

# Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel



## Meeting minutes

### Details

**Location:** National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS), 11 Farrer Place, Queanbeyan

**Date/time:** 10 am – 2 pm  
Wednesday 6 November 2019

**Chairperson:** [REDACTED]

**Deputy Chair:** [REDACTED]

### People present

1. Chairperson: [REDACTED]
2. Deputy Chair: [REDACTED]
3. Member: [REDACTED]
4. Member: [REDACTED]
5. Member: [REDACTED]
6. NPWS representative: [REDACTED] Director Southern Ranges Branch
7. Secretary: [REDACTED] Project Officer- Wild Horses, NPWS
8. Guest: [REDACTED] Chief Executive Officer, RSPCA Australia and Deputy Chair of the former Kosciuszko Wild Horse Independent Technical Reference Group

### Apologies

9. Member: [REDACTED]
10. Member: [REDACTED]

## 1. Opening and Welcome

[REDACTED] assumed the role of Chairperson until an election could occur later in the meeting. [REDACTED] offered an acknowledgement of Country.

## 2. Apologies

[REDACTED]  
NPWS advised that [REDACTED] had resigned from the Scientific Advisory Panel effective 5 November 2019.

## 3. Introductions

As this was the first meeting of the panel, all members and NPWS representatives introduced themselves and their respective backgrounds:

- [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] was a member of the former Kosciuszko Wild Horse Independent Technical Reference Group. He has conducted extensive and long-term research on peat bogs in the montane and alpine areas of the ACT and Kosciuszko National Park.
- [REDACTED] – is a veterinarian and completed her PhD on the population ecology and welfare of wild horses in NSW, including Kosciuszko National Park. She is currently researching methods for assessing the welfare of wild horses in the field and has studied the use of immunocontraceptives on captive wild horses.
- [REDACTED] – is an Adjunct Research Fellow with the University of Southern Queensland. He has experience controlling wild horse populations in central Australia and Queensland and

## Meeting minutes

runs a wild horse control business. David also has 17 years' experience in rabbit control in Queensland.

- [REDACTED] specialises in wildlife ecology and management and is currently finishing a PhD on reproductive ecology in wild horses, including the use of fertility control.
- [REDACTED] He has completed extensive work on the threatened Green and Golden Bell Frog, as well as other animal species. Graham is currently undertaking research on pollinator species in Kosciuszko National Park. He also spent eight years as a member of the NPWS Advisory Council.

## 4. Timeline for a New Management Plan

- NPWS advised of the Minister for Energy and Environment's request to complete a final wild horse heritage management plan by 1 May 2020. Given the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*'s requirements for consultation of the draft plan, this will necessitate completion of a draft plan by February 2020.
- The Minister supports a scientific approach to developing the new plan.
- Members expressed general concern over the short-timeframe available to complete the new management plan.
- NPWS advised that the *2016 draft Kosciuszko Wild Horse Management Plan* and its supporting documentation could be used as a foundation for the new plan if required.

[REDACTED] arrived at 10:36 am.

## 5. Kosciuszko Wild Horse Independent Technical Reference Group (ITRG)

[REDACTED] provided a background to the ITRG as the scientific advisory panel for the 2016 draft wild horse management plan and provided advice to the new panel based on learnings from the ITRG:

- A site visit, including aerial survey, was useful for understanding landscape and management issues.
- The ITRG produced two reports in 2016. The first report addressed questions specified by NPWS. The second report assessed the humanness of available control methods and included consultation with independent experts. Both reports are considered useful documents for the panel.
- Avoid setting a target population based on a specified number.
- A population estimate is required to decide on appropriate management and control measures.
- Consider updating the humanness assessment of control methods.
- The ITRG recommended aerial culling in very small areas of the park, where densities were low and visibility was good. It could be used in specific areas to halt the formation of new populations.
- Consider which control methods are suitable for each areas of the park.
- Commonwealth/State transport standards for horses need to be reviewed to allow provisions for wild horses.
- There are no welfare standards for horses in knackeries and abattoirs.
- A standard operating procedure does not exist for culling in trap yards and so the humanness of the control method could not be properly assessed by the ITRG.
- Trapping and removal is termed a non-lethal control method, yet many horses may be sent to a knackery or abattoir.

## Meeting minutes

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- The wild horse welfare implications of a lack-of-management was not assessed by the ITRG.
- There is an opportunity to reconsider the management zones in the 2016 draft plan and further refine the recommendations for each.

NPWS advised that the Act requires some horses to remain in the park. NPWS provided an overview of the outcomes from the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel meeting on 1 November 2019.

NPWS advised that the results of the 2019 wild horse aerial survey would be available early December and was currently being reviewed by independent technical experts. A plain English version of the report will be produced.

[REDACTED] left the meeting at 11:30 am.

**ACTION:** Secretary to provide members a copy of the letter from the ITRG to the Minister for Environment.

## 6. Election of Chair and Deputy Chair

[REDACTED] nominated [REDACTED] for position of Chairperson. There were no other nominations. All members present supported the nomination and [REDACTED] was elected as Chairperson.

[REDACTED] nominated herself as Deputy Chair. There were no other nominations. All members present supported the nomination and [REDACTED] was elected as Deputy Chair.

## 7. Declarations of Pecuniary or Other Interest

- [REDACTED] have current scientific research permits for the park.
- [REDACTED] is working with the Australian Brumby Alliance (ABA) to undertake impact research. He will be applying for a scientific research permit for the park. [REDACTED] was an expert witness for the ABA in their federal court case against Parks Victoria's control of wild horses. He also runs a private company specialising in wild horse control.
- [REDACTED] noted that her work with wild horse rehoming groups is pro-bono.

## 8. Aerial Culling

- NPWS advised that all control methods are available for the panel to consider, including aerial culling, and that aerial culling is used for other pest species in the park. Lethal control of wild horses is currently only undertaken for euthanasia purposes.
- The panel discussed the outcomes of the 2000 Guy Fawkes National Park aerial cull. NPWS advised that the then-Minister for Environment ceased further aerial culls of horses.

## 9. Correspondence

It was noted that some members reported difficulties accessing the SharePoint page created for the panel.

**ACTION:** Secretary to resend invitations to the panel's SharePoint page. USBs will be mailed to those members that continue to experience difficulties accessing the page.

## Meeting minutes

**ACTION:** NPWS to provide a recommended reading list to members.

The resignation of [REDACTED] was discussed by the panel. Members considered that the expertise and experience of existing members was adequate to address any potential gap in knowledge left by [REDACTED] resignation. The panel also acknowledged that knowledge gaps can be addressed by consultation with relevant experts external to the panel. The panel does not recommend replacing Dr Sawford.

### 10. Member's Induction

NPWS inducted the Panel on behalf of the Minister of Energy and Environment.

- NPWS referenced the panel's Code of Conduct and Communication Protocols.
- NPWS advised that the Chair is the authorised member to speak officially on behalf of the panel after prior approval from NPWS.
- NPWS advised that members are paid a meeting sitting fee but also can apply for payment for time spent working out-of-meetings if deemed necessary.
- NPWS advised that the panel is non-voting due to its advisory-role. Alternative opinions of members will be recorded.

### 11. Social Science

Members discussed whether a social scientist should be represented on the panel. Andrea Harvey provided the names of two social science experts if external consultation is required.

### 12. *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*

NPWS provided an overview of the Act and its requirements.

### 13. Trapping and Removal

- NPWS provided an update on the current status of the trapping and removal program at Blue Waterholes.
- The limitations of the control method were discussed, including compensatory reproduction, herd social impacts and transport restrictions.

### 14. Assessing Impacts

The need to measure the impact caused by wild horses on the environment was discussed.

### 15. Questions from the Community Advisory Panel

NPWS presented the questions for the Scientific Advisory Panel raised by the Kosciuszko Wild Horse Community Advisory Panel.

### 16. Meeting Priorities

The following priorities were raised by members for consideration at future meetings:

- The ITRG's recommendations for further work (based on advice from [REDACTED])
- Questions from the Community Advisory Panel
- Revision of the humanness assessment of control methods, including the use of scientific data to support assessments

## Meeting minutes

- 2016 draft management plan – what needs to be revised?
- Consider whether aerial culling can be used in some areas

**ACTION:** Secretary to ensure agreed discussion points are added to future meeting agendas.

### 17. Next Meetings

Proposed meeting dates are:

- Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 December in Jindabyne (TBC). Includes a site visit by helicopter.
- Monday 13 January. Suggested as a combined meeting with the Community Advisory Panel, noting that the Scientific Advisory Panel would still need to meet separately that day.
- Wednesday 19 February.

**ACTION:** NPWS to confirm whether sitting fees can be increased to include travel time.

### 18. General Business

**ACTION:** [REDACTED] to provide an update on fertility control at the next meeting.

**ACTION:** Secretary to distribute member contact details amongst the panel.

### 19. Next Meeting and Site Visit

Monday 16 and Tuesday 17 December 2019 in Jindabyne (details TBC).

### 20. Meeting Close

14:38 pm

[REDACTED]  
**Chairperson**

### Actions from this meeting

No.	Action	Responsible	Date Completed
1	Secretary to provide members a copy of the letter from the ITRG to the Minister for Environment.	Secretary	
2	Secretary to resend invitations to the panel's SharePoint page. USBs will be mailed to those members that continue to experience difficulties accessing the page.	Secretary	
3	NPWS to provide a recommended reading list to members.	Secretary	13 November 2019
4	Secretary to ensure agreed discussion points are added to future meeting agendas.	Secretary	

# Kosciuszko Wild Horse Scientific Advisory Panel



## Meeting minutes

No.	Action	Responsible	Date Completed
5	NPWS to confirm whether sitting fees can be increased to include travel time	Secretary	
6	██████████ to provide an update on fertility control at the next meeting.	██████████	
7	Secretary to distribute member contact details amongst the panel.	Secretary	13 November 2019