

NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE QUESTIONS ON NOTICE recorded in the Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps – Hansard Transcript 23 August 2023

1. Page 29 – breakdown of horse removal numbers over last 18 months

Senator CADELL: Of the 2,201 horse removals in the last 18 months, how many have been non-lethal? How many horses have been re-homed or—

Mr Fleming: We could take that on notice and give you a breakdown.

ANSWER: Between February 2022 and 18 August 2023, 35 per cent of horses removed from the park have been rehomed.

2. Page 30 – use of drone technologies in surveys

Senator CADELL: The Chief Scientist of New South Wales recommended higher quality, more precise surveys using drone based technologies for NPWS in its surveys. There was a small trial done. Are we looking at that? Was it done any more than that?

Mr Fleming: From memory—and I'd have to take on notice the specifics—there have been several suggestions that we continue to explore all of the options for improving the survey, and that's exactly what we're doing. So we'll continue to look at all options to continue to enhance the precision of those survey results and the confidence we can have in them.

ANSWER: In 2020 a trial was conducted on the use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAVs) for surveying wild horse populations across smaller areas of the park. The method was compared with conventional surveys using helicopters and thermal imagery helicopter surveys. The UAV survey produced a higher population estimate compared to the other methods and that estimate had poor precision.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service continues to consider all options for ongoing improvement in population survey design and implementation, including in relation to the potential application of UAV and other technologies.

3. Page 30 – increase in horse numbers associated with cattle

Senator CADELL: But did we foresee the increase in horse numbers that went with the removal of cattle?

Mr Fleming: I'm not sure the connection is as direct as you're suggesting, but I'd have to take that on notice.

ANSWER: The last cattle were removed from the park in the 1960s. The National Parks and Wildlife Service is not aware of any peer reviewed published literature that directly addresses the relationship between the removal of cattle and horse numbers.

4. Page 32 – Commonwealth funding

Mr Fleming: I have mentioned in a previous response that the Commonwealth has provided \$1.1 million which was for feral horse control—the implementation of the plan adopted under our act.

Senator HUGHES: When was that?

Mr Fleming: I can't remember the exact date, but, effectively, it covered the period of about the last 18 months. It was post bushfire.

Senator HUGHES: And the bushfires were about three years ago?

CHAIR: Could we get that answer on notice so that it's very clear and so that the time frame is clear?

Mr Fleming: Yes.

ANSWER: The Commonwealth funded project timeframes were 1 November 2021 to 30 June 2023.