



Brumby Bridges

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The ABA

The *Australian Brumby Alliance Inc. (ABA)* was established in 2008 to help facilitate the efforts of like-minded wild horse interest groups throughout Australia. We do this by sharing information and expertise as well as providing a collective voice in regard to the humane management, welfare, preservation and promotion of what we consider to be a National Treasure - *The Australian Brumby*.

ABA News

President's Chat

Ongoing Government lobbying

With Christmas and the New Year festivities seeming like a distant memory, the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) is back into intense Brumby lobbying mode, this time in Victoria, including a refreshing approach to consulting introduced by Parks Victoria ...[more page 4](#)

ABA lobbying in NSW was interrupted late January 2017 with a new Minister, the Hon. Gabrielle Upton taking over Environment and Heritage from the Hon. Mark Speakman. We are now in the process of re-establishing links with the new minister responsible for National Parks and Wild Life Services (NPWS).

The ABA platform for Kosciuszko National Park's (KNP) management plan includes:

- the retention of a Brumby population of 3,000 to 4,000,
- no ground shooting, or aerial shooting (if proposed) of free foaming Brumbies,
- increasing the rehoming percentage of Brumbies trapped by:
 - selected use of fertility control (a foal not born will not need trapping)
 - have interested groups to assist in managing the Brumby population, and
 - provide financial help to experienced rehoming individuals or groups.

More on managing sustainable Brumby populations in KNP [on page 3](#).

Wheelchair Savvy Brumbies?

On a lighter note, Colleen O'Brien is adding to the Victorian Brumby Association's (VBA) Brumby Gentling Program a wheelchair and crutches de-sensitization segment. Most of you will know I am becoming more dependent on mobility aids, having caught Poliomyelitis as a child, and now dealing with the later effects of Polio, or Post Polio Syndrome.

Recently while taking with Colleen (VBA) about my need to upgrade wheelchairs and mobility scooters, Colleen asked if she could have my older mobility aids. Colleen was most likely recalling the apprehension of such odd items for new VBA Brumby arrivals. Next time we met up I off loaded my old manual wheelchair and crutches for the VBA to put to good use. Well done VBA for being disability inclusive.

What a start to 2017!

The recent floods and fires in NSW have put considerable strain on our member groups, particularly the Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA) and Save The Brumbies (STB) as they go from one weather extreme to another. Still, in the midst of these challenges the Brumby rehoming process goes on. For every Brumby rehomed, another NPWS or Parks Victoria trapped Brumby can be saved.

Wishing everyone a fresh start to 2017. In particular the ability to cope with the challenges ahead of ongoing lobbying, the search for funds to support rehoming and the long hours of rewarding work volunteered to gentle and rehome our heritage Brumbies.

Jill Pickering

ABA lobby approach expanded

While we wait for the Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) Brumby plan to be released, the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) has continued to seek avenues within Government and NPWS to make key changes to the KNP draft plan.

We value the NPWS review and the resulting recognition of KNP's Snowy Brumby heritage value, however retaining only 600 in three areas of 200 will leave their long term survival untenable. The 2003 wild fires killed 64% of KNP Brumbies, if repeated with 600 Brumbies, subsequent fires will accelerate inbreeding, then extinction. The NPWS recognition of Brumby heritage is also inconsistent with their stated intention to prevent any Brumbies numbers returning to 600 if their population drops below 600.

As a result, the ABA is lobbying for key changes to the draft KNP plan, such as:

- the retention of 3,000 to 4,000 Brumbies living wild in KNP,
- no ground shooting (or aerial shooting),
- trial non-permanent fertility control,
- use adaptive management to find *acceptable densities** as Brumbies are removed, and
- Aim for most trapped Brumbies to be successfully rehomed.

* The Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG 2016) report [p24] states; “Acceptable densities are based on the premise that there is a population density below which the horses' undesirable effects are acceptable, i.e. a threshold level”.

Assume, for example, a population increase of 10%. We could retain:

- 4,000 Brumbies by removing 400 annually using both fertility control to prevent 100 foals being born, and rehoming 300, and could retain
- 3,000 Brumbies by removing 300 annually using both fertility control to prevent 100 foals being born, and rehoming 200.

The ABA is also keen for the KNP NPWS plan to recognise the concerns raised in the ITRG 2016 report [p9], that “While studies on herbivory are widespread, there is less information specifically on the effects of horses. This is because controlled experimental studies are rare, and most rely on a correlational approach and are often complicated by the presence of other herbivores (Beever & Brussard 2000). Exclosure plots that exclude all grazing herbivores are likely to exaggerate the impacts of horses (Linklater et al. 2002). Some studies fail to find an effect, or **may even find a positive impact** (e.g. Fahnestock & Detling 1999).

The ITRG report [p10] goes on to refer to studies that showed a wild horse presence can result in:

- **“Increased species diversity, Sub-alpine, montane, (Fahnestock & Detling 1999 Austrheim & Eriksson 2001 Fahnestock & Detling 2002 Ostermann-Kelm et al. 2009 Stroh et al. 2012.), and**
- **“Reduction of fire severity, Forest, sub-alpine, montane, (Silvers 1993 Davies et al. 2015).**

The ITRG report [p12] cautions Robertson's 2015 treeless ephemeral drainage lines report to NPWS with “Despite the study's encompassing of alpine and sub-alpine regions of Victoria, NSW and the ACT, it focuses only on treeless ephemeral drainage lines (Robertson et al. 2015) within those regions. This focus should be noted and care taken not to extrapolate the findings across all drainage line types or types of impacts in other habitats”.

The ABA supports the ITRG overall management objectives [p38] of:

- **“The agreed heritage value of the horses also needs to be appropriately acknowledged”.**
- **“A broad range of community expectations needs to be observed”, and**
- **“Clearly defined management regions and zones are required to facilitate this coexistence”.**

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The ABA is also encouraging the final KNP management plan to take on board the ITRG report [p41] observations that *“Surprisingly little is known about the ecology of horses in KNP. Some very useful information would come from funding PhD projects on behavioural ecology, demography, movement ecology, habitat preference, and abundance”*.

We look for further developments with the Hon. Gabrielle Upton and NPWS, to support our key management objectives as the KNP Wild Horse Management Plan draws to a conclusion.

Jill Pickering

Parks Victoria Recent Wild Horse Stakeholder meetings

Parks Victoria (PV) released their Greater Alpine National Park (GANP) management plan in December 2016. Before the printing ink had dried, key stakeholders, including the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) and the Victorian Brumby Association (VBA), were invited to attend three “Round table” meetings for Barmah Brumbies, and running concurrently, three round table meetings for Alpine and Bogong Brumbies.

The GANP intends to reduce the Brumby population (2,350 last count) in the Victorian Alps to minimise impacts. However the ABA is highly concerned that the GANP has proposed eradication of small groups, such as those in Barmah and the Bogong High Plains.

Several representatives, including the ABA and VBA attended all meetings. The stress to find space in busy lives to attend 6 meetings from mid-January to mid-February 2017 was evident by the final meeting.

Luckily ‘The Primary Agency’ consultants engaged by PV to facilitate these meetings did a great job to ensure all sides contributed to the debate in a respectful manner. It was a relief to be facilitated by a professional, sensitive, results orientated consultancy group to coax out common ground from diametrically opposed meeting views on such an emotive topic.

Realistic ways for local Barmah Brumby groups to assist PV to manage (not eradicate) their small horse populations

was identified and hopefully this encouraging start can be sustained.

Workable ways to lower the Victorian Alpine Brumby numbers from 2,350 at last count, were raised. However no common ground was identified for the small Bogong Brumby population that PV want to totally remove - “because they can” - despite repeated offers by VBA’s Colleen O’Brien to deliver a low cost fertility control to manage the Bogong High Plains population.

PV is now finalising a draft plan for the Hon. Lily D’Ambrosio to consider before it will be released in June for public feedback, and the process finalised later in 2017.

Following the February meeting the ABA is lobbying PV to:

- support Colleen O’Brien’s offer to deliver a low cost fertility control program,
- establish Bogong High Plains baseline ecological data to guide Bogong’s population,
- and further raise the heritage profile of Bogong High Plains Brumbies.

We did have stakeholder agreement in requesting a copy of the consultants’ report (in the absence of official minutes), and that PV never again run high stress meetings over such a short period, especially when time is needed to work through broad ranging issues.

Jill Pickering

Member News

Save the Brumbies (STB)

New management at our main Armidale Sanctuary, NEBS, has seen us all very busy over the last few months. As with any change over there have been adjustments to be made and a lot of reorganisation. Due to unforeseen circumstances, we found it necessary to appoint a new horse handler. Taphyl Stewart is a local man and is doing a good job with the horses; check out his website: <http://www.taphylstewarthorsemanship.com/>. Taphyl can also offer a full starting service to new owners if required.

All our paint weanlings have now been adopted together with a further five horses. Quality overall of the horses was excellent and they were placed very quickly into approved homes. Our website Adoption page will have new photos and updates of horses available before Easter.

The bush fire season has had us all very worried. There was a fire burning to the west of the Sanctuary but, thankfully, it was brought under control. NEBS has a fire plan in place and, to be safe during the fire, all the horses were moved to the front of the property with access to a large dam and also, freedom if needed, to the road.

Plenty of rain on the Tablelands has resulted in good paddock growth and the horses look fantastic. Bellingen Sanctuary has also had good growth although not as much rain.

The fertility control program progresses into another year and we are beginning to have some idea of the results; it is working well with the young colts treated to date and also the mares. Like all research programs only time will give us definite answers. We feel it is an important contribution to the future management of the horses although maintaining the horses in the trial is a severe drain on our resources.

We will again have horses to compete at Bellingen show in May and for further news go to our website: www.savethebrumbies.org



STB Storm meets Taphyl for the first time

Hunter Valley Brumby Association (HVBA)

We have experienced a terrible summer here at the HVBA, with scorching temperatures above 45 degrees for many days, no rain and bush fires. Our paddocks were under

enough stress before summer and now things are much worse. Plans were in place for pasture improvement but our efforts have been fruitless due to the weather. But

thankfully our Brumbies are all looking well due our investment in the Whoa Steady Neddy Hay Saver Nets. Our Brumbies can now enjoy picking at their hay all day without any wastage and are great for boredom, we highly

recommend them and we could not have got through this summer without them. To order go to <http://www.whoasteadyneddy.com.au/>



Kaimanawa Heritage Horses

Bramble and Reno - Reunited!

The heartwarming story of a mare and foal separated at the muster and reunited 2 ½ years later

Bramble and Kaia came out of the 2014 Muster. The homes they originally went to didn't work out, so they came, still unhandled into HUHA's care - Bramble in 2015, and Kaia in July 2016.



Bramble was very defensive when she arrived. She had always been confident and curious but she had become more than a bit grumpy with life. She still had

curiosity - she would hang her head over the fence inviting you to approach, but get too close and the ears would go back and the teeth would be bared. She wasn't

adverse to front footing everything that got too far into her bubble either. We gave her space to settle in – she had been through a lot in recent history, losing her family in the wild, having her foal in captivity and then going through the weaning process, as well as the huge culture shock of adjusting to domestic life.

What seems to work out well for the Kai's is getting them used to a simple routine: the HUHA horse team volunteers quietly going about their business around them, taking their buckets of feed in everyday, picking up poos, non-demanding time to build their confidence, as well as the business of the shelter everyday all around them.

Slowly but surely Bramble turned around, she got more accepting of people, wanting to interact. She was a big character, and her playful traits started to show

themselves more. She was the class clown, grabbing empty feed bags and running around with them freaking out the other horses, stealing gloves and trading them for apples. And once trust was there, it was like an avalanche. Everything came so quickly and so easily, she progressed faster than any of the other Kai's that I have had the pleasure of spending time with, it definitely was a huge 'clicking' moment, a total acceptance. Once we had started down this path she just gave her all – but as with most of them it was selective, Bramble bonded with her one person first off.

Meanwhile we had the most wonderful opportunity from Russell Higgins (4 Star Parelli Professional and all round awesome horseman), he offered to take two of our Kaimanawas, and start them under saddle for us with his students that were arriving in September 2016. He wanted the horses to have some initial handling, so they knew the basics, and he would take it from there. This was such a huge deal for our ponies to get such a great start. We had taken two more off of the 2016 muster, but the mare had poor conformation and wasn't going to be suitable as a riding horse, and was likely in foal. So we made the decision that Bramble would be one of the lucky horses to get a first class education! As we continued with her preparation, Kaia, who Bramble had come out of the muster with, came to us also. It seemed like the perfect pair to send off to Russell, but we didn't have a lot of time to get her ready, so he ended up with a slightly less prepared horse than planned!

Bramble and Kaia headed off to Russell's horsemanship centre in Te Awamutu in September to start the next part of their journey.

Bramble needed some reminding that she was in fact a domestic horse now, and

with her new person they needed to start again! But it was a great experience for Russell's student Becky, who quickly fell in love with Bramble, and was very keen to take her back to the UK in her suitcase (but the excess baggage charges were just a little out of reach unfortunately)! Once



Bramble got the hang of things with Becky, they progressed at an amazing rate, Becky was thrilled to be the first person to sit on her, all of which Bramble took in her easy-going stride.

Russell's other student Jacques had turned up after Becky, size wise was more suited to Bramble, so he started Kaia off on the ground initially and then swapped over with Becky when it came to the ridden part. Kaia was much further behind, she hadn't even been haltered when she got to Russell, so she had a lot of catching up to do. She was much more sceptical, and needed a lot of work to get her to the point where she really wanted to be part of the process. But with Jacques and Becky's time and patience she got there, and once she got it, she also progressed quickly, from the shy and defensive wee pony that arrived, to being happy to be caught, handled and then comfortable under saddle. She tries so very hard, and wants to be understood. She will become a wonderful loyal friend for a lucky someone.



Russell had been keeping everyone updated on Kaimanawa School on his Facebook page. The first post he put up was spotted by Dani, who couldn't believe it when she saw the picture of the stunning mare with the distinctive wonky blaze. Dani had bought a foal from the 2014 muster. There were lots of social media pictures of Reno with his mother in the wild and Dani had always wondered what had happened to the mother - where she had ended up - and there she was! Reno's mother was Bramble. It seemed like this was meant to be - this really did end up being a bit of a fairy tale ending.

Dani decided to adopt Bramble and reunite the mare and her now grown up foal Reno 2 ½ years on. Bramble travelled to Auckland where she has the most amazing grazing - 500 acres where she runs with a herd, including

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her baby, with the most amazing views from the hills to the sea, with streams and lakes. She stood mesmerised by it all on arrival, taking it in with Reno and her new herd by her side. This will give her a real reminder of her wild days on the ranges. She really has landed on her hooves!

So not only did Russell provide a wonderful start for Bramble and Kaia, but by accident he also facilitated this amazing reunion! We didn't anticipate at the time what

this journey would mean, for Bramble in particular – and this magical ending is more than we could ever have hoped for.

At the time of writing we would love Kaia to have her fairytale ending- she is still looking for her perfect forever home – if you are interested in adopting her, please email Sam at horses.huha@gmail.com



Bramble and Reno re-unite

The Editor's Tail

50 Shades of Grey....

It started as a small bump – like a tick bite – just behind the jaw. But it never went away, and then I realised it was no longer the size of an insect bite.



I have had Stromlo since late 2005 and not long after he came out of the Guy Fawkes River National Park. He was a dark little thing who morphed into a dun for a short while until he started to grey. More at risk of certain cancers and skin issues than other horses, it was time to call the vet.

A needle aspiration sample yielded an onerous lab report: "*Thyroid neoplasia, suspected carcinoma*". I was devastated. Still, it was not a full biopsy and maybe I could find something online. It turns out thyroid problems in horses are not very common and malignant thyroid tumours are rare. Not a lot to go on.

My own vet admitted that the throatlatch area was not easy surgery. Major veins, nerves, air passage and saliva glands inhabit this area and the risk of collateral damage was high. Furthermore, if the tumour has invaded the jugular vein, for example, it was going to be very tricky indeed. This was a two vet, plus vet nurse operation.

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surgery, and all went well. The growth was well contained and came out in entirety. A catheter was stitched into the other side of his neck so I could administer intravenous pain relief and antibiotics. Two shots of penicillin and much flushing with saltwater and a touch of pink spray each day completed the post op treatment. Best of all, the biopsy came back benign. Whfew...

I always knew he was a Super Brumby.

I will spare you all my own wavering moments of "to cut or not to cut....that is the question". But at the least, this beast would sooner or later affect his breathing and blood flow. Suffice it to say I booked the



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ABA Member Groups

- ☞ Australian Brumby Horse Register
- ☞ Coffin Bay Brumby Preservation Society Inc. (SA)
- ☞ Hunter Valley Brumby Association (NSW)
- ☞ Kaimanawa Heritage Horses (NZ)
- ☞ Save the Brumbies Inc. (NSW)
- ☞ Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group (NSW)
- ☞ South East Queensland Brumby Association
- ☞ Victorian Brumby Association