

Submission
No 88

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

Name: Ms Carol Beattie

Date Received: 11 October 2023

Partially
Confidential

INQUIRY INTO THE PROPOSEED AERIAL SHOOTING OF BRUMBIES IN THE KOSCIUSZKO NATIONAL PARK

By Carol Beattie 9 October 2023



**** I took this photo in May 2023 – was this beautiful Currango brumby slaughtered too?**

I will preface my submission by proclaiming my absolute disgust at the abhorrent massacre which confronted brumby advocates and tourists alike over the past long weekend. Even though I wasn't there, I've seen enough photos and videos from those who were, to have made me physically ill.

Is this what Australia has now become? How can this cruelty be condoned by the NSW Minister for the Environment?

From this (Mum and Bub living peacefully)



To this (looks like neck shot leading to bleeding out)



**** These 2 photos were taken from Facebook**

Methodology

The methodology provided by Dr Stuart Cairns to the NSW Government which is used to justify the removal of brumbies from the Kosciuszko National Park by trapping, shooting and,

now, proposed aerial shooting, has been proven to be grossly flawed. Submissions made by Ms Claire Galea (highly regarded Independent Biostatistician) and Ms Joanne Canning (BSc Equine Sports Science, HND Equine Sports Coaching, BHSII) show exactly how the data supplied by Dr Cairns is impossible to achieve.

The current numbers are believed to be well below the 3,000 legislated and an urgent **independent** count needs to be taken urgently. It is a 'legal obligation' under the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 and the Kosciuszko National Park Management Plan to retain 3,000 wild horses in the Park.

On the 2nd and 3rd of June this year, I was one of the participants in the "community count" in the northern Kosciuszko National Park, where the collective count was 653. This count was done very thoroughly and professionally, with strict instructions. I would've personally only counted around 30 all weekend. Obviously we were unable to cover the entire northern end of the park, or see every wild horse, but even if this amount was doubled (or tripled), the numbers are way below what the Government is insisting. Since then, many more brumbies have been trapped and removed, as well as the well over 100 carcasses discovered when the gates opened. If another community count of the same area were to be held today, would we even see 300 in total?

I visited the Long Plain, Tantangara and Currango areas in May this year. Yes, there were quite a few brumbies in the area, but the only real damage I saw was around the causeway which I believe is often covered with water. It was open when I was there but was quite muddy. Apart from animal tracks, there were considerable 4WD tracks ripping up the soil.

To say I'm totally devastated that those sentinel animals calmly feeding and taking no notice of this stranger (me) standing with them, have all been massacred.



**** The above 2 photos were taken by me in May this year, the bottom collage was taken from Facebook**

Justification for proposed aerial shooting

There is NO justification for aerial shooting. I consider all shooting of wild horses to be barbaric and inhumane, especially as the disputed numbers are much lower than the 3,000 legislated.

There are no guarantees an aerial shot would immediately kill a fleeing horse. A mob of horses would be terrified at the first sound of an approaching helicopter and take flight. There are too many variables, pilot skill, visibility, shooter skill and accuracy. If not killed instantly, wounded horses would die in agony, possibly for days. Foals at foot would be left to starve or be attacked by dogs. Fleeing horses may fall and break a leg, and also die an agonising death, maybe after several days. One only needs to see the devastation left by ground shooting to see how inhumane this is.

Threats to endangered species in the Kosciuszko National Park

Any threat to endangered native species by the wild horses is not proven. In fact they may even be beneficial to wild life. Brumbies travel in single file on their own tracks, which are also followed by bushwalkers. Their dung is an excellent fertiliser as well as spreading plant seeds. Their gentle grazing reduces fuel loads, thereby lessening the risks of wild fires. This was shown during the fires of 2019-2020, where the most brumby population grazed, was the least affected. The destruction of countless native flora and fauna is immeasurable.

The very sensitive alpine areas are too steep to be accessed by wild horses. In fact, the areas of the National Park where the majority of brumbies live, is far from "Fragile and Pristine". These areas already have been used by humans for a couple of hundred years. What is sensitive about the area around Tantangara and the Snowy 2.0 construction? Let alone the Alpine tourist resorts, mountain bike tracks, 4WD driving, dirt bikes, campers, bushwalkers, skiers, etc? There are man-made roads, kilometres of powerlines and power towers, land cleared for traps in the area where the majority of brumbies normally congregate.

There is plenty of evidence of environmental damage made by pigs, deer and rabbits. I personally saw whole areas dug up by pigs with pig dung close by. Pigs and deer also love to wallow in bogs. Brumbies do not.

Pig Damage at Coandra (my photo taken in June 2023)



The history and adequacy of NSW laws, policies and programmes

- *2021 Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan.*
The current government is not adhering to this plan. It has condoned indiscriminate shooting of wild horses without regard to the contested population count being well

below the 3,000 legislated. A moratorium should immediately occur until such an independent count is carried out.

- Passive trapping and rehoming should be the standard operating procedure. Currently this trapping has been ramped up and shown to cause stress to the animals trapped. Horses are injured (as witnessed with the carcass of a dead mare with a broken leg near a trap and her young foal obviously had died of starvation). Family groups are separated, heavily pregnant mares not released, mares separated from their foals as an example. The numbers coming out of the park so rapidly have meant the rehomers are under great strain to take them, leaving a great number of perfectly good horses being sent to the knackeries. This does not adhere to the 'Best Practice Standard Operating Procedures' model required of NSW Parks.
- Should the population of wild horses succeed the legislated 3,000, the horses can be trapped and rehomed without needing to be shot.

Animal welfare concerns associated with aerial shooting

The current discovery of so many indiscriminately ground shot wild horses, show total disregard by NSW Parks to the humane treatment and have not adhered to the Standard Operating Procedures HOR001 for ground shooting and HOR002 for aerial shooting.

The SOP clearly states 'Only head (brain) or chest (heart/lung) shots must be used. Shots to the head are preferred over chest shots as they are more likely to cause instantaneous loss of consciousness. Chest shots do not render the animals instantaneously insensible and are likely to result in a high incidence of wounding. Shooting at other parts of the body is unacceptable. Culling programmes should be timed to minimise the risk of orphaning dependent foals and abortion when females are in late pregnancy'.

It is not possible to carry out aerial shooting of a fleeing horse with the accuracy required for an immediate kill. A mob of horses would be terrified at the first sound of an approaching helicopter and take flight. There are too many variables, pilot skill, visibility, shooter skill and accuracy. If not killed instantly, wounded horses would die in agony, possibly for days. Foals at foot would be left to starve or be attacked by dogs. Fleeing horses may fall and break a leg, and also die an agonising death, maybe after several days.

All shooting, whether ground or aerial, causes severe stress, pain and fear while the horse is dying. Sometimes with death is long and drawn out.

In the most recent carcasses discoveries, many had neck shots with evidence of significant bleeding out.

Human safety if KNP remains open during operations

Human safety should always remain a priority with the park open or even if closed. There is always a chance bushwalking tourists may inadvertently enter a closed area.

The impact of previous aerial shooting operations

I remember very vividly the reason why Minister Bob Debus brought in the legislation to ban aerial shooting of wild horses. The Guy Fawkes Massacre of October 2000. Making matters worse was the Sydney Olympics opening ceremony had just showcased "The Man from Snowy River" and our iconic brumbies to the world. Then one month later, Australia was once again showcasing our iconic brumbies to the world, but this time not with pride but with horror.

The result of this massacre, which the following excerpt from Michael Keenan's book vividly describes, left horses peppered with bullet holes and dying in agony.

"In Search Of A Wild Brumby" – Michael Keenan page 128.

"It was terrible. We couldn't believe our eyes. It was the height of the foaling. Mares with foals half born. It made me spew up. Everywhere, bloated and stinking bodies of horses. Sun-baked shit caked around the bullet holes where the slugs slammed into their guts. They were meant to be heart-lung shots, but when horses are bolting and the pilot's trying to weave around spurs that rise almost from the river the best marksman in the world couldn't pin-point bullets. The bullets hit them all over the place. One stallion had more bullet punctures in his legs than anywhere else. He'd dug a bit of a hole underneath himself. Then the flies told so much of the story. Blood must have spurting from these running horses like water escaping from a poly-pipe crack, and the flies were still on the blood trails, dried black by the sun. There were millions. The smell in the canyon was overwhelming and we gasped at the prospect of all this rotting flesh leaching into the river."

I also remember the outcry at the Singleton Army Base massacre, and the recent photos I've seen of the slaughter of the Barmah brumbies by the Victorian Government. I feel nothing but disgust at all these barbaric operations.

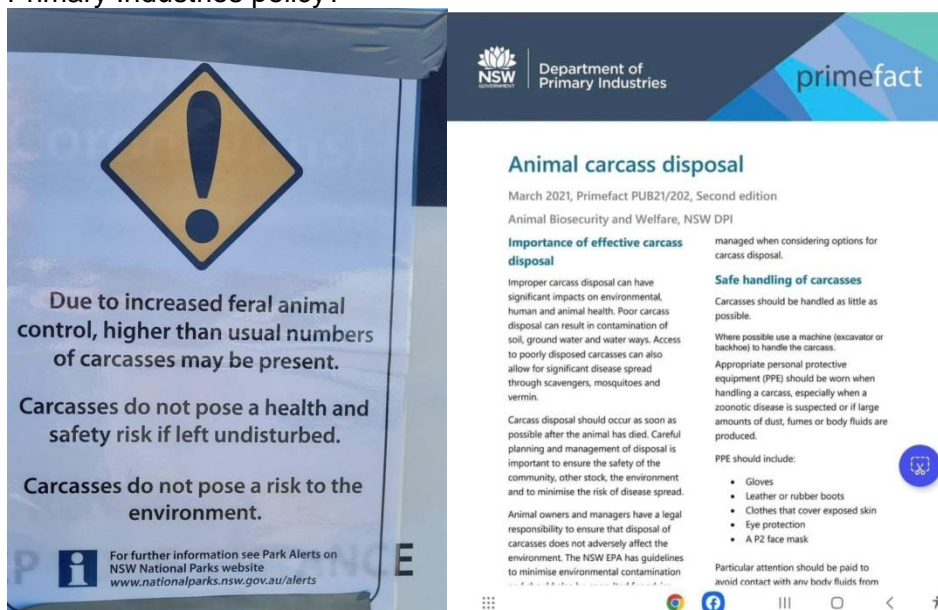
The availability of alternatives to aerial shooting

Aerial shooting, and ground shooting for that matter, should never be considered as a means of wild horse management. The only suitable means of management should be by passive trapping of yearling fillies and colts for rehomers to train as domestic horses. Family groups should never be separated, and certainly lead stallions and pregnant mares or with foals at foot.

Any other related matters

Carcasses left to rot in full view of the general public

Why is a current sign erected by NSW Parks in complete contradiction to the Dept of Primary Industries policy?



****The above photos were taken from Facebook**

Carcasses left to rot in waterways leading to the local water supply

Carcasses have been left to rot in the “pristine” waterways which is obviously a health hazard.



**** The above photos were taken from Facebook**

These questions should be asked of Minister Penny Sharpe:

- why does the Minister constantly refuse to accept that there is huge discrepancy in the numbers of wild horses in the Kosciuszko National Park being 14,000 plus as claimed by NSW parks, and the local communities and photographers who dispute those numbers as being less than the 3,000 which has been legislated?
- why does the Minister constantly ignore the reports of Ms Claire Galea and Ms Joanne Canning proving the methodology used by Dr Stuart Cairns is seriously flawed?
- why doesn't the Minister agree to an immediate independent wild horse count?
- why does the Minister constantly ignore requests for a moratorium until such a count can be conducted?
- why does the Minister consider the barbaric shooting of wild horses, including mares aborting foals, when it is obvious that many, if not most, are not killed outright?
- why does the Minister condone the leaving of carcasses to be left to rot; eaten by pigs, wild dogs, etc.; to be viewed and smelt in horror by bushwalkers?
- why has the Minister not taken up numerous invitations to go through the KNP with the various photographers who have thousands of photos and videos of hectares and hectares of pristine water ways, grasslands, sphagnum moss and plenty of frogs croaking?
- will the Minister please confirm whether the most recently discovered massacred wild horses were ground or aerial shot, due to the majority of wounds sighted not appearing to have caused instant death?

***** Acknowledgement of the Facebook photos above to:***

and anyone I may have missed