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MEDIA RELEASE

Parks Victoria to Exterminate ALL of Barmah's Heritage Brumbies

The Hon. Lilly D'Ambrosio has approved Parks Victoria's (PVs) Strategic Action Plan Protection of Floodplain Marshes Barmah National Park and Barmah Forest Ramsar Site 2020 – 2023 (the plan).

The Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) strongly rejects PV's claim that removing Barmah's Brumbies is an immediate priority as "Brumbies are the most destructive of Barmah's feral species". The ABA's goal is to support the retention of sustainable Brumby numbers in their historic homelands. We are deeply shocked and horrified to see this Barmah Brumby eviction plan based on propaganda.

Jill Pickering, ABA's President said that PV advised that the numbers of Barmah's deer, pigs and goats etc. were in the 'thousands'. PV reports removing 20 pigs, 34 deer, 7 sheep and 1 goat (multi-birth species) in 2017-18, so "removing all horses (single birth species) is disproportionately excessive."

The PV plan then states "pig, deer, goat and sheep numbers in Barmah Forest are not available, as they are smaller and more cryptic ... not as easily discriminated the cryptic (hidden) nature of pigs and deer also makes their eradication difficult". This admission infers that any damage where horses are and no other 'cryptic' species is visible, will be recorded as Brumby damage. "This is not science, it is propaganda and totally unacceptable for a government agency," said Ms Pickering.

Moir grass declined with River regulation (1930's), yet horses, cattle, sheep and logging was routine in Barmah for 100 years *before* the 1930s. The plan quotes Colloff 2014; but omits Colloff 2014's key water regime quote "a flood regime that most closely matches plant-specific water requirements ... represents the *single management action that holds the best prospect for conservation*".

The plan states that despite environmental water deliveries the decline has not reversed due to "the *inability to achieve* the most appropriate water regime due to delivery constraints". Ms Pickering states, "PV is simply using Brumbies as a scapegoat, since correct water regimes are un-achievable."

PV also inaccurately claims that the National Parks Act (Vic) 1975 "does not allow for the ongoing presence of horses within the park ... they are considered exotic if uncontrolled". This is false - the Act gives PV a choice to, "eradicate or control".

We must not allow this plan to overrule Australian community groups that value Brumby heritage. "Co-existence of cultural values should always be recognised, respected and encouraged," said Ms Pickering. "This is especially important in cases where they conflict (Burra Charter 2013)."

Authorised by Jill Pickering, Australian Brumby Alliance, mob: 0400-558-772.