

# Questions on notice - NSW Government

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1. The Chief Scientist for NSW recommended the use of higher quality and more precise surveys could be conducted using Drone Based Robotic Surveys.
  - a. Please provide the results of any Drone Based Robotic Surveys?
  - b. Please advise what research has been undertaken when considering the use of drones for surveys? Please provide any documentation or reports relating to this.
  - c. Please outline the costs involved in running a drone survey v the current aerial or on foot methods? Please provide any documentation or reports relating to this.

**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 UAV survey was also an estimated four times the cost of the conventional survey using a helicopter.

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.

2. Mapping shows high density of horses at Currango/Tantangara.
  - a. Please provide any documentation relating to the reasons for the high numbers of feral horses in the Currango area?
  - b. Please advise what steps are being taken to reduce numbers in the Currango/Tantangara areas? Please provide any reports or documentation relating to the steps being taken to reduce these numbers in this region.
  - c. Please advise why Currango is used to showcase damage to the region by feral horses over other areas in Kosciuszko National Park?

**ANSWER:** Prior to the adoption of the 2021 Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan passive trapping was the only method used to remove wild horses from the park. Passive trapping within the Currango and Tantangara areas is limited by access constraints and visitation.

Since the adoption of the plan wild horses have been removed from these areas using available control methods.

The negative impacts and high density of wild horses at Currango Plain highlights the need to reduce the population, consistent with the Plan, to maintain environmental values throughout the park.

3. What steps does NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service take when determining which regions of Kosciuszko National Park they will remove feral horses from?

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**ANSWER:** Wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park is undertaken in accordance with the 2021 Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan. The Plan was adopted on 24 November 2021 to meet the requirements of the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*. The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has a legal obligation to implement the Plan.

4. Please provide any documentation or reports relating to the decision making process undertaken by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service when determining the areas for reduction?

**ANSWER:** See answer to Q3 above.

5. Please provide any documentation, reports or plans NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service currently uses to measure the impacts of the feral horses and to maintain the levels of feral horses once the target number is reached?

**ANSWER:** A range of information and sources are used to assess the impacts of feral horses, including publicly available peer reviewed scientific papers. A sample of these are outlined in the NSW Government submission to the Inquiry.

The NSW Government submission to the Inquiry also details how the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is measuring and reporting on the ecological health of Kosciuszko National Park (see section E).

Methods available in the plan will be used to maintain the population once the target population is achieved.

6. Please provide maps with the following information
  - a. Map 1: endangered species

**ANSWER:** The Department of Planning and Environment website provides information on the indicative distribution of threatened species: [Threatened biodiversity profile search | NSW Environment, Energy and Science](#).

- b. Map 2: known clusters of brumbies

**ANSWER:** Page 11 of the Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan contains a map of the Kosciuszko National Park wild horse distribution (Figure 1).

- c. Map 3: map overlay of Maps 1 and 2

**ANSWER:** See answers to 6.a. and 6.b. above.

7. In 2014 NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service dug up and moved 150sqm of sphagnum bog to make way for a chairlift at Guthega - where was this transplanted to and please outline whether this was a successful transplant and provide any evidence of

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the success/failure of this transplant.

**ANSWER:** The construction of the 'Freedom Chairlift' in Guthega in 2014 by the resort operator Perisher Blue Pty Limited was subject to the planning application and approval process. Information about the development proposal is available through the NSW planning portal: [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/development-assessment/state-significant-applications/projects/state-development-applications/da-005-02-2012-guthega-construct-guthega-quad-chairlift-and-associated-works](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au/development-assessment/state-significant-applications/projects/state-development-applications/da-005-02-2012-guthega-construct-guthega-quad-chairlift-and-associated-works).

The development application was assessed and approved by the relevant planning authority. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has an advisory role on development applications in Kosciuszko National Park.

Monitoring indicated that the transplantation was successful.

8. What studies or data collection has NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service undertaken relating to the extent of the damage, and steps to mitigate damage, to Kosciuszko National Park, endangered species and vegetation by:
- The new "Perisher 6" chairlift that has been approved for development
  - Overhead transmission lines
  - Alpine resorts

**ANSWER:** Development proposals by external parties go through the planning application and assessment process. Information about development proposals (including new developments within the alpine resorts) is available through the NSW planning portal: [www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au](http://www.planningportal.nsw.gov.au).

All these items were the subject of development applications, assessed and approved by the relevant planning authority. The NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service has an advisory role on development applications in Kosciuszko National Park.

9. Please provide any maps, reports or documentation relating to this.

**ANSWER:** See answer to Q8 above.

10. Has NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service engaged any consultancy services relating to Kosciuszko National Park, specifically endangered species and/or brumby management in the following financial year periods:
- 2022/2023
  - 2021/2022
  - 2020/2021

**ANSWER:** No. NPWS has not engaged consultants as defined under the NSW Government procurement framework.

11. Please provide details, documentation, reports and any work products provided by the consultancy services retained in relation to Kosciuszko National Park, specifically endangered species and/or brumby management in the following financial year periods:

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- a. 2022/2023
  - b. 2021/2022
  - c. 2020/2021

**ANSWER:** Consulting is a classification of professional services that is characterised by giving advice or recommendations on a specific issue. The NSW Procurement Board Direction PBD-2021-03 defines a consultant as a person or organisation that provides 'recommendations or professional advice to assist decision-making by management'. While no consultancy services were sourced, NPWS does have reports that were externally sourced such as the one attached or the one published on the website at <https://www.environment.nsw.gov.au/-/media/OEH/Corporate-Site/Documents/Animals-and-plants/Pests-and-weeds/Kosciuszko-wild-horses/kosciuszko-national-park-wild-horse-heritage-plan-2021-evaluation-report.pdf>.

12. If consultancy services have been retained by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service relating to Kosciuszko National Park, specifically endangered species and/or brumby management please provide complete, unredacted copies of any correspondence relating to the engagement and scope of the consultancy services for the following financial year periods:
- a. 2022/2023
  - b. 2021/2022
  - c. 2020/2021

**ANSWER:** See answer 11.

13. Please provide details of the amounts spent by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service on consultancy services relating to Kosciuszko National Park, specifically endangered species and/or brumby management in the following Financial Year periods:
- a. 2022/2023
  - b. 2021/2022
  - c. 2020/2021

**ANSWER:** See answer 11.

14. What is NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service predicted spend on consultancy services relating to Kosciuszko National Park, specifically endangered species and/or brumby management in the 2023/24 Financial Year?

**ANSWER:** Nil.