

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

HEARING – Monday 5 February 2024 SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS

Dr Jill Brown, Convenor, Heritage Horse and Environment Alliance

1. The committee heard from a witness that he guesstimated it would cost the Government \$5000 to remove a brumby but only \$100 to \$150 to kill one via aerial shooting – do you think these guesstimations are correct? If not, why not?

1. This statement is a gross oversimplification. The basis of the Inquiry is around the inherent cruelty of aerial culling, not the cost benefit of the current actions. At the core of the matter is an accurate count of real brumby numbers. Working together to ascertain this and to assess the actual impact of brumbies on the environment would be the optimal way to resolve the issue and to reduce conflict.

The cost of training, supplies, aircraft, health and safety needs to be factored in. It may come down to cost on the day only being \$100 to \$150 per horse IF they are shooting several thousand during a one flight day. Capital and operational costs incurred in setting up and running the recent aerial cull trial should be sourced from the NSW Government and NPWS to fully understand actual financials.

As to the cost of rehoming, all materials, policies and processes to trap brumbies have been in place for many years. There are no ongoing training or establishment costs for the NSW Government to pay. Only maintenance, staffing, 'bait supplies' and hay to feed brumbies in traps/at Blowering to be purchased – purely operational costs that should already be well documented by NPWS.

To clarify, brumbies are passively trapped using portable yards set up within the KNP. These are 'baited' using molasses and salt, to encourage the horses in. The trap gate 'springs shut' trapping the horses inside the yard panels. These panels can be purchased for approximately \$3000 to make up a set of yards and a gate, and last for many years. A portable cattle ramp can be purchased for approximately \$2,500. NPWS currently have ramps and a large amount of panel stock on hand and set up, so the investment has already been made.

NPWS staff periodically check the traps, and if there are horses, remove them to Blowering (near Tumut) to be sorted and held in yards. Cattle crates for removal cost around \$10,000 to purchase new. NPWS have several cattle crates on hand so the investment has already been made.

Blowering was built years ago and is fully operational. The investment has already been made and there are no further costs involved.

Capital and operational costs incurred in setting up and running trapping and rehoming of horses should be sourced from NPWS to fully understand actual financials. They have been doing it for years and it should be well documented.

The ongoing costs are mainly maintenance and operational, and occur whether or not a brumby is bound to be picked up by a rehomer, or a slaughter truck, or to be shot on the NPWS Blowering site.

2. How much would you roughly estimate that it would cost the NSW Government to remove a brumby from Kosciuszko National Park and send them on to a rehomer or sanctuary?

Given that all necessary infrastructure has been funded and established years ago, ongoing costs for the NSW Government are only for maintenance of yards, vehicles, staffing, bait material and hay.

Rehomers pay for and organise transport themselves, so there is no cost to NPWS except for manpower to provide safe yards, hay, water and cleaning for the horses.

Horses are not held in yards for long, so if feed is 2 bales of hay per day horse for a week being \$308 per horse, at \$22 per bale of hay. The price of hay varies and can be as little as \$10 per bale or less substantially reducing the cost of feed.

if staff costs are included 2 hours a day to feed and clean the yards, estimated costs would be \$100 per day. Split this across say 10 horses in the yard and it is around \$70 for a week per horse. Veterinary care would be on an as needed basis.

So the total running cost to NPWS is between \$378 and \$210 per horse for a week prior to rehoming. If horses were to be relocated in a sanctuary rather than rehomed, costs would be substantially reduced.

Note that, currently, rehoming bears all ongoing costs themselves. If provision and funding for basic foundation training was made, it should be possible to sell brumbies to appropriate homes, thus recovering much of the cost involved. This is, however, a matter for the future and a coordinated, co-operative and far kinder approach to brumby management.