

**PETITION to the Victorian Government
for the Barmah Heritage Brumbies to remain in the Barmah
National Park where they have existed for over 150 years**

To the Legislative Assembly of Victoria

To the Honourable, The Speaker and the Members of Parliament
The Petition of the people of Victoria draws the attention of the House of their concern to the decision to remove all of Australia's Heritage Horses the Brumby from Barmah Forest.

The Barmah Heritage Horses date back to the 1870s and may have preceded this time. The combination of horses, cattle and active forestry under the eye of a multicultural established local community has selectively thinned and weeded the vegetation to support 236 species of birds including at least 13 species of long distance migratory birds nesting and resting in the Barmah. There are an estimated 54000 or more birds living in and visiting Barmah. There are also species of 8 frogs, 50 mammals, 30 reptiles, 21 fish, 553 + plants. Unknown numbers of insects, fungi and other forms of life making up the successful ecological formula to attract RAMSAR declaration in 1982, as the 14th listed in Australia's of 65 wetlands internationally acclaimed.

The Victorian Parliament has decided to remove all Barmah Brumby Heritage Horses after 150 years of coexistence that saw Barmah Forest internationally recognised and included in Ramsar. The Strategic Plan adopted at Ramsar COP6 (1996) equates "wise use" with sustainable use. Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention also recognize that wetlands, through their ecological and hydrological functions, provide invaluable services, products and benefits enjoyed by, and sustaining, human populations. The Convention also promotes practices that will ensure that all wetlands, and especially those designated for the Ramsar List, will continue to provide these functions and values for future generations as well as for the conservation of biological diversity.

Ramsar COP9 (2005) updated the definition of wise use of wetlands as "*the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of sustainable development*".

The Barmah Brumbies have been a part of human occupation and forest management for over 150 years. The moira grass 'lawns' are highly productive. The flood plain vegetation supports waterbirds, spawning native fish and crayfish raising of fry, fingerlings, spat, tadpole, ducks and wading birds during high water events. The Brumby in the dry seasons groom these lawns to remain at their most vibrant and productive level. Fertilized seed and rhizomes are

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distributed and re-established across the region by Brumbies and their grazed green, 'lawns' significantly reduce fire fuel levels.

To declare that horses and cattle threaten the biodiversity is ill conceived and deceptive to the Australian people.

Forestry, cattlemen and the Barmah Brumbies have a long history in the Barmah Forest successfully maintaining the security of the biodiversity well established prior to Ramsar and National Park declarations.

We believe the Victorian Government is violating its international undertakings to RAMSAR by removing its Heritage Horses and associated management systems. The Conservation status granted by RAMSAR was based on the results of local community management.

We strongly object and oppose the removal of the Barmah Forest's Brumby population.

The petitioners therefore request that the Legislative Assembly of Victoria;

- 1) Stop immediately any actions to remove the Barmah Forest Brumbies.
- 2) Ensure Barmah Brumbies remain to continue their 150 year contribution to conserve biological diversity in the forest.