

Submission
No 135

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

Name: Name suppressed

Date Received: 13 October 2023

Partially
Confidential

Please withhold name and contact details – happy for publication.

Submission for the Animal Welfare Committee inquire into and report on the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park and surrounding areas:

(a) the methodology used to survey and estimate the brumby population in Kosciuszko National Park

The methodology used to survey the brumbies is badly flawed. My family and I have enjoyed bushwalking around Kosciuszko National Park over the years and amazingly have found it quite hard to find brumbies. There is nowhere near the reported 18,000 to 24,000. I feel if there were brumbies in those numbers, they should have been a lot easier to find, this is backed up by a recent count conducted by a brumby group who only managed to find 853 horses in 2 days.

The quoted and severely inflated numbers have been researched by Equine Scientists, who have found that the numbers quoted of 18 – 24 thousand, hadn't considered the number of horses that are removed each year through trapping and has been quoted as saying that the suggested increase of 37% is a "biological impossibility."

I would like to call for an accurate and fair count of brumbies in the park.

References:

*About Regional article - Call for NPWS to stop brumby cull in face of 'flawed' population count
23 August 2023 | Edwina Mason*

<https://aboutregional.com.au/call-for-npws-to-stop-brumby-cull-in-face-of-flawed-population-count/432232/>

2GB Ray Hadley interview with Joanne Canning – 15/8/2023 - 'Biological impossibility': Equine scientist rejects brumby count figures"

<https://www.2gb.com/biological-impossibility-equine-scientist-rejects-brumby-count-figures/>

(b) the justification for proposed aerial shooting, giving consideration to urgency and the accuracy of the estimated brumby population in Kosciuszko National Park

There can be no justification for aerial culling of brumbies, the very act itself is barbaric and inhumane. It is well known that it is very difficult to shoot a horse cleanly and quickly from a moving helicopter from a distance in sometimes thick shrub, regardless of how well trained the shooter is. This was proven in Guy Fawkes National Parks in 2000, where 606 GF Brumbies were culled via helicopter, several horses were found wondering around 5 days later with bullet wounds, slowly dying and in pain. The dead horses were inspected later, many had been shot by more than one bullet with wounds in their stomach, neck, jaw, legs and rump areas (these areas are outside the agreed practices *killing zone) and indicating a slow, painful and terrifying death. One unfortunate horse was found alive 2 weeks later with bullet wounds, in the targeted killing zone of the body, still alive in pain.

Many of these brumbies suffered and slow and terrifying death, surely any animal deserves better than what the GF brumbies were subjected to.

It is impossible to guarantee a quick and instant death with aerial shooting and the only urgency is to complete a proper head count.

*Reference killing zone as taken from Pestsmart resource guide
<https://pestsmart.org.au/toolkit-resource/aerial-shooting-of-feral-horses/>

Australian Brumby Alliance – 31 Oct & 2 Nov 2000 - ABA Desktop Review Report October 2014
<https://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/ABA-Guy-Fawkes-2000-review-20-Oct-2014-Final.pdf>

(c) the status of, and threats to, endangered species in Kosciuszko National Park

The biggest scars that have been made in Kosi are man-made and it's worth noting that the builder constructing the Snowy Hydro 2.0 has been fine 3 times already for releasing sediment plumes into Yarrangobilly River. The water pollution that is killing the native wildlife is man-made and whether there are brumbies or not in the mountains these man-made scars made will still be there, never able to be erased.

Reference: ABC News online report - Snowy 2.0 contractor WeBuild fined for third time over pollution of waterways in Kosciuszko National Park reported on ABC South East NSW by Victor Petrovic
Posted Fri 18 Aug 2023 at 4:00pm Friday 18 Aug 2023 at 4:00pm, updated Sat 19 Aug 2023 at 2:11pm
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-08-18/snowy-contractor-we-build-pollution-fine-national-park/102748550>

(c) the history and adequacy of New South Wales laws, policies and programs for the control of wild horse populations, including but not limited to the adequacy of the 'Aerial shooting of feral horses (HOR002) Standard Operating Procedure.

As stated in section b and in due to the experience in Guy Fawkes National Park, aerial culling of brumbies is inhumane, cruel and unnecessary.

(e) the animal welfare concerns associated with aerial shooting

Already outlined on point B - Aerial shooting is barbaric, inhumane and we know due to experience in Guy Fawkes national Park that no matter how experienced the shooters are that it is nearly impossible to have a clean shot and instant kill. Brumbies deserve the same respect and kindness as a domestic horse, they have the same feelings but imagine the public outcry if this was to happen to domestic animals.

(f) the human safety concerns if Kosciuszko National Park is to remain open during operations

There have been numerous stories of close calls to human safety during aerial culling operations, an example was in March this year, in South Australia, when, on private land, two hunters had to run into a clearing to ensure that they were seen, after shots had been fired close to them. The helicopter was fitted with military-grade thermal imaging equipment, but the hunters remained undetected. More disturbing the helicopter did not have permission to be there.

On another occasion in Kosciuszko National Park 2 bushwalkers had to take shelter after aerial deer culling started unannounced and had shots fired into the ground only five metres from where they were standing.

These incidents and other show that there is a real concern to the safety of the public during aerial culling operations.

Reference: Australian Deer association - Hunter's close call to aerial culling.
<https://www.austdeer.com.au/@news/2023/09/08/1386121/hunters-close-call-to-aerial-culling>

(g) the impact of previous aerial shooting operations (such as Guy Fawkes National Park) in New South Wales

The impact of mass shootings of feral animals has several negative effects, long term and short term.

The shootings are leaving rotting carcasses for other feral animals (pig and dogs) to eat and with a plentiful supply of food their number will increase and thus the shooting of brumbies will make the number of pig and dogs increase.

The decomposing horses have been left near water holes, so this will be causing water pollution.

The dead horses have been left to rot near walking tracks and hikers, some with their families had witnessed the carnage. I can only suggest that it wouldn't be a nice walk in the park for a family with children to come across these killing fields. It has been well documented that children have become more stressed after COVID and a walk in Kosciuszko National Park with dead horses isn't going to make them feel any better.

(h) the availability of alternatives to aerial shooting

The alternative to culling is to rehome the brumbies. If trained properly they have a beautiful calm nature and are more than suitable for equine therapies.

As there are serious doubts as to the actual number of horses within the park a proper head count needs to be completed.

(i) any other related matters. The terms of reference for the inquiry were self-referred by the committee on 28 August 2023.1

As stated several times, I feel that the first thing to do would be to complete an independent survey of actual brumby numbers before any more culling or trapping happens. If the latest 2-day brumby count conducted by brumby supporters is anything to go by the numbers are already under the 3000 horses. It will be an incredibly sad day for Australia should we lose our iconic and beautiful Snowy River Brumbies.

Name Withheld