

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential



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Web: <https://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/committees/inquiries/Pages/lodge-a-submission.aspx?pk=2991>

Dear Parliamentary Inquiry,

RE: Shooting of KNP Brumbies

The term feral when applied to horses is, I believe political and not scientific, therefore, I will use the term wild instead of feral in my submission as most of the Brumbies were born wild and not domestic so therefore can not be accurately described as 'feral'. I will also use the word Brumby (with a capital B) to describe the wild horses in Australia throughout this submission.

The Australian landscape can never return to pre-colonisation days. It is erroneous and entirely inaccurate to use false logic to justify the removal of Brumbies that they are not 'native' to the land, well neither are bike tracks, car parks, roads, power lines and the Snowy Hydro 2 which all compete for space in the Australian Alps.

By scapegoating the wild horse on selective arguments, you undermine the legitimacy and value of the Inquiry as it becomes a political tool to further fund 'feral' projects rather than take a wholistic view of the landscape as it stands today.

The Brumby is an iconic part of Australian culture, stories such as ‘the Silver Brumby’ and ‘the Man from Snowy River’ inspire people from all generations and bring about their love of the Australian bush and its inhabitants.

There is much scientific evidence to prove the benefits of the wild horse (large herbivores) to their eco system and how they promote biodiversity. I support the humane removal of Brumbies from national parks and the protection of fragile ecosystems in the Australian Alps. Most Brumby supporters do.

Firstly, I have included some links and information to current humane population management programs for wild horses internationally which have achieved success in reducing population numbers. These programs are cost effective, have the support of the local communities and are easily replicable in Australia, should we ever have the political will to extend vision beyond our current archaic “kill everything” mentality, we could and should learn from them.

New Zealand – Kaimanawa Heritage Horses Contraception Program

Link - <https://kaimanawaheritagehorses.org/contraception/>

“The May 2022 Kaimanawa Wild Horse Muster marked the start of a new era in the management of the Kaimanawa wild horse population following the introduction of immunocontraception as a method of controlling population growth into the future...”

“Finding suitable homes for mustered wild horses is challenging and not sustainable for long term management of the Kaimanawa wild horses. A population management programme was developed in 1993 the horse herds to a practicable level, that programme now includes the use of GonaCon Equine, a contraception drug helping reduce the wild horse population...”

America – Virginia Range Fertility Control

Link - <https://americanwildhorsecampaign.org/virginia-range-fertility-control>

“The Virginia Range program has broad-based community support, including participation from five local wild horse organisations, support from the business community (lead by Blockchains LLC), and bipartisan support from Nevada elected officials...”

“The program delivers PZP birth control, a non-hormonal immunocontraceptive vaccine, to wild mares via remote darting. The vaccine is documented by 30 years of science to be safe and 97% effective in preventing pregnancy without impacting the mustangs’ natural behaviours...”

England – The Fell Pony Conservation and Grazing Society

Link – <https://www.fellponysociety.org.uk/grazing.htm>

“The Society has a Conservation and Grazing sub-committee to promote the use of Fell ponies as native grazers of a managed landscape.

“The Fell Pony is a historic part of the Cumbrian countryside and well suited to conservation grazing, being easy to manage and inclined to stay away from people even though there may be public access to the land.

Europe – Rewilding Horses in Europe

Link - <https://rewildingeurope.com/rewilding-in-action/wildlife-comeback/wild-horses/>

“The European wild horse is officially extinct, but at the same time still present in many different types of feral horses. From Exmoor ponies in Western Europe to Hucul in the Eastern parts of the continent, several primitive horse breeds still have many characteristics of the original wild horse and are suitable for rewilding and regaining their place in European ecosystems. Horses used to live in the wild and in natural social groups are preferred above other breeds...

Secondly I would like to highlight the importance of some scientific studies which could help inform the discussion around the consequences of total removal of wild horses to the Australian landscape.

Macquarie University – Savanna responses to feral buffalo in Kakadu National Park

Link - <https://researchers.mq.edu.au/en/publications/savanna-responses-to-feral-buffalo-in-kakadu-national-park-austra>

*“the simple removal of an exotic **herbivore was not sufficient to return savanna systems to their previous state....and that the sudden removal of this exotic herbivore created two ecological cascades by altering ground cover abundance and composition, which in turn affected competitive regimes and fuel loads with possible further, long term effects due to changes in fire regimes..***

CSIRO Publishing – Free-ranging horse management in Australia, New Zealand and the United States: socio-ecological dimensions of a protracted environmental conflict

Link - <https://www.publish.csiro.au/RJ/RJ19019>

“Such labels and status can influence policy. For example, in AU horses were first recognised as a feral pests in the 1860s, and the notion of ‘feral’ was reflected in federal legislation in the 1975 Australian National

*Parks and Wildlife Conservation Act. This Act stipulates that exotic animals are to be **exterminated** or controlled in order to protect the parks' natural and native values, specifically for federally managed parks, but not necessarily for parks and conservation tenures under separate state legislation, although it is noteworthy that this was repealed by the Environmental Reform Act of 1999 (Australian Government 1975).*

Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage – Rewilding Australia to sustain biodiversity

Link - https://epicaustralia.org.au/rewilding-australia/?fbclid=IwAR1DPYg2uSCuwlcwLl40z_hUPGneoku-s33eosdx9Q7EMGYbapDCOOOjGRY

*“None of this is to say that large herbivores introduced to Australia have no ecological value. Probably they do, and under some conditions that could include controlling fire risk. **The challenge for Australian ecologists is to discover what those benefits might be and work out how to manage the abundance of those animals so that their benefits outweigh their harm.***

“The key will be to look at our environment, including both our native and introduced species, with fresh eyes.”

Science Advances - Collapse of the World's Largest Herbivores

Link - <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.1400103>

*“**large wild herbivores are crucial to ecosystems and human societies...Loss of large herbivores can have cascading effects on other species...**The rate of large herbivore decline suggests that ever-larger swaths of the world will soon lack many of the vital ecological services these animals provide, resulting in enormous ecological and social costs.*

*“By altering the quantity and distribution of fuel supplies, **large herbivores can shape the frequency, intensity, and spatial distribution of fires across a landscape. There are even unique interactions among large herbivore populations that can influence fire regimes.***

*“**the loss of large herbivores can have cascading effects on other species including large carnivores, scavengers, mesoherbivores, small mammals, and ecological processes involving vegetation, hydrology, nutrient cycling, and fire regimes.**”*

CSIRO Publishing – Efficacy of dart-delivered PZP-22 immunocontraceptive vaccine in wild horses (Equus caballus) in baited traps in New Mexico, USA

Link - <https://www.publish.csiro.au/wr/WR18112>

“using darting to administer fertility control, they could reach previously inaccessible herds and it induced at least one year of measurable infertility, the study also demonstrated the efficacy of fertility control delivered by dart instead of hand injection.

CONSERVATION BIOLOGY – When all life counts in conservation

Link - <https://conbio.onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1111/cobi.13447>

“the current policy direction, as shown in our study, leads conservation to be the most common motivator for killing immigrant vertebrates in Australia.

“Further, the study found several reasons to discredit this flawed narrative of non-native equals feral, these are a couple of the reasons:

- species richness and diversity is potentially boundless, adding a species does not necessitate losing another,
- native species can develop ecological dependencies on non-native species,
- most killing programs are not sciencebased,
- many situations where migrants do contribute to extinctions arise as an artefact of other human-caused stressors.

“Because they are not counted in conservation, these non-native populations are subjected to mass eradication programs. Paradoxically, in assessing how such programs are justified, we found conservation is the most frequently cited reason for killing these wild animals.

“The removal of donkeys and other introduced megafauna to protect desert springs in North America and Australia seems to have led to an exuberant growth of wetland vegetation that constricted open water habitat, dried some springs, and ultimately resulted in the extinction of native fish.

Finally, when considering the environmental damage in the KNP, it is important, no, it is ESSENTIAL to balance any impact wild horses have on their environment with that of man’s destruction. The landscape can not ever return to pre-colonialism days with the introduction of car parks, roads, power lines etc as the following photos illustrate quite clearly.

Taken with permission from Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia FB page.



Environmental Damage. Compare the Pair.



Environmental Damage. Compare the Pair.





Photo Credit: Michelle Brown

Environmental Damage. Compare the Pair.



Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia Inc.



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In conclusion, I support the protection of fragile ecosystems, I support the reduction of population of wild horses, I support the application of commonwealth and state legislation to regulate these practices.

I do however, firmly believe that the current attitude towards wild horse management in Australian is very political and a power imbalance, where those with an attitude of killing the Brumbies have this approach as there is significant government funding available for this position. Yet none is available to support rehoming or alternative population management strategies.

International examples exist which can be easily replicated in Australia to safely and humanely manage wild horse population numbers, which are also cost effective.

Killing is not the answer. To kill the Brumbies will NOT return the Australian Alps to pre-colonial conditions.

Australia needs to look at all the impacts, both positive and negative of wild horses to the Australian environment, then carefully consider the long term impacts of its decisions.

Regards



Photo credit: Ian and Michelle Brown

“The key will be to look at our environment including both our native and introduced species, with fresh eyes.”

Centre for Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and Heritage

Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia inc

- END OF SUBMISSION -