



# Brumby Bridges

*The quarterly newsletter of the ABA*

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## FROM THE WILD TO THE SHOW RING!



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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*.

*Congratulations to  
Guy Fawkes Casuarina and  
Shanlee Duckett who took out  
**Champion All Breeds Ridden**  
at the 2014 Bellingen Show!*

## ABA News

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### President's Chat

We are challenged on several fronts by Wild Horse reviews of Kozcuisko National Park, the Victorian Alps and Barmah National Park. While the first two reviews are still in progress, Parks Victoria have decided to bypass their Barmah Horse Advisory Committee (BHAC) formed to provide specialist advice on horse management, and have now commenced plans to remove the remaining 140 Brumbies from Barmah Park. It is vital this decision is reversed.

ABA member groups work tirelessly to promote the social, heritage and biodiversity values Brumbies provide, but it seems we need more untried strategies to counteract Parks reliance on inaccurate and outdated views. Ideas such as:

**The National Parks Act (Victoria)** [Page 1](#) has three overriding thrusts to ensure Parks are available for the benefit of the public: a) includes *historical* values, b) "*areas that demonstrate man's effect on his environment whether through his agricultural or pastoral pursuits or otherwise*", and c) includes *recreational use*. The Act's clear *intent* to include man's effect, historical and recreational use, in my view, clearly supports the concept to keep sustainable numbers of Brumbies living wild in areas they have co-existed with for decades. ([more page 3](#))

**Ramsar Wetland** (Barmah wetlands are Ramsar listed). Ramsar requires that no changes be considered without first undertaking comprehensive scientific studies to ensure *any* change considered will not degrade Ramsar's listing integrity. Lyn Sutton (HOOFS) and the ABA have separately asked Ramsar to consider whether Parks Victoria met required obligations before deciding to remove the Brumbies from Barmah. ([more page 4](#))

**Heritage listings** can preserve man's pastoral values and history working the land. Why can't this be extended to Brumbies? This move is being investigated and an

application to Heritage Victoria is in progress to introduce the notion that heritage listing need not be limited to non-living values. We often read of Living History in historical and Aboriginal documents. There can be no doubt in anyone mind that Barmah Brumbies, living wild and descendants from earlier European settlement are Living History.

### *Positive developments include: -*

The **Barmah Brumby Preservation Group Inc.** with Murray Willaton (member Barmah Forest Cattleman's Association), as President has been formed by several Barmah community groups. The Victorian Brumby Association, the ABA and HOOFS2010 Inc. are also involved so we can present a significant, unified community voice to Parks Victoria on why it is essential that Brumbies remain living wild in Barmah Park. ([more page 4](#))

**Andrea Harvey** is forming a Vet/science group to spread Brumby awareness to the veterinary profession and focus the need for science based Brumby research. ([more page 5 & 10](#))

**Kosciuszko NPWS** staff hosted several Brumby groups, including the ABA, HVBA and VBA for two day long visits to a variety of Brumby sites. The scenery and information gained from other groups and NPWS staff was invaluable and I came away determined that I, and maybe all of us, need to study relevant Park Acts. ([more page 6](#))

**Positive Brumby Information Sheets.** The subtle influence of repeated statements such as Brumbies introduce weeds can become the norm. After hearing, during the recent visit to Kozcuisko, that NPWS staff actually introduced fast growing grasses (exotic weeds) to stabilise banks some decades ago, and before their potential to overrun indigenous grasses was understood, I started drafting information sheets to refute the myth *Brumbies cause damage*, but am only part finished. **Any volunteers to help?**

written about is role in arresting desertification in this issue's Editor's Tail ([more page 11](#)).

Read on for a range of fascinating articles in this Brumby Bridges – Jill Pickering, President, ABA

**Conservation grazing** is gathering momentum in many parts of the world. We all need to keep up to date and quote information on this new science. Sandy Radke has

## Vital to know your state National Parks Acts

The National Parks Act (Vic) Page1 has three key objectives to ensure Parks are available for the benefit of the public:

- a) includes *historical values*;
- b) *“areas that demonstrate man’s effect on his environment whether through his agricultural or pastoral pursuits or otherwise”*; and
- c) includes *recreational use*.

The Australian Brumby Alliance wrote to Bill Jackson, CEO Parks Victoria in February 2014 to ask why Parks Victoria had decided to remove all Brumbies in Barmah National Park, his response included:

*“Barmah National Park contains significant cultural and environmental values and Ramsar-listed wetlands of International significance”.*

Then goes on:

*“As part of its responsibility under the National Parks Act 1975, Parks Victoria plans to remove all the wild horses from the national park. This objective is supported by the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation, which has expressed the view that all wild horses should be removed from the national park”.*

My responses are:

- The need for Ramsar to consider whether Parks Victoria had met its Ramsar obligations before deciding to remove the Brumbies from Barmah; (*see President’s Chat*)
- **The National Parks Act 1975** states that Parks should be made available for the benefit of the public, in particular **Areas that demonstrate man's effect on his environment whether through his agricultural or pastoral pursuits or otherwise**;
- The reference to exterminate or control exotic fauna is a single line on page 21; and

- The Yorta Yorta Nation, whose headquarters are in St. Kilda Road, Melbourne, may not be the closest traditional owners of Barmah Forest.

The Act’s reference to **man's effect on his environment** surely includes Aboriginal and settlements over the past 200 years. Australia correctly protects Aboriginal culture, however this should not be at the expense of 200 years of other settlement history and culture. Both should, and can, be sustained in a non-conflicting and complementary manner.

**The National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974 (NSW)** second objective (b) is:

the conservation of objects, places or features (including biological diversity) of cultural value within the landscape, including, but not limited to:

- (i) places, objects and features of significance to Aboriginal people, and
- (ii) places of *social value to the people of New South Wales*, and
- (iii) places of historic, architectural or scientific significance;

and the third:

(c) fostering public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation.

The Act’s objectives are to be achieved by applying the principles of ecologically sustainable development, and *public interest in the protection of the values for which land is reserved*.

In my opinion, these NSW and Victorian Park Acts examples provide a firm basis upon which ABA members

can argue for governments to support sustainable Brumby management. Once all ABA groups have reviewed their relevant Acts we will be well positioned to advise on a National sustainable Brumby management program.

## The Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (<http://ramsar.wetlands.org>)

The "Ramsar Convention" is an intergovernmental treaty that embodies the commitments of its member countries to maintain the ecological character of their Wetlands of International Importance and to plan for the "wise use", or sustainable use, of all of the wetlands in their territories. (Ramsar website)

At the centre of the Ramsar philosophy is the "wise use" concept, defined as "the maintenance of their ecological character, achieved through the implementation of ecosystem approaches, within the context of *sustainable development*".

"Wise use" therefore has at its heart the conservation and sustainable use of wetlands and their resources, for the benefit of humankind. *Source:*

[http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-home/main/ramsar/1\\_4000\\_0](http://www.ramsar.org/cda/en/ramsar-home/main/ramsar/1_4000_0)

Barmah was once a common land for grazing animals, such as cattle and horses with an annual muster to keep herds within sustainable numbers. It was during this period that Ramsar listed the Barmah Wetlands as an area of significance. However subsequently the government ceased cattle and logging leases resulting in increased undergrowth density. Currently 140 Brumbies remain, to do all they can to limit the undergrowth, as they have done for over 150 years.

Ramsar requires that no changes be considered without first undertaking comprehensive scientific studies to ensure any change considered will not degrade Ramsar listing integrity. However no studies on the negative

impact of removing cattle occurred. It is vital studies are conducted prior to even considering the total remove of Barmah's Brumbies.

The concept of "wise use" emphasizes that *human uses on a sustainable basis is entirely compatible with Ramsar principles and wetland conservation in general*. The principle is crucial to ensure *wetlands can continue fully to deliver their vital role in supporting maintenance of biological diversity and human well-being*.

Recognizing that for the conservation of wetlands and the wise use of their resources, an overall agreement is essential among the *various managers, owners, occupiers and other stakeholders* to benefit the quality of life for local and indigenous people and that these people, in addition to their involvement in site management, should derive the benefits that result from conservation and sustainable use of wetlands.

Ramsar listing, especially in sites subject to intense use by human communities, either to extract resources or to benefit from the natural functions of the wetland, helps to provide the necessary protection to ensure its long-term sustainability. This can best be achieved by preparing and implementing an appropriate management plan, with the *active participation of all stakeholders*. (*Source Ramsar Manual - <http://www.ramsar.org/pdf/lib/manual6-2013-e.pdf>*)

Somehow we must enable Parks Victoria to recognise Ramsar's concept of *Wise Use*.

## Barmah Brumby Preservation Group Inc. (BBPG)

Barmah National Park, previously called Barmah Forest, is located east of Eucucha adjacent to the Murray River. No documented evidence has been produced by Parks

Victoria to back their claims that Barmah Brumbies should be removed. Such claims appear based on unfounded and based on outdated views.

## Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

The determined mantra that Brumbies cause damage so should be removed continues despite overseas science now promoting the value of 'Conservation Grazing'. Equids and cattle are now being used as an effective control to stop the spread of tall, dense, dry undergrowth, which then fuels intensely overheated wildfires that destroy the land for decades to come.

Colleen O'Brien, Victorian Brumby Association and local Barmah key stake holders on Parks Victoria *Barmah Horse Advisory Committee* (BHAC) have worked for several years to produce recommendations on Barmah Horse management options.

The **Barmah Brumby Preservation Group Inc.** was formed in May 2014 by local Barmah groups along with the ABA, VBA and HOFS2010 Inc. to provide a united voice to reverse Parks Victoria sudden decision to remove the remaining 140 Barmah Brumbies from June 2014. BBPG membership also includes Aboriginal people who traditionally worked this area and still live nearby.

BBPG's Mission Statement is to maintain a sustainable number of Barmah Brumbies living in the wild of the Barmah National Park Victoria.

## New Science/Vet focused Group



**Andrea Harvey**, a vet with several Brumbies from Save The Brumbies (STB), is helping with STB's fertility control trial.

Andrea is also keen to support the Brumby Welfare work ABA members carry out by forming a new group of representatives from scientific and veterinary backgrounds to develop science based Brumby management information.

Andrea hopes to progress the vital need for science based research to guide government authorities on humane Brumby management. Andrea is concerned that Park staff seem to make Brumby management decisions based on outdated and emotive views.

For example conducting random aerial culls of thousands of Brumbies with no scientific reasoning that a cull is necessary. No scientific research on how best to control

BBPG aims to achieve the Mission in order: -

- To ensure the Heritage of Barmah National Park is recognized, maintained and restored for future generations of all Australians
- To promote the historical and heritage significance of the Barmah Brumbies
- To assist the government in managing the Barmah Brumbies by utilizing the expertise of members forming the Barmah Brumby Preservation Group

Removing Brumbies from where they have existed for 150 years will destroy the 'living heritage' we now enjoy and value. Furthermore, Barmah's current bio-diversity will become bio-dense, as we saw in the exclusion areas of the Alpine National Park.

BBPG is moving fast to raise the issues and develop a platform to represent positive values of Brumbies in Barmah to Parks Victoria and the Victorian Government.

numbers, then use reports that an aerial cull was humane to justify further aerial shooting.

Andrea, as a scientist, has read these aerial cull reports and finds them scientifically flawed and therefore, in her opinion, essentially useless.

I spoke with Andrea early May 2014 after she had recently spoken with Sheila Greenwell (OHHAWA vet) and Bidda Jones (RSPCA Canberra). I put Andrea in contact with Lyn Hinds (CSIRO Canberra) and Magdalena Zabek (Brumby supporter/researcher QLD). If anyone has additional contact suggestions for Andrea, please let me know.

This group has potential to spread awareness across Science and Veterinary Professionals about issues facing Brumbies, and to promote the need for Australian scientifically sound research papers that we can use when negotiating with Australian Authorities.



## Member News

### Australian Brumby Horse Register (ABHR)



At the recent Bellingen Show, ABHR Registered Brumby *Guy Fawkes Casuarina* ridden by Shanlee Duckett was Champion All Breeds Ridden. The judges supported their choice of Champion by stating *they were*

*impressed that she was captured in the wild and is now in the show ring.*

### Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

#### Kosciuszko Field Trip

Kath, Sharlone and Sam headed to Jindabyne in March for a two day field trip with NPWS and reps from the VBA, ABA, RSPCA, Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group and the newly formed local Brumby management group. The field trip was organised by NPWS with the intension of showing us the damage or "impact" caused by Brumbies. With all of the media and claims by NPWS of the problems caused by Brumbies and the increasing populations we travelled around with our eyes open.

Brumbies have been in Kosciuszko National Park for more than 150 years. This was the first time the HVBA has had a chance to do a field trip here. We have previously tried to go to the northern end of Kosciuszko when picking up Brumbies and have a look around, but by the time we get there, and with a very long trip home the next day transporting brumbies, it just hasn't been possible.

The first day was an exhausting 11 hours in the 4 wheel drives. We were taken to southern areas of the park including creeks and plains that are used by Brumbies. To say we were shocked at what we saw is an understatement. A few hoof prints here and there – and no Brumbies! We were expecting them everywhere! After 11 hours of driving, we saw only 11 Brumbies. The

waterways that we saw were pristine and the Brumbies were changing where they crossed over time. The previous crossings had plenty of regrowth of vegetation. We also noted areas where Brumbies were grazing on the lower plains and leaving the native grasses on the higher areas to grow and flourish.

The second day we were shown how a trap yard works which was very educational. As the trap yard was being demonstrated, with more than 20 people standing there,



out came a very large wild dog! He was huge and a small foal left outside the yards would be no match for him. Unfortunately all of the Brumbies

trapped in the southern end of the park are sent to slaughter.

As we travelled around some of the plains we saw some more Brumbies and pristine waterways that had absolutely no damage from Brumbies. In fact the most damage done to the waterways was by the 4WDs!

## Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

We were all taken to a site that is just across the Victorian border where a “study” is being done. This study is very



poorly designed. Four fenced plots have been set up with only a few meters between them – all in a row and within a water way.

These plots are supposed to show what the grass growth would be if grazing animals (i.e. Brumbies) were not in the park causing damage. The problem is they are so close together that it has forced the Brumbies, and other grazing animals, to walk between and has created more damage than what would naturally be there.

But the major concern with this site is that it is the first place the media are taken - “see look at this, look at what they are doing”.

Which is why Brumbies are now labelled as destroying the whole park. Brumbies only occupy one third



of Kosciuszko National Park, they have been there for many generations and their “impact” is very minimal that we observed.

We saw some beautiful sites like Mount Kosciuszko and restored huts on our drives and of course some beautiful Brumbies. But it was clear that it was a “butter up” trip. Brumbies are in areas where they could be trapped but impossible to transport out and NPWS want Brumby groups to agree to other methods. The new management plan that is in development has called for all methods to be put on the table. NPWS are considering everything from cyanide poisoning to aerial culling – and unfortunately they do have RSPCA NSW on side that will agree to aerial culling.

We agree that there are some sensitive wilderness areas in the park where Brumbies should not be – and walkers are finding Brumby poo offensive on the top of Mount

Kosciuszko. The HVBA will certainly be keeping involved in the development of the management plan and we will not agree to any inhumane methods.

The HVBA finished the trip with our own tour of the northern parts of the park where our Brumbies are trapped. Again, we struggled to find any!

The area of Long Plain is targeted by NPWS as it is very easy to transport the Brumbies out once they are trapped.

We found a horse riding camp in the area and we stopped for a chat. We were told that they had been riding there for 30 years. In the early days Brumbies would confidently wander the plains in full view of the wonderful site. But now due to trapping and people chasing the Brumbies they mainly stay in the trees where they feel safe.

NPWS will be conducting a new aerial count survey in May and we are eagerly awaiting the results – and we will be sure to keep our members informed.

### Singleton Brumbies

We are very pleased to announce that our good friend Adam Sutton has been awarded the tender to trap the Singleton Brumbies. A trial trap of 10 Brumbies will commence in the coming weeks and if successful, the remainder of the approximately 200 Brumbies to be trapped in the coming years – our new sanctuary can’t come soon enough!

### Tocal Field Day

The HVBA team are gearing up for a huge weekend at Tocal Field Day. We have lots of merchandise, Brumby books and a new look stand! This year we are located at site 114, right next to all the food! So you can’t miss us and we hope to see many of our members over the weekend. Cowboy and Bella will be given a workout during our daily demonstrations at the arena.

### The Man From Coxs River

This self-funded, documentary style movie has been hitting the independent cinemas lately. The HVBA has been critical of the movie since its release due to the incredibly poor and sometimes brutal treatment of the Brumbies.

The movie focuses on the removal of the Brumbies from Warragamba Dam, outside Sydney. It is dramatised with a

### Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

sense of urgency that the Brumbies must be removed or they will be shot. This movie is certainly a case of “never let the truth get in the way of a good yarn” The Brumbies were never in any danger of being shot as the five year management plan clearly states that only 10% of the Brumbies needed to be trapped in the first twelve months for the program to be deemed successful.

It is our opinion that the only sense of urgency was due to the time constraints by the contractor – in which case he should not have put his hand up for the tender – and the lack of budget of the documentary crew.

## Save the Brumbies Inc. (STB)

STB is progressing with fertility control methods at the New England Brumby Sanctuary. Specialist vets from Sydney University are working with us on scientific data which we will present to NSW Government in due course. It is our sincere hope that fertility control will eventually be introduced into the management plans for Guy Fawkes River National Park and while not the panacea for overall control yet combined with passive trapping and removal will see a significant reduction in numbers of horses over a five year period.

The Plan of Management we worked so hard to introduce into Guy Fawkes after the horrific aerial slaughter in 2000 has been highly instrumental in convincing other national parks to follow this example of more humane management. Fertility control is the next step and one all at STB feel passionate about.

Our main Sanctuary is still in severe drought going into winter and we are at present unable to take more horses until dams are full. The high cost of hay is also a drain on the budget. However we have placed on a further ten horses so far this year to approved owners although our overall placement rate is down due to the drought conditions.

We were so fortunate to have highly renowned and respected horseman, Carlos Tabernaberry conduct a two day clinic at our Bellingen Sanctuary on behalf of Save the Brumbies Inc. on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> April last.

The clinic was fully booked and to those who missed out, take heart, Carlos will be back with us again in 2015.

The way in which the Brumbies are handled and trained to be taught to lead out of the park is very difficult to watch. Unfortunately audiences are left thinking that Brumbies need to and are handled in this way.

The movie will be screening at Avoca Beach on Thursday the 8th May with a Q&A with the production crew afterwards. The HVBA will be attending and we will certainly have some questions and endeavoring to set the record straight.

Carlos has a very high regard for the intelligence and temperament of the Brumby, his favourite horse to work with, and this certainly proved to be true as most of the horses participating were Brumbies we had placed with caring owners.



The morning session concentrated on establishing a secure foundation and covered extensive ground work, lunging, flexion and response to the lightest pressure, as Carlos emphasised, without solid ground work and control in place before the saddle one cannot expect good results once backed.

Carlos worked with the large group, demonstrating his gentle methods and keeping all amused with his varied and interesting stories about his past experiences with all types of horses and owners.

Each participant then benefited with personal attention from Carlos with focus on any problems causing concern. The large group of Observers gathered around the arena



### Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

were not forgotten; Carlos found time to answer the questions fired at him and all were totally absorbed in the proceedings.

A quick break for lunch and then the afternoon session began. Most participants were in the saddle and again benefited greatly from Carlos's expert instruction. Carlos rides bitless and although some were wary of forsaking that bridle he soon had them confidently working in halters and the horses obviously enjoyed this change of direction.

That one mare executed three steps of a canter pirouette in a halter under Carlos's hands was an inspiration to watch.

A campfire BBQ, great horse stories, great company in the evening concluded the first day.

Sunday was given over to private, one on one, lessons and under Carlos' direction many found this a great confidence booster and gained much from the instruction. Carlos

backed a young Brumby for the first time and showed his skill in all areas of horsemanship. There was even a session with a young horse learning carriage work; horses looking on had their first exposure to a 'horse with wheels attached', all good training along the way.

Without exception, all enjoyed the time with Carlos immensely and look forward to further clinics in the future. We thank Carlos Tabernaberi most sincerely for his expertise, his help, his gentle understanding of the horses' mind and feelings, as Carlos says, it's 'Through the Eyes of the Horse' that we learn. JAN CARTER President, *Save the Brumbies Inc.*



website for Carlos Tabernaberi:  
[www.whisperingacres.com.au](http://www.whisperingacres.com.au)

## South East Queensland Brumby Association (SEQBA)

SEQBA has had a busy time lately with a Bunnings BBQ on 11 May, a Brumby spotting tour on 12 April and the rehoming of Pearl and Gypsy.

Pearl was delivered to her new owner Michael who lives near Gin Gin on 22 March 2014 but when she got there she didn't want to get off the float. Eventually she did get off and is doing well at her new home where she will be a brood mare as she can't be used as a riding horse due to an injury sustained whilst living the life of a wild brumby.

Gypsy, a one and a half year old very pretty filly, was delivered to her new home near Cooroy on 25 May 2014 where she is being doted on by her owner Michaela who got straight into brushing her lovely



long flaxen mane.

Grace, who is mother of Gypsy, had a foal on the 7th Nov 2013. The foal has the very fancy name of Rainbow Yarraman, Bo for short. He is now 6 months old and is being weaned before he goes to his new home near Kenilworth in a couple of months' time. That will leave SEQBA with just one brumby, namely Grace, to rehome.



Terry and Anne Wilson, who were the primary founders of SEQBA, have been caring for and training brumbies on a voluntary basis for the past four and half years. They are now going to take a break and are looking for any person who lives between Gympie and Toowoomba who may be interested to take on the role, on a voluntary basis of caring for and training the brumbies. *If you have experience with horses, an adequate yard system (i.e. yards inside a high fenced paddock), and most importantly*

the time please send an email to [seqbrumby@hotmail.com](mailto:seqbrumby@hotmail.com).

SEQBA is still waiting to hear what forestry plan to do in the long term regarding the management of the approximately 1,000 brumbies within the Toolara and Beerwah state forests. In four and half years approximately 75 brumbies have been trapped, removed and rehomed. Unfortunately not all rehoming have been successful and the removal of an average of 20 brumbies per annum is insufficient to manage the increasing brumby population. The trapper (Dave Berman) has advised he intends to trap and remove another herd of brumbies in the near future as there have been a number of vehicle horse collisions in an area further north of where the 75 have been removed. If SEQBA is unable to find a new volunteer carer and trainer before the trapping occurs they can only hope Dave will take the brumbies to his place and rehome them himself which thankfully he has done in the past.

SEQBA has submitted a funding application to the Qld ANZAC Centenary Grants Funding Program. The project is called **136,000 Horses**. The aim of the project is to raise community awareness about the 136,000 Australian horses used in the first world war of which only 1 came back.

The project will incorporate three stages:

Stage 1. Research, including interviews, to obtain information regarding the use of horses in World War I e.g. where they were bred in Qld, how they were trained and transported, what they were used for.

Stage 2. Preparation of at least 3 informative articles for magazine publication.

Stage 3. To generate interest, an "Anzac Centenary Trek" will be undertaken along the Bicentennial National Trail with the 20 presentations occurring in towns along the trail, e.g. Kilkivan, Nanango and Killarney. The presentations to schools and the community will bring to life stories involving the horses in the First World War and will feature 4 authentic brumbies, examples of equipment used in the war, power point display and maps.

Letters of support were provided by none other than the ABA and the Bicentennial National Trail. SEQBA will be advised sometime in June if their applications has been successful.



(SEQBA's new float made by Terry)

## Hoofprints - Noteworthy Tracks

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### New Sentient Brumby Working Group

Andrea is a veterinarian who has adopted six Brumbies and also set up a Brumby Working Group, within *Sentient, The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics*. Andrea's vision is to form a group of veterinarians and other animal scientists to become a central resource of scientific information about Brumbies, and hopefully with time be considered the 'go to' organisation for welfare advice regarding their management. Key roles for the group would be facilitating and compiling research into specific

areas that would advance the welfare of Brumbies, forming strategic alliances with other organisations to develop and propose policies for their humane

management, and advocating on behalf of their welfare to government and environmental groups.

Some of the key issues for Brumbies, historically, have been claims of their negative impact on the environment, welfare issues arising from mass aerial shooting, limited alternative options for population control (such as fertility control and passive trapping and adoption), the fragmented approach to advocating for their needs, and the lack of independent scientific evidence upon which to base decisions about the most humane management of these unique wild horses. Andrea is seeking interested people to get involved – if you are interested in becoming involved with Sentient’s Brumby Working Group, please contact Andrea on [andreaarvey.cat@gmail.com](mailto:andreaarvey.cat@gmail.com)

## SENTIENT

### The Veterinary Institute for Animal Ethics...

...is an independent forum and lobby group that aims to bring the recognition of animals as sentient beings to the national agenda and to ensure that their needs are appropriately and ethically addressed by governments, industry and the public.

As a veterinary driven body, Sentient offers scientific reflection within an ethical framework to collaborate with the community in furthering the animal protection movement.

*"Animals can communicate quite well. And they do. And generally speaking, they are ignored."*

*Alice Walker*

<http://www.sentient.org.au/Sentient/Home.html>

## The Editor’s Tail

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### The Role of Herbivores in Restoring Soils and Vegetation

I have been noticing that slowly but surely, people are questioning the assumption that the presence of large numbers of herbivores in the environment is categorically bad. Conservation grazing, where wild and domesticated herbivores are used to maintain and increase the biodiversity of natural or semi-natural habitats, is gaining recognition as an effective environmental approach.

Recently, I viewed a TED<sup>i</sup> talk by Allan Savory, a grassland ecosystem pioneer, on his thoughts in regard to arresting desertification of vast areas of land. The thrust of his theory is that the *movement* of large (even dense) herds are critical in maintaining sufficient organic matter in soils to hold rainwater. Without this material, rain water will either run off or evaporate quickly and his talk has compelling evidence that removing animals in many areas is a mistake.

The effectiveness of conservation grazing relies on a holistic approach; implementation must consider each environmental set of circumstances and the nature of the species used for grazing. Other questions also come to

mind, for example the animal welfare implications of re-establishing herds in already denuded and dry land, and its applicability to Australian environment (lack of predators being the biggie).

In arguing the case for maintaining wild horses in the environment, it is tempting to latch on to the conservation grazing model. But nothing is a panacea and more understanding of its effects and consequences need to be sought. Nevertheless, it places a healthy question mark on current thinking.

I encourage you to watch this 22 minute presentation and, although it does not discuss horses, I believe you will find it interesting in its applicability to what is happening to wild horse populations. There is also an interactive transcript of the talk below the top screen at the link below.

[www.ted.com/talks/allan\\_savory\\_how\\_to\\_green\\_the\\_world\\_s\\_deserts\\_and\\_reverse\\_climate\\_change](http://www.ted.com/talks/allan_savory_how_to_green_the_world_s_deserts_and_reverse_climate_change)

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1 TED (Technology, Entertainment, Design) is a global set of conferences from the non-profit Sapling Foundation aimed at

encouraging discussion of cutting edge ideas. TED conferences can now be viewed online at [www.ted.com](http://www.ted.com)

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## Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.

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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)
- ☞ Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA
- ☞ Save the Brumbies Inc. (NSW)
- ☞ Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group (NSW)
- ☞ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ☞ Victorian Brumby Association

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