



# Brumby Bridges

*The quarterly newsletter of the ABA*

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### ABA salutes the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA

It is the end of an era for West Australian Brumby Rescue as the OHHAWA winds down its charity group. [See p 6 for more](#)

### 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 have been regularly contributing along with other ABA members to the Kosciusko National Park conversation chat website. What a revelation! Wide ranging views for park management to work through to meet its obligations under The National Parks Act 1975 objective '*foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation*'. All park visitors should be able to enjoy the park, including those wanting 'pristine landscape' and those wanting wild Brumbies, in managed numbers, co-existing in their environment as they have done for over 200 years.

This opportunity to interact daily with broad ranging views is increasing my knowledge and understanding as I read each contributors approach to Brumby management. It is great to see many Brumby supporters putting forward sound, professional debate positions as the emotions run high.

References 'for' and 'against' are offered by contributors to followed up. One reference used by authors of the recent media hyped death of one Brumby caught in an extreme snow dump at Dead Horse Gap misinterpreted figures from a 1999 report to infer that up to 11,000 - 20,000 Brumbies will die of dehydration, starvation or poison over the next 10 years in Kosciusko alone. This research paper was in fact reporting Australia wide statistics (including wild horses living in large arid Australian areas), not as the authors claimed happening in Kosciusko alone.

Whether Brumbies cause damage or not avoids the key issue since any species, especially humans, can cause damage. Slowly Parks are moving towards the concept of recognising manageable populations will continue living in the park. Hopefully National Park will:

- Research the population level each park region can sustain, without losing resilience, or the ability to bounce back from transitory impacts, and
- Identify the damage source - is it humans, horses, pigs, goats, deer, wombat, or a mix? and
- Manage that species in the most humane way.

We continue to strive for keeping sustainable Brumby populations living in parkland, and that any population reduction programs must be the most humane, not the most expedient.

With more groups becoming involved we stand an ever increasing chance to achieve our goal. The articles to support aerial culling will get more intensive until the management plan's finished, so keep in mind The 1975 Act's objective '*foster public appreciation, understanding and enjoyment of nature and cultural heritage and their conservation*'.

All park visitors should be able to find their place of beauty in our amazing, unique National Parks.

*Jill Pickering, President ABA*

### Snippets from the Online Kosi Chat Room

#### **Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Management Review**

The horse plan is under review [CLICK HERE](#) to join the conversation until 30 Nov, explore and have your say. Below are some For/Against highlights to date.

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#### **Grazing - Fire control**

Advised to put stock in an eaten down paddock during a fire, keep vegetation short around dwelling to reduce fire risk – Grazing reduces fuel loads, parks do not clear undergrowth, so fire risk is higher. Grazing horses spread grass seeds as do birds and other species in the wild.

### **Need Research**

Many researchers believe horses must not be in a park which creates bias. When does an *introduced species* become *vital*? Wild horses assist environments and evidence shows if wild horses are removed bio-diversity declines. Research animal impacts by type/percentage, quantify, damage short-term or? Brumby impacts are small compared to fires, weeds, wind, wombats, rain, snow, ice, droughts and floods etc.

### **Impacts**

Hoofed animal cause; soil loss, native vegetation changes, hillside tracks, trampled bogs, upturned dirt/grass, churned stream crossings and horse dung over-whelm eucalypt smells.

Hoof prints fade with storms and Brumbies transit the environment, spell areas, regenerate, refresh pastures and do not destroy root systems. It takes prolonged, concentrated impacts to cause serious, long-lasting damage by horses alone. 10 birds, 10 plants and 11 mammals (4 hard hoofed) are introduced, why focus on horses, they are one of many introduced species.

### **Streams/Bogs**

Hoof prints in bogs, trampled streams approaches, broken banks, dung fouled streams means water purification.

Feral pigs damage waterways/land more than horses and native Wombats dig huge holes in river banks and deposit manure. Brumbies selectively graze around bogs.

Floods, not Brumbies, carve gullies, create erosion etc., nature cleans, replenishes & survives. Have streams stopped flowing or bogs disappeared because of Brumbies? Rain after intense fires made streams look like lava flows & produce sediment, yet people blame brumbies. Any species can 'muddy' water holes, leave prints, water holes can be muddy unless spring fed.

### **Bio-Diversity**

Horses damage native ecosystems which have not evolved to cope with hoofed animals. Introduced species harbor infectious bacteria and compete with native herbivores for forage. Huge stallion markers by main roads, topple the balance of ecology.

Bio-diversity and eco-systems have not collapsed since Europeans arrived, but adapted. Many studies on negative

horse impacts, none on positive impacts in KNP. Parks must check for inter-dependencies of plants and/or other animals on the grazing behaviour of KNP Wild horses.

### **Evolution**

Not all ecological processes are positive – I don't want KNP habitats to adapt to horses.

The Brumby is a "keystone" species and assists biodiversity best in sustainable numbers. It is not whether species compete but is one pushing another to extinction. When Gondwana broke into continents, local species kept evolving. All started in one place so none are *introduced*. Horses were in the park before it became KNP so they have a right to stay. Humans/livestock comprise 97% of animal biomass; don't begrudge the few 3% of wild animals surviving wild.

### **Pre/Post settlement values**

Snowies are valued for wilderness, nature, ancient trees, woodlands, streams with sphagnum and delicate plants in pristine state. Feral animals harm KNP - remove them to return to pre- settlement natural times. Aboriginal heritage has been displaced by brumbies.

Leave old Wild Horse bloodlines in the country that they have called home for generations, evolving perfectly into their environment and harming nothing.

### **Population Management**

Eradication is possible, instead of killing horses, stop using 1080.

Bushfires, floods, major snowfalls impact on ecosystems. Wet seasons/downpours impact on wetlands & streams; ask locals with generations of experience their views. Consider the low Brumby ratio/sqkm, identify when a species becomes overabundant and manage to that level.

### **Aerial Shooting**

Aerial culling is quick and cheaper than trapping. RSPCA support this method. Need what is practically achievable. Dung piles, soil filling creeks and rivers will stop after the horses go.

Mass brumby killing is genocide, how can people love a plant more than an animal. Horse carcasses increase wild dog, pig and fox numbers. Work together and get the balance right.

**Heritage**

Does past practice equal heritage value? Stockman valued horses, but for long-term survival of precious alpine areas we must have no more stockmen, cattle or horses.

Brumbies are a vital link to our heritage if OK to ski in precious areas the horses should stay.

Our country was built on the horse's back. It's the spirit of this country, the battles and the battlers, the harshness of life, our resilience, success; we'd never have achieved without the horse, specifically our horses, forefathers bred horses to survive no matter how hard the job.

## Member News

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### Australian Brumby Horse Register (ABHR)

Last year the Australian Brumby Horse Register introduced the ABHR *Showcase Brumby of the Year Awards*.

Running from the 1st July 2013 until 30th June 2014, all Brumbies registered with the ABHR had a chance to win this prestigious award.



This award is not about winning, it is about recognising those that are willing to get out there and give it a go.

The ABHR awards the Brumby from each State who competes in the most classes at all agricultural shows and

horse breed shows. This includes not only Brumby classes, but any class. Winners will be announced at the completion of the show season and the winning brumby from each State will be awarded with an engraved trophy.

In order to be in the running for Showcase Brumby of the Year, members must fill a ABHR Showcase Brumby Of The Year card for each show they compete in. When you pay for your classes present it to be signed or stamped by the show staff and send it by post to the ABHR after the show. All cards must be received by the 30th of June.

Congratulations to winners of the inaugural ABHR Brumby Showcase of the year for 2013/14!

**NSW – Aspley Tess and owner Debbie Barret**

**Qld – VBA Answer and owner Keryn Masters**

### Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

After five years of communications with Defence Environmental Officers, HVBA finally received local Brumbies from the Singleton Army Base.



The Brumbies were loaded on to the rescue trailer while surrounded by automatic live fire practice. They have now been separated into two family groups and are taking much longer to settle in than the Kosciuszko Brumbies, but slowly they are getting used

to the routine here at the sanctuary – and especially the yummy food!

All of the Singleton Brumbies in to our care are between 13 and 14hh and are smaller horses rather than pony type. They are all very well put together with breathtaking movement. Being on the base has meant they have been exposed to people during training and a high amount of activity and noise. So in these early days we are just

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focusing on them settling in and in the coming weeks to have Storm and Ghost gelded.



The HVBA was contacted by ABC News after filming another story at the base and hearing of the trapping program. The HVBA was then contacted by NBN News and 2UE Radio who also wanted to cover the story. So it was lights, camera, and action for a few days!! If you missed the news features, here are the links:

<http://www.nbnnews.com.au/index.php/2014/08/11/singleton-army-base-brumbies-captured-in-trial-program/>

[http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-10/a-brumby-catch-underway-at-a-nsw-army-base/5661014?WT.ac=statenews\\_nsw](http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-08-10/a-brumby-catch-underway-at-a-nsw-army-base/5661014?WT.ac=statenews_nsw)

After both of the news features we were contacted by a gentleman whose father used to take him to see the Singleton Brumbies back in the 1950's. According to this person the Brumbies have been in the area since the 1930's and the original population in the 1950's was approximately 40, meaning if the approximate count now is 200 there certainly has not been a population explosion.

It was also interesting to learn that in the late 1950's, two grey fillies were removed, trained and came home full of ribbons from the Sydney Royal!

### More Media Coverage

The HVBA will be featured in the Town and Country Leader special Everything Equine this week.

We will also be featured in an upcoming horse diary to be released at the end of August at most department and saddlery stores.

### University Work Placements

The HVBA has hosted three University students from UNE and Sydney Uni studying animal science and animal bio science.

Some of the students had no experience with horses before but in only a few days they were much more confident and also very surprised just how quiet and sensible Brumbies are!

Having students do work experience with the HVBA not



only gives us a much needed hand, but also provides the students with valuable horse experience and with a breed they would really never have access to, and a very positive experience which all helps to spread the word about Brumbies.

### Meetings with NPWS

The HVBA participated in a teleconference call with the VBA, ABA and NPWS regarding the draft of the new Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko NP. NPWS have now asked for public comments and concerns via their website. There are many topics of discussion and it is an opportunity for everyone to have their say until the 30<sup>th</sup> of November. We highly encourage people to comment via this web link:

[www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectsnowies](http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectsnowies)

The HVBA also had a general catch up with the Rangers and Area Manager at the Gloucester NPWS. Regional Manager, Robert Quirk, was also in the area and able to participate in the meeting.

There was a presentation showing the stability of the numbers of the creamy Brumbies of Currucabundi NP. Everyone agreed that the Brumbies can remain where

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they are due to the low numbers and having very little to no impact on the environment.

The meeting also included discussion of the Barrington Brumbies. Rangers have been gathering a lot of data for the location and photo identification of individual Brumbies and family groups.

There are concerns about the increase in Brumby numbers at high tourist locations in the park, especially the Little Murray camping area. The area is closed to vehicles during the winter but due to financial constraints no passive

trapping can be implemented in the near future. We have requested that information be provided to campers at Little Murray to not feed the Brumbies, harass them or to get too close to photograph them.

## Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA (OHHAWA)

It is with regret that we announce the decision has been made to wind up the registered charity, the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA Inc.

The charity has done great things in terms of heritage horse rescue, advocacy, relationship building and public education regarding “feral” animal management and welfare since its inception in 2005 but the past few years have seen less rescues required, dwindling membership and a lack of resources and time from our dedicated volunteers.

The remaining 8 horses from Juna Downs and Cape le Grande will continue to be cared for and trained at charity expense until they can be suitably rehomed.

Closing a registered charity requires more administrative work than to open one, and closure will take a number of months once formally underway.

We wish to thank all past and present Committee members, ordinary members and other volunteers and members of the public who, over the years, have contributed to the saving of over 200 equine lives. Without

each and every one of you these horses would have starved to death or been culled. By raising awareness via the OHHAWA Inc., over the years, the WA government are now more conscious of the fact that the lives of our wild heritage horses matter to the majority of the general public and they will be held accountable if humane management practices are not continually maintained and enforced.

Dr Sheila Greenwell, in her professional capacity and as a member of the Department of Food & Agriculture’s Pest Animal Ethics Advisory Committee, will continue to lobby and advocate for improved “feral” animal management practices within WA and interstate.

The Australian Brumby Alliance Inc., the national umbrella group to which the OHHAWA Inc. belonged, will also continue to monitor the welfare and management of Australia’s wild horses in all states.

*Sandra Hall*  
*Hon. President*

**(see [Hoofprints](#) for a photo tribute to OHHAWA)**

## Save the Brumbies Inc. (STB)

Break through news from STB ... commencement of fertility control trials at our New England Brumby Sanctuary.

We are thrilled to make this announcement as this is the first time such trials have been conducted on wild horses in Australia.

Preliminary research data will be available in 2015 and from there it is our hope to have fertility control introduced into suitable areas of national parks. Our horses treated so far have not shown any adverse reactions and the drug is easy and quick to administer, also highly cost effective. Fertility control has been on the agenda of the STB Team for years, now we can look forward to actual results with the scientific and proven results presented to Government.

We are currently experiencing the driest conditions in over twenty years at both Sanctuaries. The 'roos outnumber our horses at NEBS by five to one and yes, the 'roos certainly enjoy what little grass we have including prime lucerne hay to the detriment of our budget. As a result we have been unable to take more horses this winter. As soon as good rain falls we will have more horses available.

TAFE students studying animal husbandry attended our Bellingen Sanctuary in August.

All enjoyed the experience immensely; it was a fun packed day and the interest the students showed in our work was

most appreciated. Luckily the horses didn't suffer bouts of



colic from the overdose of carrots and apples

We now have a voice in North Qld., Shelly Cowan is our representative in that area and this will help us to keep in touch with Qld Parks wild horse management first hand.

Our annual Spring Day will be held at Bellingen Sanctuary this year. Lots of horse action, demonstrations and talks by professionals and of course, a lunch time BBQ.

All welcome to attend if in our area. **Date: Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2014**

## South East Queensland Brumby Association (SEQBA)

We have some exciting news! A local lady, Christine Butler is having a kids brumby book published soon. It will be ready in time for Christmas. The book was inspired by the



SEQ Brumby rehoming program and Jana and John Jack, who are children of Judith Taylor. Judith

(pictured) rehomed a young brumby "Toolara Kamala" and her husband trained her to saddle. SEQBA was invited by Christine to write the forward to the book. Info on how to purchase the book will be provided when it is available. All proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated by Christine to SEQ Brumby Association.

We are currently:

- **searching for a brumby trainer.** If you know anyone who may be interested please let us know either by email [seqbrumby@hotmail.com](mailto:seqbrumby@hotmail.com) or phone 07 5485 3369.
- **waiting to hear from Forestry Plantation Qld** on what their plans are regarding the future management of the estimated 1300 brumbies in Tuan and Toolara State Forest.

I recently attended a showing of a brumby documentary at the University of Queensland, Gatton Campus, developed by Magda Zabek. Magda, who was completing a doctorate, spent two years studying the brumbies within the Tuan and Toolara State Forests and individually photographed 500 brumbies. The documentary does not address management issues so is not political in anyway, rather it is about the basic behaviours of brumbies, and will be a good educational tool once it is able to be released which could be a while as Magda is seeking permission to use the background music, and has yet to determine what she is going to do with it/how she is going to distribute it. It is interesting that Magda is from Poland and has produced a documentary to educate Australians about our brumbies!.

Some interesting information from the documentary are that:

- the brumby population in the pine plantations of Tuan and Toolara State Forests is approx. 1,300 and is increasing at a rate of about 9% per annum
- the mares foal on average once every two years
- when a mare doesn't foal, the foal from the previous year may feed from her until it is up to two years of age

We look forward to being able to read the full results of Magda's studies at some point in the future.

## Victorian Brumby Association (VBA)

It has been a big few months here at the Victorian Brumby Association, with the trapping seasons at Bogong High Plains in Victoria's Alpine National Park and also the Kosciuszko National Park in New South Wales in full swing.

The Bogong 'season' runs from around February to May and during this time, we picked up and transported 23 Brumbies to our new sanctuary. These ranged in age from a four week old foal to stallions of around 13-15 years of



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age, with many pregnant mares also and pretty much every age in between. We also took in five pregnant mares from the Kosciuszko program. All the stallions have now been gelded and turned out for a spell as they settle in to



their new lives. The mares have also been turned out so that they can foal in peace in our larger paddocks with a settled

mob. One of the girls has already had her foal – she decided to surprise us quite quickly after her arrival here, which we didn't expect, but both Mum and baby are doing well and we are eagerly awaiting some friends for baby Ruby to play with in her new big paddock!

Of course, we always have our lobbying going on behind the scenes, with concerns about the Brumbies of Barmah National Park in Victoria. Parks Victoria commenced a community consultation process and then made the decision as it was in its early stages, that they would remove all the Barmah Brumbies regardless!

We have been working hard to ensure that this doesn't happen and have been blown away by the local community support for the Barmah Brumbies. The Kosciuszko Brumby management plan is under review with some fiery meetings attended – again, great local support for these iconic Brumbies, but we have a long road to travel to keep them safe.

Kosciuszko is very similar to the situation in the Alpine National Park in Victoria, where we are working on establishing a target number that the government are happy to keep in the park. Without an end number, we feel that 'management plans' have the capacity to become exterminations. More to come on all of that as we await the Alpine National Park Brumby Management draft plan, which was due for release in November 2013 and is yet to arrive.

On top of all of that, we have moved house as a result of a road about to go through our lovely sanctuary in Beaufort! We are 25km up the road now, at Brumby Junction, a stunning property which we are working hard to get just right for our Brumbies. We have a lot more infrastructure here, which is great and are working our way through much of the fencing needs, which keeps us very busy indeed!

Equitana is coming up in Melbourne in November and we will have our Brumbies in the Breeders Village again – this is a huge effort and cost, but a great event for us and we are really looking forwards to showcasing our stunning



Brumbies to the huge crowd of horse folk that flock to Equitana. Around Equitana, we also have our annual Brumbies Big Day Out, a fun filled, Brumbies only Gymkhana and family day and even a few shows with Brumby classes – what a busy year!

We are rather proud of VBA Mighty Mouse, with his owner Allie McShae completing their first 40km endurance ride, where they won the novice and finished with a heart rate of 36bpm (which is sensationally low!). 'Mouse' was caught as a seven year old stallion with his mare band



from the Bogong High Plains about three years ago.

What a change from the stallion in the second pic, shown the day he was caught!

## Hoofprints - Noteworthy Tracks

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The ABA is sad to see the closure of one of its member groups, the Outback Heritage Horse Association of WA. One of the OHHAWA's last recues was the Cape le Grande horses south of Esperance. The following photos are a tribute to their dedication and hard work towards saving Australia's Heritage Brumbies.





## The Editor's Tail

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The Editor has her tail between her legs this edition. Due to being overseas and other commitments she has not had much time for this edition of Brumby Bridges. She will be back in the saddle for the December newsletter!

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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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