

Bushwalking Victoria's Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Impacts and management of feral horses in the Australian Alps

Introduction

Bushwalking Victoria is the peak body for bushwalking in Victoria it represents 59 affiliated clubs along with associate and individual members covering some 62,000 bushwalkers but also advocates for those 250,000 people in Victoria who have bushwalking as one of their main past times. Many bushwalkers hike in the Australian Alps and are appalled by the damage to the environment caused by feral horses and other hard-hooved invasive species. The impacts do not align with the Bushwalking Victoria's environmental statement: [Tread Softly - Bushwalking Victoria](#)

Walk Softly To protect our bushland:

Victoria's bushland areas are a valuable and fragile recreational resource. They need to be protected and nurtured so that we and future generations can enjoy them. Everyone who visits these areas needs to act in ways that help preserve them.

Feral horses and other feral species are a problem in the Alps, stronger action is needed, the federal government should intervene.

Outcomes sought

These are the three outcomes we want from the federal inquiry:

Put a spotlight on the feral horse issue and the failures of state governments to take adequate action to protect wildlife and ecosystems by rapidly reducing feral horse numbers in the Alps.

Encourage federal government intervention, including regulations to force state governments to act and federal funding.

Push for important changes to national environmental law which will ensure places like the Australian Alp are better protected.

Specific recommendations

1. All jurisdictions should use the full suite of control tools available, ensuring they meet standard operating procedures and animal welfare requirements, to reduce the

significant impacts of feral horses on the Australian Alps. This should include ground and aerial shooting by professionals.

2. The Federal Environment Minister should develop National Heritage management principles under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation (EPBC) Act to require states and territories to effectively and urgently remove feral horses from the Australian Alps National Parks and Reserves National Heritage Place.
3. The Federal Water Minister should investigate powers under the Water Act 2007 to ensure that feral horses are not damaging and polluting the catchments of the Murray, Murrumbidgee and other rivers such as the Snowy River.
4. The appropriate Authorities should undertake an assessment of the impact of feral horses and other hard-hooved invasive species on water quality and erosion and any actions required to prevent, mitigate, or repair the damage.
5. Australia's national environmental law should be reformed so the Australian government can rapidly intervene where areas of national and international environmental significance are not being protected or managed effectively.
6. The Australian Government should develop a national feral horse Threat Abatement Plan.
7. The Australian Government should co-invest with state and territory governments in feral horse management in the Australian Alps, which is a priority place under the Threatened Species Action Plan.
8. The NSW Government should repeal the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act* which prioritises feral horses over native wildlife in a National Park and undermines Australia's national and international environmental obligations.

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