

ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

Supplementary questions: Invasive Species Council

Answers are to be returned to the Committee secretariat by 29 January 2024.

1. At the Inquiry, it was discussed that the Invasive Species Council (ISC) had a 'pro-forma' submission that it encouraged people to submit to the recent consultation on the NSW Government's 'Draft Kosciuszko National Park wild horse heritage management plan'.
 - a. Can you please confirm how many people submitted an ISC pro-forma submission to the consultation (either in the form of an actual submission, or a survey response)?

6,466 people made submissions through the Invasive Species Council website to the NSW Government's public consultation into amendments to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. Separately, about 20 volunteers for the Invasive Species Council also developed their own pro forma submissions which they provided to members of the public at stalls. The Invasive Species Council supported their efforts through our public liability insurance. We understand they collected and forwarded about 1,700 separate hard copy submissions through this.

- b. Can you please provide a copy of the ISC's pro-forma submission to the Committee?

Yes - see [attachment 1](#).

- c. Were all the people who ultimately submitted ISC's pro-forma submission to the consultation from NSW?
 - d. If yes, how did the ISC ensure that only people from NSW made a submission using the pro-forma?
 - e. Are you able confirm if people overseas were able to fill in the ISC proforma? How many people overseas made a submission using the pro-forma?

c-d.

People making submissions through the ISC website were asked to include their postcode and using these we can provide the breakdown by state in [Table 1](#).

All approximately 1,700 hard copy submissions collected by volunteers were collected at locations within NSW. They also required a postcode, but we do not have access to these.

There were 93 submissions through the ISC website that included either an invalid postcode or no postcode and some of these may have been from overseas. Many of these were people who

wrote their suburb or address instead of a postcode and are clearly from Australia and predominantly from NSW.

There was no requirement in the consultation that people be NSW based. Given Kosciuszko National Park is part of the National Heritage Listed Australian Alps and one of the most visited National Parks in the country it is no surprise that people from across the country are concerned about its devastation by feral horses, were interested in the outcome of this consultation and made a submission.

Table 1 – Submissions through the ISC website broken down by postcode provided.

State	Signers	Percentage
NSW/ACT	3,647	56.39%
Vic	1,178	18.22%
Qld	765	11.83%
SA	274	4.24%
WA	237	3.67%
TAS	237	3.67%
NT	35	0.54%
Invalid or No Postcode	93	1.44%
Total (including invalid postcodes)	6,466	

2. How much money did the ISC spend promoting their pro-forma and encouraging people to make a submission to the consultation, including in relation to any Facebook advertising? Please provide a breakdown of amounts spent.

- Facebook/Instagram: \$3,525.42
- The Invasive Species Council also supported the efforts of volunteers who developed their own pro forma submissions which they provided to members of the public at stalls through our public liability insurance.

3. There was discussion at the Inquiry hearing about meetings that the ISC had had with members of the Committee about the Inquiry. For the record, can you please clarify which committee members you met with about the inquiry and whether at any of those meetings you:

- a. discussed the evidence you planned to give at the Inquiry; or
- b. discussed the questions the members of the Inquiry planned to ask you, or expressed questions you thought should be asked to other witnesses or yourself?

If the answer is yes, please provide specific details as to what was discussed and with whom.

- Jack Gough had a meeting with Aileen MacDonald in October 2023 about a range of invasive species issues and the issue of feral horse control was discussed.

- Jack Gough had a meeting with Emily Suvaal in November 2023 about a range of invasive species issues and cannot recall if the issue of feral horse control was discussed.
- Jack Gough had a meeting with Emma Hurst in November 2023 about a range of invasive species issues and cannot recall if the issue of feral horse control was discussed.
- Jack Gough met with Stephen Lawrence in December 2023 about a range of issues and the issue of feral horse control was discussed.

At none of these meetings does Jack Gough recall discussing the specific questions we thought should be asked. The discussions touched on a range of issues regarding feral horse control which the Invasive Species Council also talked about in our evidence to the inquiry.

4. The Invasive Species Council was the third Ministerial meeting Minister Sharpe declared in her disclosures, ahead of larger (and arguably more crucial) Ministerial portfolio stakeholders, such as AEMO, the Energy Regulator, and even the ETU and AWU.
 - a. Who requested the meeting?

The Invasive Species Council met with Minister Sharpe as part of her visit to Kosciuszko National Park. We cannot recall who instigated the meeting at the time, but it was by mutual agreement following earlier discussions about the importance of the issue.

- b. Was aerial culling discussed and if so, who raised it?

Yes. The Invasive Species Council outlined the evidence which shows that aerial culling:

- can be done safely, humanely, and effectively when undertaken by professionals,
- is a routine part of feral animal management for other species in NSW, including for deer and pigs in Kosciuszko National Park, and for feral horse management in other states and territories, and
- is the only control method which would enable the NSW government to meet the legally required target of 3,000 feral horses by 2027.

The points we raised reflected similar points we have made publicly in the media, in discussions with the previous Liberal-National NSW Government, in our submissions and evidence to the Senate inquiry and this inquiry, and in our communications to parties, candidates, and MPs in the lead up to the 2023 NSW election.

- c. Did the Invasive Species Council make any financial commitments to the Government by way of supporting any future aerial culling proposal, by funding advocacy campaigns?

No.

Attachment 1: ISC submission guide

Dear Project Team,

[YOUR PERSONALISED MESSAGE WILL APPEAR HERE.]

I support the amendment to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan to allow our incredible National Parks staff to use aerial shooting as one method to rapidly reduce feral horse numbers. I want to see feral horse numbers urgently reduced in order to save the national park and our native wildlife that live there.

The current approach is not solving the problem. Feral horse numbers have rapidly increased in Kosciuszko National Park to around 18,000, a 30% jump in just the past 2 years. With the population so high, thousands of feral horses need to be removed annually to reduce numbers and stop our National Park becoming a horse paddock. Aerial shooting, undertaken humanely and safely by professionals using standard protocols, is the only way this can happen.

The government's own management plan for feral horses states that 'if undertaken in accordance with best practice, aerial shooting can have the lowest negative animal welfare impacts of all lethal control methods'.

This humane and effective practice is already used across Australia to manage hundreds of thousands of feral animals like horses, deer, pigs, and goats.

Trapping and rehoming of feral horses has been used in Kosciuszko National Park for well over a decade but has consistently failed to reduce the population, has delayed meaningful action and is expensive. There are too many feral horses in the Alps and not enough demand for rehoming for it to be relied upon for the reduction of the population.

Fertility control as a management tool is only effective for a small, geographically isolated, and accessible population of feral horses where the management outcome sought is to maintain the population at its current size. It is not a viable option to reduce the large and growing feral horse population in the vast and rugged terrain of Kosciuszko National Park.

Feral horses are trashing and trampling our sensitive alpine ecosystems and streams, causing the decline and extinction of native animals. The federal government's Threatened Species Scientific Committee has stated that feral horses 'may be the crucial factor that causes final extinction' for 12 alpine species.

I recognise the sad reality that urgent and humane measures are necessary to urgently remove the horses or they will destroy the Snowies and the native wildlife that call the mountains home. I support a healthy national park where native species like the Corroboree Frog and Mountain Pygmy Possum can thrive.

Kind regards,

[Your name]

[Your email address]

[Your postcode]

Question 1:

The CHAIR: When the Government announced their consultation, did you email your members and encourage them to make submissions?

JACK GOUGH: Sorry, this inquiry?

The CHAIR: No, the Government's consultation.

JACK GOUGH: We definitely went out to our supporters and encouraged them to engage with it, yes.

The CHAIR: Did you provide any pro formas for submissions?

JACK GOUGH: Yes, we encouraged people to make submissions to that, as often occurs.

The CHAIR: How many submissions went through that pro forma system?

JACK GOUGH: I'd have to take it on notice.

The Hon. WES FANG: There were 6,373, according to your website.

JACK GOUGH: Excellent. Well, we did a good job then, didn't we?

Ms SUE HIGGINSON: Yes, good reach.

JACK GOUGH: You should donate to us.

Answer: 6,466 people made submissions through the Invasive Species Council website to the NSW Government's public consultation into amendments to the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. Separately, about 20 volunteers for the Invasive Species Council also developed their own pro forma submissions which they provided to members of the public at stalls. The Invasive Species Council supported their efforts through our public liability insurance. We understand they collected and forwarded about 1,700 separate hard copy submissions through this.

Question 2:

The CHAIR: Did you provide any submission suggestions to the members as well to make a submission, outside of the pro forma, like a submissions guideline?

JACK GOUGH: Sorry, to the members here? Sorry, I don't know what you mean—to the members of Parliament?

The CHAIR: No. In addition to a pro forma, did you provide a submission suggestion to your members to make a submission to the Government's consultation?

JACK GOUGH: We don't have members that we go out to, but certainly just people who support the Invasive Species Council and encourage them to make a submission.

The CHAIR: Sorry, you don't have members of the Invasive Species Council? There's no membership base?

JACK GOUGH: I would have to take it on notice.

The Hon. ROBERT BORSAK: Your annual report says you've got about 230.

JACK GOUGH: I think we may have members as part of the constitutional process, but I'm talking about we have supporters that we engaged with.

Answer: The Invasive Species Council has 131 members

Question 3:

The CHAIR: Some people give submission suggestions, "points that you might like to make in your submission". Other people also have a pro forma. You have said that you have a pro forma. The other question was did you also have submission suggestions that you make to your supporters while encouraging them to make their own submission, outside of the pro forma?

JACK GOUGH: I'd have to take it on notice.

The Hon. WES FANG: Now he's vague.

JACK GOUGH: No, I'm not trying to be vague. My memory is that we went out to our supporters and asked them to make submissions using the pro forma and then engaged with other organisations as well—like, not to supporters but organisations on things that they may like to raise and provided our submission to them.

The CHAIR: Which organisations was that?

JACK GOUGH: I actually can't remember.

The Hon. WES FANG: So vague.

The CHAIR: Order!

JACK GOUGH: I can take that on notice as to which organisations we engaged with. It would have been a large number.

The CHAIR: Thank you. If you could also take on notice if you've got the information as to how many submissions those organisations were able to get through the pro forma as well, that would be useful.

JACK GOUGH: Yes, I can ask them. I don't know how—

Answer: **The Invasive Species Council, the National Parks Association of the ACT, National Parks Association of NSW, Colong Foundation for Wilderness and the Nature Conservation Council of NSW founded the Reclaim Kosci campaign in 2018 to bring into sharp focus the out of control feral horse numbers in Kosciuszko National Park. This campaign is coordinated by the Invasive Species Council and supported by over 25 organisations who have collaborated over many years on this crucial environmental issue.**

In response to the NSW Government's consultation on important amendments to protect Kosciuszko National Park from the impacts of feral horses, the Invasive Species Council emailed several community, union and environment organisations to encourage them to make a submission to the NSW Government's consultation. We also provided them a link to our submission guide on the Invasive Species Council website (<https://invasives.org.au/>) and asked them to let their supporters know about the opportunity to make a submission. These are all organisations who have a long-standing commitment to urgent action to reduce feral horse numbers to protect our native wildlife and alpine rivers.

We do not know which of these made submissions and presumably many would have made submissions regardless of our prompt. These included:

- National Parks Association of NSW
- National Parks Association of ACT
- Victorian National Parks Association
- NSW Conservation Council
- Conservation Council of ACT
- Environment Victoria
- Australia Land Conservation Alliance
- Australian Conservation Foundation
- The Nature Conservancy
- Birdlife Australia

- Wilderness Society
- Environmental Defenders Office
- Friends of the Earth
- Public Service Association
- CPSU
- Wilderness Australia
- Inland Rivers Network
- Australian Association of Bush Regenerators
- Australian Wildlife Society
- Inland Rivers Network
- WWF Australia
- Biodiversity Council
- Canberra Bushwalking Club
- Bushwalking NSW
- Nordic Ski Club
- Friends of Currango
- Native Fish Australia
- Monaro Acclimatisation Society