



Brumby Bridges

The quarterly newsletter of the ABA

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(above: VBA Starbright and Sandy Varker in the Yearling Final)

**ABA congratulates all
Human and Brumby participants
in the 2016**

Australian Brumby Challenge

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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

President's Chat

Christmas 2016 is just around the corner, and still we wait for the final Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) Wild Horse Management Plan (WHMP). After three years thinking, sleeping and doing all things Kosciuszko review, I am reminded of the film "Ground Hog day" when the hero had to repeat the same day until he "got it right".

Heritage Recognition

Major progress was made this year when National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) Heritage Values Context review determined that "the wild horse population is an attribute associated with the cultural heritage significance of Kosciuszko National Park (KNP)". The down side is NPWS plans to all but eradicate the Heritage Snowy Brumby by only retaining 600 Brumbies, which is a genetically vulnerable level, that the next bush fire will severely diminish (the last fire killed 64% of all Kosciuszko Brumbies).

Australian Brumby Challenge

The Australian Brumby Challenge (ABC), run by the Victorian Brumby Association under the guiding eye of their President, Colleen O'Brien concluded its finals at Equitana over four days last month. Brumbies and proud trainers demonstrated how they had taken Brumbies from "Wild to Wonderful". Glowing audience's feedback was received by Colleen (VBA) and Equitana at seeing how the ABC used gentling techniques that demonstrated what a Brumby & its trainer can achieved in 150 days when trust and confidence develops to create an amazing result. (see [VBA Report](#), [Hoof Prints](#), and [Editor's Tail](#) for more info)

Ongoing Government lobbying

People are still being surprised to learn that NPWS intends to cull 90% of KNP Brumbies and asking how to voice their extreme concerns. It is never too late to write to key NSW and Federal Ministers (see [ABA Website](#)) to explain in a concise and polite way, why losing so many Brumbies and distinct area Brumby breeds is such a significant concern

to them personally. For more detail on how and who to write to please visit

<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/How-to-help-save-Snowy-Brumbies-Oct16-1-1.pdf>

Straight Talk highlights

Straight Talk, hired by NPWS during the consultation process, included positive and negative feedback and the low level of concern the public places on seeing Brumbies in Kosciuszko National Park, for example:

- Most participants saw horses (Brumbies) as **native to Australia**
- Wild Horses were ranked as the second lowest threat (at 3%)
- Non-lethal methods were supported by more respondent groups than lethal methods

And my favorite quote: "*Once the numbers are known, try and decide on a number that does no more harm than skiers and bush fires*". (See [page 3](#) for more information)

I thank ABA members for their sustained, dedicated hard work to lobby for balanced Brumby management and rehoming members committed to save Brumbies trapped under NPWS culling programs but without any financial support from Government. At best, rehoming charities just cover collection, feeding, gelding etc. by money raised from selling gentled Brumbies to new homes. However, this small financial return never covers ongoing costs such as infrastructure, land and their volunteered hours. ABA rehomingers run at a significant loss and have to survive on donations and fund raising.

I wish our ABA member groups, and their long suffering families, a relaxing break over this festive season and hope you can return revitalised for 2017. You have ALL achieved plenty this year to be proud about. HAPPY CHRISTMAS and best wishes for the New Year.

Jill Pickering

Kosciuszko's Wild Horse Management Plan Consultation

National Parks & Wildlife Service (NPWS) hired Straight Talk to manage public feedback on their review of Kosciuszko National Park's Wild Horse Management Plan. Both positive and negative views were reported by Straight Talk. I have highlighted parts of our ABA submission that were reported by Straight Talk consultants which show evidence of significant general public support on the values of seeing Brumbies living wild in the park.

- “We (participants) feel that brumbies are now a part of the Australian landscape and expect to see brumbies in the park and many visit with the hope of seeing these beautiful wild horses”. [Kitchen Table p14]
- A significant proportion of respondents saw the cultural and heritage significance of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park as important. [Kitchen table p15]
- Only one third of respondents correctly identified horses as feral animal or pests. [Initial on-line survey p20]
- Most participants saw **horses** (Brumbies) as **native to Australia** [Second Straight Talk survey p15]

Participants responding to the consultation question “What do you think are the major threats to the park?” [Initial on-line survey P13] ranked Wild Horses second **lowest** threat (at 3%), compared to :

- 63% said human activity including tourism
- 35% said Introduced flora and 35% said fauna [Note: Second Straight Talk comment above that “Most participants saw horses (Brumbies) as native to Australia”.]
- 31% said pollution/environmental damage.
- 25% said over development/commercialisation

- 20% said climate change and 20% said bush fires
- 8% said lack of Government support/maintenance and 8% said nothing/not sure
- 4% said skiing
- 3% said 4WDs and 3% said Wild Horses
- 1% said hunting

Common ground

Many people in the community and within stakeholder groups agree that management of the wild horse population is required. The issues of how, and to what level, are where conflict and disagreement begins [2008 Management plan highlights p1].

Most participants value the Snowy Mountains as a national park, but for different reasons, such as valuing Wild Horses as part of the heritage or iconic attraction of the Snowy Mountains [Community Engagement report p15].

The majority of the public did not support aerial **or** ground shooting;

- **Non-lethal** methods were supported by more respondent groups than lethal methods, [Community Engagement report p14]
- A clear majority (two-thirds) replied that ground shooting is **not** considered an acceptable management method.

Ambiguous questions

Attendees were asked to rank “Trapping & removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir” [Kitchen Table p5] as one option. We asked for two separate options:

- a) Trapping and removal then rehoming.
- b) Trapping and removal then transport to abattoir.

NPWS refused our request to separate the question, saying “this is the only method NPWS is currently utilising to control the wild horse population in Kosciuszko National Park”. I still fail to see the logic in such an incomprehensibly bureaucratic reason.

The consultation process frequently asked the community to choose between valuing wild horses **or** the environment [second survey p19] which ignored the reality that many of us value both horses and the environment in KNP.

Inaccurate education provided to consultation forums

Attendees were told “Although some fertility controls can be administered by dart rifle, the range of these rifles means that horses must be trapped or mustered & yarded for the dose to be delivered effectively” [Town Hall meeting p19 and kitchen table p14]. Only after intense pressure by attendees who had seen fertility vaccines delivered by dart gun to USA Mustangs and Dartmoor ponies, did NPWS give a short verbal correction, but NPWS never updated their printed material. Darting trapped Brumbies adds \$1074 to the basic dart costs of under \$50.

Brumbies targeted above other species

Straight talk described claims that NPWS unfairly target Brumbies by culling more Brumbies than other feral

Website “contact ABA” inquiries continue to roll in

The ABA received 25 inquiries over the past 3 months via its website *contact* form (found on the lower left side of the ABA home page) from across Australia. Inquiries by state are: SA (3), Qld (3), NSW (4), Vic (6), SA (2) and unknown (7).

The ABA is receiving increasing praise for its website content, thanks to Sandy Radke’s skillful web pages design and regular updating. To keep the front page refreshed, older posts are moved to other pages behind the home

animals, as a “*tactic to obfuscate the issue*” and avoid genuine engagement [Engagement Conclusions p4]. However NPWS statistics for the past 5 years show a yearly average of; **369** Pigs, **186** Deer, **169** Goats, **51** Cats, **407** Foxes and **275** wild dogs are culled compared with up to **670** Brumbies per year.

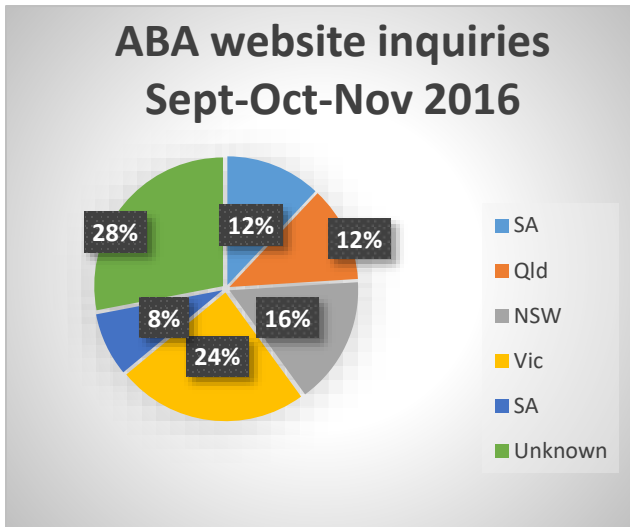
Straight Talk Community Quotes

- “Ecosystems adapt and find a new equilibrium and it may well prove that if all brumbies were removed from the Park that the area would be adversely affected in ways that we cannot foresee.” [On-line Engagement p45]
- “How can we condemn one species for being destructive to the environment in order to survive, when all we as humans have done is play a destructive role in our ecosystem and environment?” [On-line Engagement P53]
- “Once the numbers are known, try and decide on a number that does no more harm than skiers and bush fires”. [On-line Engagement p39]

Jill Pickering

page. Please send in any website suggestions as readers think of them.

The ABA continues to receive school inquiries (5 in the past 3 months) which require more detailed information for student Brumby school projects. We hope next year to add a school project page to the website to assist students find answers and use the site as a key Brumby resource for most of their school project work.



We have had 2 media inquiries for a radio interview and information to add to an editor's Hoofbeats magazine article. Hopefully these media inquiries will increase.

There are also several media queries that the ABA passed on to member groups to follow-up.

Jill Pickering

Member News

Save the Brumbies (STB)

Save the Brumbies Inc. has had another, busy, hands on year.

A change of management has seen Megan Hyde leave us after five years of dedicated care to the horses. Our new Manager, Leonie McDonald, adopted three of our horses several years ago and is delighted to have been offered permanent residence at our New England Brumby Sanctuary. Leonie will be responsible for the daily running of the Sanctuary in conjunction with Cody Snell who will be handling our horses before Adoption.

Our Research vet, Andrea Harvey, was invited by the management of Guy Fawkes N.P. to attend the last meeting of the Horse Reference Committee to present an outline of our fertility control program at NEBS. Interest was shown by NPWS and pending funding.

Andrea will conduct an ecology study of Guy Fawkes with a view to commencing a trial fertility control program there.



We can only hope that this will eventuate in 2017 but as NPWS is currently having a review of staff and

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amalgamation with Glen Innes N.P. it remains to be seen if this will be possible due to severe funding cuts by the NSW Government.

Our Open Day and Christmas social will be held on Sunday 11th December at our New England Brumby Sanctuary.

We have some superb, top quality coloured weanlings available for Adoption together with several young mares. All our horses are registered with www.abhr.com.au

Check out the horses on our website:

www.savethebrumbies.org Adoption link.

All welcome to attend our Open Day if in the area.

Contact: email: info@savethebrumbies.org or phone: 02 66552224 for direction map and information.

Jan Carter President. STB Inc.

Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group (SMBUG)

Light Horse High Country Remembrance Day ceremony at Bullocks Hill

The Snowy Mountain Bush Users Group (SMBUG) held a spectacular Remembrance Day ceremony at Bullocks Hill on Friday 11 Nov at 11am last month.

High Country Horsemen, along with a Light Horse Troop in full uniform and local residents gathered at Bullocks Hill, just off the Snowy Mountains Highway to commemorate the loss of 60, 000 Australian soldiers and thousands of horses killed in action in World War One. This event provided a unique and solemn opportunity for Australians to pay tribute to the thousands of young men who gave their lives in battle with the iconic Snowy Brumby by their side, known as Walers in the Light Horse.

Mounted Members of the Light Horse paraded in full uniform, supported by local horsemen and women, descendants of those who fought in the Boer War, WW1, WW2 and subsequent conflicts including Viet Nam and Afghanistan. Aaminaby RSL sub branch conducted the Remembrance Day service and concluded by playing the Last Post and a recital of the Ode.

A tragic irony for our Snowy Brumby population is that, although they are descendants of Brumbies that gave their lives to defend Australia's freedom, the proposed new Kosciuszko plan leaves 90% of them looking down the barrel of guns aimed by Australians they died to keep free.

Snowy Mountain Bush Users Group

Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

The *Australian Brumby Challenge* wrapped up with the finals series at Equitana Melbourne in mid-November and it was just incredible! To see the transformation that the Brumbies had undergone over the 150 days and the relationships they had formed with their trainers was an absolute thrill.

We ran four classes, starting with the roundpen, which showcased some basic ground skills and float loading. Onto the pattern class, which was designed to show basic ridden maneuvers in all paces and the obstacle course, which consisted of a jump, bridge to cross, gate to open, a

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log to drag etc. – all designed to test each Brumbies basic education, calmness and relationship with their trainer.

Our final class on the Sunday was the freestyle class – four minutes, set to music and the brief was for the trainers to showcase their individual Brumbies strengths – that was a real eye opener! To see Brumbies who had been so very wild and wooly only five months ago showcased not only in such diverse events, but in such a huge environment as Equitana was touching and inspiring.

All the Brumbies were winners to us and to the crowds who delighted in watching and then getting to meet our ‘wild ones’. The eventual title winners though in the



ridden section was **Rachel Clarkson and VBA Maximus**. Max was caught only last winter and arrived here with his two mares, both of whose foals entered the Brumby



Yearling challenge! In the yearling event, **HVBA Thor and Samantha McCallus** took out the big garland. To all the trainers, who believed in our beautiful Brumbies, to the sponsors who put their businesses behind our event and

the general public who were so open minded and supportive of our Brumbies throughout and at Equitana – **thank you!**

You can read more about the Australian Brumby Challenge on our website: www.australianbrumbychallenge.com.au or on the Facebook page.



VBA Maximus not long after capture

The Brumbies who were caught over winter 2016 have all settled in well – all the boys have been gelded and the mares have all foaled except one and the grass is belly deep, so they’re looking incredibly good! We currently have 40 Brumbies here at our Brumby Junction sanctuary, including several who are looking for their forever homes. Some are not yet ready however, as always, that settling in period is just so important for them. The stallions need to learn that they are no longer stallions and the mares must foal down and raise their babies in peace too! We do have some mares who will come into training over summer and quite a few youngsters too!

Our summer projects are to get the shearing shed/ outdoor education space finished and run some more of the never ending fencing project! It’ll be a busy summer here!

As always, we are also looking for more volunteers – if you know of anyone who might be interested, tell them to give us a call!

Hoof Prints – Other items of note....

Some more pics from Equitana.....



The Editor's Tail

I had the pleasure of being at Equitana during the last two days of the Australian Brumby Challenge. The Challenge is a massive undertaking for any rehoming group to take on. Their own organization still has to run as do their own lives outside of Brumbydom. It was definitely a "Wild to Wonderful" experience and my hat is off to VBA and all the volunteers who made the event a great success.

In the broader scheme of things, ABC helps to spread the word that Brumbies are great horses and deserving of a place in the Australian culture. There was great interest during the events, at the Brumby Village and at the

<http://australianbrumbyalliance.org.au/more-info/australian-brumby-challenge/>



HVBA President Kath Massey and
VBA President Colleen O'Brien



ABA President Jill Pickering
captures a moment at the Wild Horse Behavior demo

Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

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Newsletter Contributions

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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