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7 December 2018

Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. (ABA) Media Release

Today the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) has filed an application in the Federal Court of Australia seeking an urgent interim injunction against Parks Victoria to stop it:

- a) from trapping, mustering, shooting, removing, or otherwise interfering with Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains in the Alpine National Park in Victoria; and
- b) from taking any action that might cause significant depletion of any of the other populations of Brumbies in the Alpine National Park.

The ABA seeks to challenge Parks Victoria's intended action to 'manage to extinction' the Wild Horses that have called the Bogong High Plains region home for 140 years, and to significantly reduce other populations of Brumbies in the Alpine National Park.

The ABA maintains that, before taking this action, Parks Victoria is required to seek approval in accordance with the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999 (Cth) (EPBC Act). The ABA believes that Parks Victoria is prohibited by section 15B of the EPBC Act from taking any action that has or will have a significant impact on the Brumby population in the Alpine National Park unless it has obtained approval under Part 9 of the EPBC Act. Parks Victoria does not have any approval and does not agree to seek approval, so the ABA will be bringing a Federal Court case seeking an order requiring it to do so.

The Bogong High Plains Brumbies have been a part of the wildlife and natural character of the region for approximately 140 years. As an isolated population, they have developed unique characteristics that are not shared by other brumby mobs in other locations of Victoria or, indeed, anywhere else in Australia. The current population of Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains is already very small and is made up of only 80 – 100 horses. Due to the small size of the population of Bogong High Plains Brumbies, any reduction in population size will severely compromise the future viability of this heritage brumby population.



*Photo supplied by the
ABA taken January 2018
on Bogong High Plains*

The Bogong High Plains forms part of the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves (AANP) and is included in the National Heritage List. It is recognised as having outstanding heritage value to Australia including the pioneering history of the high country. The National Heritage Listing recognises that the pioneering history of the high country is valued as an important part of the construction of the Australian identity featuring in myths, legends and literature. The ballad "The Man from Snowy River" epitomises horsemanship undertaken historically in the rugged landscape. The stories, legends and myths of the mountains and mountain lifestyles have been romanticised in books, films, songs, and television series and many such as the Elyne Mitchell's Silver Brumby novels are part of Australia's national identity.

The early 2017 stakeholders 'consultation' process began with Parks Victoria stating its intention to rid the Bogong High Plains region of its resident Brumby population. The intention to removal all Brumbies from Bogong High Plains is at odds with Parks Victoria's intention to acknowledge "post-settlement values placed on feral horses (brumbies) and their association with early European use of the Alps".

The ABA is a national animal advocacy charity that advocates for the recognition, management, preservation and welfare of Australian Wild Horses. It has put forward a rational comprehensive research management plan to retain the small heritage population of 80-100 Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains area.

The ABA disputes the science that underpins Parks Victoria's intended action. The ABA particularly disagrees with the intended removal of entire populations of brumbies from Victoria's alpine region such as in the Bogong High Plains. The ABA considers the research relied on in support of the Action Plan is insufficient and flawed. For example, the research does not satisfactorily distinguish between the impacts caused by deer and by brumbies, despite there being a far greater population of deer in the Alpine National Park.

Ms Jill Pickering, President of the ABA explains *"our injunction application is a last ditch, costly move to retain the small heritage population that became established long before their homeland was declared a national park. The time, money and effort in approaching the Court for an order to force compliance with the EPBC Act would be better spent funding our proposed Bogong Brumby program to research Brumby social behaviour, grazing movements as well as positive and negative Brumby impacts, along with other species causing impacts"*.

National and international visitors come to the Bogong Alpine regions to see its Heritage Wild Horse population, adding to the region's tourist dollars. A heritage that reflects a living aspect of Australia's diverse communities, tell us who we are, the past that formed us. This heritage is irreplaceable, precious and to be conserved for present and future generations.

The date of the injunction hearing, which will be heard in the Federal Court in Melbourne, is not yet known but is expected to be as soon as during next week.

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