

Submission
No 85

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

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

SUBMISSION TO ANIMAL WELFARE COMMITTEE

INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN KNP.

The TORs:

(a) and (b)

As a former statistician I understand the parameters of survey design, population estimates and confidence intervals. I do not have a problem with the many successive surveys undertaken since the early 2000s of feral horse numbers in KNP. The bottom line is feral horse numbers have increased exponentially and so have their impacts.

I have spent 25 years watching the inadequate, inefficient, and often inhumane methods of the removal of small numbers of feral horses from KNP. None of these has ever kept up with the natural rate of increase. Trapping and rehoming have not worked, and are indeed often grossly inhumane. One repeated example is that horses are transported great distances, including to SA and Qld. Ground and aerial culling are quick, instant and humane and result in large numbers of horses being removed.

(d)

The NSW laws, except for the key element of aerial shooting, have been adequate to control feral horse numbers. Unfortunately there has been a lack of will, driven by the successful emotive and self-centred advocacy of the pro-horse groups and individuals.

(e) Committee members need to look at two large scale aerial shooting programs to control feral horses on Aboriginal land in WA (Lake Disappointment) and NT ([Tempe Downs](#)). Up to 10,000 horses were removed in WA, and 10 years on the recovery is quite amazing, and the well-being and opportunities for the Aboriginal land owners has been extremely successful. Stop putting the so called rights of horses over people, flora and fauna, and the rights of other land users.

(f) I am quite sure that large tracts of KNP will be closed to the public, both during aerial culling operations and for some months following to allow for the decomposition of what will be a large number of carcasses.

(g) On Guy Fawkes. Read the Prof. [Tony English](#) report slowly and comprehensively, and stop expounding further mis-truths on that operation.

(h) Yes, there have been alternatives to aerial shooting, and they have been around for 25-30 years. Had the removal of feral horses taken place in the late 1990s, and early 2000s, but for the obstructions and obstinacy of the pro-horse lobby, we would not be facing the current feral horse numbers and issues we have today. There was also the opportunity to remove feral horses, when numbers were 2,000 – 3,000 in KNP after the 2003 fires, but there was a refusal to do so by the pro-horse advocates, even though access and assistance was offered. I was on that first KNP Alpine Horse Management Committee, and know.

This pro-horse group of advocates has destroyed over 300,000 ha of national park, and now inflicted the deaths of tens of thousands of feral horses on both other animals and the environment. These groups of advocates have everything to answer for.

See Attachment A for details of the Horse Management Plan for the Alpine Area of KNP, January 2003.

Note also, that fewer horses in KNP, will result in a much higher breeding and survival rate amongst those that remain. This has occurred following the culling of the Kaimanawa horses in New Zealand.

Conclusion:

I can't wait for the relatively short period it will take for the horse carcasses to decompose, and to start to see some slow return to natural flora and fauna health in KNP. While this could well take up to the next 70 years, as it had done after the removal of grazing, the first signs of recovery should start to occur.

Similarly, I look forward to being able to visit and walk in that recovering landscape. I will notice the reduction in sediment in the water, the wetlands start to stabilise, and that there will be no further damage and encroachment of river and creek banks in KNP. Riverside shrubbery will start to occur, bringing with it insects, protection for small animals, and of course the return of birds. In all a diversity of habitat will benefit all.

These objectives can only be achieved by the introduction of aerial culling of feral horses.

ATTACHMENT A**Horse Management Plan for the Alpine Area of KNP, January 2003****What were the issues concerning NPWS Managers by 2000?****They were:**

- Scientific evidence of the damage they were capable of causing on the Ingeegoodbee River and by extension, in other parts of the park (Dyring 1990 *The Impact of Feral Horses (Equus caballus) on Sub-alpine and Montane Environments in Australia*).
- Increasing numbers of horses in the alpine and subalpine area and an estimate of 3000 for KNP (Walter/Dawson, 2003).
- Lack of control mechanisms since brumby running had ceased for horse welfare reasons since the 1982 KNP Plan of Management.
- Lack of approved/agreed to methods for disposal/removal of the horses.
- The arbitrary politically imposed ban on aerial culling as a result of successful exploitation of media coverage of the Guy Fawkes culling of 2000.

Detail of the style of agreement at that time is explained by the following Extracts from the *Horse Management Plan for the Alpine Area of KNP* (2003)

In 1997 the NPWS began to receive letters and phone calls citing concerns about the level of environmental damage being caused by horses in the sub-alpine and alpine area. This level of concern among NPWS staff and the public has continued as the horses have become more established in this area and the impacts more apparent. p. 5

The next stage was the establishment of a steering committee composed of members representing key stakeholder groups and community interests. The following stakeholder groups were identified; the NPWS Snowy Mountains Region Advisory Committee, conservation groups, scientific experts, bushwalking groups, animal welfare interests /veterinarian, local horse riders, NPWS staff, tourism organisations and the Snowy River Shire Council. Each of the above stakeholder groups are represented on the Wild Horse Management Steering Committee. p. 9. (Excepting the horse riders, most did not remain on the Committee)

A public workshop was held in Jindabyne in January 2001. More than 50 people attended. A public information session held at Queanbeyan in February 2001 was attended by about 75 people. The Draft Wild Horse Management Plan for the alpine

area of Kosciuszko National Park was on public exhibition from June 1 to July 15, 2002. During this time public information sessions were held at Jindabyne, Cooma, Tumut and Queanbeyan to provide information to interested people. Approximately 130 people attended these sessions. p. 10

There is agreement on a number of key issues surrounding management of feral horses including:

- Agreement that the alpine area of Kosciuszko is a unique environment which must be protected from the impacts of horses.*
- Agreement that control methods must be humane for horses.*
- Agreement that management of horses shouldn't be limited to the alpine area; but should be extended across the entire park. p.11*

Michelle Walter's research during the past three years including aerial surveys, estimates the population of horses in Kosciuszko National Park to be about 3,000. The southern part of Kosciuszko, from the Alpine Way south to the Victorian border, is estimated to contain approximately 1,400 horses (M Walter, pers comm). This research has indicated that during the 1999-2000 summer, there were typically 5-10 horses in the Kosciuszko alpine area, however this number has since declined. Nearby on the Big Boggy, an open plain south of Dead Horse Gap, there are up to 80 horses. Preliminary analysis indicates the horses on the Big Boggy have a relatively high annual survival rate of .92, with the population currently growing at 8 per cent per year. (M Walter, pers comm) p. 11