



# Brumby Bridges

*The quarterly newsletter of the ABA*

AUTUMN 2020, ISSUE 20 – 1

ABA Inc. Charity/ABN No: 9-784718191

## A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Hi all brumby supporters Australia wide! **WELCOME** to the Autumn edition of the ABA newsletter.

I am the new editor for our **Brumby Bridges** newsletter and hope to provide you with informative friendly and inclusive content.

A bit about me... last year was a highlight as I adopted VBA Promise who I am now trail riding as regularly as possible into the forest nearby. Promise is a gentle Brumby mare who used to live on Long Plain in Kosciusko National Park. She lives with our mare Lainie, ex trotter Joey, and Arab cross Choppa, my children also ride and we recently for the first time in decades had all 4 horses out on the trail together!

I feel very passionate about these magnificent wild horses and will be their advocate at every opportunity, including making submissions, calling MPs and sharing information and news through my networks. Thank you to everyone who contributed to this newsletter and made it so special! If you would like to contribute to future editions, please contact me.

I hope you enjoy this edition. Regards, Pat!

### The Australian Brumby Alliance

**President-** Jill Pickering,  
**Vice President -** Sandy  
Robertson, **Secretary -** Pat  
Hoelmer, **Treasurer -** David  
O'Brien

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*Dedicated to the recognition,  
management, preservation  
and welfare of Australian  
wild horses*



Thankyou to Ian and Michelle Brown from Brumby Photography Group for  
theuse of their photo



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## ABA PRESIDENT'S REPORT

What a disastrous start everyone is having from the start of this year 2020. The Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) sends all our readers its thoughts and hopes that we can make the best of the rapidly escalating restrictions being imposed by Federal and state governments on our life styles and basic daily living essentials.

Parks Victoria (PV) however seem unaffected by the virus restrictions and have continued to trap the 4 remaining Brumbies on Mt Nelse, presumably being told to "Do the right thing now and stay at home today, tomorrow, until we're through this" and "If you are flouting rules, you will be punished", trapping horses is more important, *read more page 5.*

### **BARMAH BRUMBIES**

PV's plan to eventually exterminate all Brumbies from Barmah national park/forest became official recently, however there has been no further word on the Yorta Yorta Barmah Wild Horse management draft exterminate Barmah Brumbies within a couple of years.

### **USQ/ABA-BHP/VIC ALPS RESEARCH**

The University of Southern Queensland (USQ) ABA sponsored research on the positive and negative impacts of Brumbies living in their historic Alpine homelands on Bogong High Plains and the Eastern Victorian Alps commenced some months ago and recently Dr. Berman from USQ carried out field studies in these areas.

Dr. Berman is now writing up his finding and identifying the necessary next "where to from here" stage. This is the first time the ABA has partnered with a University to conduct such in-depth, robust studies and represents a vital part of the best way forward to minimise the

controversy around the management of sustainable Brumbies in Sustainable environments.

### **MEETING WITH MAT KEAN/SENIOR NPWS STAFF**

Late 2019, following a letter from the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) asking to meet with The Hon. Mathew Kean; myself and Colleen O'Brien, President of the Victorian Brumby Association (VBA) travelled to Sydney to meet with Senior officers working with Mr Kean, Minister responsible for the environment in NSW.

We met for over one hour working through our discussion points below which we felt were essential to raise, after two plus years of minimal trapping and the recent Cairns 2019 count showing higher numbers of Wild Horses in Kosciuszko national park (KNP).

It is tragic that the longer trapping is in limbo for KNP, now means many more Brumbies will die than would have had trapping continued under the 2008 KNP horse management plan, as was originally intended by National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS). See page 4

### **NEWSPAPER AT LAST FOR PEOPLE LIKE US -**

<https://www.facebook.com/connectingourcountry/>  
"Connecting Our Country" is a community generated marketing campaign that combines the strength of a traditional printed newspaper combined with new media platforms to tell a collective story from a wide range of spokespeople committed to achieving outcomes that combines the strength of a traditional printed newspaper combined with new media platforms to tell a collective story from a wide range of spokespeople committed to achieving outcomes that

- Improve realistic management of the Murray Darling Basin Plan
- A review of the management of public land in Australia, and



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## ABA PRESIDENT'S REPORT continued

- A stop to the Victorian Governments proposed “lock out” from National Parks and fair and reasonable negotiation with the locals with regards to protection issues relating to the cultural, historical, economical, social and spiritual significance of a diverse range of people, including traditional owners, in our public spaces.

Worth checking this paper and submit sensible, factual articles for printing via the link.

### AUDITOR GENERAL (VIC) RAMSAR MANAGEMENT SHORTFALLS

The ABA provided a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary inquiry launched 28-Nov-2019 to review progress on the 2016 Auditor-General audit report on Victorian Wetlands meeting Obligations to Protect Ramsar Wetlands, including Barmah, Issued 28 October 2019 - see link;

[https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file\\_uploads/Auditor-General\\_-\\_Meeting\\_Obligations\\_to\\_Protect\\_Ramsar\\_Wetlands\\_mmyx7jcp.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/file_uploads/Auditor-General_-_Meeting_Obligations_to_Protect_Ramsar_Wetlands_mmyx7jcp.pdf)

The ABA's submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry has been accepted by the committee and placed for open viewing on their website. To read the ABA submission go to;

[https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/paec/Inquiry\\_into\\_Auditor-Generals\\_report\\_No.\\_202\\_Meeting\\_Obligations\\_to\\_Protect\\_Ramsar\\_Wetlands\\_2016/Submissions/310\\_Australian\\_Brumby\\_Alliance\\_ver\\_2\\_with\\_corrections\\_Redacted.pdf](https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/paec/Inquiry_into_Auditor-Generals_report_No._202_Meeting_Obligations_to_Protect_Ramsar_Wetlands_2016/Submissions/310_Australian_Brumby_Alliance_ver_2_with_corrections_Redacted.pdf)

### WELCOME OUR NEW MEMBER GROUP

The ABA welcomes a new member group, Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia (HBAA) Inc. and very much looks forward to working with their President, Justine Curatolo. HBAA is a legally registered association, formed in November 2018 as an independent organisation with a focus on advocacy and systemic change that works with all stakeholders and is not aligned to any political party. The HBAA constitution states, our primary purpose is *to engage all stakeholders and advocate for the humane treatment, preservation and protection of the Australian Heritage brumby*. We will do this through (but not limited to) creating awareness campaigns, letter writing and making submissions to ensure the voice of the brumby is heard. Visit:

<https://www.facebook.com/HeritageBrumbyAdvocatesAustraliaInc/>



Jill Pickering, ABA President



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## ABA / VBA MEETING WITH MINISTER KEAN'S OFFICE (NSW)

### MEETING AT MINISTER KEAN'S OFFICE

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We met for over an hour working through our discussion points which we felt were essential to raise, after two plus years of minimal trapping and the recent count showing increased numbers of Wild Horses in Kosciuszko national park (KNP).

It is tragic that the longer trapping is in limbo for KNP, the higher the number of Brumbies now have to die. So many deaths could have been avoided if trapping had continued under the 2008 KNP horse management plan that had held numbers down.

### DISCUSSION POINTS

- We requested that routine trapping under the 2008 NPWS Wild Horse management plan be reactivated until the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018 (the Act); new management plan was approved to start.
- Fertility Control needs to be used as one of the management options applied.

Discussion at the meeting showed consensus to these two approaches by all present.

### CONCERNS TO ADDRESS

- Pro-Brumby supporters are concerned that numbers are well under the 2019 Cairns count, and that this fire season is not over.

- Anti-Brumby supporters are concerned that the high Cairns 2019 count requires immediate and drastic action since very little trapping/removal has occurred in the last 2 years.

### SUGGESTIONS DISCUSSED

Announce together that;

- trapping under the 2008 NPWS plan to continue until the Act's new management plan is approved by the Minister, and
- That a NPWS annual Brumby count will commence immediately after this fire season with the intention of providing an approximate count result within 4 weeks.

### STRATEGIES

- Begin by trapping in the Curango area, where horse density is at its highest.
- Encourage trapped horses to be collected by responsible, skilled rehoming people.
- Horses unable to be collected could be euthanized at the trap site to reduce extra stress to trapped Brumbies by being transported to an abattoir to die.
- Trial slow mustering air/ground (i.e. walking at the pace of the slowest brumby).
- Encourage robust, large scale environment impact studies that identify both the positive and negative impact types.

Time and the Virus dictate if these strategies are utilised until the new plan commences.

***Jill Pickering***



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ABA PRESS RELEASE 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020



## **Parks Victoria Push Rehoming Group to flout COVID-19 restrictions**

AUSTRALIAN BRUMBY ALLIANCE

### **Parks Victoria Push Rehoming Group to flout COVID-19 restrictions**

It is inconceivable, continued Ms Pickering, that Parks Victoria has trapped these three Brumbies, then dropped them at a temporary holding point with no feed to tide them over for the period we are told to stay at home for by Victoria's Premier, Daniel Andrews and his chief medical advisors. How can one government department so blatantly ignore another government's warnings issued under emergency powers arising from a declared state of emergency, twice by trapping Brumbies then leaving the Victorian Brumby Assoc. (VBA) responsible for their care despite virus travel bans? ..

**30<sup>th</sup> March 2020** Read more of press release at: [www.australianbrumbyalliance.org.au](http://www.australianbrumbyalliance.org.au)



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## STOP PRESS!!

This year's Kaimanawa wild horse muster has been delayed due to New Zealand's severe current restrictions to slow the spread of the CONVID-19 virus. Parks Victoria, however, are not only continuing to remove Eastern Victorian Alpine Brumbies, they now want to go to court again as they want to increase the number of Alps Vic Brumbies (not Bogong High Plains) removed to 500. They also want to go against their own management plan and start ground shooting the brumbies! Get ready to watch the ABA Facebook page for more updates on this travesty.

### *Jill Pickering*

**Kaimanawa Heritage Horses**  
March 23 at 2:05 PM · 🌐

**\*!! MUSTER 2020 UPDATE !!\***  
Due to COVID-19 and New Zealand reaching Level 4 Alert in the next 48 hours, the 2020 Kaimanawa wild horse muster will be postponed until further notice!  
Applications **WILL** stay open and we hope that all of you lovely people who have applied (30 horses currently applied for) will keep your applications open with us.  
We do hope to still muster sometime this year, but if not, waiting until April 2021 will mean there will be 250+ horses that will need homes and we will need all your help and support. If you have any questions/queries please email - [muster@kaimanawaheritagehorses.org](mailto:muster@kaimanawaheritagehorses.org) or PM our page.  
Stay safe everyone!!





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## BRUMBIES, BAD OR GOOD?

Is it true that “Kangaroos and Koalas are dying in Australian Hellfires...wild brumbies and feral cats are taking over” and “Invasive species, coupled with the fires, could lead to “eco-system collapse” ... as reported in the VICE online NEWS on the 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020? (ref1)

No, it is far more likely that brumbies are protecting native plants and animals from fire. There is a growing worldwide movement to utilise the benefits of using today's “megafauna” (horses, cattle and other large herbivores) to lower the negative impacts of fire.

“Large vertebrates affect fire regimes in several ways: by consuming plant matter that would otherwise accumulate as fuel; by controlling and varying the density of vegetation; and by engineering the soil and litter layer. These processes can regulate the frequency, intensity and extent of fire” according to a Royal Society publication in August 2018, titled “Can trophic rewilding reduce the impact of fire in a more flammable world” (ref2) supported by the Australian Research Council.

These authors wrote the “Recent and continuing declines of large vertebrates are likely to be significant contributors to changes in fire regimes and vegetation that are currently being experienced in many parts of the world”..... “Probably, extinction of Quaternary megafauna triggered increased biomass burning in many such environments”.

Ensuring sufficient grazing by, for example, Wild Horses/Brumbies to control biomass levels, is something today's environmental groups refuse to even consider as a possibility.

Yet, recent fires in the Australian Alps did not burn where the highest densities of horses were, in the open grasslands favoured by horses.



### [Diprotodon optatum - The Australian Museum](#)

*The massive Diprotodon optatum, from the Pleistocene of Australia, was the largest marsupial known and the last of the extinct, herbivorous diprotodontids. It was widespread across Australia when the first indigenous people arrived, co-existing with them for thousands of years.*

Incorrect, emotive claims are made daily by environmental lobby groups on mainstream and social media in a targeted effort to persuade the general public to support aerial shooting of our Brumbies (Wild Horses). These Brumbies have lived for 150-200 years in environments they called home, long before their homelands were declared a national park.

Andrew Cox, CEO Invasive Species Council (ISC) stated “There are no hard-hooved animals native to Australia” which is the common basis for the belief that horses do damage and have no beneficial impact.



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## BRUMBIES, BAD OR GOOD? Continued...

Apparently, because of their *weight* and *hard hooves* brumbies crush vegetation and compact (or cut into) soil. Such a claim ignores the fact that 3 species of Australian native mega-fauna weighed 1,000 –2,000 kilograms, and that megafauna *Sthenurines* (230 kg) had an extremely developed; almost hoof-like, fourth toe (*ref3*).

Schools, museums and books provide a range of information on Australian Megafauna. In fact, the heaviest of Australia's megafauna weighed up to 2,000 Kg, more than four times the weight of today's Australian megafauna such as Brumbies. This animal, *Diprotodon* was present in Australia, trampling vegetation and pugging the mud for 25 million years, initially the size of sheep but for the last 1.6 million years they were 2 metres long and 1.7 metres tall.

Australia's native flora and fauna evolved with these megafauna and therefore should tolerate and even benefit from the presence of large grazing or browsing mammals.

Australia is fortunate to already have wild Brumbies, a large grazing herbivore that survives in the wild - But for how long? Today's environmental lobby is pushing hard to exterminate the Brumby, a wild species that is potentially capable of coping with wild fires and mitigating wildfire risks.

With the Royal Commission into recent catastrophic fires now official, it would be timely to conduct robust comprehensive research into ways that trophic rewilding can be used as an effective tool in lowering negative fire damage.

**Jill Pickering**

### References

1. [https://www.vice.com/en\\_us/article/3a8kwv/kangaroos-and-koalas-are-dying-in-australias-hellfires-wild-brumbies-and-feral-cats-are-taking-over](https://www.vice.com/en_us/article/3a8kwv/kangaroos-and-koalas-are-dying-in-australias-hellfires-wild-brumbies-and-feral-cats-are-taking-over)
2. Can trophic rewilding reduce the impact of fire in a more flammable world? Christopher N. Johnson, Lynda D. Prior, Sally Archibald, Helen M. Poulos, Andrew M. Barton, Grant J. Williamson and David M. J. S. Bowman School of Natural Sciences and Australian Research Council Centre of Excellence for Australian Biodiversity and School Heritage, and of Natural Sciences, University of Tasmania.
3. <https://australianmuseum.net.au/learn/australia-over-time/extinct-animals/diprotodon-optatum/>





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## FEDERAL POST FIRE RECOVERY FUNDING and STATE BODIES

In February there were two aerial culls of 'pest species' announced, one in New South Wales and one in Victoria as part of the federal post bushfire recovery effort. In both instances, Parks NSW and Parks VIC did not name specifically if wild horses were included in the cull, it was not until mass public outrage on both accounts, that they were forced to make a statement explicitly excluding wild horses from the aerial cull.

***Parks NSW and Parks VIC are state bodies and received one off federal funding to carry out the aerial culls.***

When considering the state bodies' justification for the aerial cull of 'pest species', it is important to remember that the funding came from **federal sources** and was **an additional amount** as a result of the bushfires. In normal circumstances, an aerial cull to manage brumby populations is not a financially efficient solution.

Take for example, Parks NSW recent announcement to aerial shoot 'pet species' in the Guy Fawkes National Park (which they later came out to explicitly exclude wild horses).

**The Guy Fawkes National Park was decimated by the bushfires**, which significantly impacted on the brumby population, food availability and other wildlife, including 'pest species'. The bushfire at Bees Nest near the Guy Fawkes National Park was more than 97,000 hectares in size with a 912 kilometre perimeter, the Guy Fawkes River National Park is approx 100,590 hectares in size.

NSW Parks announced a 5 day aerial shooting of 'pest species' in the Guy Fawkes National Park as part of the federal funding.

Meanwhile, the Guy Fawkes Heritage Horse Association has been successfully working with local agencies to trap, remove and rehome brumbies from the Guy Fawkes National Park for the past 15 years. The rehoming program is so successful that demand far outstrips supply, as the demand for brumbies is strong, but in 2019 the Association only received 23 horses for rehoming, despite requesting more according to the founder Ms Jessup in a recent article.

The federal money going to Parks NSW would have been better spent supporting and expanding existing programs to trap and remove brumbies from the park.

*Excerpt from an article written by Justine Curatolo titled 'The Political Manipulation of the Australian bushfires to eradicate the brumby population.' To be published in April 2020.*



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## NEWS FROM SAVE THE BRUMBY ORG



STB's New England Brumby Sanctuary (NEBS) was just dust, dirt and weeds for months during the recent drought, then threatened by fires on all fronts, but luckily managed to escape the worst. During the drought, feed and water had to be brought in. Sadly we have lost several of the older mares due to colic and inability to cope with the harsh climate.

NEBS vet, Calum Paltridge said he was getting over six calls per day due to severe colic in horses in the area and assured us that it was no fault of ours, just a result of the terrible drought and smoke haze. PS – Sustaining rains has seen grass return over the past month.





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## NEWS FROM SAVE THE BRUMBY ORG Continued

STB Sunshine has now been saddle started under Lucy's expert care and leaves us for her 'forever' home early in the N.Y. Her new 'Mum', Jessica Head is a member of the Light Horse and Sunshine, being a descendant of the war horses, will take part in Anzac day celebrations.

**save the  
brumbies**



## NEWS FROM THE AUSTRALIAN BRUMBY HORSE REGISTER

### **Report from the Australian Brumby Horse Register:**

It has been another highly successful year for the ABHR. We have Brumby shows now in four States and membership continues to increase. STB was a founding member of the Register in 2004 and Committee member Margery Boylan, Registrar, has an ongoing demanding task with all the paper work involved. For more information, details of show results and upcoming shows for 2020 go to:

[www.australianbrumbyhorseregister.com.au](http://www.australianbrumbyhorseregister.com.au)



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## SUCCESSFUL ADOPTION PROGRAM OF BURROS IN THE USA

### WILD HORSES AND BURROS IN ARIZONA FIND NEW HOMES THROUGH FEDERAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM!

John Hall (photographed), the Arizona wild horse and burro program lead for the Bureau of Land Management, said the agency **began its Adoption Incentive Program last year to give adopters up to \$1,000 for an untrained wild horse or burro**. Hall gathers horses and burros for rotating adoption events like the one in Marana. At any given time, Hall has 450 to 1,000 animals in his care.

“We try to hit new spots every year so that people understand that we do have this program,” Hall said. “It really brings more attention to us, helps us actually get these animals in good homes.”

Rancher Steve Temple came to the Marana adoption in search of a burro to be a friend to a retired rope horse. “It was excellent,” Temple said of the adoption process. “You know, we came through, we looked around, we looked at all the animals, and we found the staff helped us provide which ones were real docile.”

For more information, open the link: <https://cronkitenews.azpbs.org/2020/03/12/wild-horse-and-burro-adoption/>





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## ABA RESEARCH CAMPAIGN

### **JOIN OUR FIGHT TO SAVE VICTORIA'S ALPINE BRUMBIES.**



Please help the ABA fund critical research to fully understand the role of sustainable Brumbies in a healthy environment. Kill & kill again is inhumane and a waste of public resources.

**#BackOurBrumbies**

Link here: [https://chuffed.org/project/join-our-fight-to-save-victorias-alpine-brumbies?fbclid=IwAR3A75Hx5fJbxhrNJAQ8Shk-frX4cFVUzqQPvqu0sOt5Tu0\\_dza3XrU8c04](https://chuffed.org/project/join-our-fight-to-save-victorias-alpine-brumbies?fbclid=IwAR3A75Hx5fJbxhrNJAQ8Shk-frX4cFVUzqQPvqu0sOt5Tu0_dza3XrU8c04)



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## ABA MEMBER GROUPS

- ❖ Australian Brumby Horse Register
- ❖ Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)
- ❖ Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)
- ❖ Save the Brumbies Inc. (NSW)
- ❖ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ❖ Victorian Brumby Association
- ❖ Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia inc.

To find out more, or to join, please contact Jill Pickering on [pickjill@hotmail.com](mailto:pickjill@hotmail.com)

## NEWSLETTER

To contribute to the ABA newsletter, please contact Pat on [hoelmerp@hotmail.com](mailto:hoelmerp@hotmail.com)

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