



Brumby Bridges

The quarterly newsletter of the ABA

WINTER 2022, ISSUE 22-3

The Australian Brumby Alliance

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

A WORD FROM THE EDITOR



Jill Pickering at the protest 8 June 2022

Melbourne Parliament

Well, it has certainly been busy for the ABA team since the last newsletter.

The good news is we have grown in size and welcome new members to the ABA.

The bad news is Parks Victoria has announced the plan to shoot the Brumbies.

In the meantime, the Victorian Auditor General has released a damning report into DELWP (incl Parks) which proves Parks have no evidence to justify their position against the Brumby.

Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ) have begun a fertility control strategy.

www.australianbrumbyalliance.org.au

Hope you enjoy the Winter newsletter and please contact us if you would like to be involved in the ABA.

Brumby Bridges Editor

[#ProtectOurHeritageBrumby](https://twitter.com/ProtectOurHeritageBrumby)



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PRESIDENT'S CHAT

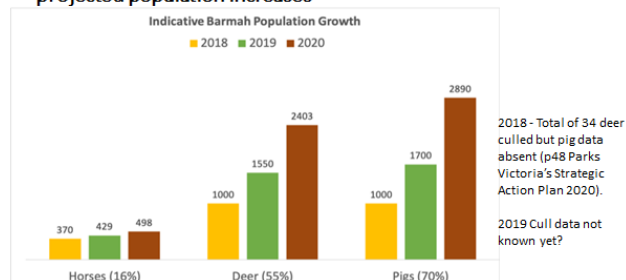
Welcome to the winter 2022 Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) newsletter. This edition shares encouraging member updates along with a big welcome to our newest rehoming group [Indigo Brumbies](#) managed by Kelli and Ian.

As we head into Parks Victoria's (PV) next Brumby shoot, it is timely that we report on the critical gaps and failings of PV's biodiversity management, highlighted by Victoria's Auditor General's Office (VAGO) report recently tabled in Parliament.

The VAGO report stated that PV is "yet to develop or use *reliable indicators* to monitor and report underlying trends and *understand the contribution of its prioritised interventions*". PV however ignored VAG's advice and instead, now prioritise horses (single birth species) above multiple birth species in its latest shoot tender.

PV's tender calls for professional shooters to kill horses as the *primary* target, leaving deer, pigs, foxes, goats, cats and rabbits (with significantly higher population increase rates -chart below), to be shot "only IF doing so does not compromise the treatment of feral horses"!

Brumbies in perspective: Scale of the problem using Barmah projected population increases



We also recently received FOI documents containing advice from PV's Technical Advisory Group (TRG) that evidences how PV take 1-2 years to *analyse* Brumby counts, can exaggerate *facts* to illicit support for Brumby extermination, deviate from Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) and using TRG's words lack clarity on how their plan's vision/ purpose can help from a "biodiversity perspective".

This is a sad indictment of PV's non-scientific actions by the VAGO report, however for the good news, read about positive rehoming updates in this newsletter.

Do not forget that NOW we can confidently advocate for the retention of sustainable Brumby populations knowing the VAG report confirms that PV have NO evidence to exterminate our iconic wild horses.

Jill Pickering



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VIC AUDITOR GENERAL REPORT OF DELWP

The Victorian Auditor General's Office (VAGO) report (Oct 2021) to Parliament found that that Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), and its partner Parks Victoria (PV), cannot demonstrate if, or how well, it is halting further decline in Victoria's threatened species populations.

The official response from Parks Victoria to the report *"Parks Victoria agrees with the Auditor General's characterization.."*

The official response from DELWP to the report *"DELWP accepts the audit's recommendations."*

Victorian Auditor General's Office [Protecting Victoria's biodiversity report](#) (2021)

**Parks Victoria DOES
NOT** routinely
specify and report

**against on-ground
outcomes, thus the
impact of shooting
Brumbies can not be
determined**



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IMPACTS (POSITIVE/NEGATIVE/NEUTRAL) & AUDITOR GENERAL'S REPORT

What is impact?

Impact means change “to have an impact or effect on”, the next step is to assess whether the impact is positive, neutral or negative.

For example, performance feedback will impact on a student, but what matters to the student is whether feedback is positive (doing well) or negative (not doing well)

What is environmental impact?

An environmental impact, or change, is the effect that an activity (i.e. culling) has on the species that the activity *hopes* to help. Impact does not demonstrate a negative or positive result.

To understand if an activity has met its goal to help a target species, it is crucial to conduct an “on ground” count of target species PRE activity (cull), then conduct a POST activity (cull) count.

If an “on ground species count is higher post activity (excluding other concurrent actions), the impact is *positive*, if the count is lower, the impact is *negative*. Regular “on ground” data counts are the *only evidence* PV can legitimately report as a claim its action (cull) has help its native species.

Discussion

The recent Victorian Auditor General Office (VAGO) report found that Parks Victoria (PV) cannot demonstrate IF, or how well, it is halting any further decline in Victoria's threatened species. [click here for report](#)

The main reasons for VAGO's conclusion was primarily that *PV does not* conduct any “pre” & “post” activity (i.e. culls) counts of relevant “on ground” native species; which also prevents PV from being able to demonstrate if public money has been wisely spent.

VAGO report that PV's: “monitoring and reporting programs focus on the amount of threat management, with very limited monitoring and reporting around threat intensity and **on-ground** changes to threatened species populations”.

VAGO also reiterated that PV, having agreed to correct deficiencies in earlier VAG audit reports, has not made any realistic improvement in its data recording/reporting processes.

VAG report that PV “has made little progress in addressing this issue and continues to underuse these tools, which are intended to guide and support species protection”.



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Conclusion

PV measure success by the number of feral species killed *because* PV assume that feral species killed = native species helped.

VAG's report reinforced this key failing on PV's behalf often, for example;

VAGO report that PV "report without targeted on-ground monitoring programs to validate (their) key predictions, they can only be viewed as modelled assumptions".

PV refer to lack of funds, however VAG reports that PV only *assume* success, never collecting "on ground" pre/post count data to confirm or disprove their assumption, for example;

VAGO report that PV is "yet to develop or use reliable indicators to monitor and report underlying trends and understand the contribution of its prioritised interventions".

VAGO's finding shows that PV continues to waste public money, therefore as a result of PV's inability to conduct "on ground" data counts;

- Victorian native species continue to decline.
- No data exists to enable evidenced based actions to improve native species, and
- Wild Horses are being exterminated *now* with no scientific results to evidence if this helps or hinders native species PV aim to protect.

Sadly, for our native species and for the ABA, the imminent loss of iconic wild Horses, the VAG audit concluded that PV "has not provided detailed, evidence-based advice to the government about the cost and benefits of protecting and monitoring threatened species to support further investment".

PV's determination to ignore "on ground" data and wild horse activities, shows that PV can never understand how to properly manage native species, and why, for example;

- frogs spawn in hoof prints,
- skinks feed on insects in horse dung,
- grazing horses provide a steady supply of short green grass (so PV does not have to slash grass for species needing short green grass, and
- biodiversity is found to be higher outside fenced exclusion zones than inside them.

A responsible move by Parks Victoria now that the VAG audit has made clear about PV's "inability to demonstrate IF, or how well, it is halting further decline in Victoria's threatened species"; would **be to** stop mass culls and *re-direct* this season's cull money to conduct an "on ground" data base count of species that PV, according to VAG, *assume* culling can help.

Jill Pickering

STOP THE SHOOT PROTEST

I was lucky enough to be able to attend the Protest Rally in Melbourne on June 8. Jill kindly let me stay with her and her cat Phoebe in Richmond.

After Re printing my poster at office works (sadly left it in Adelaide airport somewhere and virgin wouldn't let me off the plane to fetch it!) Jill and I set off for Parliament House.

We needed to detour to a servo to pump up one or 2 tyres of the Jill mobile. First servo's hose fitting was too big for the small wheels but success at the repco bit further down. The fella was very helpful! Bet he had a giggle after we left. Walking into the city carrying a big poster of a poor dead stallion (thanks Michelle and Ian Brown for the photo) attracted some attention.

First cafe we passed about 20 minutes of walking made great coffee and Jill ate her breaky roll and was interviewed by a journalist.

Second stop was a comfort break in the emergency of a hospital.

Not sure how long it took but we arrived safe and sound with plenty of time to spare.

The Rally organisers did a great job setting up a pergola and so many people had great posters and banners. Some I remember from previous rallies.

I saw Andy Meddick MP in the crowd so we had a chat and got a photo with him.



Photo: Pat and Andy Meddick MP at the protest 8th June 2022



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The momentum built each time someone spoke and cheering was loud when the LNP announced shooting would not occur on their watch.

There were many familiar faces in the crowd and it was nice for Jill and I to chat with Ginny Imhoff. Many people chatted with Jill.

The rally attracted many journalists thank goodness and I read some passers by donated.

Jill and I went home the same way and my feet hurt so tried to access an orange scooter.. failed dismally lol so took off my shoes which I think saved my left small toe from falling off lol.

I made us a cuppa and we debriefed (laughed about our day out) and then I started the journey back to Adelaide. Waiting on the front porch Phoebe came up to me hoping for more kitty food before I left, apparently I fed her too much and now she misses me.

Well done to everyone involved... here's hoping kindness to our beloved Brumbies prevails!

Pat



Photo: Wendy Lovell MP + Peter Walsh MP + James Newbury MP +

Bev McArthur MP In support of the Brumby at the June 8 protest at Melbourne Parliament



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UPDATE FROM NATIONAL BRUMBY RESCUE

We are at a standstill currently with the 3rd muster due to political issues in the NT. The National Brumby Rescue has successfully stopped 3 aerial culls of wild horses in the northern Territory by offering an alternate management plan that uses slow mustering and combination of relocation and rehoming.

The first program relocated 88 wild horses from a sacred indigenous site to a privately owned cattle station where selected offspring of these brumbies will be used in equine therapy programs.

The second program moved 60 wild horses from an indigenous communities spring water supply, utilised exclusion fencing around the spring. These horses were mustered to a less sensitive area within the community where watering troughs were provided for the horses and are managed ongoingly by the community elders.

Our 3rd, upcoming program is a relocation of 150 and rehoming of 50 wild horses. These

horses will be relocated to the Northern Territory Brumby Sanctuary, owned by the Franz Webber Foundation in Switzerland who will oversee their future and preservation as wild free roaming herds for generations to come.



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UPDATE FROM KAIMANAWA HERITAGE HORSES



The May 2022 Kaimanawa Wild Horse Muster marked the start of a new era in the management of the Kaimanawa wild horse population following the introduction of immunocontraception as a method of controlling population growth into the future.

After being researched thoroughly over the last decade, technological advancements in immunocontraception drug efficiencies and successful overseas trials, KHH have been the driving force towards seeing this option implemented in the wild Kaimanawa herd as a complementary option to rehoming.

To see the addition of contraception as a combined tool toward maintaining a healthy and sustainable wild herd was an exciting achievement and the partnership between KHH, DOC and the Kaimanawa Wild Horse Advisory Group will remain focused on seeing it applied throughout future years.

For more information - <https://kaimanawaheritagehorses.org/contraception/>



www.kaimanawaheritagehorses.org

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UPDATE FROM BLUEWATER BRUMBIES

WOW! A huge congratulations to Toni and Brave, her Brumby from Bluewater!



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UPDATE FROM SAVE THE BRUMBIES

We sure save the Brumbies, a recent group has arrived at NEBS from the flood areas of the Northern Rivers in NSW. Trapped by NPWS and LLS before the floods, the horses were yarded for weeks before finally being transported to our Armidale Sanctuary. Our vet was in attendance, 'boys' were gelded and microchipped, two mares are in foal so we expect the patter of little hooves in spring, all being well.

The horses were really down in condition and covered in rain scald but are now recovering well. One little colt, STB Solo (pictured) has only one eye, our vet said he was born that way, Solo copes o.k. but due to his disability we have placed him in our Sponsorship program as he will stay with us permanently.

Our winter Newsneigher will be out in July and you can follow Facebook, New England Brumby Sanctuary and also our [website](#).

Our supporters have been informed of the tragic Victorian Brumby news and we do what we can to raise awareness and support the actions of ABA. At least in NSW we have better management but it's always difficult without

any Government funding however we continue to take horses and rehome as many as we can.

Jan Carter STB Inc



Pictured: Newly arrived Colt Solo



www.savethebrumbies.org

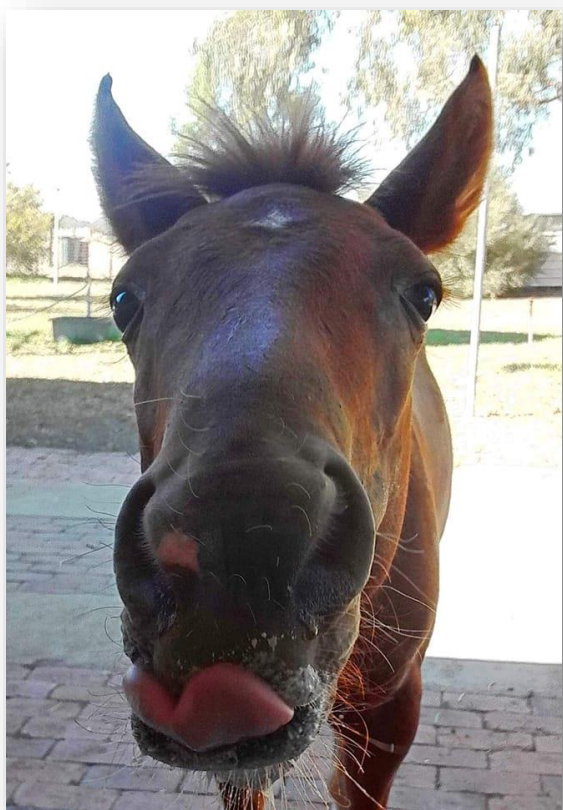


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UPDATE FROM HOOFS2010



“We have some wonderful news and this is just a brief update we will make the official announcement soon.

Our Land project now sits at \$163,000 thanks to an anonymous family trust donation. Let’s keep the momentum going!”

WE CAN DO THIS!!

To donate to the Land project, [click here](#)

Contact HOOFS2010

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PV FOI – PAPERS on SCARIER - COUNT - SHOOT

The ABA received several FOI documents recently which included advice from Parks Victoria's Technical Advisory Group (TRG).

The information below was taken from **FOI2021-22-49-Doc10-Redacted minutes** Date: 26 August 2021 and to the ABA, they *confirmed* that PV and their TRG;

- Frequently take 1-2 years to *analyse* Brumby count data,
- **Can exaggerate “evidence-based facts” to gain public support for Brumby eradication,**
- Use methods that *deviate* from Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs), and
- Lack clarity on how their plan's vision/purpose can help from a *biodiversity perspective*.

Via FOI: Bogong High Plains 2021 Survey delays

PV's TRG Meeting stated that;

- PV's “Bogong survey (was) completed in June 2021”, and
- PV's “Analysis still in progress” **and still NOT released** (at 2-Aug-21).

Via FOI: TRG offer to “devise scarier” comments

PV's TRG advised that “*Should* an exotic disease get into a large wild population eradication would be very difficult eg equine influenza, exposure to bats infected with hendra virus etc.” **then, amazingly, the TRG stated (we) “might devise a scarier comment”.**

Via FOI: TRG advice on PV's “humane” killing

PV's TRG acknowledged that the national SOP for aerial and ground shooting of feral horses (Sharp 2016) state “Only head (brain) or chest (heart/lung) shots must be used”. For years PV claimed to adhere to SOP guidelines, now we see the TRG advised PV that;

- **Head shots are problematic, even vets in close proximity miss the brain.**
- Multiple chest shots using ammunition *exceeding* SOP specifications are needed so the *explosive force* in the chest area is *sufficient* for reliable *instantaneous* death,



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- A vet be present to oversee the program start for the *first 10-20 horses*, and
- *Dogs* may be used to scent animals that shooters miss and if needed, follow-up wounded animals.

Via FOI: TRG cautioned PV on its 2021 horse plan

While PV's TRG support eradication they cite "lack of clarity around PV's Horse Action Plan", such as;

- The plan is issue based, and they
- Challenged PV's horse plan ambitions in terms of its goals, and expressed
- Concern over lack of clarity around the plan's vision/purpose from a *biodiversity perspective*.

One day PV's manipulative ways highlighted here and in the VAGO report will be officially recognised. Even if PV apologise for claiming their management plans are "humane", science based and essential to "save" native species; we pray this occurs before Parks Victoria exterminates all of Victoria's valued heritage Horses.

Jill Pickering

WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE?

Parks Victoria has NO
EVIDENCE that shooting
Brumbies saves threatened
species



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ABA MEMBER GROUPS

Incorporated ABA member groups:

- Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society (SA)
- Heritage Brumby Advocates Australia (Vic)
- Victorian Brumby Association (Vic)
- HOOFs2010 Brumby Rescue (NSW)
- Save The Brumbies (NSW)
- Australian Brumby Horse Register (National)
- National Brumby Rescue (National)
- Bluewater Brumbies (Qld)
- SEQ Brumby Association (Qld)
- Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)

Non-Incorporated ABA member groups:

- Friends of Wild Horses (SA)
- White Alpine Equine (NSW)
- Indigo Brumbies (VIC)

For any queries, please contact us on info@australianbrumbyalliance.org.au

NEWSLETTER

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All donations over \$2 are tax deductible

END NEWSLETTER