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Hi everyone, I'm Penny Sharpe – Minister for the Environment.

I wanted to take the time to send a message today to all National Parks and Wildlife Service staff.

Today, as you may have seen, I've announced that I have directed the Department to prepare a draft amendment of the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan* and to place it on public exhibition.

I am proposing to amend the plan to allow aerial shooting of wild horses in the park.

I am concerned that Kosciuszko National Park – one of the jewels of our national parks crown – is in grave danger. Kosci's precious ecosystems and endangered species are at risk of extinction.

We know that there are simply too many wild horses in the park.

I believe that aerial shooting **could** give us a powerful tool to use in order to protect the park.

A final decision has not been made.

The amendment will be exhibited for at least 30 days. The public is encouraged to make submissions. Any community member that cares about Kosci is encouraged to let us know their thoughts.

After the exhibition I will consider all submissions before making a final decision.

However, I know that this time won't always be easy for National parks staff. Particularly our staff who work in Kosci and the surrounding area.

I know there are a small number of members of the community who have said and done things that are inexcusable. I want all Parks staff to know that I take the safety of parks staff extremely seriously.

Your safety is the number one priority and the National Parks and Wildlife Service leadership team is implementing additional measures to ensure you

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are safe at work. I will be speaking to parks leadership regularly about what I can do to support parks staff.

The work that all national parks staff do is valued and crucial. I support the work each and every one of you do, everyday. Whether you're on the ground, in an office, or something in between.

Kosciuszko was the first national park I visited after I became the Minister. I was proud to take the Premier there a week ago to see the beauty and to see the damage.

This will be hard. But hard things are worth doing.

There's work to be done – I'm looking forward to doing it together.

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