



# Brumby Bridges

*The quarterly newsletter of the ABA*

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### **The ABA**

The *Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. (ABA)* was established in 2008 to help facilitate the efforts of like-minded wild horse interest groups throughout Australia. We do this by sharing information and expertise as well as providing a collective voice in regard to the humane management, welfare, preservation and promotion of what we consider to be a National Treasure - *The Australian Brumby*.

## ABA News

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### President's Chat

I am looking forward to warm summer days - winter seems to have been longer than usual. This edition covers my visit to Dartmoor National Park (England), hosted by Charlotte Faulkner, Dartmoor Hill Pony Association.

I was thrilled to start my visit at the Bicton Common 10 year grazing research area. Check the Dartmoor National Park website which explains; *Moorland ponies are an integral part of the Dartmoor landscape. They help to graze the moor and maintain its character.* The next day, Charlotte took me to see her apply fertility control by a dart gun to three mares grazing on the moor, see item on [page 3](#).

Read more about the exciting new group Wild Equus Network (WEN), a global network of like-minded people with a shared commitment toward the welfare of domestic equids, and *conservation of wild and free-roaming equids* on [page 4](#).

The break from submission deadlines has enabled me to catch up on other items to bring up and link/place on the ABA website. I end my chat on a positive note with extracts from an article by Darren Gray (21-Oct-13) ***Happy wanderers return to national park with help from grazing sheep.*** Good to read how grazing enabled a critically endangered bird in Terrick National Park, north Victoria to return, after wet conditions in 2010 and 2011 generated too much grass growth for it to cope with.

*Sheep grazing on some of the park, sometimes in heavy numbers, is considered one of the key reasons why the grasslands are again suitable habitat for the small bird. Dr. Antos said grazing, which had to be managed very carefully, was helping to restrict the amount of grass in the park to a suitable level. "It's critical. If it wasn't for the grazing the plains-wanderers wouldn't be there - it's as simple as that," he said.*

*The bird's preferred habitat is native grasslands with grass about 15 cm tall, but where more than half of the ground's surface is bare. "It basically shows that we can, with the ability of burning, grazing and manipulation of the grasslands ... actually improve it to the point where native species will return," he said.*

*Local farmers said the use of sheep in the park was "a victory for commonsense. It shows that farmers know and understand the environment and can look after and manage the environment for the benefit of native species."*

See link for full details.

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/happy-wanderers-return-to-national-park-with-help-from-grazing-sheep-20131020-2vv2h.html>]

Read on for more news in this edition of Brumby Bridges.

***Jill Pickering, President, Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.***



*Dartmoor Ponies*

## Visit to Dartmoor National Park (DNP) – June 2015

### Introduction

I spent two fascinating days with Charlotte Faulkner, President of the *Dartmoor Hill Pony Association* in June this year on Dartmoor where centuries of grazing by ponies, cattle and sheep habitats in Dartmoor National Park (DNP) have shaped the landscape from forest into a unique community for rare wildlife communities.

[Ref: [www.Dartmoor-npa.gov.uk](http://www.Dartmoor-npa.gov.uk) and <http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/laf-ecologywildlife/laf-biodiversityprojects/conservation-grazing> ]

Dartmoor has carried up to 30,000 ponies at times, but currently carries 1,500 ponies grazing on 35,882 ha in DNP. The ponies are semi-domesticated in that they are used to being herded down to lower areas at annual 'Drifts'. Adult ponies pass their social knowledge of the drift routine to their young and lead the way down familiar paths to holding pens where they are fed and health checked before farmers decide which to sell and which to return to Dartmoor as breeding stock.



Much of DNP is 'common land' with farmers buying grazing rights, such as used to occur in the areas that are now Kosciuszko National Park (NSW) and Barmah National Park (Victoria). The farmers' ponies have learnt to keep to a 'lear' (grazing area). Successful 'learning' requires grazing ponies to have sufficient feed so that they do not need to

graze on adjacent areas, where other pony mobs have already established their territory. Lears also make it easier for each farmer to monitor their stock.

The pony market dropped 5-7 years ago when the global economy crashed. Ponies are sold for riding or carriage driving work and a growing number are now purchased for 'conservation grazing projects'. Of the ponies not sold, Charlotte and pony 'rehomers' take around 50-70 to gentle and sell on and those remaining are slaughtered under a closely monitored system to become 'Conservation' meat and fed to zoo animals.

Where landowner grazing stock is not available and grazing is critical to maintain the interest of the habitat, the National Park Authority use a mobile Dartmoor pony herd. [Ref: <http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-landmanagement/laf-ponies>]



To retain DNP pony social learning (developed over centuries living wild on the moor) until the market recovers, farmers have Charlotte apply fertility control by dart gun to a

proportion of ponies. Charlotte is now in the final of a 3 year fertility control trial (*you may recall reading the article 'Dartmoor ponies go on the pill'!*). DNP rangers also understand the need to retain pony grazing on DNP to ensure the survival of species now dependent on a grazing presence.



### Bicton Common 10 Year Grazing Research Program

I joined Charlotte and DNP staff to visit Bicton Common where a 10 year research program is in its third year. The research is to gain detailed understanding of the eating and grazing habits of cattle and ponies on upland moor country and their interaction with every aspects of

moorland ecology. This was a truly inspiring visit - see links below:

- <http://www.pebblebedheaths.org.uk/content/news/dartmoor-ponies-released-onto-bicton-common.ashx>
- <http://www.clintondevon.com/content/press-releases/dartmoor-hill-ponies-with-gps-to-graze-east-devon-pebblebed-heaths.ashx>
- <https://www.facebook.com/events/611141142362133/>

The next day I accompanied Charlotte across the moors to see her dart three mares in three separate mobs over about three hours. I was amazed how calm the process



was, even though I had been told it should be. I even got to hold the dart gun!

For more information on Dartmoor National Park check out the links below;

- [http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/42010/dartmoor\\_vision\\_leaflet\\_april\\_2008.pdf](http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/42010/dartmoor_vision_leaflet_april_2008.pdf)
- <http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/laf-ecologywildlife/laf-habitatspeciesmgmt->
- [http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/laf-ecologywildlife/laf-biodiversityprojects/conservation-grazing.](http://www.dartmoor.gov.uk/lookingafter/laf-naturalenv/laf-ecologywildlife/laf-biodiversityprojects/conservation-grazing)

My favourite, on DNP Bogs and wetlands, [www.Dartmoor-npa.gov.uk](http://www.Dartmoor-npa.gov.uk) includes:

- “Under grazing and lack of scrub control is a threat to rhôs pastures”, and
- Dartmoor pony, while managing the threatened rhôs pasture at the same time.

*Jill Pickering*

## Introducing the new global coverage group Wild Equus Network

I received an email last month from Victor Ros, of Wild Equus Network (WEN), asking if we would join up with their new global Equid group. Per my email a few weeks ago, the ABA has now become a member of WEN and hopefully we can start contributing articles also to develop overseas understanding of our Heritage Australian Brumbies.

WEN’s website <http://wildequus.org/> states that WEN has a clear focus toward the protection and conservation of wild and free-living equids, as well as the promotion of welfare measures for domestic equines across the globe.

*Our dedication to equids defines our important niche not only for domestic equines, but also in the environmental and conservation community. We clearly recognize that we cannot protect any equid species without simultaneously*

*protecting the habitats and wildlife diversity on which they rely, and on which many people depend.*

WEN is a global network of like-minded people with a shared commitment toward the welfare of domestic equids, and conservation of wild and free-roaming equids.

There is already quite a few interesting education articles on this website, with links on the WEN website including;

- Field Studies
- Equus Echogram
- Register an Equid Population
- Library of Articles to date

Happy reading!

*Jill Pickering*

## Member News

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### Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

#### Our Open Day!

Despite the chilly weather and the promise of snow on the Barrington Tops, our Open Day was a great success! We had over 60 visitors for the day and many were happy to rug up in a new HVBA rugby jumper and enjoy the activities and meet all of the Brumbies. It was also wonderful to catch up with some of our long term HVBA Members!

The foals and our new coloured boys from Oxley Wild Rivers National Park were very popular, but the crowds were amazed as Sienna and Matari put on two incredible



demonstrations and showed everyone not only how trainable Brumbies are, but how safe and sensible they are around children.

In the four hours that our gates were open we managed to raise just over \$1700! With this incredible support from everybody we were able to purchase some much needed hay to see us through for the rest of the winter and until more can be cut in spring.

#### Sydney Uni Students

We had a great time with our latest students from Sydney Uni just before our Open Day.

Every time new students arrive and complete their two weeks here they leave with a sense of accomplishment and are amazed at how quiet and how easy it is to train a Brumby!

#### More Visitors!

We recently had a visit from the University of the Third Age (U3A) from Forster and Tuncurry. U3A is an international association which offers senior people the opportunity to teach their skills and learn with and from others. U3A asked if they could visit the sanctuary and have a morning tea and raffle.



It was a wonderful morning with 23 members keen to learn about Brumbies and the HVBA. We were very grateful to them for organising the trip, providing their own morning tea and the raffle, as our team was exhausted! We had only just arrived back from Kosciuszko the night before with new Brumbies!

#### Our New Brumbies

The HVBA received a call from Kosciuszko National Park that traps would only be open for three weeks – great news as it meant a small trapping season.

Because we have so many geldings and foals in training at the moment, the original plan was to bring home some

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older pregnant mares, as they are most likely to be sent to slaughter.

That was the plan anyway, but two days before we were due to leave, we received a call from Oxley Wild Rivers NP that one more trap was needed there for a family group.

So with more mares arriving soon from Oxley, our plans were thrown out the window. We made a call to our good friends at Horse Welfare Inc. to see if they might be able to take a couple of Brumby babies this winter, and thankfully they could! The plan was now to just bring home as many as we could.

Normally our trip is very exciting and our Brumbies are chosen for us by Glen, a wonderful horseman, who traps the horses. We all head to the hotel and catch up with the VBA and it is like "Brumby Christmas" – we don't know who is waiting in the yards for us the next morning. Unfortunately Glen was on sick leave due to an accident and this trip was going to be very different - we would have to choose.

When we arrived at the holding yards on Tuesday afternoon (25<sup>th</sup> Aug) there were almost 60 Brumbies in the yards - everything from large stallions, 2 year old colts, pregnant mares and tiny babies (weanlings).

The HVBA had arranged to meet with Colleen from the VBA at our usual Kosi catch up. The VBA planned to take home 4 large stallions and as many mares as they could on

their truck. Decisions had to be made quickly – the abattoir truck was on its way.

A large group of mares and weanlings were put through a lane way and we only had a few moments to choose who was going to live and who was going to die. Were they calm in a small space? mare, filly or colt? how old? any injuries? and how many were going to fit on the trailer? Eight stallions were then placed in the same laneway and again only 4 could fit on the VBA truck.

After nearly 4 hours we all left the yards and headed to the hotel feeling gutted. There was no Brumby Santa this



year. But we managed to save 8 Brumbies, as many as we could comfortably carry in our trailer for the long 8 hour trip home.

Two older pregnant mares, one older filly who we suspect is in foal and 5 tiny babies! (two colts and 3 fillies). All of the Brumbies travelled and unloaded very well on Wednesday afternoon and they have settled in well for the past two days. It has been a while since we have had lots of fluffy babies and they are all very cute!



*It can take quite a while for new Brumbies, no matter how exhausted they are, to lay down to rest. So it was wonderful to see the morning after they arrived, most of the Brumbies felt comfortable to enjoy a long nap in the sun.*

## Kaimanawa Heritage Horses Stallion Makeover Challenge

For many years, the New Zealand equestrian community has viewed the adoption of a wild horse as an act of charity rather than desiring a Kaimanawa horse for their qualities and value. If this perception could be changed through a competition, it would show the NZ public not only what skilled professionals could achieve with these horses, but what they too could aspire to, and how wild horses could fit into their own equestrian goals.

Kaimanawa Heritage Horses' ultimate goal is to secure quality homes for every horse that is mustered in future and create a nationwide passion for Kaimanawa horses' beauty, versatility and trainability, ensuring their preservation in the wild, for future generations.

It was a mammoth undertaking but with the vision of Kelly Wilson (a NZ equestrian celebrity and KHH member) spearheading the project, the Kaimanawa Heritage Horses Stallion Challenge was born. Sponsors were secured and 12 trainers were selected from various disciplines and invited to compete for a prize pool of \$50,000 in cash and prizes.

Each trainer had one or two wild stallions assigned to them and 19 stallions were sent, direct from the 2014 muster. Their first challenge was to handle, geld and habituate their horses to domestic life before showcasing their achievements just 150 days later in the 'Major Milestone' challenge at Equidays.

The Major Milestone consisted of a halter class where the (now gelded), stallions were required to complete certain tasks in hand such as being released and recaptured in a pen, picking up all four feet and loading into a horse float, as well as performing other tasks chosen by their trainers, to demonstrate their unflappable natures and unwavering trust.

The second part of the 'Major Milestone' was a ridden challenge. It was anticipated that only a few of the horses

would be ready for ridden work so soon in their education, but the majority of the horses competed and astounded the crowds with what they could do. Indeed, these horses not only performed beyond their expectations, they willingly performed feats that would normally take years to teach a domestic horse and the equestrian public were hooked.

With everyone thoroughly inspired, the trainers and their horses went home to continue their training for another 100 days, in preparation for the final 'Stallion Makeover' challenge at NZ's most prestigious 'Horse Of The Year Show'.

The first part of this challenge was an evaluation of the horses' soundness and condition. Over the next 3 days, they competed in a Horsemanship challenge, an Obstacle Course and a Freestyle challenge where they once again, exceeded all expectations.

The announcers were left speechless and struggled to find words to express their amazement at what these horses could do and what their trainers had achieved in just 250 days. Record crowds filled the grandstand and packed the arena rails to watch the top 8 competitors compete for the KHH Stallion Challenge title which was ultimately won by Tina Fagan and her horse, Rock Star.

The trainers and their horses certainly met the goal of inspiring the NZ equestrian public and changing all previous perceptions. However, the true success of this event will only be measured by the number of successful home placements from the 2016 muster and those beyond. The Stallion Challenge has proven that every healthy Kaimanawa horse mustered, no matter what their age or gender, is not only deserving of a loving home, but is capable of anything their domestic peers can do and more.

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The Challenge commenced with the Trot-Up - Welfare and Best Conditioned Class. All the horses were presented in immaculate condition, and flew through the trot-up, gaining entrance to the remainder of the competition. The score from this event made up 20% of the score for those that made it into the final.



*In the Horsemanship Class trainers had to ride a set workout pattern that included ground tying, mounting, trotting through bending poles, trotting over ground poles, cantering circles, galloping, and side-pass over a pole. All trainers impressed the judges with what they had achieved with horses less than a year out of the wild.*



*The Obstacle Course was a big unknown to all the competitors, as they would be seeing the obstacles for the first time only an hour before the competition - and there would be no trial runs. The nine obstacles were the Horse Gifts curtain of towels, the Kaimanawa Crazy stairs, the Coprice carpet walk, the Saddlery Warehouse goal, the Washbar maze, the Eqidays back-up, the John Wilson Sculpture figure-of-eight, the Tuffrock pail carry, and the Thoroughbred Floats float loading.*



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In the Freestyle Class, competitors had four minutes to show off what they have achieved with their horses. Competitors were able to bring in their own props, but had only one minute available to set up before their performance. The riders and horses were in costume and performed amazing and challenging feats of horsemanship and athleticism. Choreographed music added to the spectacle, and the judges and crowd were thrilled.



The top eight ranked combinations qualified for the Stallion Makeover Final which was comprised of a Freestyle part and an Obstacle Course. The results from these two events, combined with their score from the Trot-Up earlier in the week, would determine who would take the title of Stallion Challenge winner.



A packed grandstand braved the chilling weather to watch both events. It was spectacular to see the conclusion of all the trainer's hard work during the previous months. The trainers and horses did the still wild breed proud, putting on a show that any horse would have a tough time imitating.



## Save the Brumbies (STB)

We are always busy at STB ... this winter we received a load of beautiful coloured horses from Oxley Wild Rivers National Park and are expecting more shortly. We also took on four rescue Brumbies from the RSPCA ... lovely taffy mares who were the subject of a neglect case, they were originally from down south. Most of these horses will go directly into our fertility control program at NEBS. Some that we consider suitable will be offered for adoption so keep in touch with our website.

We are waiting anxiously to see if any of the mares treated for fertility control will foal this season, updates at the end of the year.

More infrastructure at NEBS is needed, i.e., fencing and alley ways to make it easier to get the horses in for treatment as we now have three groups of horses in our trials. Never a dull moment for STB personnel.

Bellingen show was well attended in May, the largest number of Brumbies yet exhibited. STB Beaute, Carlos and Toy Boy all excelled in their respective classes and Beaute

was crowned Champion Brumby and Champion Palomino. A great result for our horses.

Trapping in Guy Fawkes has been on hold pending



the revised Plan of Management. We are watching this carefully and will report on the outcome later in the year.

August 1<sup>st</sup> saw an enthusiastic crowd of people who attended the horses' birthday party. Bellingen Sanctuary played host and there was much merriment and fun. A large carrot cake decorated with candles was certainly

enjoyed by the horses and visitors and every horse had treats of liquorice allsorts and goodies. Luckily there were no colic attacks !!!!!



Our next event is our Christmas Open Day Social at the New England Brumby Sanctuary, Armidale on Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December. All are warmly welcome to attend.



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For further details contact [info@savethebrumbies.org](mailto:info@savethebrumbies.org)  
Jan Carter for STB Inc.

## Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

What a busy few months here at Brumby Junction! Our last season's foals – a mixture of those born wild and those who had been conceived wild and born here after their mother's arrival, have been getting so very big and it was time for them to face the world without Mum. Zorro and

Teddy's mobs had been sharing a paddock, so we brought them all in, weaned all the babies and wormed all the adults. The mares were returned to the paddock with Teddy to play on the grassy hillsides and get their figures

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back and the babies have stayed closer to home to start their training.

In July, we ran a **Wild Horse Gentling Clinic**, which was fully booked. Our timing wasn't fabulous however, as the eastern seaboard was pelted with an 'Arctic blast', which is just what it sounded like – VERY cold! The Brumbies and their trainers all did wonderfully however and we thoroughly enjoyed the chance to show people how we train our beautiful Brumbies.

Preparations for next **Australian Brumby Challenge** have been going along really well – we have some great applicants and seeing the Brumbies we plan to have entered in the event fill out is getting really exciting!



**Our first foal** for this year was born quite early in the season, in the middle of August! Mum, VBA April, was caught from Bogong High Plains in April and foaled too

close to a fence, delivering baby to our next door neighbours who were, luckily, very happy to pick her up and pass her back to Mum over the fence! Never a dull moment here!

National Parks and Wildlife service has had a shorter

**trapping season in Kosciuszko National Park** this year, limiting themselves to only three weeks. We



were really hopeful that most of the Brumbies caught would be rehomed, but there has just been so much negative social media regarding the program, that hasn't happened, leaving many Brumbies facing their fate at the knackery, which is heartbreaking. We have taken in as many as we can manage for our program and now have



nine beautiful pregnant mares, six stallions and three yearling to two year old fillies, a total of eighteen,

which will probably reach twenty seven once all the foals have been born. We are heading back up this week for our last pick up of the season, hoping to bring back another five or six youngsters, which is as much as we can have in our program.

**A really interesting sidenote** to our new arrivals was that we took photos of the older stallion's perfect feet and they've gone viral, being shared through barefoot groups around the world as an example of how horses feet should look. That's a real testament to our Brumbies as this was a group of five plus year old stallions who had lived wild all their lives.



So that's us! Busy as ever, but just loving the fact that we have a chance to be involved in the future of our Aussie Brumbies. We're always keen to have new volunteers, so if you have some time on your hands, why not give us a call and see how you can help?

## Hoof Prints – Other items of note....

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### Horse Tales from the 2003 Canberra Fires

*The following is a reprint from the ACT Rural Fire Service publication "Hightailing into the Fires: Bush Fire planning on ACT Horse Agistment Centres"*

We were waiting for the fire. Arriving late at the property, I have driven past the house and stables and whatever other people are doing, straight to the paddock where my bay mare, Miranda, lives. The air is still fairly clear and it looks as if the fire could go by without touching us. If it does come our way we should be protected by a large area of heavily grazed, treeless open paddock stretching the best part of a kilometer upwind. The shelter faces east and half has been enclosed to make a cosy stable...With very little to burn, and the shelter to shield us, we should be safe.....

There was time to prepare. First I dipped a supply of water from the trough a few paces behind the shelter. Then I changed into a long sleeved shirt soaked in water and slipped my t-shirt soaked in water over the muck rake to make a beater. I wet two towels, one for Miranda and one for me to put over our eyes and nostrils if necessary. Then it was a matter of waiting.

A helicopter flew overhead – and disappeared in a smoke haze. Did they see me waving? We are on our own now.

Presently the fire went through the long grass of the neighbouring property, less than 200 meters away, traveling parallel to the open over-grazed area upwind of us. It charged along with clear bright flourishes of flame meters into the air, and headed up the hill towards the skyline. Even as I registered its pace and energy, a sudden blaze climbed the rocky knolls away to the left, torching the gum trees and Cyprus pines and on into the reserve where the deeper grasses were waiting. We were surrounded.

The smoke was getting denser but Miranda showed no signs of distress or concern. She stood calmly as I walked over to her and draped the wet towel over her nose. ...I knew it would not be possible to persuade Miranda to

come into the shelter, I was spending most of the time with her out in the yard in the smokey wind, one hand holding the towel over her nostrils, the other keeping mine draped about my head and face.

Then I heard the noise. It was like nothing I had ever heard: not a rushing windy noise or the sound of fire cracking but a big deep growling, very close. In the time it took to get across the yard into the shelter it was upon us. It was impossible to see anything – the air was thick with eddying debris. Eyes closed and the towel tight about my head and face, it was all I could do to try to save myself; there was no question of doing anything for Miranda.

Fumbling my way to where I guessed the back wall to be, instinctively crouching. I touched one of the heavy poles sunk deep into the ground that support the building. It felt firm, not even shuddering with the impact of the wind. The wind roared on, and now a new sound started – a metallic shrieking, wrenching sound – but still the pole felt solid and unmoving.

Twice I tried to open my eyes to see what was going on but as soon as I loosened the towel even slightly my face and closed eyelids were bombarded with flying fragments. There was no sensation of radiant heat and no difficulty breathing – the two things I had feared the most.

Then it was all over....I could see Miranda looking out, apparently unharmed, her back to the onslaught as she must have been, through it all. Like me, she must have had her eyes tight shut because...her eyes were uninjured....At some point I realized the roof had gone.

***You can view or download the full publication on the ABA Website:***

<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/more-info/articles-and-papers/>

## The Editor's Tail

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### Hightailing It Into The Fires – Bushfire Planning for Horses

Having joined my local fire brigade last year, I have had an interest in, and access to, many topics on bushfire planning and control. With the start of the new fire season well and truly upon us, I thought it might be timely to look at bushfire planning for horses.

As it turns out, on one of my internet trowels, I discovered a publication of the ACT Rural Fire Service titled ***Hightailing Into The Fires: Bushfire Planning on ACT Horse Agistment Centres.***

The report, and its underlying study, were commissioned by the ACT Rural Fire Service following the 2003 Canberra fires and offers sound advice for any of us who have horses under our care. The report recommendations are

in three sections: for agistment owners and managers; agistors; and for the ACT RFS.

The full document has been uploaded to the ABA Website (<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/more-info/articles-and-papers/>) so I will leave it to readers to follow up on comprehensive information.

Also have a look at this edition's [Hoof Prints](#) where we have re-published a story by one of the many horse owners that were consulted in the study about their experience during the Canberra fires.

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#### Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.  
PO Box 3276, Victoria Gardens, Richmond, Vic 3121  
Phone: (03) 9428 4709  
[info@australianbrumbyalliance.org.au](mailto:info@australianbrumbyalliance.org.au)  
[www.australianbrumbyalliance.org.au](http://www.australianbrumbyalliance.org.au)

#### **Newsletter Contributions**

Contact Sandy  
[sandyradke@bigpond.com](mailto:sandyradke@bigpond.com)  
0458 105 221

#### **ABA Member Groups**

- ☞ Australian Brumby Horse Register
- ☞ Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)
- ☞ Hunter Valley Brumby Association (NSW)
- ☞ Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)
- ☞ Save the Brumbies Inc (NSW)
- ☞ Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group (NSW)
- ☞ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ☞ Victorian Brumby Association