

MEDIA RELEASE



Paul Weller MLA **Member for Rodney**

Thursday 26 June 2014

LEAVE BRUMBIES IN BARMAH FOREST: WELLER

Member for Rodney Paul Weller has tabled a petition in State Parliament opposing the removal of the Barmah heritage brumbies from the Barmah National Park.

This followed his meeting with the Barmah Forest Cattleman's Association, the Barmah Heritage Brumby Awareness group, and Greg Barr, the Nationals candidate for Shepparton, at the 2014 Barmah Muster.

The petition contains more than 2600 signatures and requests that any actions to remove the Barmah Forest brumbies cease immediately.

The petitioners call for the brumbies to remain in the Barmah National Park to continue their 150-year contribution to conserve biological diversity in the forest.

Mr Weller said Parks Victoria had been working with the Barmah Horse Advisory Committee in the management of the horses within the Barmah Forest for the past 12 months, however a decision had recently been made in accordance with the National Parks Act to remove them.

He said he had been liaising closely with the Victorian Environment Minister to secure an arrangement which would provide for a viable population of brumbies to remain in the forest.

"We are talking about only 130 brumbies in a forest that spans 77,000 acres and they do far less damage than other introduced species such as pigs, goats, deer, foxes and rabbits.

"My position is that I am in favour of managing the brumbies to a number in the forest as opposed to total removal," he said.

"That has always been my position and the minister is aware of that.

"The brumbies are important to the region's tourism, culture and heritage and I want to see a viable number stay in the Barmah Forest for future generations of Australians to visit and enjoy."

Mr Weller said the Barmah community had a strong emotional attachment to the brumbies and were not prepared to accept them being culled or relocated.

"The Barmah Forest Cattlemen's Association and the Victorian Brumby Association reject claims that the brumbies are an environmental threat to the forest," he said.

"These associations are made up of people with specific knowledge, experience and skills relating to bush knowledge, horsemanship, environment and cultural heritage protection and they maintain that the environmental impact of such a small number of brumbies roaming a 77,000 acre area is virtually non-existent."