

**Submission
No 60**

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

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I am an Emeritus Professor of Veterinary Science at the University of Sydney and a former Dean of the Faculty of Veterinary Science. I was also a member of the Independent Technical Review Group (ITRG) appointed by the NSW Government in 2015-16 to investigate the brumby issue in the Kosciusko National Park. I am one of the few veterinarians registered as a specialist in equine medicine and equine surgery and I hold a PhD and Doctor of Veterinary Science, as well as a Diploma in Veterinary Science and a Fellowship of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. My field is not only equine medicine and surgery but also equine physiology. I believe that I have good scientific qualifications and also understand the broader issues in relation to brumbies, as my family has lived the Snowy Mountains region since 1872. I would be happy to assist the enquiry by appearing in person.

Here are my reflections, having thought about this issue for many years and having been a member of the ITRG.

1. The central question is: what is the purpose of the park? This is of course the key issue and there are many who want to see brumbies eliminated who hold a view that the park is sacrosanct. However, it is clearly an unsustainable position as there are many noxious weeds and introduced animals such as feral pigs and deer that impact the park. By the same argument, people then should also be excluded.

2. One of the important insights that I gained from ITRG and interaction with statisticians on the panel was that the methodology for assessing brumby numbers was deeply flawed and it seems likely that there is dramatic overestimation of the numbers. This is a critical issue and any further culling should be suspended until an expert panel of biostatisticians is assembled to review the past population assessment inadequacies and then recommend a process going forward that provides confidence in the numbers of brumbies in the park.

3. The brumbies main habitat is outside the most sensitive areas. I was able to understand this first hand when examining the brumby areas by helicopter. The brumbies tend to be largely located in the least sensitive areas.

4. Once numbers are established and if culling is required, the idea of shooting from helicopter or on foot, does not pass the "pub test". The best predictor of future behaviour is past behaviour. Past experience shows us that shooting is not accurate or humane which is not surprising as the shooters, no matter how skilled, are trying to hit a moving target. Horses are certain to be injured and maimed in any process. Despite assurances given, these should not be accepted as the results in each brumby "cull" are the same- injured and maimed animals.

5. The brumbies have been part of the Snowy Mountains long before such areas were gazetted and these animals have a unique place in our heritage. Any government that condones shooting of brumbies from the air or by foot will end up with terrible publicity that cannot be defended. There is no justification for the approval of the culling of brumbies from the air,