

## 7.18. PETITION “LET SLEEPING DINGOES LIVE” (8 JULY 2025)

<b>REPORT AUTHOR</b>	Acting Coordinator Public Spaces
<b>MANAGER</b>	Manager Maintenance and Operations
<b>DEPARTMENT</b>	Maintenance and Operations
<b>RECOMMENDATION</b>	

**That Council:**

1. Note that this report addresses the petition titled “*Let Sleeping Dingoes Live*” submitted on 3 January 2025;
2. Reaffirms its commitment to compliance with the *Biosecurity Act 2014* with respect to dingo management and adherence to Councils adopted Biosecurity Management Plan 2022-2026; and
3. Note that correspondence will be provided to the lead petitioner detailing Council’s response to the concerns raised with the petition.

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over several months, Council has received over 30+ formal complaints and numerous correspondences—particularly from local resorts—regarding dingo activity in the Port Douglas township. Reports describe two dingoes displaying increasingly bold and aggressive behaviour, including:

- Attacking domestic pets
- Stalking residents
- Scavenging food from resorts & commercial areas

Such behaviours pose a serious public safety risk and indicate the animals have become habituated to human presence, often due to feeding.

### BACKGROUND

A petition titled “*Let Sleeping Dingoes Live*” was submitted to Council via email on 3 January 2025 and formally presented at the Ordinary Council Meeting (OCM) on 31 January 2025. The petition attracted 1,161 signatures, including 134 from Douglas Shire residents (approximately 1.04% of the local population, based on recent census data).

The petition called for:

1. The immediate removal of dingo traps in Port Douglas.
2. A shift in Council policy away from baiting and culling, towards relocation.
3. Increased public education on safely coexisting with dingoes.

### COMMENTS

Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, dingoes are classified as *restricted invasive animals*. Local governments have a legal duty to take reasonable and practical steps to manage biosecurity risks associated with such animals.

### **1. Petition Concern: Immediate Removal of Traps**

Council's Response:

- Trapping is employed only when dingoes display threatening behaviour, such as aggression toward people or domestic animals.
- Council's response is in accordance with State biosecurity and animal welfare legislation and follows best-practice guidelines.
- Interventions are targeted and undertaken on a case-by-case basis in consultation with relevant stakeholders.

### **2. Petition Concern: End to Automatic Baiting and Killing; Support for Relocation**

Council's Response:

- Council does not engage in automatic baiting or culling. Decisions are based on public risk and legal responsibilities.
- Use of 1080 baiting is prohibited in urban areas and is not used within the Port Douglas township.
- Relocation is not legally permitted. Under the Biosecurity Act, restricted invasive animals such as dingoes cannot be moved, kept, or released without a permit, which is typically granted only to scientific or conservation bodies.
- Council has no authority to relocate dingoes and must comply with biosecurity law.

### **3. Petition Concern: Public Education on Coexistence with Dingoes**

Council's Response:

- Public education is a core component of Council's strategy to reduce human-wildlife conflict.
- Temporary warning signs have been installed in affected areas, with permanent signage planned.
- Educational brochures have been distributed to tourist accommodations, particularly backpacker hostels, warning of the dangers of feeding dingoes.

In response, a Council workshop was held on 25 March 2025, attended by the Mayor, Councillors, Chief Executive Officer, and General Managers.

The workshop discussed Council's commitment to:

- Uphold community safety while respecting the ecological role of native wildlife.
- Maintain compliance with Queensland legislation, including the *Biosecurity Act 2014* and relevant public health laws.
- Continue to pursue education-first approaches wherever feasible, with enforcement actions used only when there is a clear and immediate risk.

## PROPOSAL

While the desire for non-lethal management is appreciated, legal and safety obligations restrict Council's ability to adopt certain actions, such as relocation. Moving forward, Council remains committed to:

- Responsibly managing human-wildlife interactions,
- Minimising biosecurity risks,
- Educating the community to prevent further habituation of dingoes.

Residents are encouraged to report aggressive or unusual dingo behaviour promptly and to avoid feeding or interacting with wild animals.

Further information can be found in Council's Biosecurity Management Plan 2022–2026, available on the Council website.

## FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- The measures proposed (education campaigns, signage, brochures, and case-by-case responses such as trapping when required) fall within Council's operational budget.
- Costs are not excessive and represent standard expenditure for public safety, biosecurity compliance, and community education.
- No significant additional staff, equipment, or long-term funding commitments are anticipated.
- Council can leverage existing biosecurity and animal control resources and partnerships with State agencies to ensure cost efficiency.

## RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- Failure to intervene when dingoes exhibit threatening or aggressive behaviour exposes residents and visitors to potential injury.
- Inaction would place Council in breach of obligations under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, which requires local government to take reasonable steps to manage restricted invasive animals.
- Non-response could damage community confidence in Council's ability to uphold safety and statutory responsibilities. It may also lead to negative media attention.
- Should an incident occur, Council may face claims of negligence for not acting on a known hazard.

## SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

### Economic:

Dingoes that become habituated to humans (via feeding or lack of management) may show increased aggression, leading to more frequent interventions in the long term.

Dingoes play a role in the ecosystem, but unmanaged conflict risks could undermine both conservation values and community safety. Without proactive education, unsafe behaviours (such as feeding dingoes) may persist, worsening long-term coexistence challenges.

Ignoring the issue would contradict best-practice wildlife management principles and State biosecurity requirements, undermining Council's sustainability, and governance goals.

**Environmental:** Under the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, dingoes are classified as *restricted invasive animals*. Local governments have a legal duty to take reasonable and practical steps to manage biosecurity risks associated with such animals.

**Social:** Council responded to the concerns for the welfare of the Shires Dingo population by way of a petition (1161 total, including 134 Douglas Shire residents) and acted in accordance with the Douglas Shire Biosecurity Plan (2022–2026) and in consultation with Traditional Owners, Indigenous ranger groups, and State Government departments, has acted to address the situation responsibly and legally

## CORPORATE/OPERATIONAL PLAN, POLICY REFERENCE

This report has been prepared in accordance with the following:

### Corporate Plan 2025-2030 Initiatives:

#### Theme 1 - Liveability

To deliver community activities to promote safe, healthy, inclusive and socially engaged communities with an environmental conscious.

**1.5 - Keep the community informed.**

#### Theme 3 - Service Delivery

We deliver Council services effectively and efficiently to meet community expectations, focusing on the wellbeing of both the community and our employees.

**3.9 - Preserve, protect and improve our unique environment.**

### Operational Plan 2025-2026 Actions:

3.9.4 - Update Douglas Shire Council's Biosecurity Plan.

## COUNCIL'S ROLE

Council can play a number of different roles in certain circumstances and it is important to be clear about which role is appropriate for a specific purpose or circumstance. The implementation of actions will be a collective effort and Council's involvement will vary from information only through to full responsibility for delivery.

The following areas outline where Council has a clear responsibility to act:

**Custodian** Council owns and manages infrastructure, facilities, reserves, resources and natural areas. In fulfilling its role as custodian, Council will be mindful of the community, the economy, the environment, and good governance.

## CONSULTATION



**Internal:**

Acting Co-Ordinator Public Spaces  
Chief Engineer  
Manager Maintenance and Operations  
Governance  
Acting Team Leader Biosecurity

**External:**

N/A

**COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Douglas Shire Resident

**ATTACHMENTS**

1. Dingo Flyer (002) [7.18.1 - 2 pages]
2. Q 8573 Douglas Shire Council Dingo Coreflutes 600 x 900 v 2 [7.18.2 - 1 page]

# Be dingo-safe in Port Douglas

Safety and information guide



Dingoes are an integral part of our ecosystem. It is essential to recognise their presence in the Douglas Shire area and take appropriate measures to ensure the safety of both humans and these wild animals.



**Learn  
More**

## Be dingo-safe!

**Do not approach or feed the dingo:**

Keep a safe distance and do not attempt to interact with the dingo. It is an offence to feed or leave food out for dingoes. When dingoes get used to humans through feeding or other encouragement, the risk of unsafe interactions rises significantly.



**Report the sighting:** Inform local authorities or the Douglas Shire Council's Biosecurity Team about the dingo sighting. They can provide guidance and assistance if necessary.

P: 40 999 444



**Follow safety precautions:** If you feel threatened by a dingo, keep your arms close to your body, slowly back away while maintaining eye contact. Do not turn your back on the animal or run. Stand up to your full height or if in pairs or a group, stand back-to-back.



# DINGO RISK AREA

## Current Dingo Activity Reported in this Area

Dingoes in the area have been reported showing threatening behaviours to people and pets, including:

- Chasing
- Stalking
- Approaching residential and outdoor areas

## For your safety:

- Never Feed or Approach Dingoes
- Stay close to small children – never leave unsupervised
- Do not turn your back on Dingoes – keep eye contact, back away slowly to a safe place, alert other people.
- Consider walking your pets in an alternate location

**Please report Dingo interactions:**

**[enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au](mailto:enquiries@douglas.qld.gov.au) or (07) 4099 944**



**Be Dingo Safe!**