

The Hon Penny Sharpe MLC

Minister for Climate Change, Minister for Energy,
Minister for the Environment, Minister for Heritage,
Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council



Our Ref

Ms Emma Hurst MP

Chair of the Animal Welfare Committee
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

By email:

Dear Ms Hurst

I note that the Animal Welfare Committee will conduct a hearing on 23 May 2024 as part of the inquiry into the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park.

Specific allegations against an unnamed employee of DCCEEW were aired on 2GB in April. The name of the staff member was subsequently provided.

The Secretary of DCCEEW has advised me that these allegations have been investigated and the Department has determined no misconduct has occurred. The investigation was conducted independently by a private investigation company. Further it involved a comprehensive review of electronic and phone records and interviews with affected staff, amongst other inquiries.

The source of the allegation was requested, but declined, to provide further information.

The allegations have been comprehensively considered and the matter has now been closed by the Department.

I also understand that:

- An audit by NPWS has found only one horse was unaccounted for out of about 1700 that were trapped since 2019;
- Multiple staff are required and are present when trapping occurs, and detailed records are kept of trapping activity, making it difficult for one staff member to act alone;
- The staff member against whom the allegation was made has no involvement in decisions to allocate horses to re-homers;
- The horses are provided free of charge and are obtained when requested (and if available), suggesting there is no incentive to make improper payments.

Given the nature of the program as outlined above, and the processes in place, it is highly unlikely that conduct as alleged would or could occur.

The broader Investigation into the Administration of Wild Horses Rehoming Program remains ongoing and a final investigation report is due with DCCEEW by 14 June 2024. I will update the Committee once that report is received.

Given that this staff member has been cleared I ask the committee to ensure that the hearing and witnesses before it follow the procedural fairness resolution in particular section 13 which deals with evidence that may seriously damage the reputation of a third party.

Sincerely

Penny Sharpe MLC

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22/5/24