

**Submission
No 150**

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

Name: Ms Leonie Schween

Date Received: 13 October 2023

I am a private citizen who is concerned about environmental issues and the welfare of wildlife and animals generally. I am strongly opposed to the proposed aerial shooting of brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park and its surrounds areas, and am equally opposed to any other proposal to cull brumbies as a so-called method of environmental management. I previously made a submission on a like proposal under the Victorian Alps Wildhorse Management Plan in 2013 and believe the issues are not dissimilar.

(a) Flawed Methodology to survey/estimate numbers

I suggest there are serious flaws as to how the estimated brumby numbers were calculated. The methodology is flawed in that the numbers are based on guesstimates that are not reliable and do not take into account the devastation caused to our wildlife including the brumbies by the severe wild bushfires of 2019-2020. These bushfires covered 5.5 million hectares (7% of the state) including over 2.7 million hectares of national parks (38% of the NSW national park system and specifically 71% of the Greater Blue Mountains World Heritage Area .[# Ref: Understanding the effects of the 2019-20 fires, NSW Environment and Heritage]

(b) No justification for aerial shooting or urgency

(c) Status of, and threats to, endangered species

The wild horses have been in this area for over 150 years and happily coexisted with other wildlife. Studies by a Flora & Fauna Guarantee - Scientific Advisory Committee in 2012 could only come up with a threat to the Guthega skink & Alpine skink - as well as a broad toothed rat (File No. FF/54/3394) in the Victorian Alps that had apparently declined in population by 50%. In its Final Recommendation on a Nomination for Listing (as endangered) of the rat, it was acknowledged the broad toothed rat was under threat due to a combination of fire, fox and cat predation and competition from other rodents. There was notably no mention of wild horses as a contributing factor in the decline of the rat or skink. Interestingly it was noted in the aforementioned recommendation that the rat was predominantly found on sites that provided a cooler climate - I suggest climate change and the warmer weather it brings would also account for the decline of this animal.

I submit that the brumbies do not pose an immediate or long term threat to the fauna or flora of Kosciuszko National Park that would warrant any culling. Any decline in the ecology in this area, especially in the last decade or so, is the result of a combination of other significant contributing factors such as bushfires, climate change, development and other animals.

I submit the brumbies in fact act as a natural management tool in controlling the vegetation & long grasses of this region. Without them, there would be a greater need for human intervention via so-called controlled burn offs that can often get out of control. Burn offs also kill vulnerable wildlife even if properly controlled.

In short, burn offs are far more destructive to the natural environment and fauna than any brumbies.

On the issue of urgency, I repeat that the brumbies have been here for over 150 years. It is not their fault that our environment is now in the state it is in. I submit the brumbies have unfairly become the scapegoat for deficiencies in land management - like our kangaroos.

(e) Animal welfare concerns associated with aerial shooting

Brumbies are societal animals - with the male as the head. If he is shot /maimed ,it will fracture the group structure. There will be young horses needing their mothers. To allow indiscriminate shooting from air , no matter the experience or technological capabilities, is fraught with such unnecessary cruelty and will destroy the societal structure of the brumbies that remain. Horses will be maimed and not necessarily killed and suffer intolerably. The mental toll on the animals will scar them for life if they survive.

This proposal is unacceptable and abhorrent.

(h) I do not support any alternatives to aerial shooting /culling. The brumbies are beautiful, magnificent animals who have happily been a part of our natural environment for over 150 years and they have every right to remain on this land, as does any broad toothed rat or skink.