



NATIONAL PARKS ASSOCIATION OF THE ACT INC.

ITRG - KNP Wild Horse Plan Review

PO Box 2228

Jindabyne NSW 2627

Dear ITRG

### **Submission to the ITRG**

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG) for the Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) Wild Horse Plan Review. The National Parks Association of the ACT ("NPA ACT") is a community-based conservation organisation with more than fifty years of working to protect our natural environment through an active outings and workparty program; participation in Parkcare activities; an extensive publication program; public meetings and conferences and engagement with government policies and programs.

The NPA ACT has a particular interest in the management of feral horses in both the ACT and KNP. NPA ACT members are regular visitors to KNP and have become increasingly concerned about the impact of feral horses on this national park. They are also very aware that feral horses in KNP have the potential to threaten to the environmental values of the ACT's Namadgi National Park.

Since 2010, feral horses have spread their range to now occupy almost the entire shared border with Namadgi National Park in the ACT as illustrated in Graeme Worboys et al, *Our Australian Alps are Changing for the Worse*, Feb 2015. These feral horses are entering the ACT water catchment area in increasing numbers, creating an environmental and financial burden for the ACT jurisdiction.

The movement of feral horses between KNP, Brindabella National Park, the Alpine National Park as well as Namadgi National Park and other adjoining reserves in the Australian Alps region is another issue that needs to be addressed to effectively manage the feral horses in KNP.

The NPA ACT has regularly reported on feral horse issues in its newsletter over the past 18 months. In particular, it has described the feral horse effects noted by an NPA ACT-led party of bushwalkers on a walk to Cowombat Flat area and including the source of the Murray, Tin Mine (NSW) and McFarlanes Flat (Vic). Several members of that party created a portfolio of photos that illustrated the

extent of damage occurring from the impacts of feral horses. This portfolio of photos can be found at <http://www.flickr.com/photos/91914657@N08/sets/>.

Further evidence of horse damage in KNP is contained in the Graeme Worboys and Ian Pulsford report entitled *Observations of Pest Horse Impacts in the Australian Alps, March 2013*, which is available at [www.mountains-wcpa.org](http://www.mountains-wcpa.org).

The NPA ACT has been a participant in the National Parks and Wildlife Service's community consultation of the Wild Horse Management Plan. The NPA ACT believes this process has attracted many emotive public submissions and that the recommendations relating to feral horse management arising from this consultation should be scientifically based. It was therefore with great disappointment that the NPA ACT noted that the NSW Government has, before the conclusion of the management plan review, ruled out certain control measures. Management of feral pests is most successful where a wide range of measures are available for managers to choose from. The NPA ACT calls upon the ITRG to challenge any political decisions relating to feral horse management that limits available control methods.

In particular, the NPA ACT would question the basis for the exclusion of aerial shooting as recent veterinary studies in the Northern Territory have shown it to be a humane and effective control method (Hampton, J.O. (2013) *Assessment of the Humaneness of Feral Horse Helicopter Shooting Operations in the Northern Territory: Tempe Downs*. NT Parks and Wildlife Commission). In addition, the NPA ACT would refer you to the English report of 2000 which concluded that aerial shooting was a suitable and humane method for removing horses from Guy Fawkes National Park (<http://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/resources/pestsweeds/englishReport.pdf>).

The NPA ACT notes that aerial surveys have shown significant annual increases of feral horses in KNP since 2003 with a current population estimated to be between 4,000 and 8,000 horses. The NPWS estimates that to maintain the feral horse population at current numbers, at least 1,300 horses per annum would need to be removed. However, despite significant resources being devoted to the removal of feral horses, the NPWS's best year resulted in the removal of only approximately 600 feral horses.<sup>1</sup> It is important to note that the only agreed control measure currently available to the NPWS is the trapping of feral horses in corrals and the subsequent transportation of these horses out of KNP. This labour-intensive control method is consuming a disproportionate amount of the feral animal control budget in KNP and is still not resulting in adequate reductions in feral horse numbers. There is an obvious need to rethink the strategy for the control of feral horses in KNP.

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<sup>1</sup> Data from NPWS presentation to the 16 February 2015 General Meeting of the NPA ACT

The NPA ACT is happy to discuss any of the issues raised within its submission, either by presentation to the ITRG or, alternatively, I or Di Thompson can be contacted on 0410 875 731 or 0421 022 477, respectively.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rod Griffiths', is centered on a light gray rectangular background.

Rod Griffiths  
President

18 March 2015