



Brumby Bridges

The quarterly newsletter of the ABA

WINTER 2020, ISSUE 20-1

The Australian

Brumby Alliance

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*Dedicated to the
recognition,
management,
preservation and welfare*



A WORD FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the Winter edition of the ABA newsletter! We certainly have many battles to fight for our Brumbies and I have been gratified to see so many new supporters join the various Brumby support groups lately. Furthermore, the level of organization and attendance at protest rallies is very heartening. It would be nice if I could attend as well, but unfortunately these days its not possible to travel interstate for many reasons.

My VBA Brumby Promise is thriving with her herd .. we don't get out on the trail much now due to the weather. She doesn't care as long as she can go out into the day paddock with her munching buddy every day. Routine is great for all of us. Happy trail riding to everyone.

Patricia Hoelmer, ABA Secretary



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PRESIDENT CHAT

Since the last Australian brumby Alliance (ABA) newsletter we've all had to find ways to cope with the COVID 19 lockdown, social distancing, travel restrictions, and more, just when people begin to get their lives sorted from the summer fires and floods.

For Brumbies that survived the summer fires in NSW and Victoria, things have deteriorated further from the COVID-19 caused delays in the SAP & CAP Wild Horse Heritage management plan meetings and Parks Victoria scrapping its NO shooting commitment in the current plan.

The ABA-v-PV Federal Case: VID1569/2018 was heard In July 2019 over 5 days. During the proceedings, expert witnesses exposed flaws in the scientific report that had formed the basis for Park Victoria's plan to eradicate all Brumbies in the Bogong High Plains.

After nearly a year of deliberation Justice O'Bryan delivered judgement on 8-May-20 finding in favour of PV. Later that day PV announced they would start ground shooting Brumbies in the VicAlps on 18-May-20, despite PV acknowledging that shooting is unpopular and not be considered until after further community consultation.

Importantly the court acknowledged that the continuing presence of Brumbies in the Australian Alps does contribute to the National Heritage Values in relation to the pioneering history of the high country, but not *significantly* as the Judge understood a significant population would continue in the east VicAlps. We now hold PV to retaining a significant brumby population in the East VicAlps.

To protect the Bogong population we need to strengthen the historic significance that *each* Victorian Brumby population represents, before they are eradicated, in order to reach the *threshold of significance* for National Heritage Values listing.



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PRESIDENT CHAT continued...

PV claims that due to the ABA court case injunction “Trapping and rehoming programs were put on hold” despite PV trapping only 127 of the 200 limit (VicAlpsEast) agreed under the court injunction, and in the Bogong region (Mt Nelse) trapped 14 of the agreed 15 Mt Nelse Brumbies.

PV repeatedly stated in bold and capitals that NO aerial or ground shooting would occur in its plan “Protection of the Alpine National Park: Feral Horse Strategic Action Plan 2018–2021”. ***In summary the commitments made by PV were that;***

- ***No ground or aerial shooting will be used in their current plan which is to be reviewed during 2021, and importantly***
- The current plan was finalised following feedback on shooting both for and against, and still rejected by Parks Victoria for the life of this plan. PV backflip on NO ground/aerial shooting Brumbies in current Alps plan



At the protest in Melbourne

The ABA provided a submission to the 2020 Royal Commission into National Natural Disaster Arrangements on 27th April 2020.

Stand firm, keep up the People Power pressure and stay with a united message to retain sustainable Brumby numbers in areas they have lived for 150-200 years, so that together we achieve humane, lasting management for our Heritage Brumby populations.

Jill Pickering, ABA President



Brumby Bridges

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UPDATE FROM SAVE THE BRUMBIES

The last few months have been very hard for us as it has been for other rehoming groups. The COV.19 lockdown resulted in cancellation of our fund raiser open days, much to the disappointment of our supporters. (And our finances !!!) The horses missed out on their carrot treats!!!



STB Jolie looking like a horse again due to Margery's expert care

We have been inundated with emails, phone calls etc. etc. regarding the KNP situation and are doing our best to support the incredible work of Jill Pickering and Colleen O'Brien.

Updates on our website and encouraging all our supporters to join in the fight via signing petitions and writing to relevant Ministers to register their opinions is one way we can assist.

In NSW we have a good relationship with our national parks personnel and although we always remain vigilant in

matters of control at least our situation here is better than Parks Victoria. If trapping does go ahead in KNP we are prepared to take groups of horses for rehoming although the logistics of long distance transport would have to be seriously considered.



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UPDATE FROM SAVE THE BRUMIES continued...

Other news in brief. Trapping in our area, Northern Tablelands, has been delayed due to lockdown as was to be expected however that hasn't stopped our rescues. A stunning Guy Fawkes Brumby mare was looking for a new home and her future was bleak. Committee member Margery Boylan came to the rescue and now STB Jolie is safe, secure and happy as companion to STB Beaute on Margery's farm. We have also placed several other horses to approved homes over the last few months. Good soaking rain at both Sanctuaries and sheds full of hay for the winter months is a relief for the budget. Our winter Newsneigher will be out in July with fuller updates.

Jan Carter, President STB Inc.

BILL TILEY (Liberal MP) SUPPORT FOR BRUMBIES

THE AYES HAVE IT ...

Late today the Legislative Council in the Parliament of Victoria moved and passed a motion to cease the Labor Government and Parks Victoria's policy of shooting Brumbies in our National Parks. It is a significant step for all of us who have fought to save these iconic high-country horses.

This vote in effect says and sends a very clear message to both the Labor Government and Parks Victoria to get back to the table and engage and consult with Victorians. To engage and consult with the organisations who have in the past and are willing to continue into the future to offer solutions that balance the environmental imperatives and the cultural and historical significance of these horses. I too am ready to engage in that process in a mature and considered way in order to find an appropriate way to manage our brumby population.



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BILL TILEY (Liberal MP) SUPPORT FOR BRUMBIES cont'd..

Some of those organisations have been pleading with the Government and Parks Victoria to do just that including and not exclusive to; Australian Brumby Alliance, Alpine Brumby Management Assoc, Benambra Brumby Runners, Barmah Brumby Preservation Group, Australian Brumby Association, Victorian Brumby Association plus a number of other qualified professional horse breakers and managers. This is a small victory in this battle but we should celebrate and acknowledge all those people from all walks of life, from across the nation and indeed the globe who have stood up to be counted, who have continued to offer reasoned debate in the face of the massive and well-oiled machinery of government. And especially to my parliamentary colleagues in the Legislative Council whose eloquence and passion won the day.



Photo credit: Marlo and Beyond



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BRUMBY PROTEST – MELBOURNE



BRUMBY PROTEST - COLAC





Brumby Bridges

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WINTER 2020, ISSUE 20-1

REFLECTING ON ABA vs PV FED COURT CASE

Federal Court decision allows Victoria's Alpine Brumbies to be annihilated

In June 2018 Parks Victoria (PV) released its "Alpine National Park - Feral Horse Strategic Action Plan 2018-2021" to eradicate all Bogong High Plains Brumbies and decimate the eastern VicAlps Brumby populations that have lived in these areas for 150-200 years.

While the ABA is not opposed to managing sustainable populations, we vehemently oppose PV's determination to "manage" any Brumby population to extinction.

Late 2018 the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) initiated Federal Court proceedings against PV on the basis that Brumby populations are an important part of Victoria's Alpine cultural heritage, and that PV would breach the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act by destroying historical populations without first seeking approval from the Federal Minister for Environment.

The case was heard In July 2019 over 5 days. During the proceedings, expert witnesses exposed the many flaws in the scientific report that formed the basis for PV's decision to eradicate all Bogong High Plains Brumbies. The flaws included examples of field notes stating deer impact being changed to "horse only" impacts. Similarly PV failed to consider the significant ratio of 300 deer to one (1) Brumby in the same areas as the Brumbies.

After nearly a year of deliberation Justice O'Bryan, on 8-May-20, dismissed the ABA's case, on the grounds that losing a population of 100 when a "significant" number will remain in the east VicAlps was not considered significant. The same day PV announced ground shooting would start in 10 days.

These court proceedings were time consuming and expensive for all concerned. At any time, PV could have avoided these court proceedings, by applying to the Federal Environment Minister to gain, or be denied, permission to eradicate long established VicAlp Brumby populations. Maybe PV were afraid permission would be denied?



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REFLECTING ON ABA vs PV FED COURT CASE cont'd..

For whatever reason, PV chose to spend nearly two years tied up in litigation in the Federal Court, hardly an expedient use of taxpayers money.

Ground breaking ecological research by University of Southern Queensland (USQ) began last August in the VicAlps to determine both positive and negative Brumby ecological impacts and presented in court. An interim report is due later this year and will be completed in 2024.

The ABA invited PV to partner with this research to avoid any conflicting results, but to date, PV have refused to join this unique opportunity, preferring to exterminate all Brumbies using flawed studies

PV's desire to shoot Brumbies who'd survived recent bushfires, and by their presence, save key native habitats from burning, is another example of PV's lack of scientific rigor, exposed in court as fundamentally unsound, to decide any Brumbies' fate.



*Horses Destined for India Pictured in Sale yards at Myrtleford
1890'S (SLV).*

Source: Peter Cabena's MA.

The current population is claimed to be around 100 in Bogong High Plains and 5,000 in the east Alps. However a new count is urgently needed to provide accurate base line data due to high the post fire death rate of all native and introduced species *before* extreme measures are taken by Parks Victoria.



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REFLECTING ON ABA vs PV FED COURT CASE cont'd..

Ultimately, the slaughter of Australian wild horses without a comprehensive, unbiased knowledge of what is happening in the ecological habitat is a waste of taxpayers' money, will do nothing for the environment and will destroy an important part of our cultural heritage. At the very least PV should wait until USQ's comprehensive research is completed before irreversible action is taken.

Brumbies have been an important part of the cultural history of the Bogong High Plains and Eastern Victorian Alps. These Brumbies represent an irreplaceable part of Australia's cultural heritage. We must not become the generation to have ordered their demise. Brumbies are a significant part of Australia's history, one that is vital to preserve for future generations to learn from and experience.

Jill Pickering, ABA President

UPDATE FROM HERITAGE BRUMBY ADVOCATES AUST

It has certainly been a busy time for Heritage Brumby advocates! Fortunately, this also saw an increase in media attention to the campaign to [#ProtectOurHeritageBrumby](#) which we hadn't had before, including TV prime time slot on Studio Ten.

On May 8, Parks Victoria announced on their website an additional lethal technique (without prior community consultation) of ground shooting at night with 'thermal imaging' equipment and 'noise suppressors'. ***As an Advocacy organization, we have been busy letter writing, lodging formal complaints with the government regulators, conducting media interviews and running an online social media campaign.***

Interestingly enough out of this complete disregard for procedure and process by a State agency and the Minister who oversees this agency, is that there has been overwhelming political response condemning the Andrews Labor Government.



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WINTER 2020, ISSUE 20-1

UPDATE FROM HERITAGE BRUMBY ADVOCATES cont..

We welcome this political support for Heritage Brumbies, because the **Victorian State Government MUST be held to account for its complete NON-ENGAGEMENT with the public as well as its INTENSE CENSORSHIP of information used to make decisions in regards to the ground shooting.**

The **Victoria Liberal** and **Victoria National** parties have both provided position statements *against* this method of shooting, and asked for a population recount taking into consideration the potential impact of bushfires on population numbers.

The Animal Justice Party and the **Greens** have both announced they are opposed to the killing of the Brumby, both favouring non-lethal removal options. Surely it's time that the Victorian Labour Party re-visited its position? ***The political momentum for recognising the cultural and historical importance of the Brumbies is mounting.***

We will continue to advocate for Australia's Heritage Brumby.

Justine Curatolo, HBAAinc President



Neue Zürcher Zeitung

Some of the media outlets who interviewed me



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WINTER 2020, ISSUE 20-1

NEW BREEDS OF ECOLOGICAL THINKING MAKE SENSE

Sandy Radke, June 2020

Even if you do not have a science background, you are probably well aware of the term “*Invasive Species Biology*” and some of the principles that this strain of Conservation Ecology promotes. Of concern to those of us who want to protect Australia’s wild horses is the single-minded focus that Invasive Species Biology has on eradicating all non-native, introduced, invasive, feral, call-it-what-you-will, species because THEY ARE DESTROYING THE ENVIRONMENT.

The ideas of Invasive Species Biology are now so well entrenched in mainstream ecological thinking that it is difficult to introduce new ideas. It is as if they are considered introduced or invasive ideas that need to be eradicated. Indeed, researchers who follow this path seem to have lost sight of the forest for the trees. They no longer think outside the Invasive Species box. Research is heavily blinkered and designed to just prove that all introduced species are not to be tolerated and *woe to those who challenge them for they know not what they are doing*.

BUT there is hope on the horizon and if you care to look, there are a growing number of scientists who are looking beyond the Invasive Species war-mongering box. This new breed of ecologists and conservation scientists are studying things like Novel and Hybrid Ecosystems and Conciliation Biology.

This new stream of thinking recognises that introduced species are largely here to stay, and so they study the new “novel” habitats that incorporate them to see how they interact with native species and how native species interact with them.

And what they are finding is interesting – introduced species have positive *and* negative effects and some have both assisted native species and increased biodiversity.



An interesting example is what happened when the non-native Tamarisk shrub was introduced to help stabilize banks in the southwest United States. After introduction, the plant was accused of lowering water tables and reducing the habitat for native riparian species, including the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher which is listed as endangered in the US.

Millions of US dollars were spent on eradication via mechanical, chemical and biological (an introduced beetle) means.

The ideas of Invasive Species Biology are now so well entrenched in mainstream ecological thinking that it is difficult to introduce new ideas.

It is as if they are considered introduced or invasive ideas that need to be eradicated.

But there is hope and a shift to new ways of thinking about the environment.



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NEW BREEDS OF ECOLOGICAL THINKING MAKE SENSE cont'd...

Finally, some research was done to see what was happening and it was found the Tamarisk was providing a great nesting



habitat for the Southwestern Willow Flycatcher. *And* it was found that fledgling success associated with nests built in Tamarisk was indistinguishable from success associated with nests built in native trees. To top it off, another review argued that many of the undesirable changes to water tables and displacement of native species blamed on the Tamarisk were exaggerated or unfounded. Meanwhile, the beetles that were introduced to eradicate the Tamarisk are running rampant as far as Utah and are eating native species. Hopefully the lessons learned in the southwest USA have not been dismissed!

Conciliation Biology highlights this new thinking. While Conciliation Biology acknowledges the principles of traditional invasion biology, it recognises that many non-native species are difficult to eradicate and are here to stay. It also recognises that non-native species often offer benefits, that their interactions with the environment and native species within it can be complex; the notion that eradication will restore the ecosystem is simplistic and not usually possible.

Because of this, Conciliation Biology has a significantly different approach to environmental management. Rather than focus on prevention or eradication of invasive species, there is emphasis on predicting and managing outcomes of longer-term native/non-native interactions at the levels of individual, population, species, community, and ecosystem.

Whether you call it Conciliation Biology, Novel Ecosystem research or something else, it is clear that environmental science is shifting to newer ways of looking at things, including the notion that invasive entities are best considered in a whole-ecosystem context, and in light of ongoing, invasion-influenced evolution. These approaches to native/non-native coexistence that incorporate eco-evolutionary dynamics into management practices may lead to better and more practical solutions.

Reference Links

[The Potential Conservation Value of Non-Native Species](#)

[Conciliation biology: the eco-evolutionary management of permanently invaded biotic systems](#)

["Ecological Traps" and the Tamarisk Leaf Beetle, Audubon New Mexico](#)

AN WHAT DO TAMARISKS AND BIRDS HAVE TO DO WITH HORSES YOU MIGHT ASK?

Sadly, there are very few studies world-wide, and none in Australia, that look at the full story on how wild horses interact in the environment. Australian studies make the assumption from the get-go that horses are bad for the environment.

This story illustrates what happens when you fail to have a comprehensive, unbiased response to the environmental issues.



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ALPINE BRUMBIES CONTRIBUTE TO HERITAGE VALUE

In the ABA vs PV Fed Court case (2018), the Judge;

- ***Accepted that the continuing presence of Brumbies in the Australian Alps contributes to the National Heritage Values relating to the pioneering history of the high country;***
- Found that Brumbies are one physical reminder of the historic activities and, in that sense, contribute to the social connection of the pastoral community to the Australian Alps.

PV INABILITY TO MEET BRUMBY TRAP TARGETS

PV Claims that due to a Federal Court injunction “Trapping and rehoming programs were put on hold”.

- **FACT:** Parks Victoria trapped 127 of the 200 limit (VicAlpsEast) agreed under the court injunction and in the Bogong region (Mt Nelse) trapped 14 of the agreed 15 Mt Nelse Brumbies, a number similar to previous Bogong region removals.
- **IN short, *the ABA court case has NOT limited PV’s ability to trap and rehome.*** PV has significantly fallen short of the agreed “up to 200” by 70+ Brumbies. To justify shooting brumbies and changing its own management plan, PV falsely blames the ABA court case for holding up trapping.

PV NO SHOOTING COMMITMENT BACKFLIP

In its “Protection of the Alpine National Park: Feral Horse Strategic Action Plan 2018–2021”, PV made the following commitments:

- ***No ground or aerial shooting will be used in their current plan which is to be reviewed during 2021, and importantly;***
- The current plan was finalised following feedback on shooting both for and against, and still rejected by Parks Victoria for the life of this plan.



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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

NEWSLETTER

To contribute to the ABA newsletter, please contact Pat on hoelmerp@hotmail.com

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END NEWSLETTER