

**Submission
No 113**

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

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Inquiry into the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park 2023

We are frequent visitors to the Kosciuszko National Park and one of the main reasons we go is to catch glimpses of the Australian brumbies. It is always a highlight of our trip to see the horses living wild and free.

The recent mass shooting slaughter of brumbies is absolutely traumatising. We were planning a trip to the Park this month but we don't want to visit a graveyard. I don't know if I can go up there again knowing what is happening and the horrors that will happen if the National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is given the go ahead to conduct aerial shooting.

There is no justification for aerial shooting to be considered. The brumby numbers are in dispute, and we should never forget the appalling scenes from the Guy Fawkes National Park brumby massacre.

As a result of the recent horrendous ground shooting, increased trapping and the fires, the brumby population is nowhere near the ever-changing numbers estimated by the NPWS by their use of computer modelling. The issue of the methodology used to estimate the numbers has been legitimately questioned but has been ignored as the inflated numbers give the authorities the opportunity to attempt to eradicate the brumbies from the Park. There have been other counts undertaken which come nowhere near the impossible numbers presented by NPWS. There should be a full objective genuine recount undertaken as soon as possible while there are still some brumbies left in the Park.

While the Australian brumby may not be native, they have earned their place over the last few hundred years and the ecosystem has not suffered from the presence of the horses. It is healthy and beautiful and those of us who have spent as much time as we can in the Park have seen it as a wonderful sanctuary. Unfortunately, with the actions of NPWS, it is no more. It is now a killing field. Not only are the horses' bodies being left to rot and attract dingoes to areas that they may not normally frequent, NPWS has increased its 1080 poisoning to counteract the increased dingo populations. They have now created a problem that they have to kill more animals to attempt to solve.

We feel that the wild horses are bearing the brunt of the anti-brumby people's outrage because they are visible and are an easy target for those who have an ideological objection to anything non-native being allowed to live in the park. Human development on a large scale, including Snowy 2, recreational 4-wheel drive vehicle activities and intensive timber harvesting have all contributed significantly to the degradation of the park. Native animals suffer from the effects of that human development, as well as from fungus diseases, climate change effects and catastrophic fire events. The presence of the horses has nowhere near the impact that these events can and have caused.

There have been more and more worldwide scientific studies being undertaken of the beneficial ecological effects of wild horses in the regeneration of the ecosystem, including in forested and alpine areas – and in fact they are being reinstated as part of rewilding efforts to regenerate some areas. Perhaps NPWS should allocate some resources to looking at this.

Horses are sentient beings and form complex social structures and family groups. This is fascinating to so many people from all over the world who follow a number of photographers who are currently documenting the horses' lives on social media. So many people appreciate these wonderful photos and can see quite clearly that the areas that the horses inhabit are healthy and beautiful with clear

waterways and diverse plant and animal species. It is unfortunate that the people who enjoy these photos are not as vocal or as invested or determined as the anti-brumby groups.

It is sad that there appears to be no genuine effort from NPWS to consider that the horses may now be a part of the Park and that there may be ways to control the horse population without resorting to lethal methods. It appears that NPWS seems to be heading into the direction of wholesale shooting to completely remove all the horses from the Park. We love the Park and will be heartbroken if this does occur. Wild horses are not lesser beings than native animals and they deserve to be treated with more dignity and respect than they have been in the past and are being treated now. More objective comprehensive research needs to be done by non-vested interests with the aim of protecting any **genuinely at-risk** native animals as well as the wild horses.

If horses must be removed in the future NPWS should be working with rehomers to ensure the horses are not shot and never end up at the abattoirs which has occurred in the past. The easy way out for NPWS should not be its preferred option. Consideration should be given to developing programs where Government funding is directed towards assisting genuine rehomers in their work.

I hope you will consider my views.

Robyn Plummer