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29-September-2019

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## Australian Brumby Alliance Submission to Parks Victoria Land Management Strategy (LMS) – 29-Sept-2019

**This version replaces the ABA earlier submission**

Thank you for the opportunity to submit feedback on Parks Victoria's Land Management Strategy (LMS). The Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. (ABA) advocates for the recognition, management, preservation and welfare of sustainable Australian Wild Horse populations

The Parks Victoria LMS sets a significant change in direction for how Australians can have a say on future Victorian park management, such as, park access and those post settlement values not recognised in park estates now owned by Aboriginal corporations.

The LMS states "*parks and reserves have been returned to Aboriginal ownership under Aboriginal Title*" and the Government is "*expected to apply to more of the parks estate in the future as further formal agreements with Traditional Owners are implemented.*"

Up to now Australia's National Parks were "owned" by the public, as such we also pay "Park Rates" towards running costs. Originally national parks were set aside "*for the benefit of the public*". The term public includes all Australians, but now park ownership is with Aboriginal Corporations, who represent just one section of the Australian public.

While this may sound over-dramatic, the ABA has recently seen first-hand how Aboriginal values are promoted in Barmah's Aboriginal-owned park, but post-settlement social and cultural values and traditional access are rarely referred to or just removed.

The ABA fully supports the integration of *all* Australian multicultural values, with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal community values each culture holds as equally valued.

The LMS seems to now prioritise one cultural **value** over another, a risky move that, as seen in the Barmah Yorta Yorta management draft plan, is encouraging a divide between communities living close to Barmah vs the Yorta Yorta Corporation based in St. Kilda Rd, Melbourne.

How will non-Aboriginals maintain a direct voice in park management when ownership has been handed over to just one section of Australia's multi interests/values, communities?

The ABA considers the LMS aspirational Statements to be confusing. While the LMS claims Victoria's parks should be inclusive and conserve cultural heritage, it then states that many Victorian "parks and reserves have been returned to Aboriginal ownership under Aboriginal Title" and many more are planned to come under Aboriginal Corporation ownership.

Yet the National Parks Act 1975 states parks should be reserved, preserved and protected permanently for the benefit of the public." ..... "and in particular there should be reserved and made available (a) areas with .... historical ..... and (b) areas that demonstrate man's effect on his environment whether through agricultural or pastoral pursuits or otherwise".

No cultural value should be ranked against another, each community holds dearly to their own cultural values. The Burra Charter, which guides Parks Victoria,

- highlights the need to strive for co-existence where values conflict,
- Provides structures to manage conflicting cultural values, emphasising that
- Co-existence of cultural values should be recognised, respected and encouraged.
- explains that cultural values refers to those beliefs which are important to a cultural group, including but not limited to political, religious, spiritual and moral beliefs, and
- that cultural value and is broader than values associated with cultural significance.

The ABA's supports the retention of small/moderate Wild Horse populations in recognition of the heritage values they represent over the 150 years they have called Barmah home.

### **Submissions to the LMS have been asked to respond under the following headings**

#### **1. Maintain and strengthen the parks estate**

The LMS asks the public to *embrace design for all*, yet then handover ownership to just one of Australia's Multicultural communities.

#### **2. Prepare for the future**

To date, Parks Victoria and other water managers have not been able to respond to the *emerging environmental and social issues* such as appropriate water regimes, commercial interests and within a country that officially plays down climate change.

#### **3. Connect with community**

The ABA agrees *Traditional Owner connections to Country to be respected and supported*. So should, we argue, all multicultural Australians connections to Country be *equally* respected and supported. However, the Yorta Yorta Corporation draft Barmah Management plan says that all Barmah Brumbies must be exterminated (rehomed/shot) and no horse riding to be allowed, while supporting 4WD, 2WD, motorbikes and cycling activities to remain allowed.

The ABA and many Barmah Brumby supporters have argued that for the retention of a small group of sustainable Brumbies in the park where they have lived for 150 years in recognition of their post-settlement heritage values. So far this post-settlement heritage request has been ignored by the Yorta Yorta Barmah draft plan, which states all Brumbies must go.

#### **4. Use knowledge and evidence-based management**

The ABA is seriously questions this statement as the research Parks Victoria rely on to insist on removing all Brumbies was shown during open court in the recent ABA vs Parks Victoria case to be heavily flawed.

## 5. Protect natural and cultural values

It is essential that both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultural heritage sites are protected.

## 6. Build Partnerships

Partnerships work best when all community partners are involved. Allowing one partner to decide for all is not a partnership and risks increasing tension and conflict as other partners see their heritage devalued. All values must be equally respected and managed sustainably.

## 8. Apply rational decision making

So far there is little evidence of rational decision making. The National Parks Act 1975 (Vic) which guides Parks Victoria states in s17(2)(a) to 'ensure that each national park ...is controlled and managed ...in a manner that will (iii) "exterminate or control exotic fauna in the park". However Parks Victoria's approach to exotic (introduced/non-native) is selective, not rational or consistent. Under Parks Victoria's approach:

**Brumbies** will be exterminated in Bogong High Plains & Barmah decimated in Vic East Alps (PV Alpine Brumby Brumby plan/Draft Barmah Brumby plan/draft Yorta Yorta Barmah plan).

**Deer** (Chital, Fallow, Hog, Red, Rusa, Sambar, Sika, and Wapiti) are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975. <https://engage.vic.gov.au/draft-victorian-deer-management-strategy>, even though a wide range of negative environmental, economic and social impacts from wild deer is acknowledged.

**Trout** (rainbow) & **salmon** - Trout & salmon stocked by the Authority are released as yearlings ..... <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fish-stocking>, and in another link - Since 1960, tens of millions of trout have been released in numerous lakes, rivers and streams across the state.... <https://vfa.vic.gov.au/recreational-fishing/fish-stocking/managing-recreational-trout-fisheries>

**Weeds** daily enter parks attached to thousands of vehicles, motor bikes, cycles, bush walkers etc., yet Parks Victoria's example of rational decision making is to ignore this and deflect the problem on Brumby populations that are living within the park.

The Australian Brumby Alliance strongly recommends that the current Parks Victoria's Land Management Strategy (LMS) be withdrawn and redesigned to account, for example;

- Inability to control the incorrect seasonal flooding of Victorian floodplain Marshes,
- Inability to provide robust research (Tolsma/Shannon Assessing the Impacts of Feral Horses on the Bogong High Plains, Victoria that was shown to have fatal flaws in open court), but still used to support the removal of all Bogong High Plains Brumbies,
- Protecting/maintaining sustainable numbers of deer populations across Victoria, and
- Breeding up trout and salmon stocked by authorities to release as yearlings in their millions in numerous lakes, rivers and streams across the state.

Yours sincerely



President, Australian Brumby Alliance Inc.  
29-September-2019