actively discouraging any feeding or habituation of any dingo and asking people to report any incidents and especially negative interactions with dingoes.

It is beneficial that Council can enforce that it is an offence for a member of the public to feed dingoes.