
From: Jack Gough
Sent: Thursday, 21 March 2024 2:28 PM
To: Animal Welfare; Emma Hurst
Cc: Office of Aileen MacDonald; Office of MLC Lawrence; Office of Sue Higginson; Robert Borsak; Office of MLC Nanva; Office of MLC Suvaal; Office of Peter Primrose; Kellie Sloane; Andrew Cox; Wes Fang
Subject: CM: Re: Proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park

Dear Animal Welfare Committee,

Cc: Environment Minister Penny Sharpe and Shadow Minister for Environment Kellie Sloane

I write to you in response to a number of adverse mentions in the media and in parliament recently by some members of the committee about the Invasive Species Council.

- Firstly, there has been a concern expressed by members of the committee in parliament and the media that the submissions that were made to the government's consultation on amending the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan through the Invasive Species Council's website or through the efforts of volunteers who collected written submissions are somehow illegitimate or of less worth than other submissions, particularly as they included a pro-forma section. Setting aside the strange suggestion that the opinions of thousands of Australians (with almost 60% being from NSW) are illegitimate or less valuable simply because of the way they made a submission, it may be of interest to the committee to know that **58% of the submission made through our website (or 3,750 out of 6,466 submissions) included a detailed personal message**. For the 1,700 written submissions collected by volunteers I do not have a breakdown of how many included personal messages but I have been told by those who collected them that this was an option that a lot of people chose to use.
- Secondly, it is disappointing and disingenuous for members of the committee to be trying to delegitimise the submissions that came through our website on the basis that some of them did not come from NSW, when there is no information about the percentage of other submissions that did not come from NSW. Given the strong interest in this issue from pro-feral horse groups in Victoria and overseas, it would be highly surprising if a high number of the submissions that were opposed to aerial culling were not also from interstate or overseas, particularly the USA.
- Thirdly, in Parliament last night the Chair of the Committee stated that *"Aerial shooting is not supported by the majority of the community. The Invasive Species Council submitted 8,000 pro forma submissions... By contrast, submissions to the upper House inquiry have shown that an overwhelming number of respondents are opposed to aerial shooting"*. In response to this it is important to point out that this committee's inquiry came only weeks after two separate and similar consultation processes where thousands of people made submissions - (1) the federal Senate inquiry into feral horse management in the Alps and (2) the NSW Government's consultation on amendments to the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. It is therefore not unexpected that a very large number of people who had in good faith made submissions to those two consultation processes did not make another submission a few weeks later - particularly when the decision to proceed with aerial control had already been made by the NSW Government. This inquiry also had much less high profile media attention in the period while submissions were open compared to both of the previous processes.

- Finally, in a motion to parliament last night the Chair of this committee described the Invasive Species Council as "*a lobby group dedicated to the killing of animals*". This is an inaccurate and insulting characterisation of our organisation, our supporters, and the work that we do. As was made clear in our submission to this committee and is clear from our public conduct, the Invasive Species Council is dedicated to stopping the extinction of native animals and plants and the degradation of Australia's environment by invasive species. Our role is to advocate for stronger laws, for stronger policies and for funding for programs that keep Australia's incredible biodiversity safe from weeds, feral animals and other invasive species. While sometimes this requires us to advocate for feral animals to be killed in effective and professional programs to protect wildlife, we do not support indiscriminate, inhumane or ineffective feral animal control programs.

I am happy for this correspondence to be made public by the committee, with my contact details redacted of course.

If you would like to discuss this further, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards,

Jack Gough



Jack Gough, Advocacy Director
Typically works Mon - Wed & Fri (not Thurs)

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Protecting nature from one of Australia's greatest threats.

I acknowledge the Dharawal people as traditional custodians of the land on which I work and pay respect to their Elders past, present, and emerging.



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