

**Submission
No 106**

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

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My name is Maureen Clifford, I am an Australian poet, author and editor now retired and I would like to submit a submission on behalf of the brumbies of Australia – most of whom reside in National Parks, Parks that belong to all Australian people not just a select few. As such the brumbies also belong to the Australian people and yet seemingly decisions made as to whether they are considered by Australians to be ‘feral’ and a pest to the environment and other wildlife, decisions as to whether they should live or be ruthlessly exterminated, apparently rests in the hands of ‘the select few’. Where is the justice in this?

I urge the committee to consider these facts that I have detailed here.

Our country would not be the country it is today without our horses – horses of all breeds and descriptions from which our brumbies originated. The originals claimed to be owned by Sergeant James Brumby who turned them loose when he was sent to Van Diemen’s land in 1806 to take up a posting there. His horses were turned out onto common land.

It was horses who helped open up our inland areas along with the early explorers. Brumby horses that were captured and broken in to work on outback cattle runs. Horses who ploughed the land, provided the transport, carried the children to school, carried our men to war. Horses today generate billions of dollars for Australia via the racing industry – people around the world love horses and just like the whales who are now a considerable draw card to our tourism industries, so to could our brumbies be.

It seems somewhat ironic that in recent times we showed some respect and admiration for our brumbies. Who hasn’t read the Silver Brumby books by Elyne Mitchell? Who didn’t thrill at the courage of mighty Thowra? In 1986 we released a series of postage stamps showcasing our Australian Brumbies. 1993 we have an Australian banknote with an image of our brumbies along with the image and words of one of our most iconic poets Banjo Paterson, himself a lover of horses who served in the Australian Light Horse remount section. leading the team of horse breakers that broke in the feral brumbies that went on to serve our men at Moascar and at Beersheba. We have a coin, 99.9% pure silver struck by the Perth Mint in 2021 with the image of a brumby on it and the words Australian Brumby inscribed on it, and then again in 2022 a 1 ounce gold coin valued at \$3995 with the same image and wording.. Our brumbies also featured in the opening ceremony of the Olympic games in Australia – an opening ceremony that was seen around the world – and how proud were we of that. We even have football teams named for them.

Head counts of our brumbies have been conducted by Government Departments and time and time again these numbers have proved to be overestimated and the method of calculation flawed. People on the ground have taken thousands of photos proving that brumbies are not destroying the environment in our National Parks, their impact in comparison to wild pigs and deer is minimal, and the brumbies have occupied those spaces for over two centuries. Many thousands of Australian Brumby supporters across Australia have signed petitions, attended rallies and marches, conducted media interviews and even gone to court to protest for these animals and yet these efforts have been ignored. Again, I say these horses belong to the Australian people. We can see their value as tourist potential. We believe this is something that has been totally overlooked. We

also believe that the brumbies are being made the scapegoat for other 'big business' opportunities that are currently in the pipeline.

Brumby supporters realize that brumby mobs need to be managed, to ensure good viability of genetics and strong healthy herds. Killing them is not managing them, and even worse killing them in a cruel manner against the guidelines set out by our own Government itself is beyond comprehension and absolutely beyond the pale. Again we have seen photographic evidence showing that many were not head shot or heart shot

but were actually gut shot, and left to die in agony, some of the mares aborting foals whilst in their death throes. Leaving their bodies to rot in the headwaters of our water supplies is disgusting and potentially hazardous to man and beast, and what a delightful sight with which to regale visitors to our National Parks ... stinking fly blown carcasses' of dead brumbies – scattered across the 'pristine' plains Imagine the image that gives of Australians and how we look after our heritage herds.

We can do better. We must do better – do we really want our grandchildren to only see pictures in books of our magnificent brumbies? Are we going to stand up and tell future generations that they were eliminated because we did nothing to save them? That is not what I want for this country.

We live in a big country, a magnificent country and there is room for all – it is simply arrogant to think otherwise.