

Kosciuszko National Park (KNP) at Risk

The NSW Government's intention to legislate for the protection of feral horses in KNP, and the end of all culling will, if successful, lead to accelerated environmental degradation, particularly in the park's fragile alpine areas.

Given that the estimated KNP horse population of 6,000 has doubled since 2008 despite on-going culling, the end of culling together with the lack of any natural predator in the park, will see an explosion in horse numbers. The 2016 Draft Wild Horse Management Plan, now rejected by government, recommended a 90% reduction in horse numbers over 20 years, primarily through culling.

The Deputy NSW Premier, John Barilaro, has stated that should horse numbers grow too high (implying that a population of 6,000 is acceptable) and threaten sensitive areas, resources will be allocated towards “relocation first followed by re-homings.” The National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) has attempted such programs, and has found them to be largely ineffective and prohibitively expensive, with most corralled horses ending up at the abattoir.

Moreover, promises of resourcing ring hollow given the cuts in recent years to NPWS programs and personnel, including the slashing of park ranger numbers across NSW from 400 to the current level of around 300.

John Barilaro no doubt perceives political advantage in peddling the Man from Snowy River legend rather than facing up to the difficult decisions required to protect KNP's fragile alpine environment. Meanwhile, the NSW Minister for the Environment, whose job it is to protect KNP, remains strangely silent. Once again, it appears that the Nationals are running the environmental agenda.

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