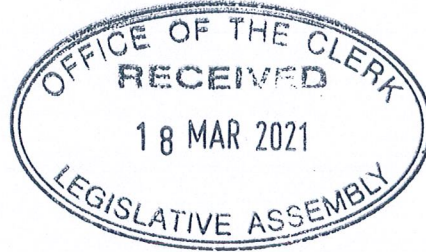




The Honourable Matt Kean MP
Minister for Energy and Environment

MD21/746

Ms Helen Minnican
Clerk of the Legislative Assembly
Parliament House
Macquarie Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Ms Minnican *Helen*

I refer to the petition, lodged by Dr Joe McGirr MP, requesting the Legislative Assembly to reduce feral horse numbers in Kosciuszko National Park by supporting a horse management plan, fund a program to restore the environment of the park and repeal the *Kosciuszko Wild Horses Heritage Act 2018*.

Wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park is a complex and challenging issue. I appreciate there are differing opinions on this matter and consider it important that all members of the community can have their views heard.

The *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018* provides the framework for achieving balance between recognising wild horse heritage values in Kosciuszko National Park and enabling active management to reduce the horse population and their impact on the park's fragile environment.

The Act requires that a wild horse heritage management plan be prepared. This is currently underway, with a community advisory panel and a scientific advisory panel providing advice. Public feedback on the draft plan will be invited when it is released for consultation in the first half of 2021.

While the new plan is being prepared, there remains an urgent need to actively manage wild horses in key locations as part of the ongoing bushfire recovery effort associated with the 2019-20 bushfires, which significantly impacted Kosciuszko National Park.

Scientific advice indicates that post-fire, the impacts of wild horses and other introduced species, will impede recovery of native plants and wildlife, especially in sensitive areas containing threatened species habitat and around waterways.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) is completing wild horse control in highly targeted areas in the north of Kosciuszko National Park that were affected by bushfire. 343 horses were removed in 2020 and the program is continuing in 2021.

These post-bushfire control actions are being implemented in approximately nine per cent of the park and were developed following close discussions with both advisory panels and informed by animal welfare assessments.

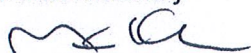
As with previous wild horse programs, the aim is to rehome as many horses as possible. If horses cannot be rehomed, they will be sent to a knackery.

The welfare of horses is a key focus and is continuously assessed throughout control programs. To ensure the highest possible animal welfare outcomes in carrying out control operations, NPWS considers advice from the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and the Scientific Advisory Panel, which includes expertise in animal welfare and veterinary science.

NPWS has considerable expertise in managing the safe, effective and humane removal of horses from Kosciuszko National Park. A control program involving passive trapping and removal of wild horses from Kosciuszko National Park has been undertaken annually since 2002 (except for 2018 when control did not occur). NPWS adheres with all relevant state and Commonwealth codes and guidelines regarding animal welfare and transport of wild horses.

Further information on wild horse management activities in NSW, including the latest population results, is available at www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectsnowies.

Yours sincerely



Matt Kean MP

Minister for Energy and Environment

17.3.21