



White Alpine Equine submission to the
Senate Environment and Communications Reference Committee
Inquiry into the Impacts and Management of feral (wild) Horses in the
Australian Alps

White Alpine Equine (WAE) became an approved rehomer by NPWS in 2019.

We have rescued and rehomed 53 brumbies in this time, including 3 who we have kept ourselves to join our larger herd of Clydesdales and thoroughbreds.

We own and run a small farm in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains and are focused on the welfare of the brumbies rather than the politics and well-funded activists in opposition to their existence.

I have been involved with horses since the age of 4, ridden competitively in Australia and the UK in eventing and show jumping and do my own handling and training. We specialise in rescuing family groups, and where possible, rehoming together.

The very nature and robustness of the brumbies makes them a pleasure to work with, and very versatile when finding permanent homes.

Examples of their career paths can be seen in the activities that some of my brumbies have gone on to do:

1. Equine Therapy
2. Agility
3. Harness
4. Lead in Shows

Agricultural shows in the area have specific brumby classes to recognise the breed and acknowledge their achievements.

A locally owned brumby has gone on to win at high levels of Canberra Royal Show and many are excellent show jumpers.

They make brilliant kids ponies and are as happy trail riding through the bush as they are mustering cattle or simply being a 'paddock ornament' and helping keep the grass down.

In 2022 a group of rehomers attended Equitana in Melbourne. Equitana is a showcase of all major equine disciplines under one roof, from Dressage to Western.

4 brumbies were there and competed in group events, each showing the public their calm and relaxed nature. Warwick Schiller, a well known horsemanship trainer, used 2 of the brumbies in his live show, again opening the general public's eyes to the potential of these horses.

This year, I represented the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) at a stand at Kangaroo Valley Show and talked to the local horse community about the plight of the brumbies, the need to focus on welfare outcomes and how they can help. From those conversations, we have 2 potential new rehomers, very experienced with horses, who wish to come on board and help. A lot of the show attendees were very supportive, having owned brumbies previously and seeing their value as a family horse.

Towns local to the KNP also benefit from the tourism that the brumbies bring, with visitors stopping to shop locally for supplies for picnics on their way to the Park. There is a deep grief in this sector this year as they often drive through and report having seen NO brumbies at all, where in years past they would at least see small herds.

Our views:

We support a best practice approach to brumby management, of which examples can be seen in the NPWS Wild Horse Heritage Act of 2021. If the horses are unable to stay wild in their home country, then a strict welfare practice needs to be put in place.

Mass removal, as has happened over the last year, negates the possibility of finding suitable adopters due to the sheer numbers and time frames.

Correctly handling and preparing the brumbies takes time and patience – rehomers are often the first hands on experience that the horses get. If this is done well, they go on to be easy to handle and bond strongly with humans over their life. If it is done poorly, they often need intervention at a later stage, by a more experienced trainer.

The NPWS Wild Horse Heritage Act 2021:

- identify the heritage value of sustainable wild horse populations within identified parts of the park

- set out how those heritage values will be protected while ensuring other environmental values of the park (including values identified in the plan of management for the park) are also maintained
- Reduce horse numbers to a minimum of 3,000, with trapping and rehoming to occur annually to keep the numbers at a 'manageable' level

This approach will allow NPWS to work with approved rehomers to plan for trapping times annually. Rehomers can then plan around taking expressions of interest from potential adopters, validating their suitability and build a list of horses they can take and manage in the best welfare conditions.

We acknowledge that there is a belief by NPWS that not all horses can be rehomed safely. We have taken in many family groups and have found both herd stallions and lead mares can domesticate – they may just take longer. As not all adopters WANT a riding horse, there is a good future for them and being shot is a terrible waste of life.

An example of people coming together can be seen with the Kaimanawa Heritage Horses. This group includes The Department of Conservation (DOC), Kaimanawa Heritage Horse (KHH) and other interest groups working together to develop agreed management plans that DOC implement.

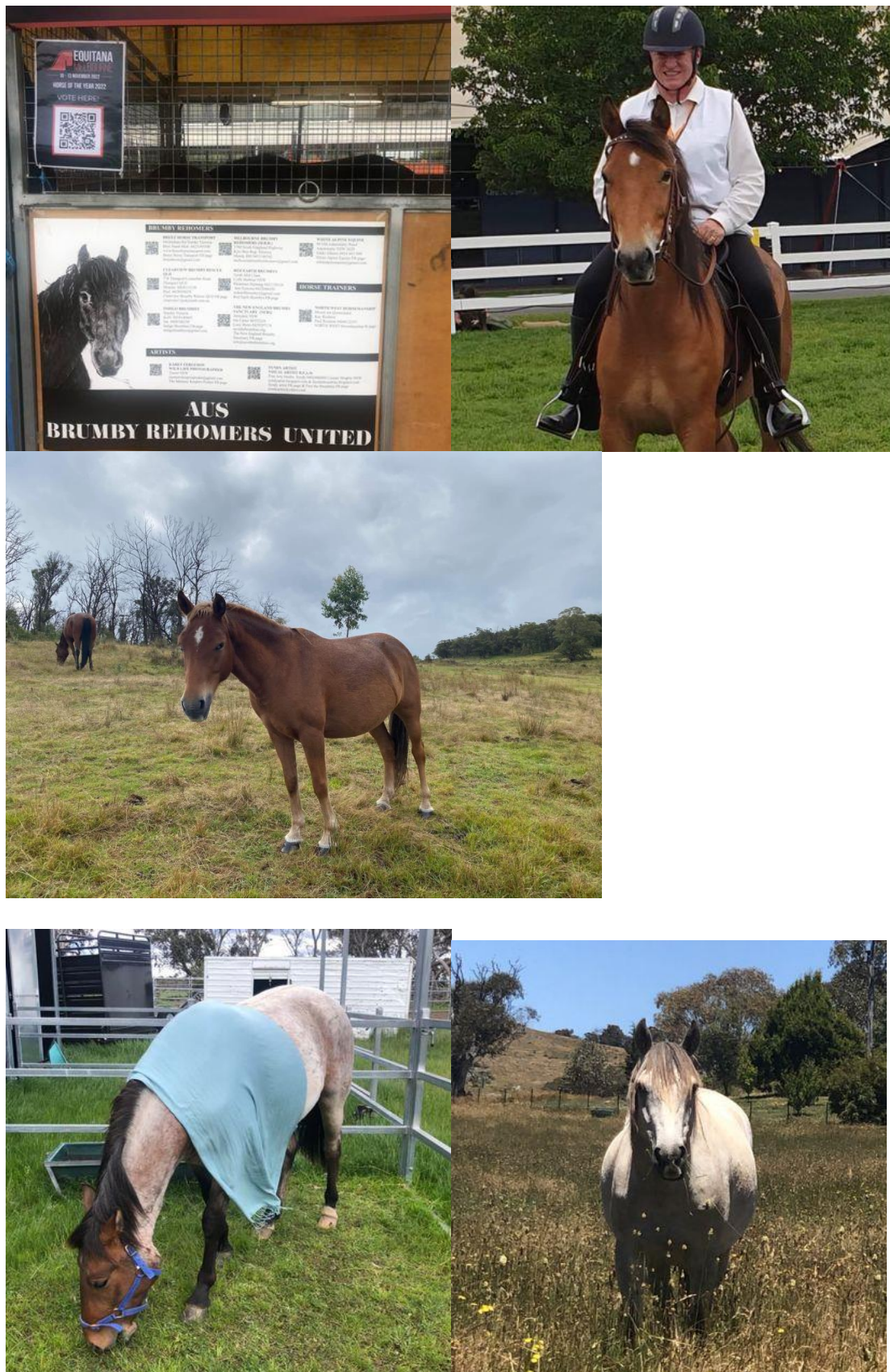
WAE recommendations to this senate inquiry into horse management:

- Work with approved and reputationally proven rehomers and the NPWS Wild Horse Management team to build a cohesive approach to management and rebuild the recently lost trust
- Refocus funding that would be used in a cull to carry out 'on the ground' counts, working with some of our experienced locals and advocates, for example, Peter Cochran
- Implement transparency on members of the Community Advisory Panel to assist in building trust that the right people are involved
- Support the commitments of the NPWS Wild Horse Heritage Act 2021
- Look to European instances of horses being 'rewilded' due to damage to landscapes BECAUSE of their removal and rethink the request made to Senate for a complete cull

Examples of just a few of our brumbies – young and old:







In summary, these horses are worth more than carcasses left rotting in the KNP.

I offer an open invitation to members of the Senate Committee, and their families, to visit our rescue centre and meet our small brumby herd yourselves. The local coffee is excellent, we are a stress free, non-political environment, and carrots for the horses are provided.

Yours sincerely

Nikki Alberts

Director,
White Alpine Equine Pty Ltd