straight Talk

hear every voice, know where you stand

21st Century Town Hall Meeting Report

Community engagement for the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan

17 March 2015

Contents

Prepared By

Ariana Selby

Reviewed By

Nicola Wass

Date

17 March 2015

Job Number

J000443

Document Name

21st Century Town Hall Meeting Report

Version FINAL

1 Executive summary

A 21st century town hall meeting was held as one of the community engagement activities undertaken to inform the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park.

This report provides details about the methodology and outcomes of this process.

A 21st century town hall meeting is a public forum that involves a large, broadly demographically representative group participating in small group discussion aided by technology to record responses.

This deliberative approach was selected as it focuses on the views and values of a 'mini public' rather than the strongly held, well known and opposing views of established stakeholders. The approach enabled everyday citizens to be part of the discussion on the management of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park.

Seventy-two community representatives, randomly selected using a third party market research firm, met on Saturday 29 November 2014 in Queanbeyan. Participants were broadly representative of the wider community, by age and gender, and drawn equally from metropolitan/urban and rural/regional areas.

The rationale of large scale, deliberative events with randomly selected participants is based on the belief that everyday citizens, provided with the time and access to balanced information, will be able to reach sensible decisions based on the common good. The importance of representation (through random selection) is that it allows the group to deliberate as a 'mini public', on behalf of the wider community, confident that they do in fact represent the broader community.

Through small group discussions and anonymous polling using Keepad technology, the 21st century town hall meeting provided participants with information about the challenges of managing wild horse populations in the park via pre-recorded video presentations and Kitchen Table Discussion Guides. Both the videos and the Kitchen Table Discussion Guides included information from National Parks and Wildlife Service as well as key advocates from horse and environmental stakeholder groups.

The issue of wild horse management within Kosciuszko National Park has been highly contentious and there is a long history of both stakeholder groups – horse and environment – actively seeking to have their perspective pursued and supported by government. In recognition of this, representatives of both groups were invited to participate in the event and the process was managed so that their input could be captured and acknowledged but not influence the outcomes of the broader participant group. Transparency of the process was important so that stakeholders could see first-hand how the event was managed and what community participants identified as important.

Key findings from the 21st century town hall meeting include:

Community participants value national parks highly and identify the protection of flora, fauna and ecosystems as important or very important.

Feral and pest animals are recognised as posing a significant threat to parks, their flora, fauna and ecosystems, and management of these animals is supported.

All participants agreed that the humaneness of any management method was important, however there were divergent views about what humaneness meant. For example, many people did not support trapping and removal of horses if that involved transport to an abattoir, as it was felt the stress of trapping and transporting wild horses was excessive if animals were then euthanised. For these people, euthanasia on site was preferable. However, for others this method was identified as very acceptable as it meant that every effort to avoid euthanasia had been pursued. Community participants were spread across the whole spectrum of 'completely unacceptable' to 'completely acceptable' on this management method.

Fertility control attracted more polarised views, with 25% of participants finding it 'completely acceptable', the same number identifying it as 'completely unacceptable' and the remaining 50% spread evenly in between. Table discussions reveal that the main issues were that the method is humane, but that the time and cost involved to trap and administer the fertility control were prohibitive, particularly when it was a method that needed re-administration after some years.

Views on ground shooting were similarly divergent. 50% of participants found it unacceptable or completely unacceptable and 45.8% acceptable or completely acceptable. Concerns about who would carry out the shooting, and how they would be training and managed, dominated table discussions about this method. Whether the method would be effective in managing the wild horse population was also strongly discussed, as were concerns about the stress and injury to horses this method may cause.

Aerial or ground mustering also split participants' views, with 47.8% finding it acceptable or completely acceptable and 33.3% finding it unacceptable or completely unacceptable. The issue that was raised by most tables during their discussions was the stress this method would cause to horses, and other species. Concerns about the damage caused to flora and fauna as a result of trampling, the safety of people involved in the activity and its cost were also raised.

The majority of the community participants, 62.1%, identified aerial shooting as appropriate but were concerned about carcasses being left on site. A number of tables identified that it was quick and if there was the need for a follow up shot it could be done immediately. Importantly, a number of tables identified that emotionally they were against this control method but they 'supported the logic' of using this technique.

Trapping and euthanasia on site was also strongly supported, with 69% of community participants finding it acceptable or completely acceptable. Most table groups identified this as an effective method of control and preferable to trapping and transport to abattoir. However, there was concern about carcasses being left on site, which was seen as wasteful, and about the stress horses witnessing killing would experience.

There was also a consistent response about fencing as a control method, which was found to be unacceptable or completely unacceptable by 69.9% of participants. Concerns about the visual impact of fencing, its cost and effectiveness, and the damage it could cause to other animals all drove this lack of support. Almost half the tables identified that it could be useful in specific, small areas.

Brumby running or roping was also found to be unacceptable or completely unacceptable by 62.5% of participants. Concerns about the stress and pain this method would cause to horses, its effectiveness as a method and how it would be administered drove this lack of acceptance.

When asked to consider what was the most important, and the least important, consideration for a population control method, effectiveness was selected by 70% of community participants as the

most important consideration. Cost was identified as the least important consideration by 62.5% of community participants.

2 Introduction

This report details the outcomes of a 21st century town hall meeting conducted as part of a suite of community engagement activities associated with the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park.

The outcomes of this engagement process, together with the findings of an Independent Technical Reference Group, will contribute to the development of a new five year management plan.

The debate about the management of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park has long been dominated by the opposing views of key stakeholder groups. Horse advocates emphasise the need to consider animal welfare and the cultural and historical significance of wild horses in the park. Environment advocates stress the importance of protecting native flora and fauna and enhancing the park's unique ecology.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS) commissioned Straight Talk to undertake a community engagement process to provide insight into the values, issues and interests of the general community regarding the management of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park.

The 21st century town hall meeting was an important component of this community engagement process. It enabled deliberation by randomly selected, demographically representative participants, on their values and the matters of importance concerning wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park.

Participants are welcomed to the event

3 Methodology

Rationale for the approach

A 21st century town hall meeting is a public forum that involves a large, broadly demographically representative group participating in small group discussion aided by the use of technology to record responses.

This deliberative approach was selected as it focuses on the views and values of a 'mini public' rather than the strongly held, well known and opposing views of established stakeholders. The approach enables everyday citizens to be part of the discussion on the management of wild horses.

The 21st Century Town Meeting is a trademarked process developed by the non-partisan, non-governmental organization AmericaSpeaks, based in the USA. It is a public forum that links technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to allow hundreds or even thousands of people to deliberate simultaneously about complex public policy issues and express a shared message to decision-makers.

The 21st Century Town Meeting aims to create a level playing field on which citizens can be fully engaged with each other in policy and planning discussions that are directly linked to decision-makers and real governance processes.

A representative group of participants is important to ensure the results are legitimate to the community and decision makers.

(Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Founder and President, America Speaks)

Recruitment of participants

An independent, third party market research firm (Jetty Research) recruited participants for the 21st century town hall meeting. Participants were randomly selected and broadly representative, based on age, gender and location (urban/suburban or regional/rural). Seventy-two community members participated in the event, providing a sample size large enough to be statistically valid.

Prior to the event participants were told the event was about national parks but it was only once the event commenced that participants were informed the event was specifically about wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park. This ensured participants arrived with only their existing level of understanding of the topic and there was not a disproportionate attendance by people with strong views on the topic.

Participants received a standard market research stipend of $150 in recognition of their time. Stipends assisted with the recruitment of a representative sample. Notwithstanding the incentive to attend, participants were highly engaged in thoughtful discussions and took responsibility for their role in the deliberative process.

The demographics of participants are listed below:

Age category	Percentage
19-24	5.5%
25-34	15.1%
35-49	27.4%
50-69	36.9%
70 and over	15.1%

Gender	Percentage
Female	52.1%
Male	46.5%
Transgender/gender diverse/intersex	1.4%

Location	Percentage
In a rural/regional area	45.7%
In an urban/suburban area	54.3%

Format of the event

The 21st century town hall meeting took place from 9:30am to 4:30pm on Saturday 29 November 2014 at the Comfort Inn Airport International, Queanbeyan. Straight Talk's Director Lucy Cole-Edelstein facilitated the event.

As part of the initial briefing, participants were informed that an Independent Technical Reference Group would investigate scientific evidence to be inputted to the management plan and that in contrast the purpose of the 21st century town hall meeting was to identify and understand community values related to wild horse management in the park. Participants were told that their role was not to evaluate the scientific evidence but to consider the values underpinning their own views.

Tables were allocated to ensure a mix of genders, locations and ages. There were nine tables comprising of a total of 72 randomly selected community members. Each table had an experienced table facilitator, most of whom were volunteers, who ensured all participants engaged in conversation and recorded key points. In addition, there were three tables comprising 21 representatives from horse advocate groups and conservation and environment advocate groups. Stakeholders participated in discussions at their tables, aided by their table facilitators who recorded key points. Seven representatives from NPWS and the Office of Environment and Heritage (OEH) observed proceedings and did not participate in any of the activities.

During the day, participants were asked to deliberate on a number of key issues associated with the management of wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park. At the end of discussions participants were asked to rate their responses to related questions. To assist their deliberations, participants were shown several pre-recorded video presentations, providing a range of views about the issue, and given information about control methods. This process allowed participants to fully consider issues before giving their quantitative response.

The format of the event was as follows:

- Completion of pre-event survey
- Welcome by facilitator Lucy Cole-Edelstein
- Introduction – Wild Horse Management Plan Review
    - Filmed presentations explaining need for a review of the management plan
        - Mick Pettitt, NPWS Regional Manager
        - Dr Linda Broome from the OEH
    - Table discussions
    - Keepad questions.
- Understanding the complexity of wild horse management
    - Filmed presentations indicative of differing stakeholder views:
        - Rob Pallin, Nature Conservation Council NSW
        - Leisa Caldwell, Snowy Mountains Horse Riders Association
        - Keith Muir, Colong Foundation for Wilderness
        - Madison Young, Hunter Valley Brumby Association
    - Table discussions
    - Keepad questions.
- Population control methods
    - Filmed presentation on animal welfare by David O'Shannessy from NSW RSPCA (Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals)
    - Table discussions
    - Keepad questions.
- Getting the balance right
    - Table discussions
    - Keepad questions.
- Thank you by Lucy Cole-Edelstein
    - Completion of post-event survey
    - Completion of event feedback form
    - Distribution of stipends.

Upon arrival, participants were given a pack of materials including a thank you letter, agenda and copy of the Kitchen Table Discussion Guide used as part of the community engagement process associated with the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park.

Keepad technology enabled community members to give anonymous, quantitative responses to questions that used a scale or multiple-choice format. Keepad technology collated the results and enabled all attendees to view all responses immediately.

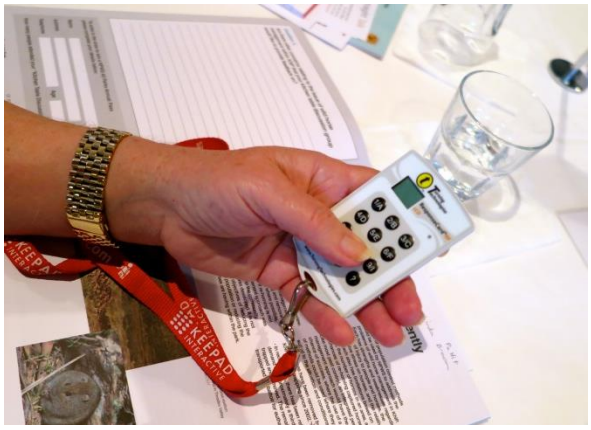
As there were unequal representatives from horse advocate and environment advocate groups, stakeholders recorded their numeric responses using a sticky dot system, so as not to skew the electronic Keepad results. Differentiating between community and stakeholder group responses also highlighted differences in the views of participants, giving the process an additional layer of transparency.

Speakers in the pre-recorded video presentations were asked the same questions and responses were edited to ensure all filmed presentations were of equal length (approximately five minutes each). Presentations were filmed to enable stakeholders to clearly express their position without interference from the audience or other speakers.

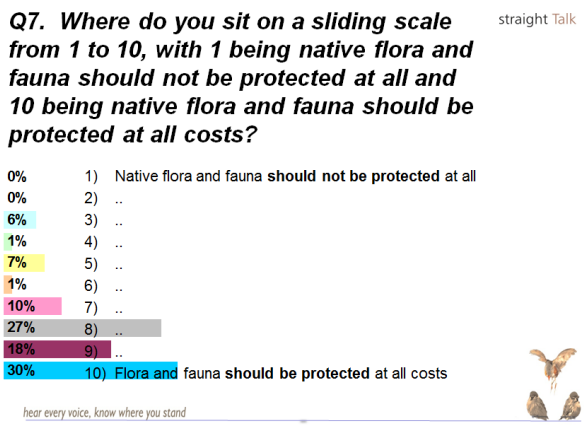
An information sheet that summarised the control methods being considered in the review was provided to assist with discussions. A copy of the sheet is included in the appendices of this report.

Participants viewing Madison Young's filmed presentation

Participants engaging in discussion on their table



Participant entering a numeric reponse into her Keepad



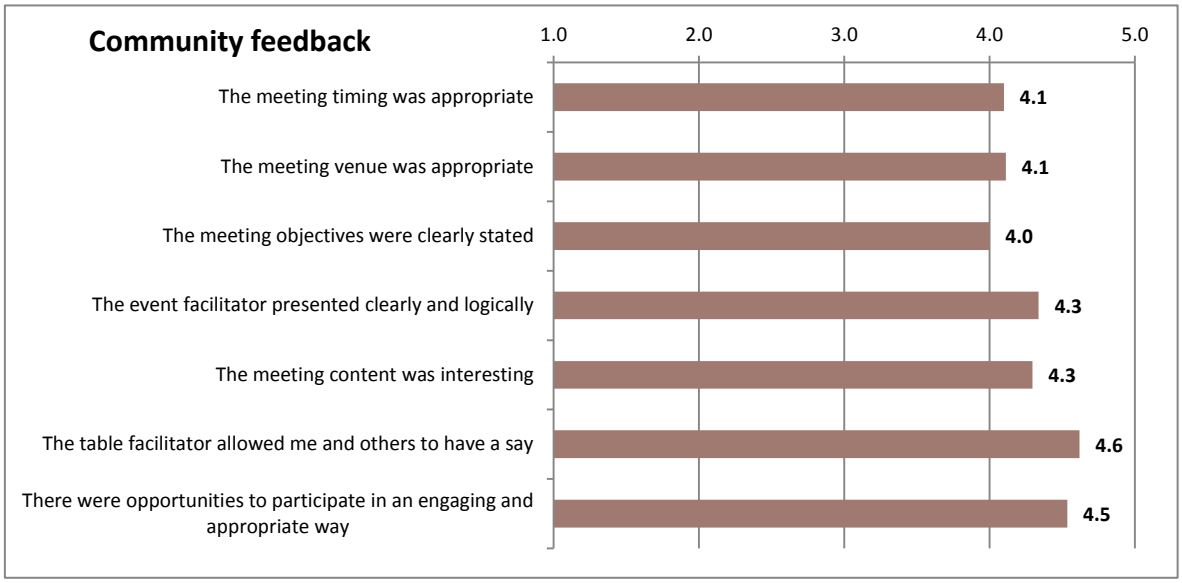
Keepad responses displayed within seconds of response time

Event feedback

At the conclusion of the event, participants were asked to provide feedback on the way in which the 21st century town hall meeting was conducted.

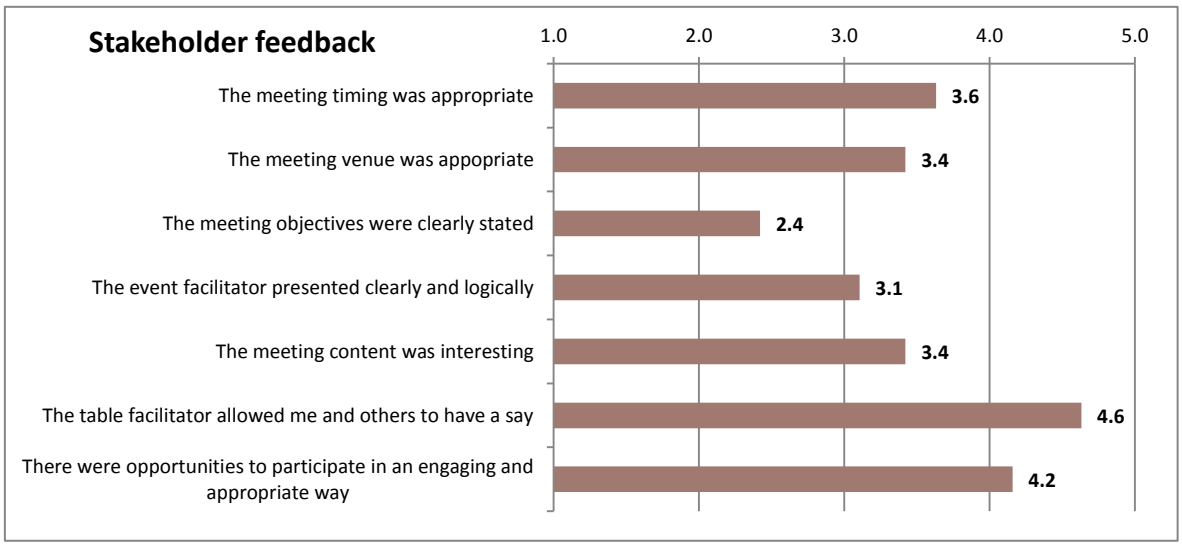
Quantitive feedback from community members was overwhelmingly positive. Respondents considered the timing and venue to be appropriate and the objectives of the event clearly stated. In addition, respondents thought the event facilitator presented clearly and logically, and table facilitators ensured all voices were heard. Respondents thought the content was interesting and that there were opportunities to participate in discussions in an engaging and appropriate way.

The graph below depicts community responses on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree):



Stakeholder feedback on the process was broadly positive although not as positive as community feedback, in particular, about whether the objectives of the event were clearly stated.

The graph below depicts stakeholder responses on a scale from one (strongly disagree) to five (strongly agree):



4 Consultation outcomes: community members

Small group discussion undertaken throughout the meeting provided an opportunity for participants to understand the complexities of the questions posed, interpret the material provided, deliberate on the issues of importance and identify their values as they related to the question. The discussion notes recorded by table facilitators reflect this deliberative process and provide insight into the issues and concerns raised by participants during their discussions.

While this information is useful, it has several limitations. Firstly, the discussions reflect deliberations rather than depict participants' final position. Secondly, the notes do not capture the number of participants who raised an issue, only the fact the issue was raised during discussion. In addition, some tables had more extensive discussions than others, which may lead to the over-representation of views from those tables. Thirdly, qualitative data is vulnerable to a degree of interpretation. Facilitators were independent, experienced and well briefed; however, the complexity of the issue and subjectivity of some statements limits the precision of the data.

The discussion notes provide valuable depth to Keepad responses, which provided a quantitative value to participants' views. The notes of discussion points have been categorised into themes, retaining where possible, the language used by participants.

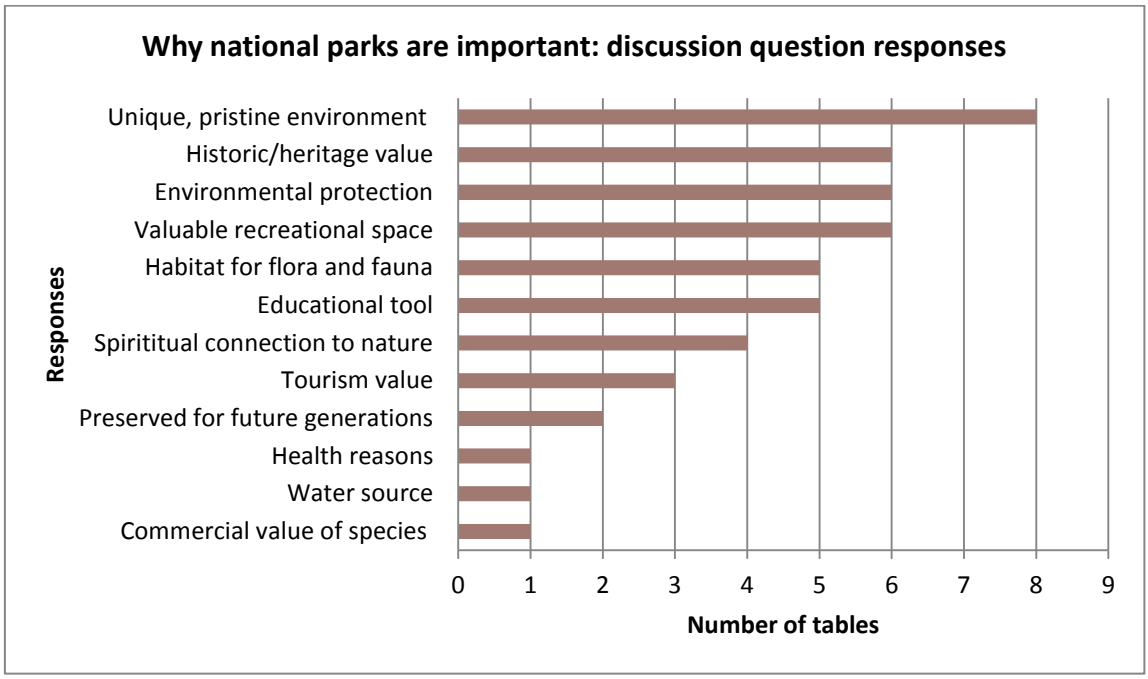
Following are the discussion and Keepad questions participants were asked and their qualitative and quantitative responses.

Purpose and importance of national narks

Discussion Question 1: ***Are national parks important to you and, if so, why?***

Each of the nine tables gave several reasons for the importance of national parks, indicating that national parks are important to participants. The most frequently cited reason was the unique, pristine environment of national parks with all but one table mentioning this reason. Many of the reasons given were associated with the connectedness of nature; specifically the fact parks are part of broader ecosystems, affecting flora, fauna and water. In addition, many responses were related to the recreational value of parks. The historic value of parks was a reason given by two-thirds of tables, and several tables who gave this as a reason specifically mentioned that heritage value included Aboriginal heritage.

The graph below depicts the reasons participants gave for the importance of national parks and the number of tables that cited the reason.

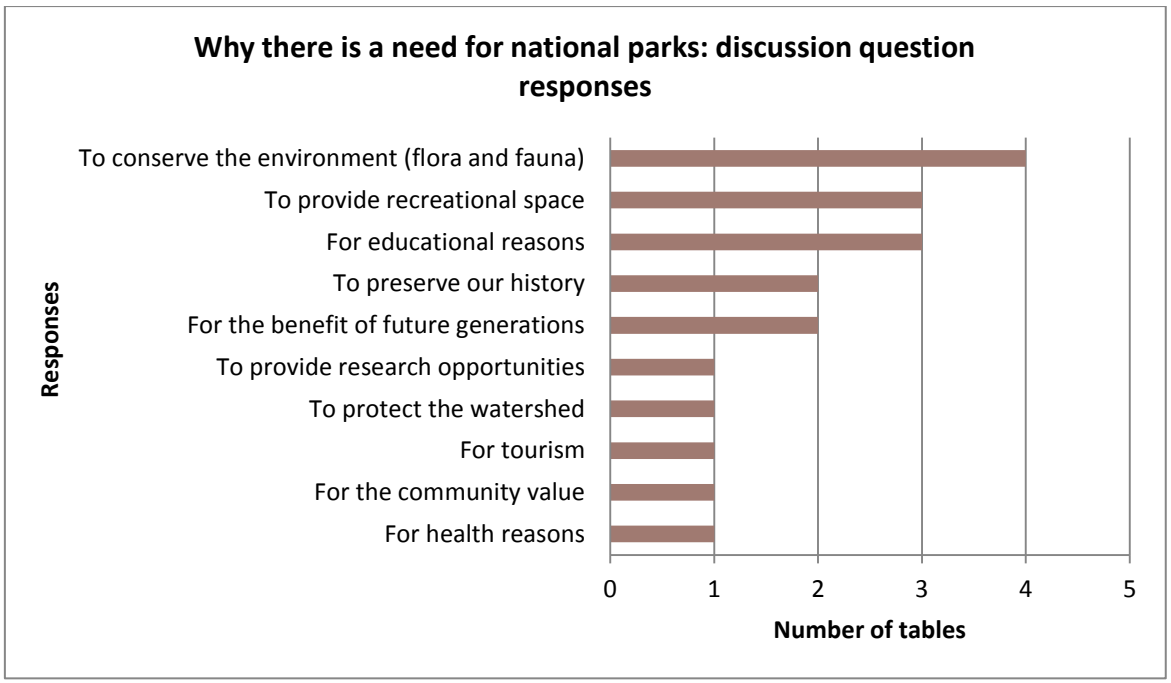


Discussion question 2: ***Why do we need to have national parks?***

Table discussions about this question did not result in many points being raised. A couple of tables commented that this was due to the overlap between questions one and two. Therefore, responses to questions one and two should be interpreted together.

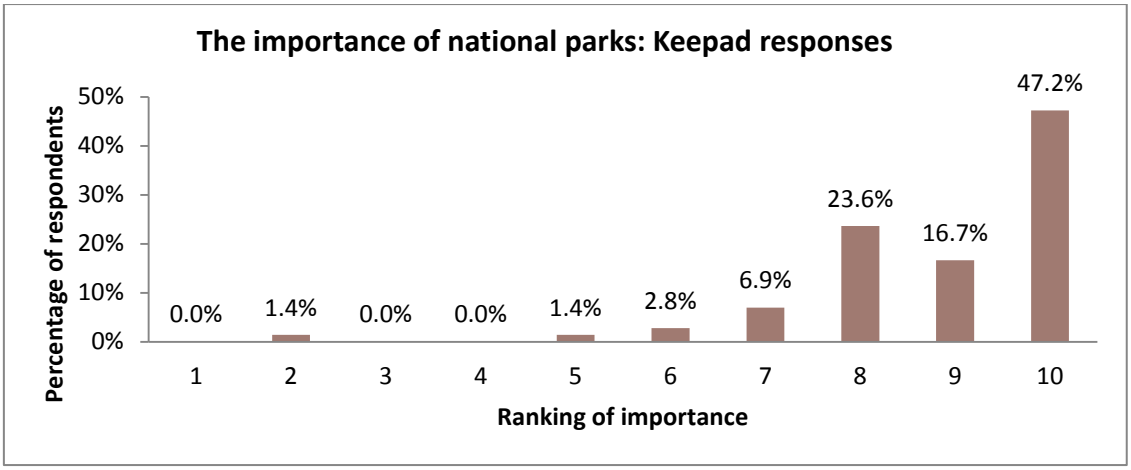
Responses to this question were similar to responses to question one, reiterating that participants thought national parks were needed for environmental conservation, recreation and education.

The graph below depicts the major reasons participants gave for the need for national parks and the number of tables that cited the reason.



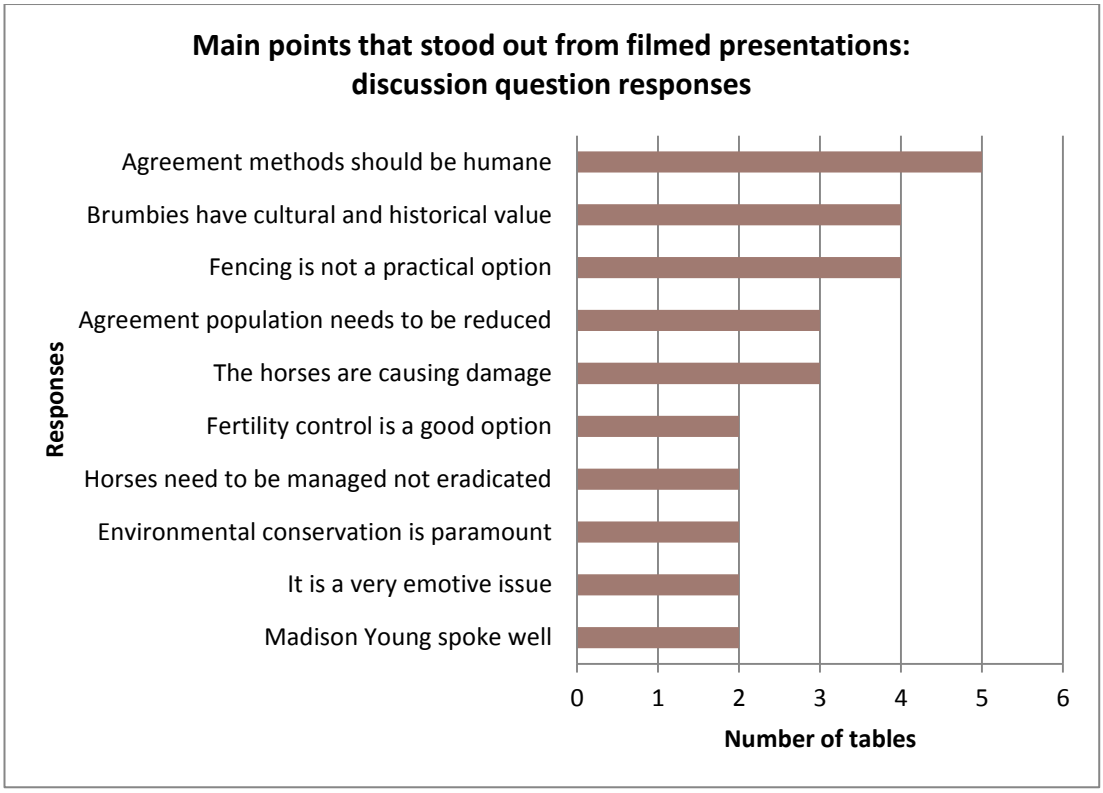
Keepad question 1: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale of 1 to 10, with one being national parks are not at all important to me and 10 being national parks are extremely important to me?***

Keepad responses indicate that close to half of all participants consider national parks extremely important. Furthermore, 94.4% gave ratings of seven, eight, nine or ten, indicating that almost all participants attributed a high level of importance to national parks.



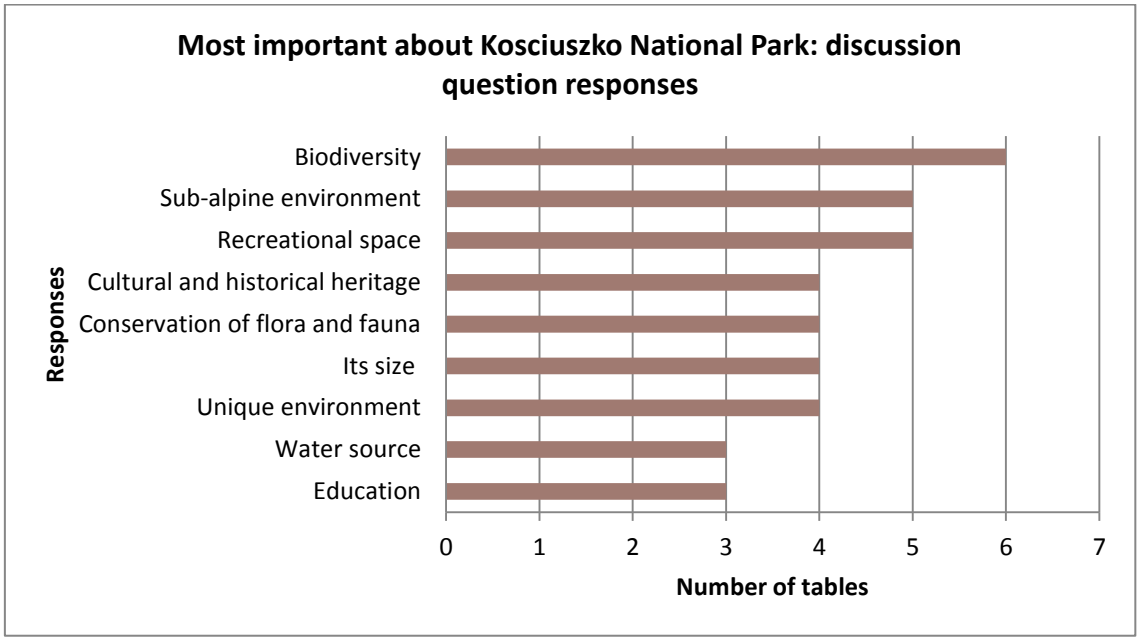
Discussion question 3: ***What were the main points that stood out for you?***

After viewing four filmed presentations from stakeholders, participants were asked to discuss the main points that stood out for them. The short films were indicative of differing stakeholder views on the issue of wild horse management. Comments highlighted the points on which speakers agreed rather than points of difference. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are included in the graph below:



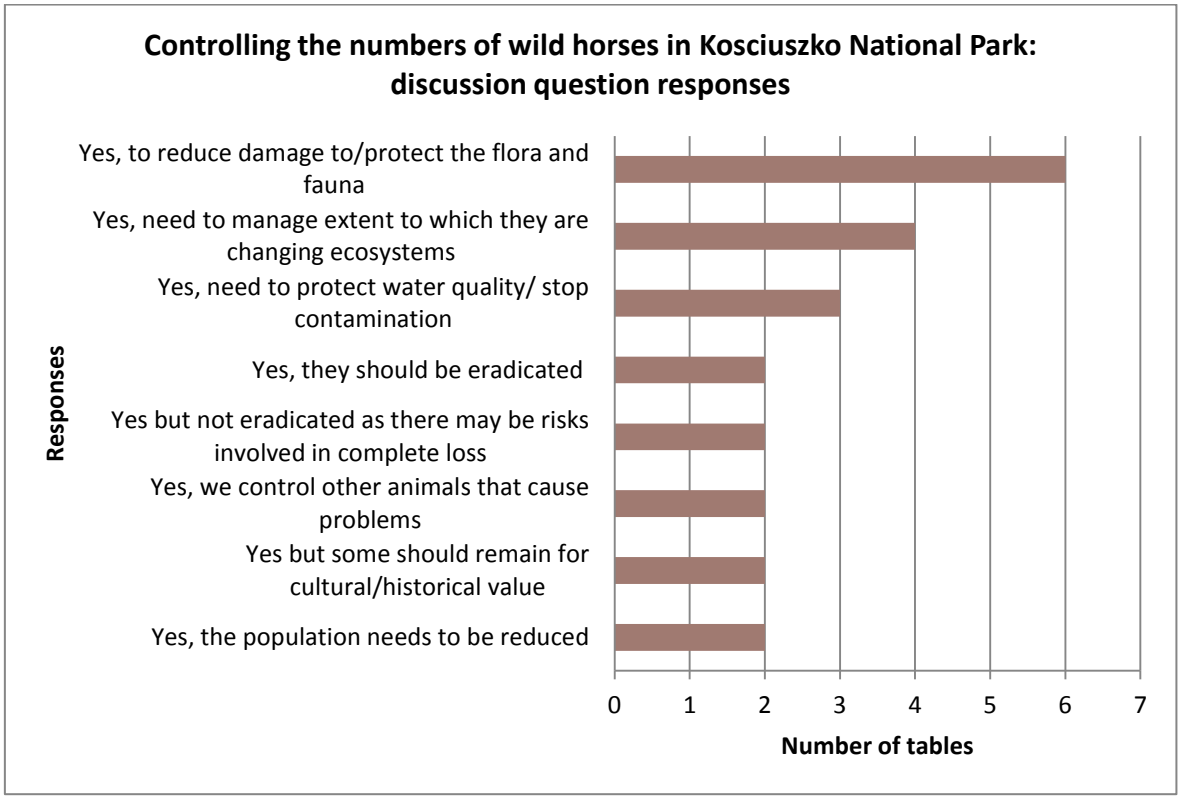
Discussion question 4: ***What do you think is most important about Kosciuszko National Park?***

During the course of small group discussions, participants raised aspects they saw as being most important about Kosciuszko National Park. Two-thirds of tables considered biodiversity to be the most important, closely followed by the sub-alpine environment and recreational space. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are included in the graph below:



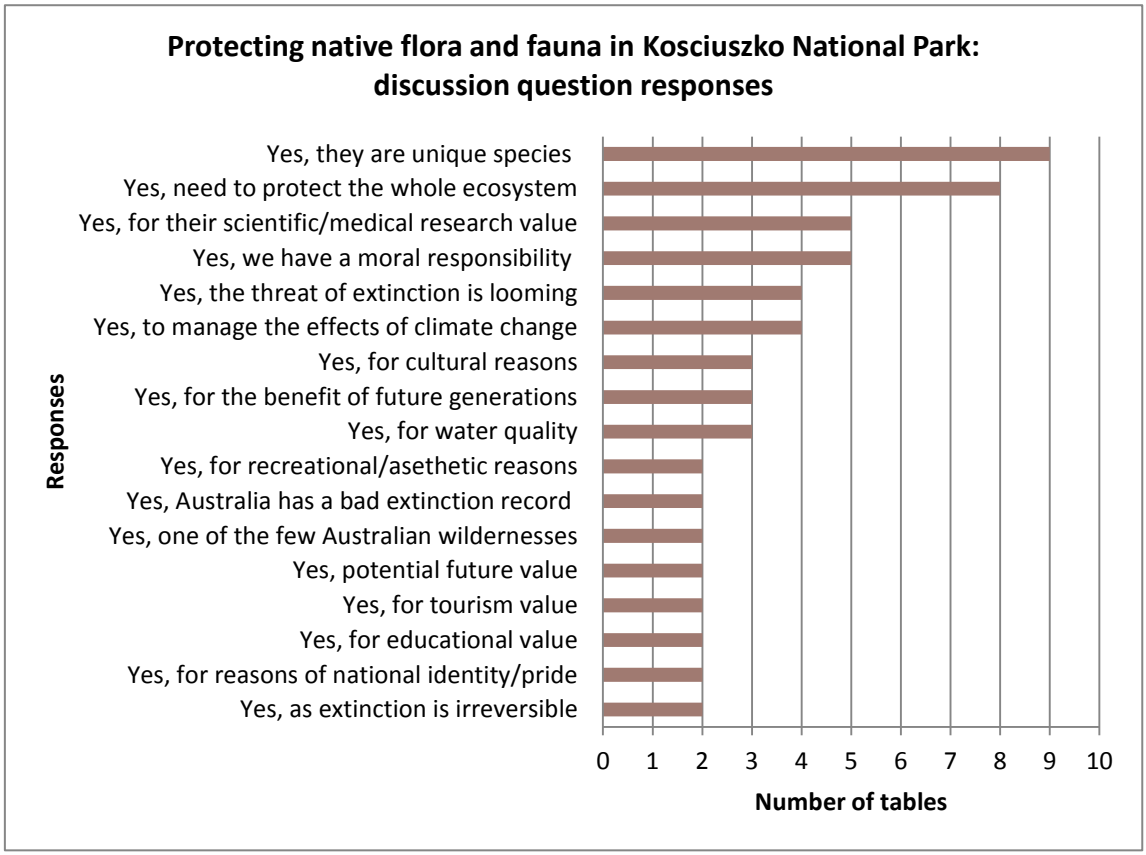
Discussion question 5: ***Should wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park be controlled? If so, why?***

There was consensus amongst the tables that wild horses should be controlled. The two main reasons participants gave were closely related; to reduce damage/protect the flora and fauna in the park and because of the extent to which they are changing ecosystems. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are included in the graph below:



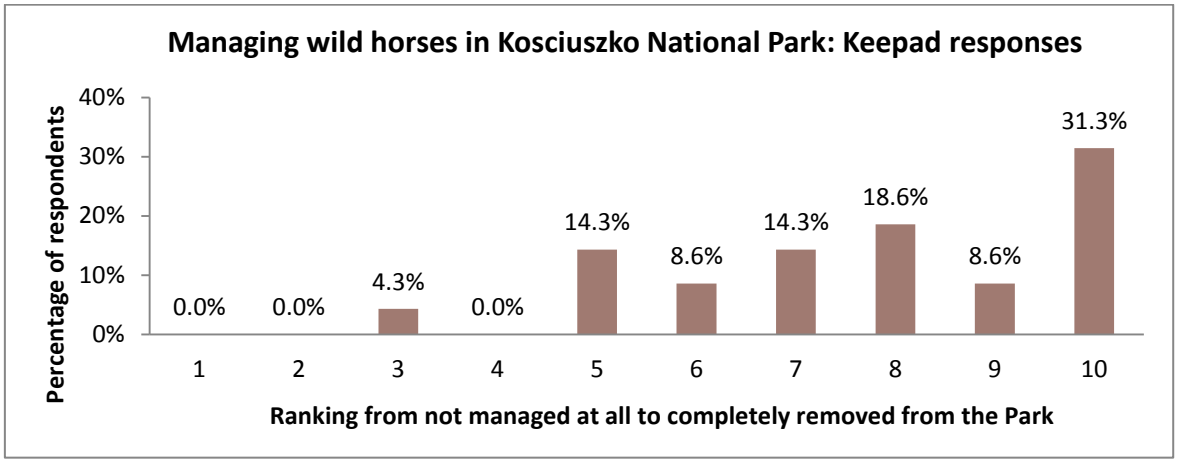
Discussion question 6: ***Should native flora and fauna be protected in Kosciuszko National Park. If so, why?***

All tables gave several reasons why native flora and fauna should be protected. In particular, all but one table mentioned the uniqueness of species. The majority of tables also mentioned the need to protect the whole ecosystem. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are included in the graph below:



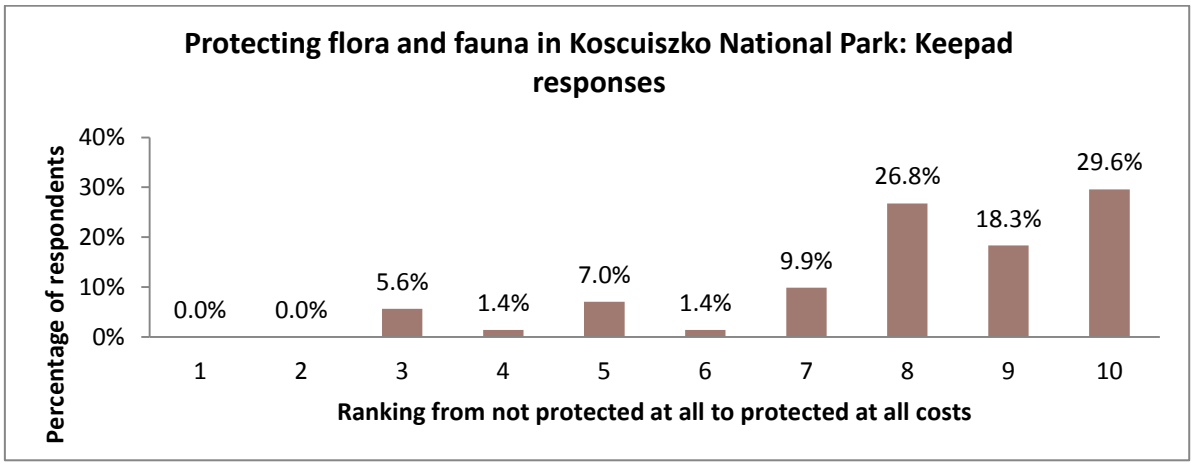
Keepad question 2: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale from one to 10, with one being wild horses should not be managed in Kosciuszko National Park at all and 10 being wild horses should be completely removed from Kosciuszko National Park?***

The majority of respondents (72.8%) recorded a rating between seven and ten, indicating support for the removal of horses from Kosciuszko National Park. Almost one-third of respondents recorded that wild horses should be completely removed from the park. No respondents stated that horses should not be managed in the park at all. Only 4.3% of respondents supported a less active approach to wild horse management in the park. Almost a quarter of respondents recorded a ranking of five or six, indicating they were neutral on the question. Responses are recorded below:



Keepad question 3: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale from one to 10, with one being native flora and fauna should not be protected at all and 10 being native flora and fauna should be protected at all costs?***

The majority of respondents (84.6%) recorded a rating between seven and ten, indicating that they strongly supported or supported the protection of flora and fauna. No respondents thought that native flora and fauna should not be protected at all. Responses are recorded below:



Population control methods

A short description of eight control methods being considered under the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan was distributed to participants who were asked to read the descriptions and then discuss the control methods in sets of four. A copy of the information sheet is included in the appendices of this report.

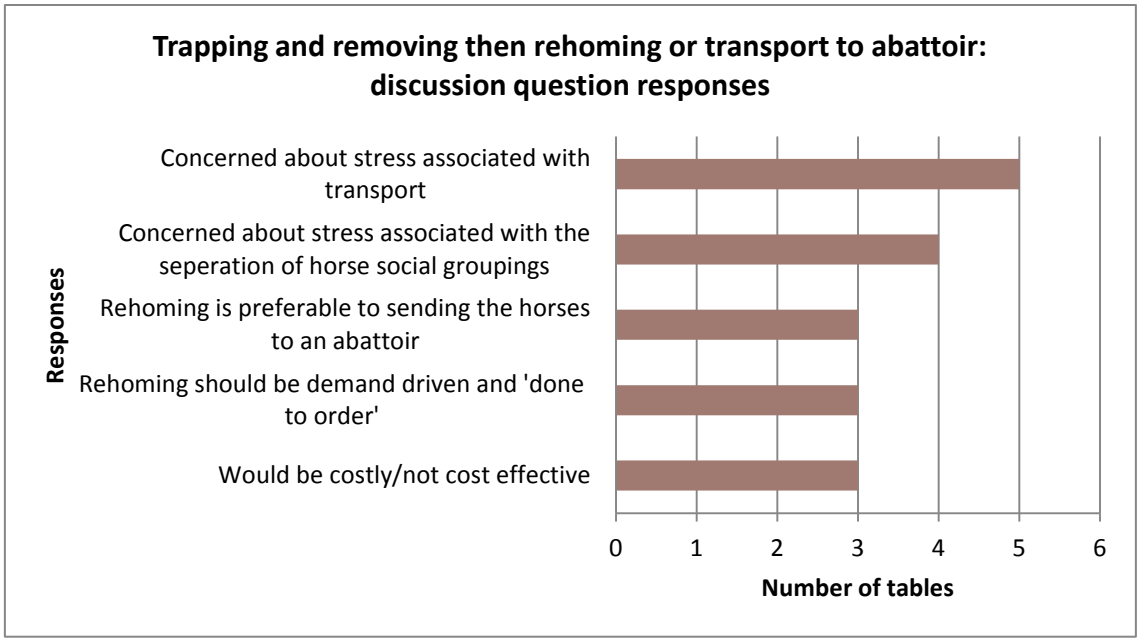
Once again, the issues raised in these discussions do not necessarily reflect a preference of one method over another but rather indicate the questions, concerns, interests and values participants raised as they considered the various options.

Discussion question 7: ***What do you think of the following control methods?***

Trapping and removing then rehoming or transport to abattoir

Trapping and removing wild horses is the only management strategy currently used by NPWS. Horses are lured to portable and semi-permanent yards using mineral blocks or molasses. Horses enter the yard of their own will, triggering a gate that encloses them in the yard. The horses are then removed, some are rehomed, while others are transported to an abattoir.

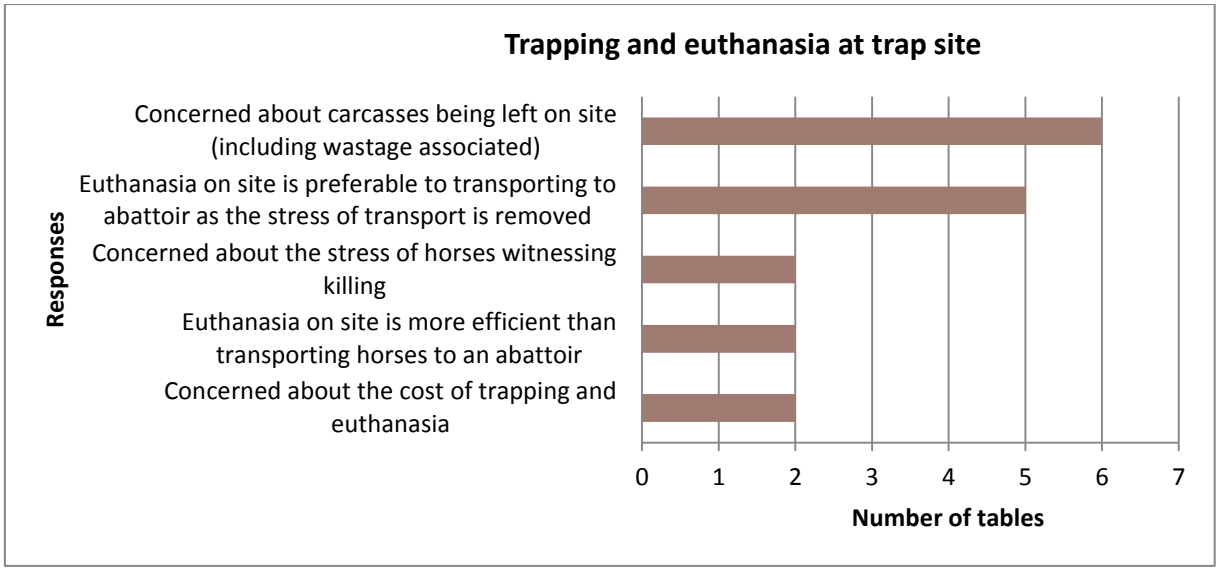
The most common comments mentioned in the discussion about this control method were associated with the humaneness of the method, specifically stress of transportation and the separation of family groupings during trapping. As this method has two components, rehoming and transport to abattoir, some participants voiced concern that while they supported rehoming, they found transport to an abattoir to be less acceptable. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are included in the graph below:



Trapping and euthanasia at trap site

This management strategy involves trapping horses as above, however if there is no option of re-homing, they are professionally euthanised at the trap site.

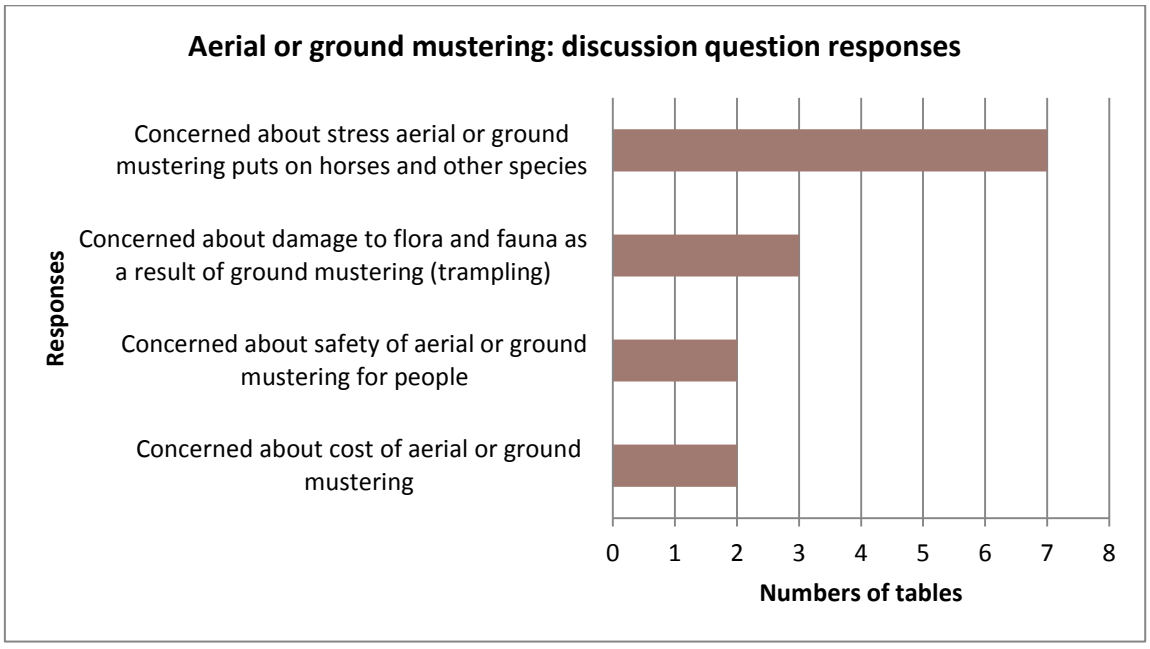
Comments raised in discussion centred on concern about carcasses being left on site and the removal of stress associated with transport to abattoir. Discussion points mentioned by more than one table are depicted below:



Aerial or ground mustering

This control method involves mustering horses using either (or a combination of) helicopter, horse riders or all-terrain vehicles to herd and move the horses into a yard using long fences and suitable terrain to guide them to the yard. The horses are then loaded for transport and removed or euthanised on site as above.

The points raised during discussions about aerial or ground mustering were varied but one concern was raised above all others, mentioned by three quarters of all tables; the stress put on horses and other species. Other comments raised multiple times are listed in the graph below:

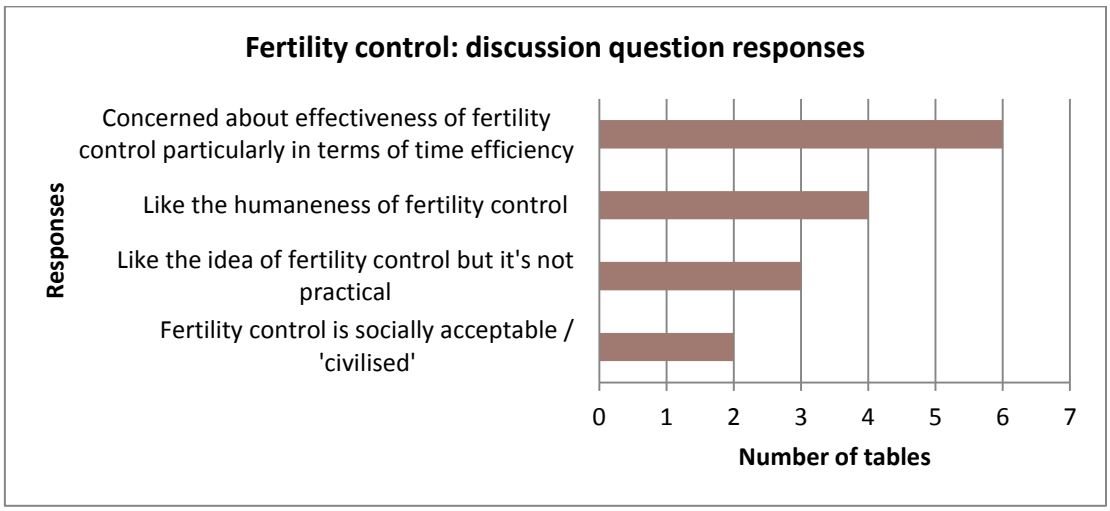


Fertility control

Several fertility control techniques exist or are under development. Each technique varies in cost and effectiveness. These include surgical de-sexing (gelding or spaying) of males or females, contraceptive implants for females and immunocontraception, where males or females are immunised against their own sperm or eggs. All three techniques require horses to be trapped or mustered and handled. While surgical de-sexing is permanent, it requires sedation and veterinary assistance. Although some fertility controls can be administered by dart rifle, the range of these rifles means that horses must be trapped or mustered and yarded for the dose to be delivered effectively. These controls wear off over time meaning horses need to be re-captured and retreated every few years.

Prior to tables discussing this control method, some clarification was given about the delivery of contraceptives on free ranging populations, negating the need for mustering or gathering, which has had some success in small-scale trials in the US of populations up to about 200 horses. It was noted that this approach would present some challenges for its application within Kosciuszko National Park.

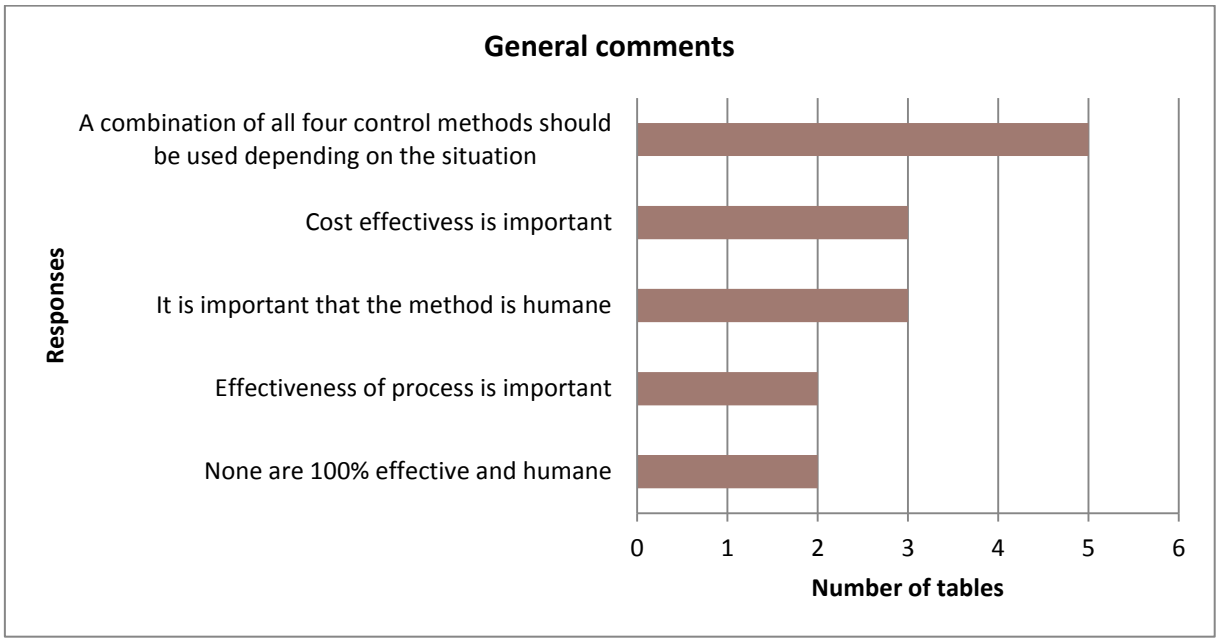
The effectiveness of fertility control, particularly in terms of time efficiency, was raised by two-thirds of tables. One comment indicative of these concerns was “if fertility control involves trapping, why release them back into the park?” Several tables also mentioned that they liked the humaneness while others stated that while they liked the concept of fertility control it is not practical. Comments mentioned by multiple tables were:



General comments

As there was one overarching question about the above four control methods, much of table discussion was not structured, thus it is important to consider that comments below were not attributable to a specific control method but reflect discussion about the four control methods in general.

In particular, half of all tables mentioned that a combination of all four control methods should be used. Comments on the four control methods mentioned by multiple tables were:



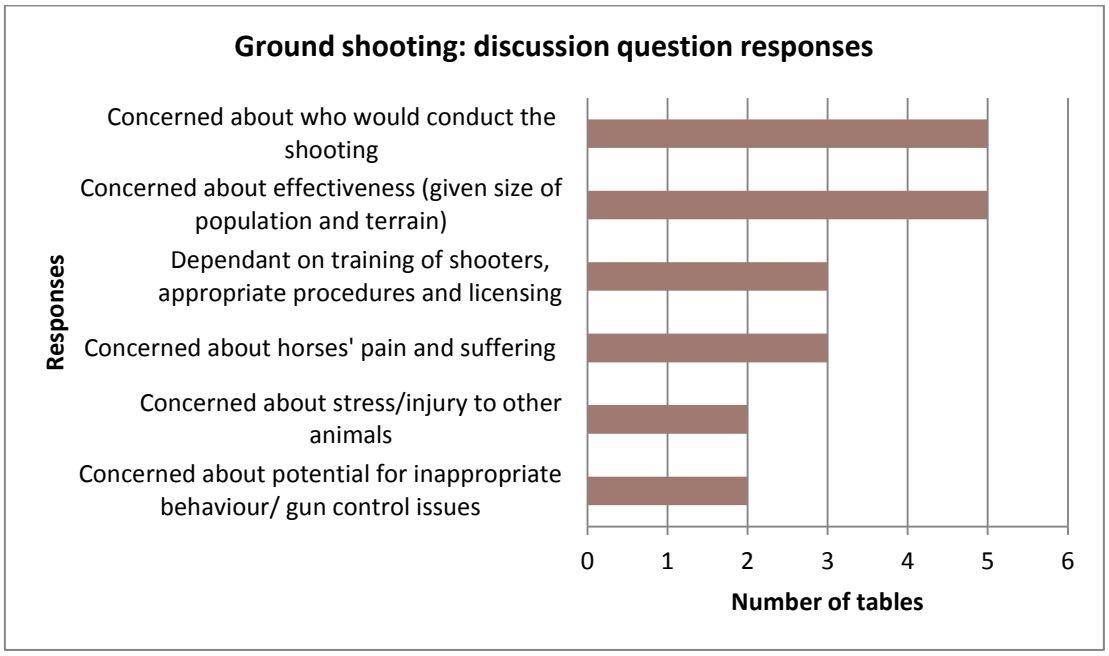
Discussion question 8: ***What do you think of the following control methods?***

Following the discussion of the first four methods, groups discussed the final four control methods.

Ground shooting

Ground shooting would be conducted using trained and qualified shooters. It is currently used to euthanise injured or very ill horses.

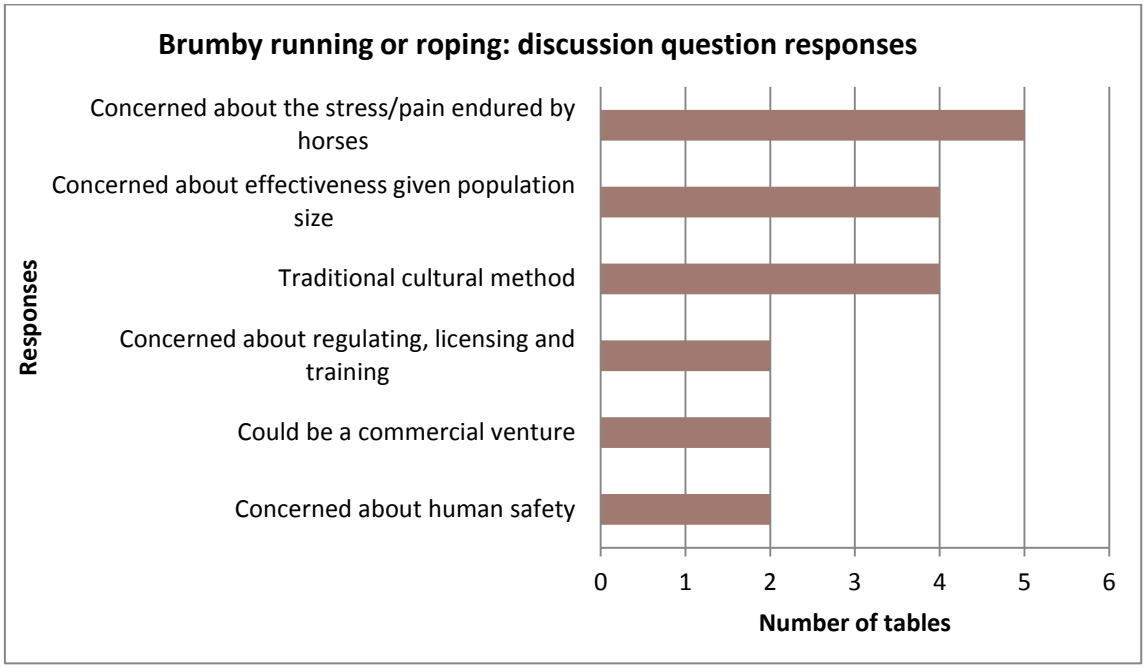
There were several considerations raised by participants about ground shooting, in particular. Half the tables raised the issue of who would conduct the shooting. For many participants, ground shooting should not be a commercial activity that was managed or undertaken by private organisations or individuals. For others, it was an activity that should not be undertaken by NPWS. Similarly, several tables specifically raised that the training, licensing and procedures surrounding ground shooting would need to be appropriate. In addition to these concerns, a large number of tables also discussed the effectiveness of the method given the size of the wild horse population and terrain in the park. Comments mentioned by two or more tables were:



Brumby running or roping

Brumby running involves pursuing and roping horses from horseback, before leading them to where they can be loaded on to a truck and removed or yarded and euthanised.

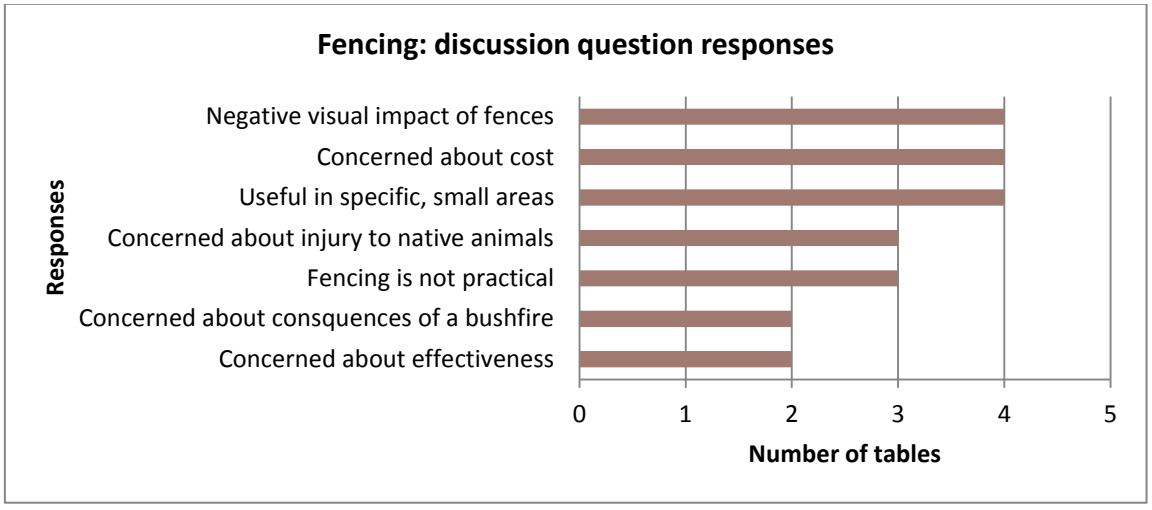
The most frequently raised issue was concern about the humaneness of the method due to the stress endured by horses. Many tables also raised concern about the effectiveness of the method. It was also discussed as a traditional technique. Key points raised in discussions are outlined below:



Fencing

Fencing horses out of sensitive areas is an option for very small areas of particular concern. It is not commonly used to control animals on public land because it can restrict public access and affects the movement of native species.

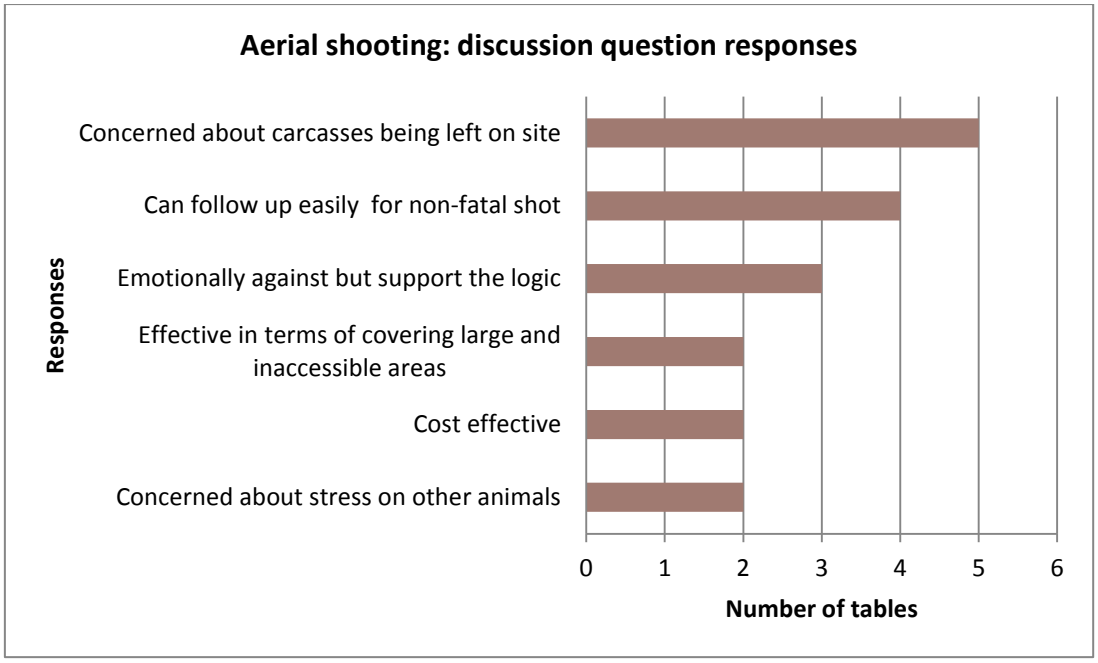
Discussion centred on the visual impact, and cost of, fencing as well as the value of fencing for specific, small areas of the park. Some tables also raised concerns about fences restricting the movement of, and injuring, native species. In addition, the impracticality of fencing due to terrain, vegetation and ongoing maintenance requirements was raised. Comments mentioned by two or more tables were:



Aerial shooting

Aerial shooting involves the shooting of animals from helicopters using highly trained, qualified single shooter, pilot, and navigator. Aerial shooting has not been used as a control method for horses in NSW national parks since 2000.

Concerns about carcasses being left on site were raised in many table discussions. Another point raised by a number of tables was that, if an animal does not die immediately, the shooter can rapidly follow up with a second, fatal shot. Several tables also raised the point that while they found it difficult to support the method on an emotional level, when thinking about it critically, they recognised the logic of using this technique. Frequently discussed issues are included in the graph below:



General comments

As there was one overarching question regarding the above four control methods, much of table conversation was not structured, thus it is important to consider the comments below which were not attributable to a specific control method but reflect general discussion in response to the question. Three tables mentioned concern about carcasses being left on site, a concern raised previously. Two tables mentioned that humaneness is important and a further two tables mentioned that a combination of methods should be used.

Discussion question 9: ***What other things do you think NPWS should consider in its review of the plan?***

There were many responses to this question, however only four issues were raised by more than one table. These were, the need to:

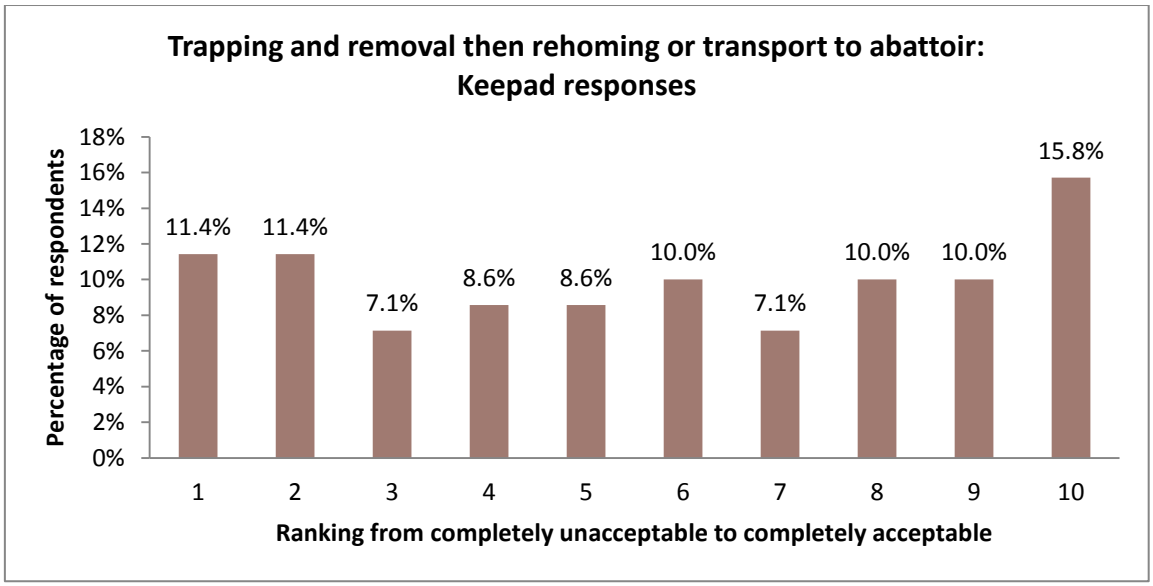
- Use a combination of management methods
- Collect data to establish the facts (monitor and evaluate the horse population)
- Consider the political aspect of the issue
- Conduct a public education program.

For the purpose of analysis of the following Keepad question results, rankings were interpreted as follows:

Keepad ranking	Participant view
One/two	Completely unacceptable
Three/four	Unacceptable
Five/six	Neutral
Seven/eight	Acceptable
Nine/ten	Completely acceptable

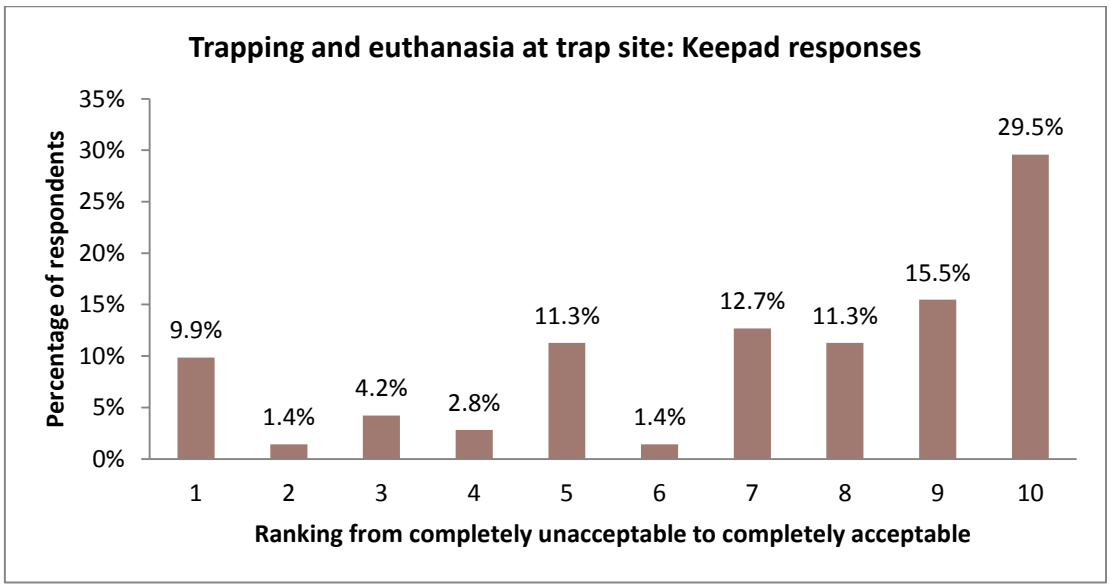
Keepad question 4: ***Trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

There was an even spread of responses across the spectrum in response to the acceptability of trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir, 42.9% of respondents considered the method acceptable or completely acceptable, indicated by a ranking of seven to ten. 38.5% of respondents considered the method unacceptable or completely unacceptable, indicated by a ranking of one to four.



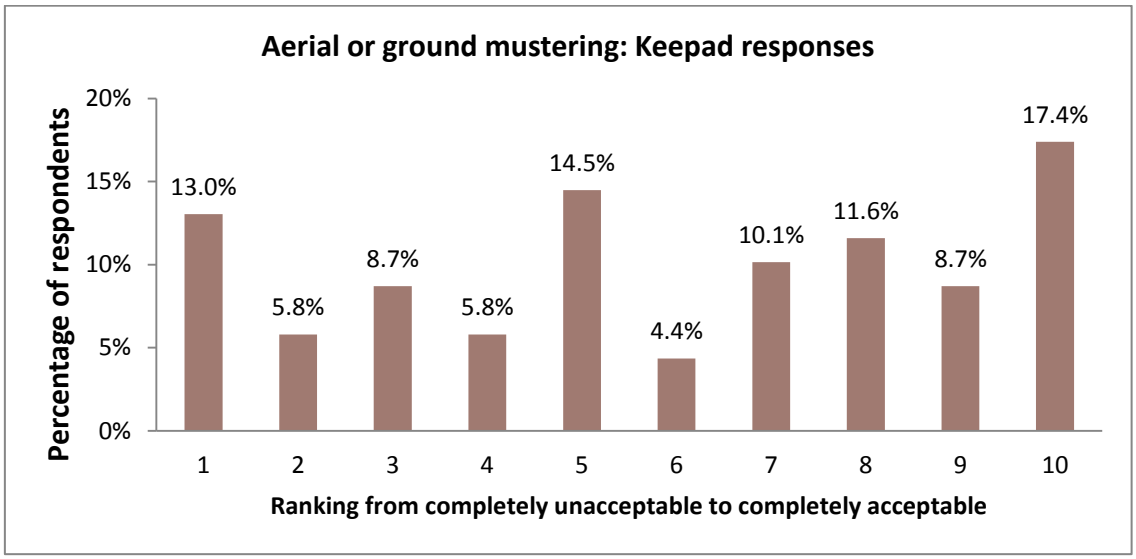
Keepad question 5: ***Trapping and euthanasia at trap site - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

The majority of respondents (69%) considered trapping and euthanasia at trap site to be acceptable or completely acceptable, a large proportion of whom gave a response of number ten, indicating strong support for this control method. However, there was a range across the spectrum as 18.3% of respondents considered the method unacceptable or completely unacceptable and 12.7% were neutral.



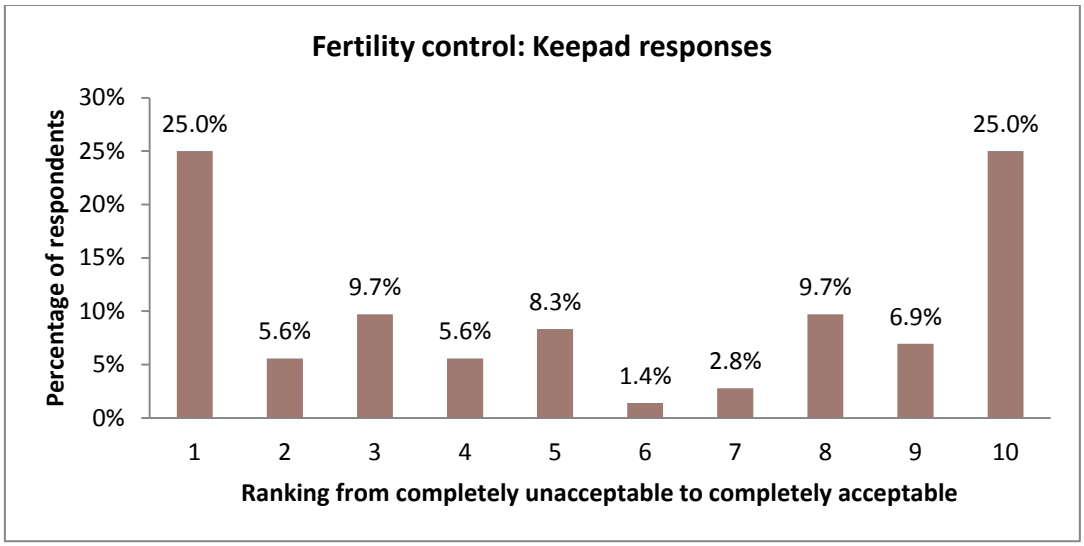
Keepad question 6: ***Aerial or ground mustering - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

Respondents' views on aerial or ground mustering varied widely however there was greater support for this control method than opposition. The differences between aerial and ground mustering may, in part, account for this variation. 47.8% of respondents thought that the method was acceptable or completely acceptable, while 33.3% of respondents considered the method unacceptable or completely unacceptable. 18.9% of respondents were neutral on their support for, or opposition to, the method.



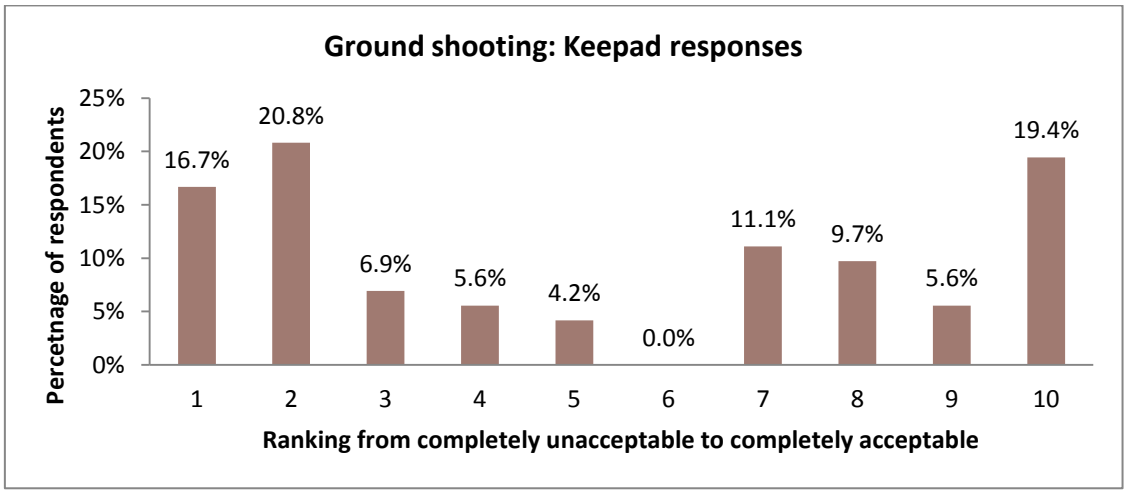
Keepad question 7: ***Fertility control - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to10, with one being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

Responses to this question were evenly distributed, with a significant proportion of respondents (25%) at either end of the spectrum. 44.4% of respondents thought fertility control was acceptable or completely acceptable while 45.9% of respondents thought it was unacceptable or completely unacceptable.



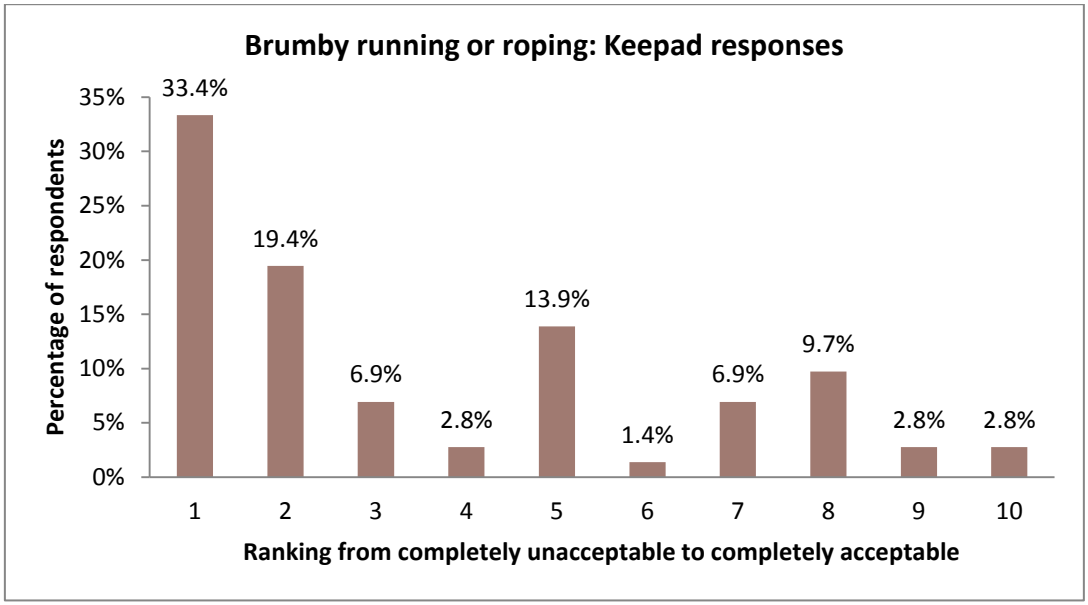
Keepad question 8: ***Ground shooting - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

While respondents had divergent views on ground shooting, a greater proportion of respondents thought ground shooting was unacceptable. A large proportion of responses were at either end of the scale; 37.5% of respondents viewed ground shooting as completely unacceptable while 25% viewed it as completely acceptable. There was also an even spread across the scale as a whole with 50.0% of respondents considering ground shooting either unacceptable or completely unacceptable and 45.8% of respondents considering it acceptable or completely acceptable.



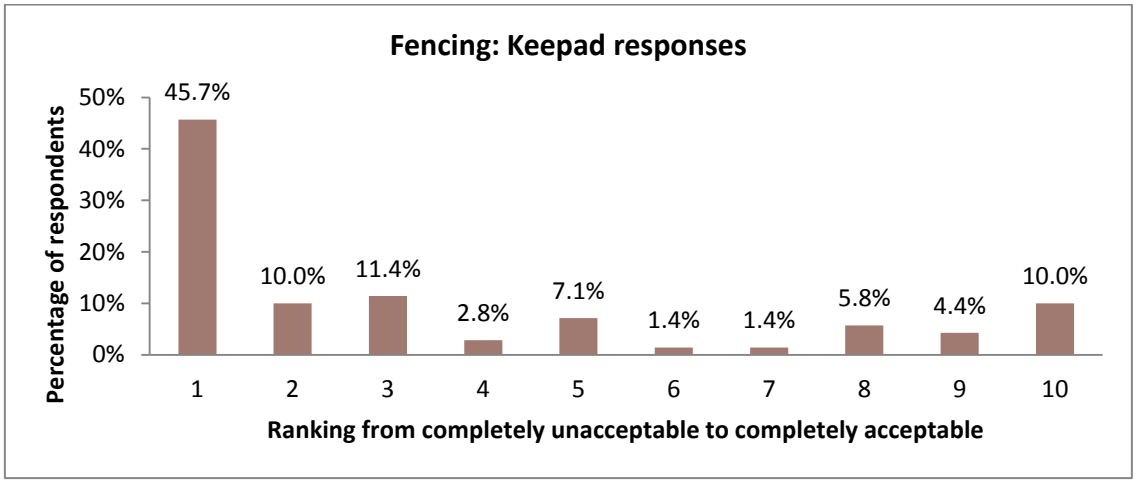
Keepad question 9: ***Brumby running or roping - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

More than half of all respondents (52.8%) thought brumby running or roping was completely unacceptable and a further 9.7% of respondents stating they thought the method was unacceptable. A small proportion of respondents (5.6%) thought that brumby running or roping was completely acceptable and a further 16% thought that it was acceptable. A relatively significant proportion of respondents (13.9%) were neutral on the acceptability of this method.



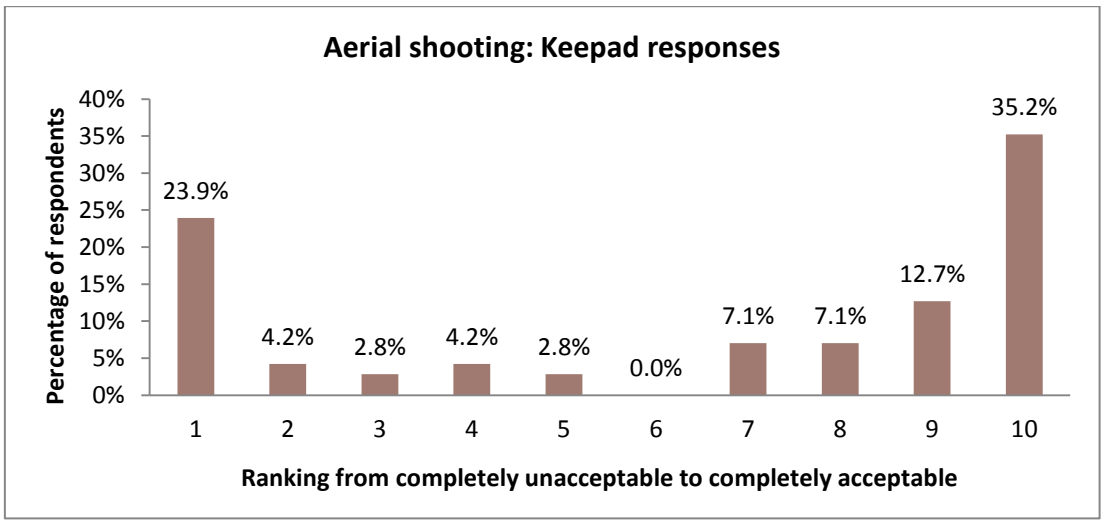
Keepad question 10: ***Fencing - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

There was strong opposition to fencing as a control method with more than half of all respondents ranking it as completely unacceptable. A further 14.2% of respondents indicated it was unacceptable. Less than a quarter of respondents thought fencing was an acceptable or completely acceptable control method.



Keepad question 11: ***Aerial shooting - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

The response to aerial shooting was quite polarised. 62.1% of respondents thought aerial shooting was acceptable or completely acceptable, and three quarters of those, strongly supported the method. 35.1% of respondents thought the method was unacceptable or completely unacceptable; the vast majority of these strongly opposed the method. Only 2.8% of respondents were neutral about aerial shooting as a control method.

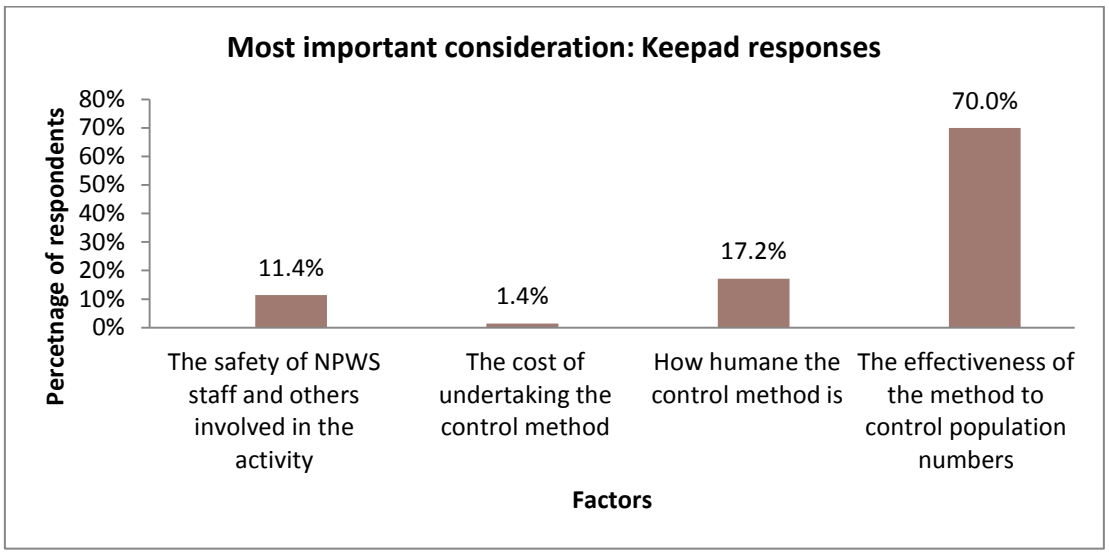


Getting the balance right

The following two Keepad questions asked participants to select the most important and then least important consideration for control methods, out of four options; effectiveness, humaneness, safety of NPWS staff and cost.

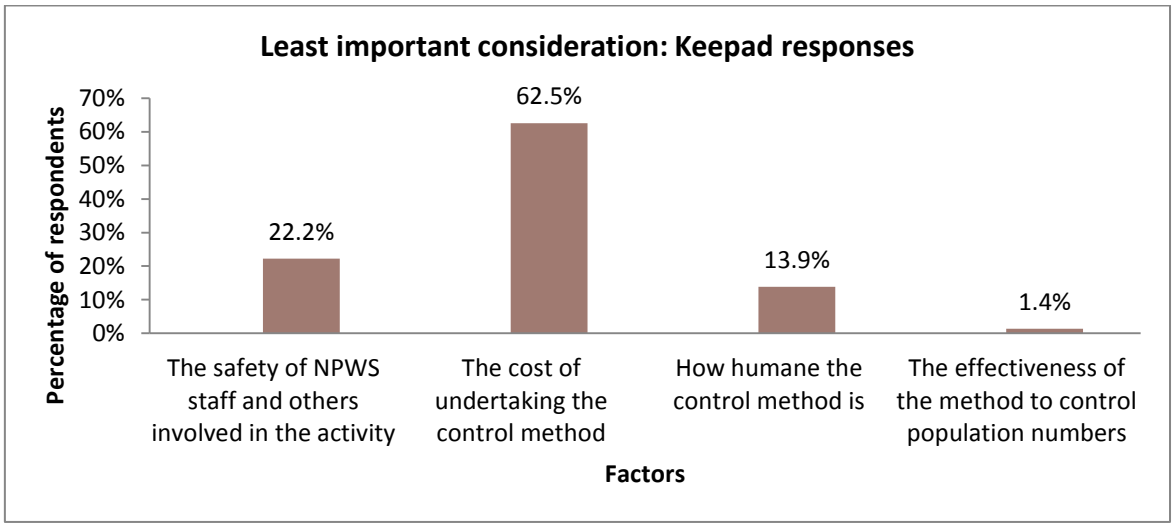
Keepad question 12: ***Which of the following do you think is the MOST important thing NPWS should consider when deciding on the control methods to be included in the plan?***

The vast majority of respondents (70%) thought the effectiveness of the control method was the most important consideration.



Keepad question 13: ***Which of the following do you think is the LEAST important thing NPWS should consider when deciding on the control methods to be included in the plan?***

Responses to this question were consistent with responses to Keepad question 12. The majority of respondents (62.5%) thought that the least important consideration for a control method was cost.



On the basis of questions 12 and 13, participants ranked considerations in the following order from most important to least important:

1. The effectiveness of the method to control population numbers
2. How humane the control method is
3. The safety of NPWS staff and others invovled in the activity
4. The cost of undertaking the control method.

5 Consultation outcomes: stakeholders

This section provides the outcomes of the discussion and Keepad questions for the three tables of stakeholders, two of which were comprised of horse advocates and one of which was comprised of environment advocates. The larger representation of horse advocates has resulted in more comments from this stakeholder group. Due to the smaller numbers of stakeholder participants, results to Keepad questions have been reported as raw data, not percentages.

Stakeholder responses to Keepad questions were provided using sticky dots on an A3 sheet of paper. This enabled stakeholder responses to be differentiated from community member responses both on the day and in subsequent analysis. The primary difference between the data collection methods was that stakeholder responses, unlike Keepad responses, were not anonymous, which may have influenced their choices.

Purpose and importance of national parks

Discussion question 1: ***Are national parks important to you and, if so, why?***

There was consistency between responses of horse advocates and environment advocates to this question.

All horse advocates viewed national parks as important. Key reasons included:

- Flora and fauna
- A natural environment away from dense urban areas
- Recreational space and tourism value (including that of the wild horses).

Other reasons included:

- Historical and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural value)
- Environmental protection (part of an ecosystem)
- Educational tool
- Available to everyone to experience.

Similarly, all environment advocates viewed national parks as important. Respondents cited the following reasons for their importance:

- Uniqueness
- Largely untouched place
- Recreational space
- Health reasons
- Biodiversity
- The benefit of future generations and environmental protection (part of an ecosystem)
- Cultural value of national parks
- Peace and tranquility
- Place of refuge for species.

Discussion question 2: ***Why do we need to have national parks?***

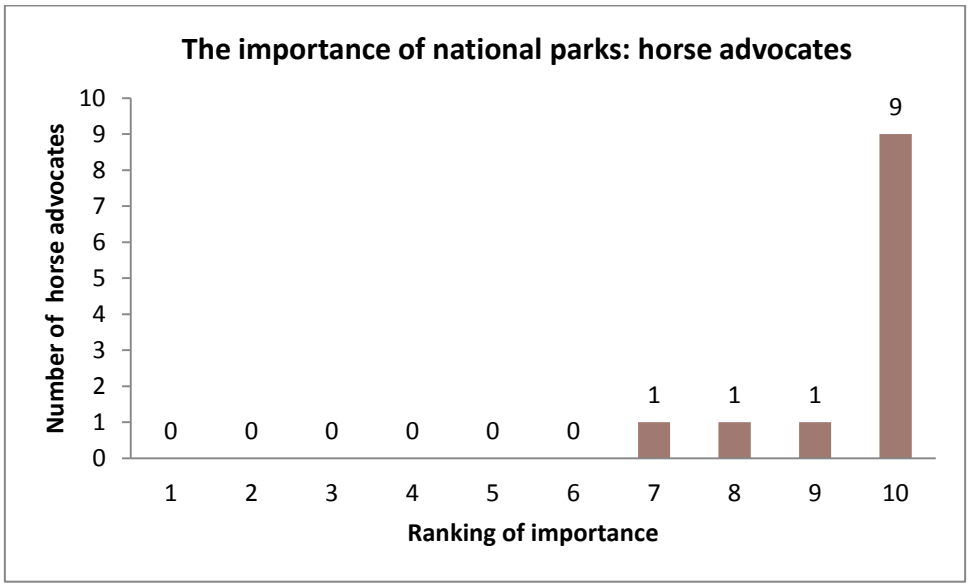
Table discussions about this question did not result in many points being raised. A couple of tables commented that this was due to the overlap between questions one and two. Therefore, responses to questions one and two should be interpreted together.

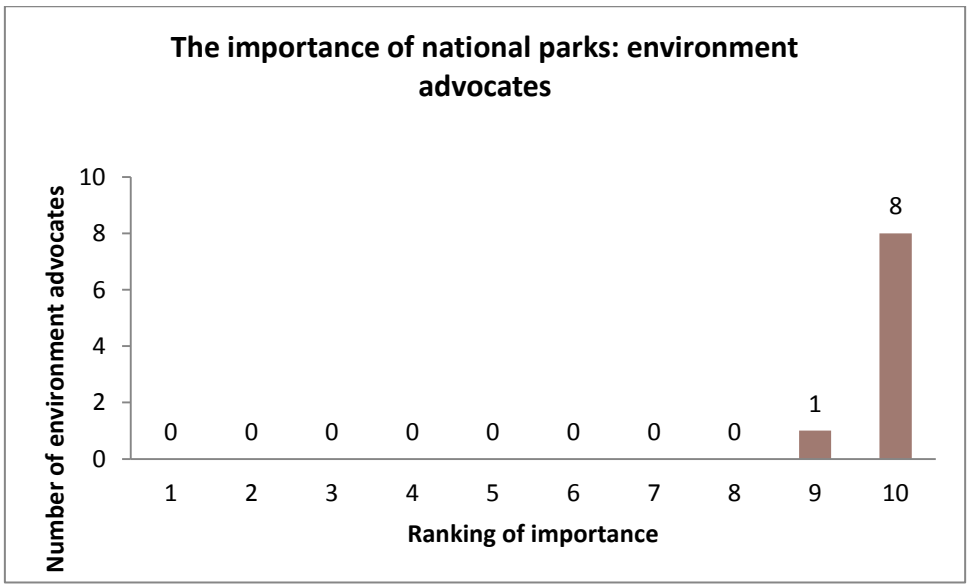
Horse advocates stated that we need national parks because they capture a particular geography, provide a safe refuge for native and introduced animals, provide a place to see wild horses and dingos in a wild environment, are there for people's enjoyment and to protect a diverse range of environments.

Environment advocates stated that we need national parks because of their cultural value, to protect the ecosystem, because we have a legal obligation to have them and to benefit future generations. Environment advocates also mentioned that national parks should not only be treated as a recreational space.

Keepad question 1: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale of 1 to 10, with one being national parks are not at all important to me and 10 being national parks are extremely important to me?***

Responses indicate that national parks are extremely important to both stakeholder groups with the majority of respondents providing rankings of nine and ten





Discussion question 3: ***What were the main points that stood out for you?***

After viewing four filmed presentations from stakeholders, participants were asked to discuss the main points that stood out for them. The short films were indicative of differing stakeholder views on the issues.

Horse advocates mentioned a number of points that stood out from the filmed presentations. Many of these comments disputed statements made by presenters in the films. Discussion points that contradicted material presented included:

- Water from the streams is drinkable
- Horse manure does not pollute streams
- Where the bogs are drying out there are no horses
- Horse population is stable not growing
- The impact of horses was exaggerated
- Misconception that current management plan is not working.

In addition, the following points were raised in discussion amongst horse advocates:

- All speakers agreed that there needs to be some sort of management
- Representative from the Colong Foundation did not mention humaneness, which they think is most important
- Environment representatives called horses 'feral'
- Horses were there first
- Removing horses will not make the Park pristine
- HVBA scientific paper on horse manure was not mentioned
- Natural and cultural values should be considered equal
- Horses can be kept out of high alpine areas to avoid trampling wetland areas
- Fencing is an impractical control measure.

For environmental advocates a number of different points were mentioned in their discussions. These included that:

- Horse advocates did not understand the impacts horses are having
- Horse advocates do not recognise Aboriginal cultural heritage
- What a sustainable horse population means was not specified

- The environmental advocates in the filmed presentations were older men, while the horse advocates were younger people or women, which was not good.

Discussion question 4: ***What do you think is most important about Kosciuszko National Park?***

Horse advocates mentioned several things that were important to them about the park including:

- The diversity of flora and fauna
- Its uniqueness as the only true alpine bio region in Australia
- Many different aspects of the park can be enjoyed through:
  - Recreational use
  - Environmental use
  - Tourism (wild horses benefit the economy through tourism)
  - Scientific use
  - Cultural heritage (including wild horses)
- Both native and introduced species are important.

Environment advocates also mentioned Kosciuszko National Park's uniqueness, the diversity of flora and fauna and the fact it is an alpine area, 2000 metres above sea level. Environment advocates specifically mentioned Aboriginal history.

Discussion question 5: ***Should wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park be controlled? If so, why?***

There was broad agreement between both horse advocates and environment advocates that wild horses in the park should be controlled.

Horse advocates were open to the concept of wild horses being controlled, with the following qualifications:

- The impact of horses would need to be demonstrated by independent, scientific evidence
- Support would depend on the specific control method
- Support would depend on a clearly defined objective in terms of what is a 'sustainable' or 'acceptable' number of horses
- Management needs to be humane, sustainable, evidence based and flexible depending on seasonal conditions and area concerned.

In addition, general discussion amongst horse advocates regarding controlling horses included:

- Concerned about the consequences of removing the horses, interfering in natural selection, damage to stock and dynamics amongst the herds
- Question as to why horses should be controlled
- Horses should be controlled like other flora and fauna, native and introduced
- Manage horses in certain areas e.g. horse-free high alpine areas
- Damage should be defined as a certain percentage of an area
- Do not want numbers to be so high that there are horse welfare impacts.

For environment advocates wild horses should be controlled because:

- They are an introduced species (ecological damage)
- Public health reasons, including water quality for animals
- Safety reasons (road safety, skiers and walkers)
- There is a legal obligation to do so.

Discussion question 6: ***Should native flora and fauna be protected in Kosciuszko National Park. If so, why?***

Discussion amongst horse advocates in response to this question involved many questions as to why native flora and fauna should be protected. One table mentioned that both native and introduced species should be managed. The importance of native flora and fauna was recognised in discussions but participants stressed that protecting their diversity and uniqueness should not be at the expense of the wild horses.

Another table of horse advocates questioned the meaning of 'protected' and many subsequent discussion points then related to horses not being a threat to native flora and fauna, these points included:

- Biggest danger is wildfires
- Horses don't eat other animals
- Horses are part of the ecosystem (200 years is sufficient time for flora and fauna to adapt)
- Horses can benefit some areas.

Other concerns included:

- Consequences of removing wild horses
- The food chain (i.e. the Broad Toothed Rat eats the Bogong Moth)
- Unnecessary sense of urgency (Broad Toothed Rat is not unique to Kosciuszko National Park)
- Pastoralists managed the park better than NPWS in terms of preventing animal extinction.

Discussion amongst environment advocates indicated strong support for the protection of native flora and fauna. Discussion points included:

- Urgency is important
- Legal and cultural obligation (including Aboriginal culture) to protect the native species
- Species are unique to Kosciuszko National Park
- Species are part of a gene pool reservoir for future scientific benefit
- Prevent loss of biodiversity.

For the purpose of analysis of the following Keepad question results, rankings were interpreted as follows:

Keepad ranking	Participant view
One/two	Completely unacceptable
Three/four	Unacceptable
Five/six	Neutral
Seven/eight	Acceptable
Nine/ten	Completely acceptable

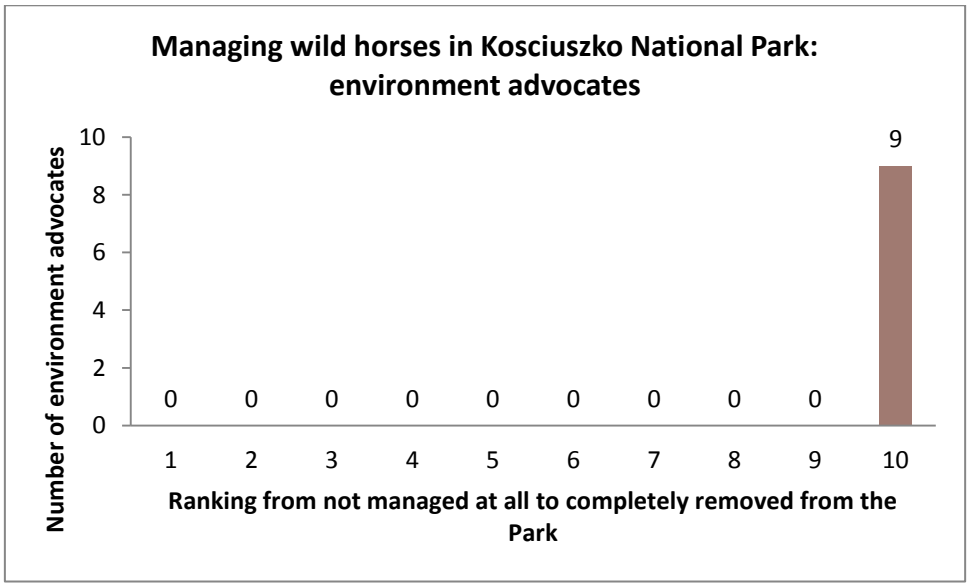
It is also worth noting that not all stakeholders answered each question, which accounts for the variation in number of responses between questions.

Keepad question 2: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale from one to 10, with one being wild horses should not be managed in Kosciuszko National Park at all and 10 being wild horses should be completely removed from Kosciuszko National Park?***

There was a clear division between the two stakeholder groups in response to this question.

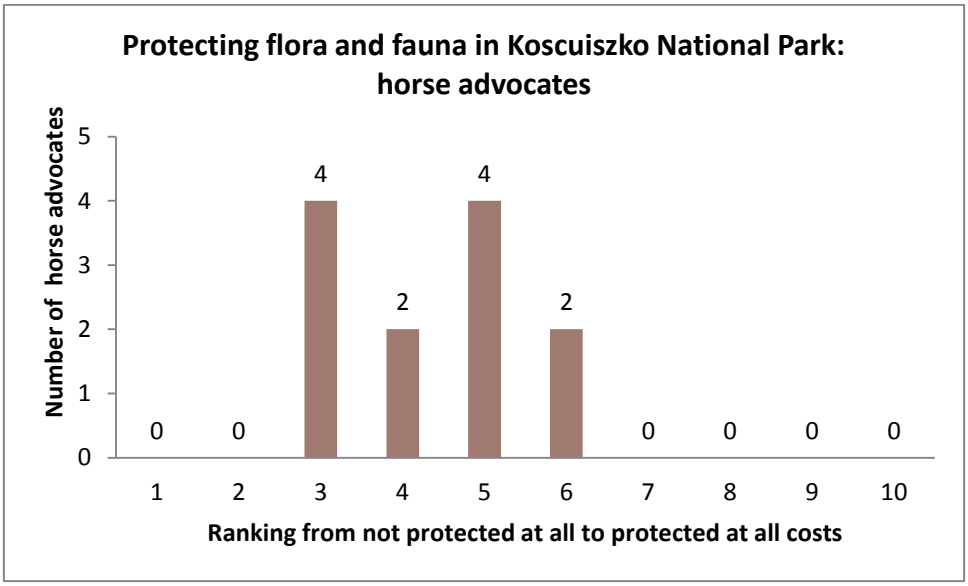
The majority of horse advocates recorded a ranking of two or three, indicating they supported no, or only very minimal, management of wild horses.

All environment advocates indicated they thought wild horses should be completely removed from the park.

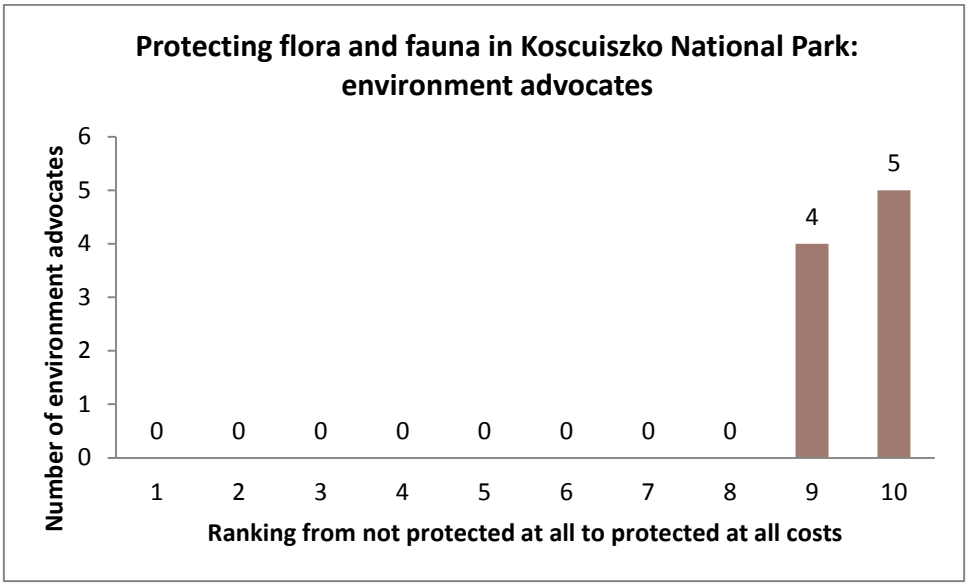


Keepad question 3: ***Where do you sit on a sliding scale from one to 10, with one being native flora and fauna should not be protected at all and 10 being native flora and fauna should be protected at all costs?***

Responses of horse advocates were generally consistent, with all rankings between three and six, indicating support for minimal protection of flora and fauna.



Responses of environment advocates indicated they support that native flora and fauna being protected at all costs.



There is a clear difference between horse advocates and environment advocates in their weighting of the need to protect native flora and fauna.

Population control methods

Discussion question 7: ***What do you think of the following control methods?***

Trapping and removing then rehoming or transport to abattoir

Horse advocates raised the following points:

- It is effective
- It is the least inhumane/most humane method
- It is widely accepted
- No issue with wastage of carcasses
- Transport to abattoir is stressful, fights occur in trucks, it would be better to have a local abattoir[1]
- Requires control over rehoming group including suitable facilities and knowledgeable, accredited staff
- There is room for improvement in current practice.

Environment advocates raised the following points:

- Support method as horses are taken out of the park
- Rehoming organisations should receive funding
- Expensive
- Hard to get abattoir to take horses
- Risk of vandalism/stealing of traps
- Cohesion of social groupings is difficult
- Should make sure there is a critical number of horses in trap before closing the gate
- Stressful for horses.

Trapping and euthanasia at trap site

Horse advocates discussed whether euthanasia at trap site would be preferable to transport to abattoir, some thought it was preferable while others thought it would be just as stressful if not done correctly and preferred the idea of using Blowering holding yard rather than the trap site.

Horse advocates were concerned about how euthanasia would take place raising the following issues:

- Euthanasia requires independent, skilled and accredited practitioners
- Euthanasia requires a code of practice/guidelines, (close range, alone, no pregnant horses etc.)

Horse advocates also raised the following points:

- Should be used as a last resort if injured or unable to rehome
- Disposal of carcasses is difficult.

Environment advocates raised the following points:

- Highly humane/less stressful than transport to abattoir
- Prolonged stress for horses
- Ineffective/horses learn where the traps are
- Have to separate the stallion from other horses
- Not good for environment

[1] Local abattoirs will not euthanize wild horses because they fear local backlash. Horses are currently transported to South Australian abattoirs.

- Reflects badly in the media
- The capacity of the traps is important.

Aerial or ground mustering

Horse advocates raised the following issues:

- Where possible, ground mustering is a great option
- Huge potential for re-engaging horse groups in ground mustering
- Helicopters are stressful for horses
- Aerial mustering could be too fast (foals left behind, split family groupings, physically and emotionally challenging)
- Aerial mustering has not been trialled/ research other places that have tried aerial mustering
- Slow aerial mustering could be an option but difficult in the terrain
- Division amongst stakeholders regarding aerial mustering, (Victorian horse advocates were open to aerial mustering, NSW horse advocates did not support aerial mustering)
- Aerial mustering is practical in the terrain, should be considered depending on trial/test results.

Environment advocates raised the following issues:

- Ground mustering should be part of a suite of methods
- People enjoy ground mustering
- In some areas of New Zealand it is well done
- Must be done by a professional
- Safety and injury risks (but could be managed)
- Has worked in some woody areas
- Can set up long fences to support mustering.

Fertility control

Horse advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Horses stay in the park which is good, different from the other methods
- What is the point if you have to trap them anyway might as well remove them
- When do you stop? Two generations and they're dead
- Average age of wild horses is important, it might not apply across the board
- Open landscape makes it difficult
- Should be used in conjunction with passive trapping
- Relies on skill of practitioners
- Look at immuno-contraception trials (USA just finished three year trial of PZP)
- Need more information from NPWS
- Drugs can change the characteristics of a mare.

Environment advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Difficult to track which horses have been treated
- Not good for the horses and stressful (need large and powerful darts)
- Horses need to be anaesthetised for a few hours
- Not cost effective
- Research needs to be conducted
- Inefficient (does not reduce population numbers immediately).

Discussion question 8: ***What do you think of the following control methods?***

Ground shooting

Horse advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Only for sick or injured horses, not as a control method
- Not humane (particularly if it's not fatal)
- Inability to follow up on injured horse
- High risk to pursuing shooter
- Do not want wild horses to be shot.

Environment advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Needs to be licensed, supervised and tightly controlled, including use of penalties
- Animal welfare/humaneness (non-fatal shot needs to be managed)
- Should only be done in remote/open areas
- Should be a minor part of a suite of methods
- Shooting is difficult.

Brumby running or roping

Horse advocates were divided as to whether or not brumby running or roping is humane and this issue heavily influenced support or opposition to the method.

Horse advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Traditional activity that is 150 years old
- When banned horse numbers increased
- Better than aerial culling
- Good for remote areas where too steep and timbered to build yards
- US horseman Guy McLean has endorsed it
- It is hard to police, if legal may be better policed than now
- Riders need to be experienced, skilled and properly trained
- Requires accreditation, licensing and policing
- Should not be commercially licensed
- Can separate horse families which is traumatic
- Dangerous for people doing it
- Only works for small numbers/younger horses
- If allowed, horses should be caught and taken out on the same day
- No dogs should be involved.

Environment advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Highly stressful
- Ineffective (out of date)
- Damage to environment
- They only take the young horses
- Recreational activity that should not be funded by the tax payer.

Fencing

Horse advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Effective (along highway and sensitive areas, permanent solution, 60km fence in Barmah National Park has worked well)
- Doesn't have to have a negative visual impact
- Constant maintenance required (current fences have not been well maintained)
- Cost effective (prevents damage to cars and protects other animals)
- Could be used in conjunction with fertility control and passive trapping
- Suspension bridge/tunnel for small animals (U.S example of 'push gates' that allow trapped animals to move across fence)
- Requires studying horse routes to see where fences are best targeted.

Environment advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- Ineffective
- Impractical
- Costly
- Damages environment
- Protection measure but not a management measure.

Aerial shooting

Horse advocates raised the following points in discussions:

- It is inhumane and for that reason should not be considered (there is a reason it is banned in NSW and Australia is the only country that does it)
- Ineffective (short term solution with immediate impact but one big aerial cull every five years isn't effective, not a silver bullet)
- Not cost effective/ very expensive
- Requires follow up on the ground
- Carcass management is an issue
- Not appropriate due to terrain and inability to follow up on all injured horses
- Traumatising for shooters
- RSPCA observations based on camel culling in desert cannot be extrapolated to horses in Kosciuszko National Park.

Environment advocates raised the following points in discussions:

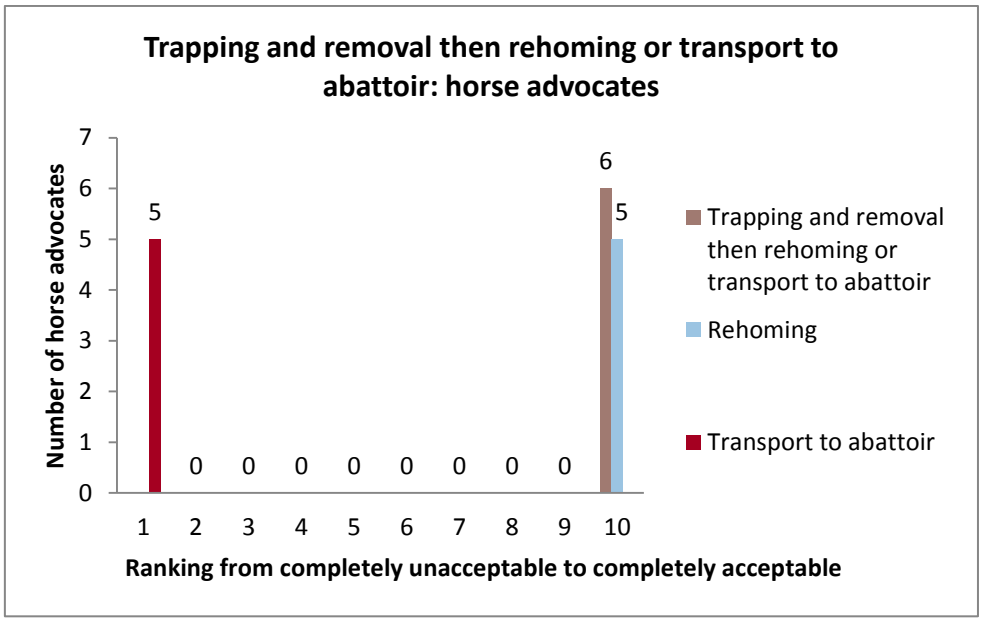
- Practical method (long been accepted for other feral animals)
- Efficient (particularly good in snow, as you can see the tracks)
- Follow up on injured horses is possible
- Carcasses can decompose in snow
- Already have protocols in place to clear an area with pig shooting
- If NPWS supervised, there would be no issue.

Discussion question 9: ***What other things do you think NPWS should consider in its review of the plan?***

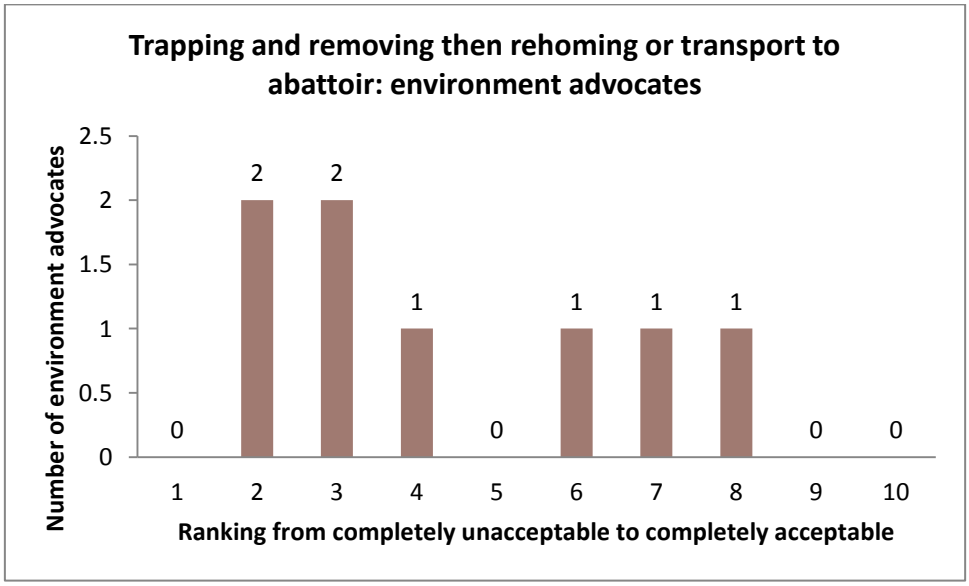
There were many responses to this question. However only two issues were raised by more than one table of horse advocates, these were, the need to conduct further research and consider the tourism value of wild horses. Environment advocates stressed the need for a communication strategy to educate the public on the damage caused by wild horses and mentioned using drones as something NPWS should consider.

Keepad question 4: ***Trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

One table of horse advocates chose to separate their responses to rehoming and transport to abattoir. These respondents viewed rehoming as completely acceptable and transport to abattoir as completely unacceptable. The table of horse advocates that did not separate their responses thought that the current control method of trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir was completely acceptable.

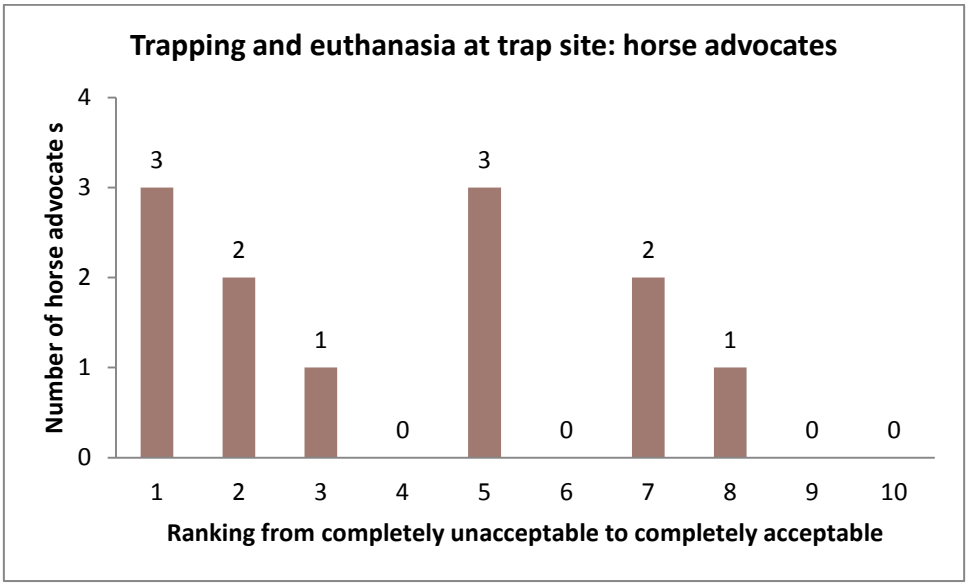


There were considerable differences in the rankings of environment advocates, with five stakeholders ranking trapping and removing then rehoming or transport to abattoir as unacceptable and two stakeholders ranking the method as acceptable. One environment advocate remained neutral.

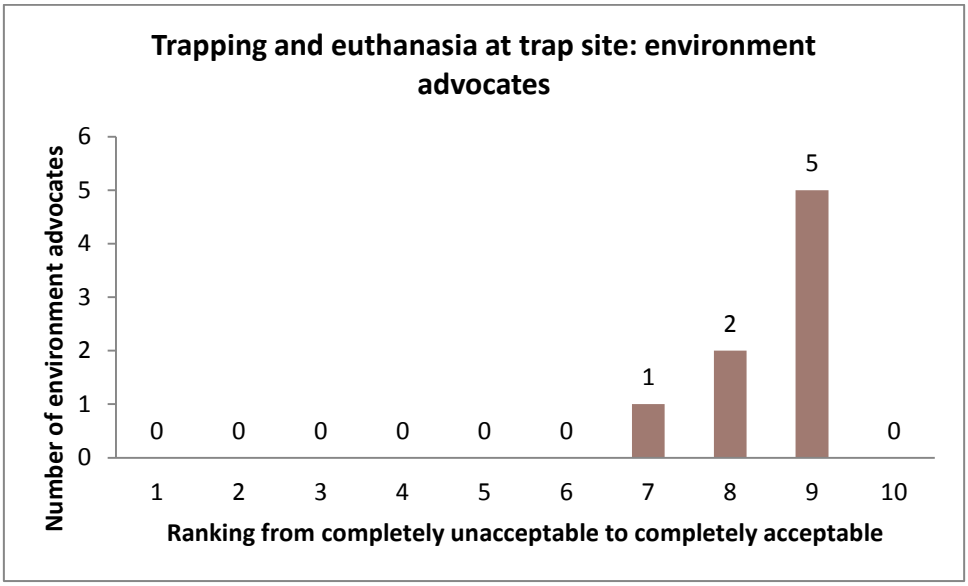


Keepad question 5: ***Trapping and euthanasia at trap site - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

There was considerable diversity in the views of horse advocates as to the acceptability of trapping and euthanasia at trap site with six stakeholders indicating it is not acceptable, three stakeholders neutral and another three stakeholders indicating it is acceptable.



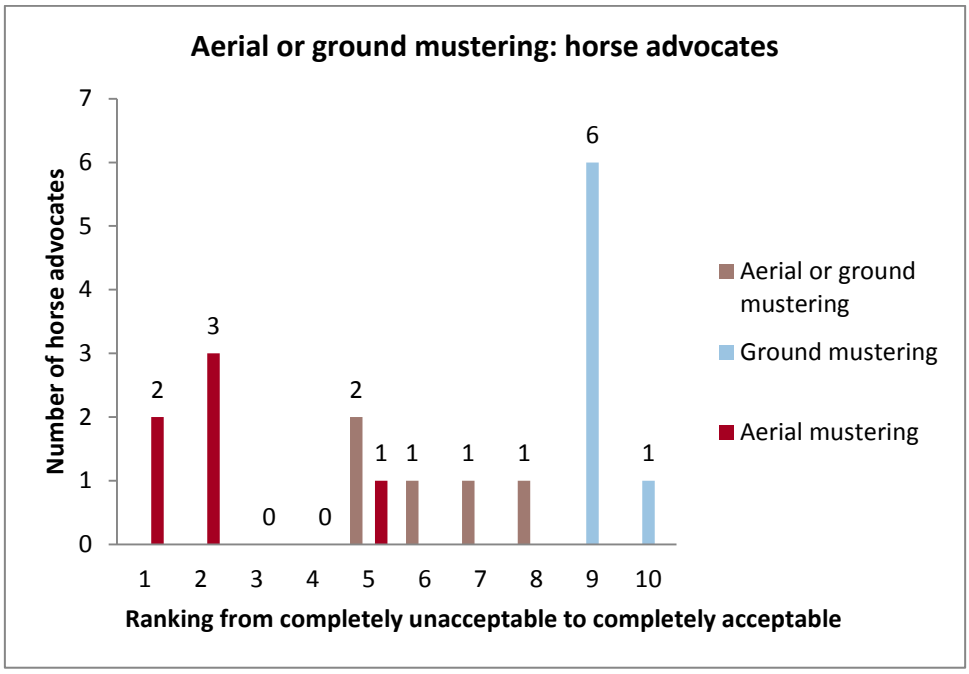
All environment advocates thought trapping and euthanasia at trap site was acceptable, albeit to varying degrees.



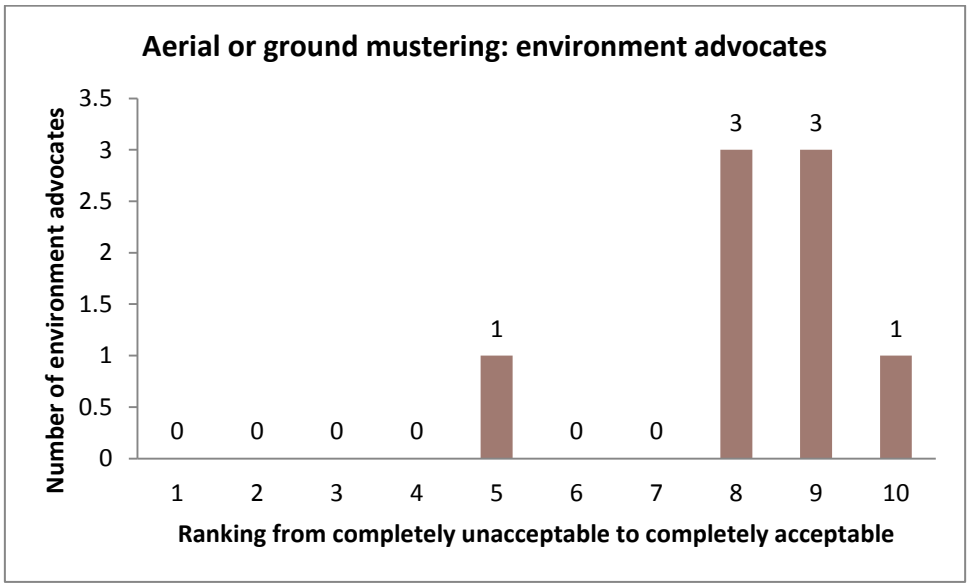
Keepad question 6: ***Aerial or ground mustering - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

One table of horse advocates chose to separate their responses to aerial mustering and ground mustering. The majority of these respondents viewed ground mustering as completely acceptable and aerial mustering as completely unacceptable. This table was not the table that chose to separate

their responses to Keepad question four. The table of horse advocates that did not separate their responses thought both forms of mustering were acceptable, or were neutral on the acceptability of the control method.

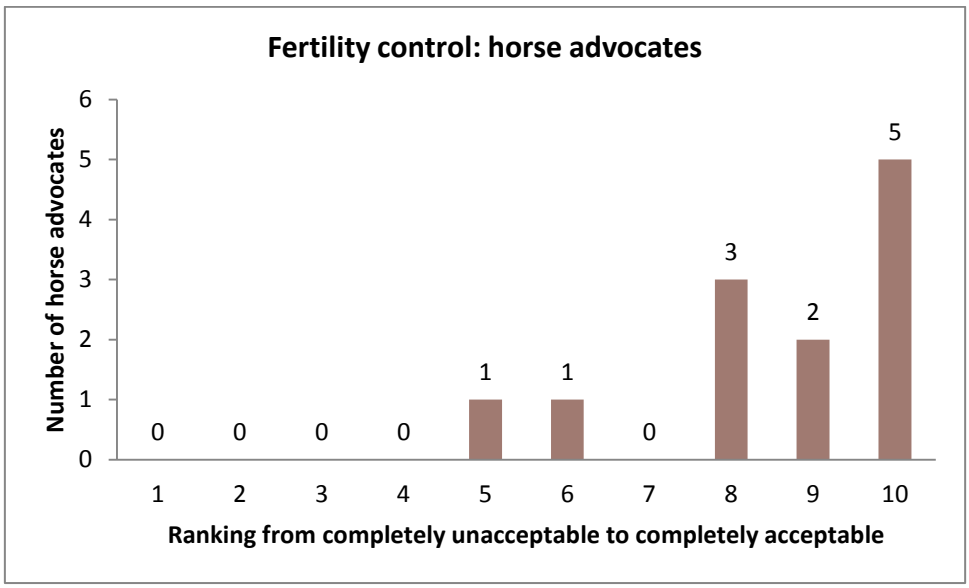


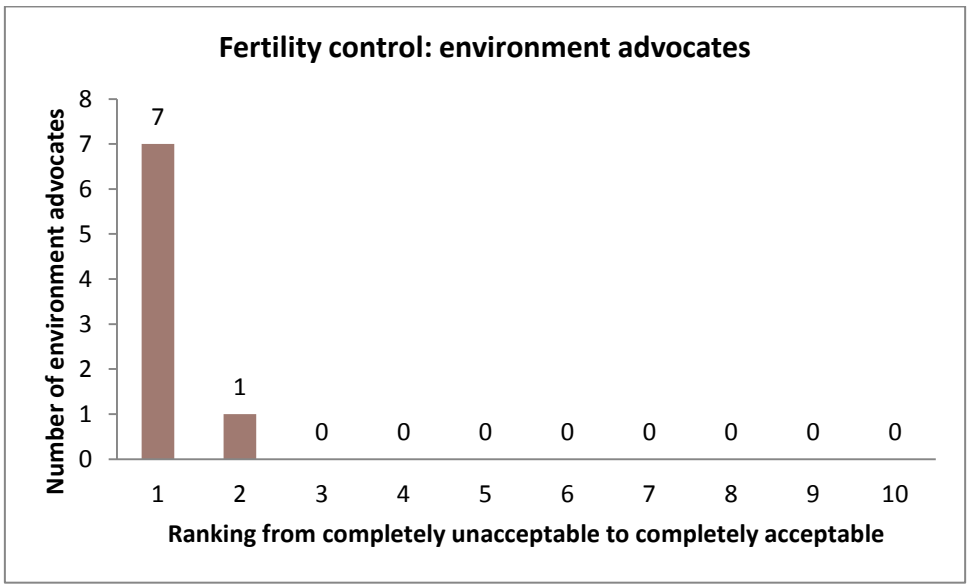
The majority of environment advocates considered aerial or ground mustering acceptable.



Keepad question 7: ***Fertility control - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to10, with one being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

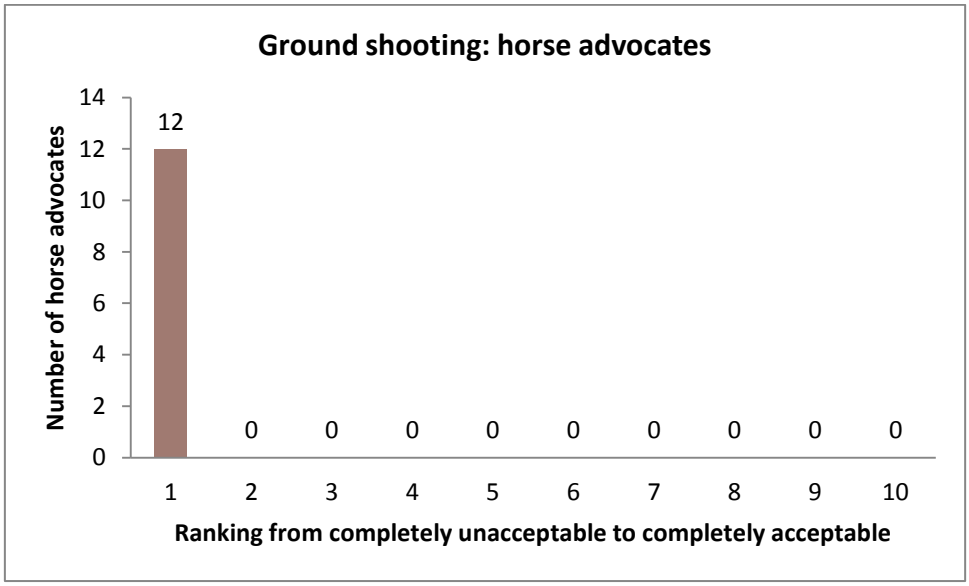
There is a clear disparity between the views of the two stakeholder groups on the acceptability of fertility control. The majority of horse advocates consider fertility control acceptable or completely acceptable while all of the environment advocates consider the method completely unacceptable.

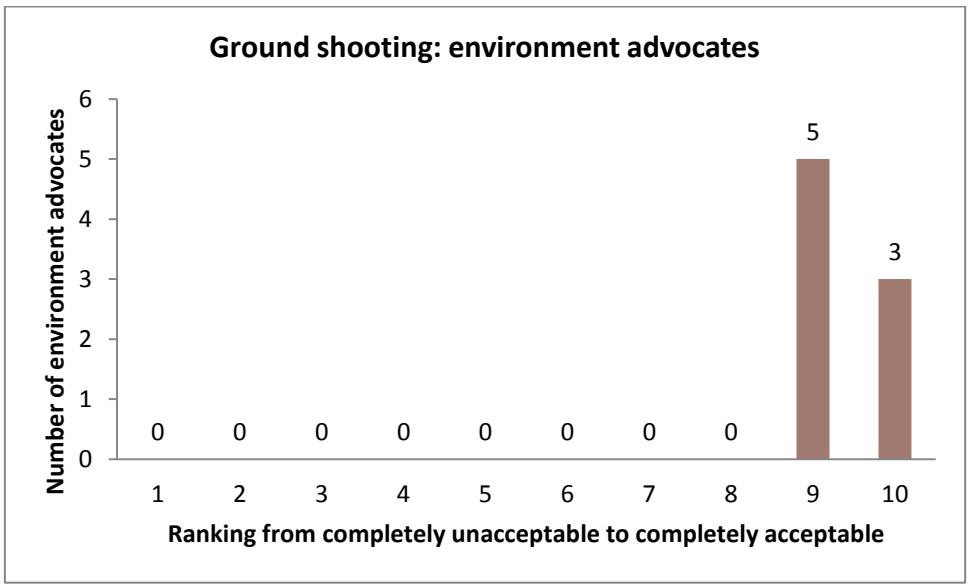




Keepad question 8: ***Ground shooting - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

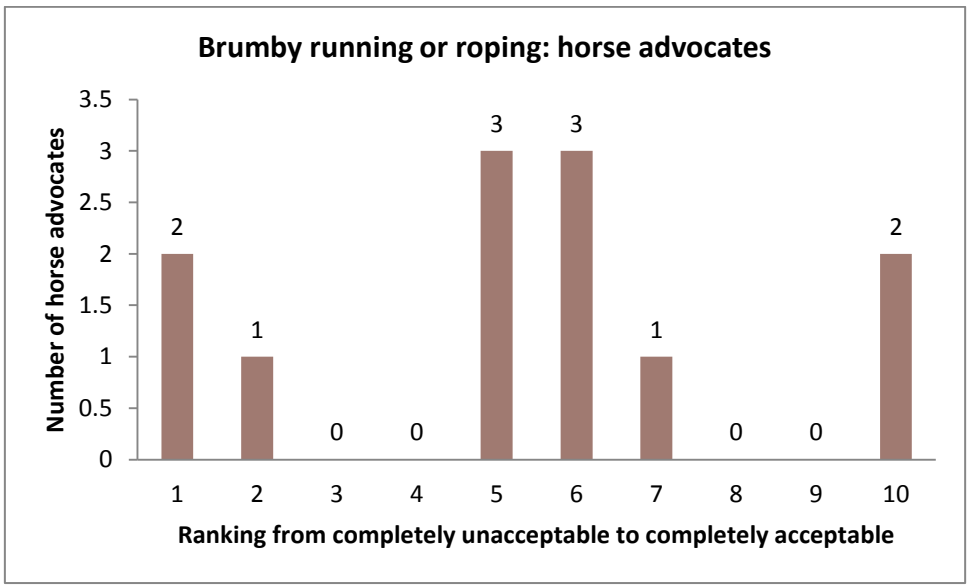
The views of the two stakeholder groups are polarised on ground shooting as a control method with all horse advocates considering the method completely unacceptable and all environment advocates considering it completely acceptable. Responses within each stakeholder group are highly consistent.



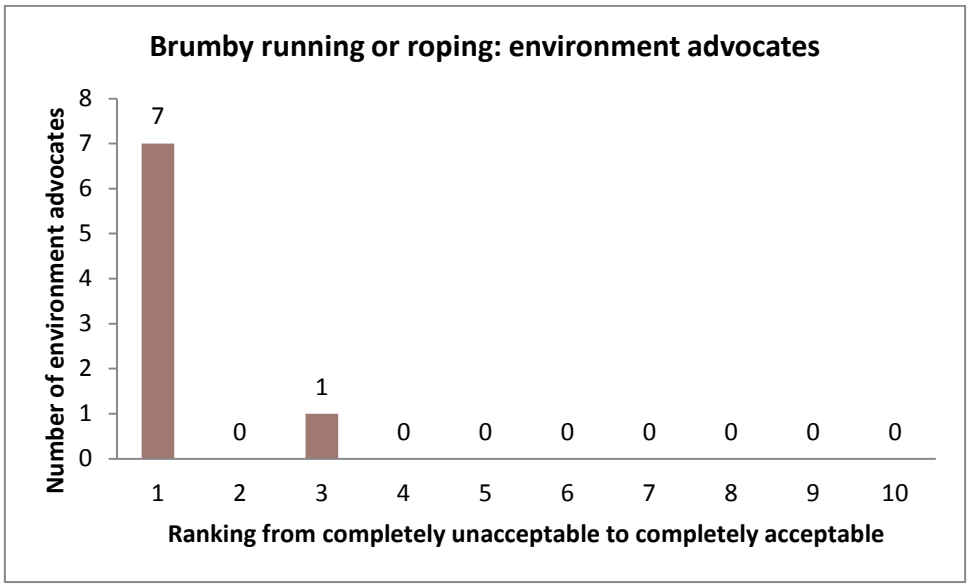


Keepad question 9: ***Brumby running or roping - Where do you sit on a slide scale from 1 to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

The views of horse advocates were split, with one quarter of respondents considering brumby running or roping completely unacceptable, half the respondents remaining neutral and a quarter of respondents considering this control method acceptable or completely acceptable.



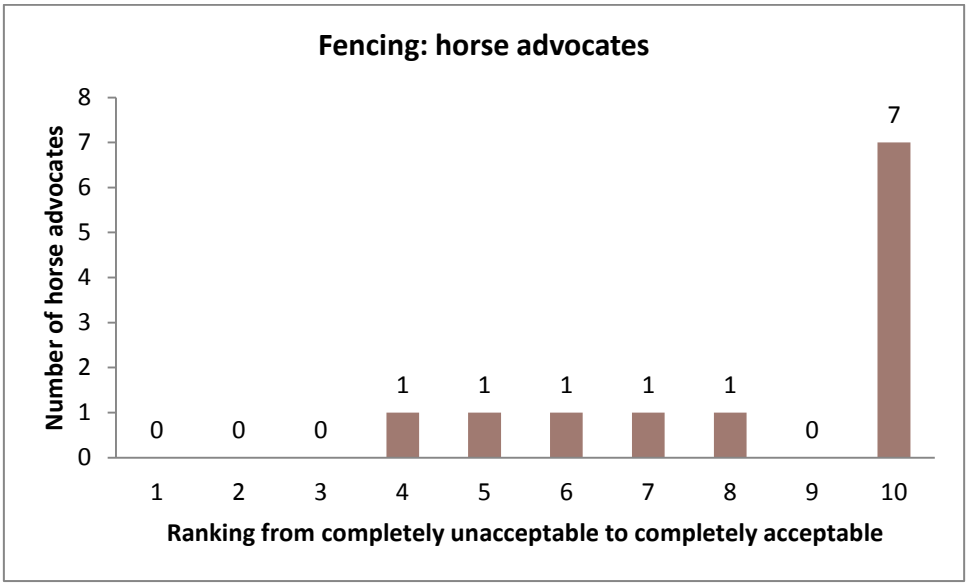
The majority of environment advocates consider brumby running or roping to be completely unacceptable.



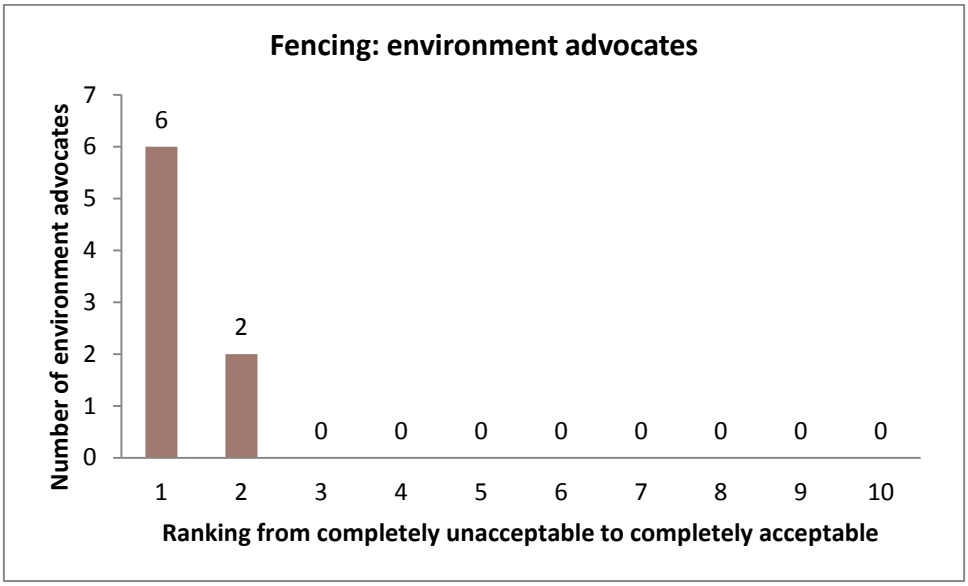
Keepad question 10: ***Fencing - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

There were significant differences in opinion between the two stakeholder groups.

The majority of horse advocates, but not all, gave a ranking of seven, eight or ten, indicating they considered fencing acceptable or completely acceptable.

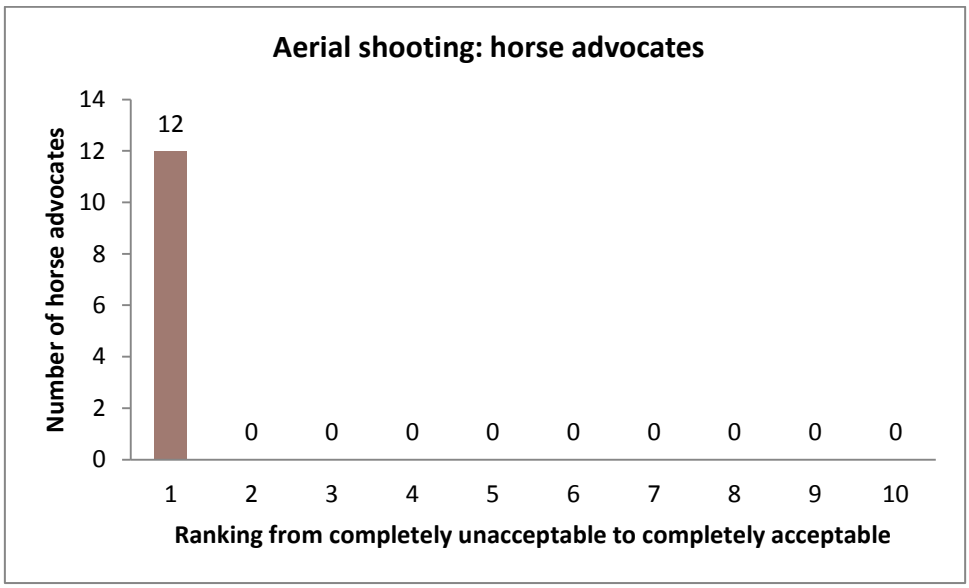


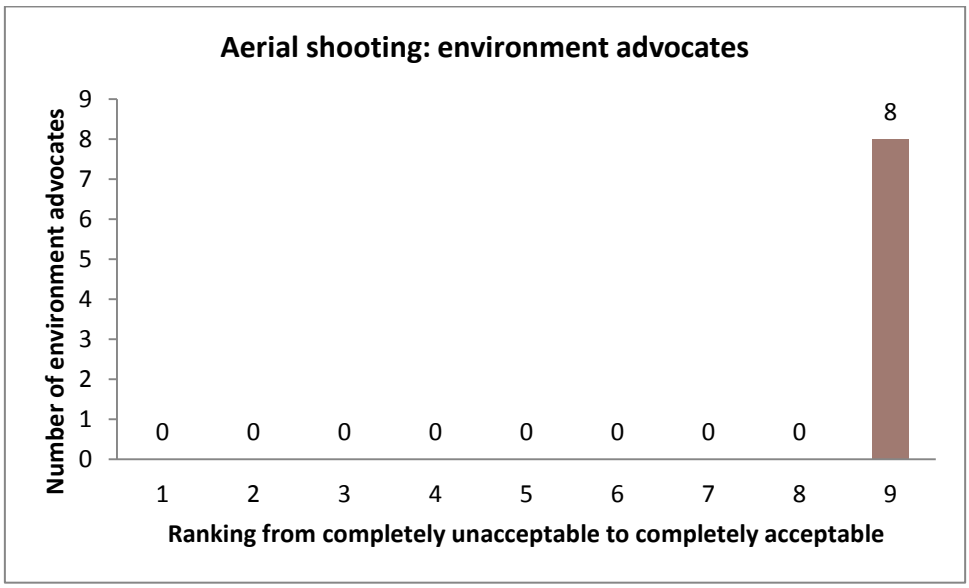
All environment advocates gave rankings of one or two, indicating they considered fencing completely unacceptable.



Keepad question 11: ***Aerial shooting - Where do you sit on a slide scale from one to 10, with 1 being this control method is completely UNACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park and 10 being this control method is completely ACCEPTABLE for wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park?***

The views of horse advocates and environment advocates were polarised on aerial shooting as a control method. All horse advocates thought the method was completely unacceptable while all environment advocates thought it was completely acceptable.



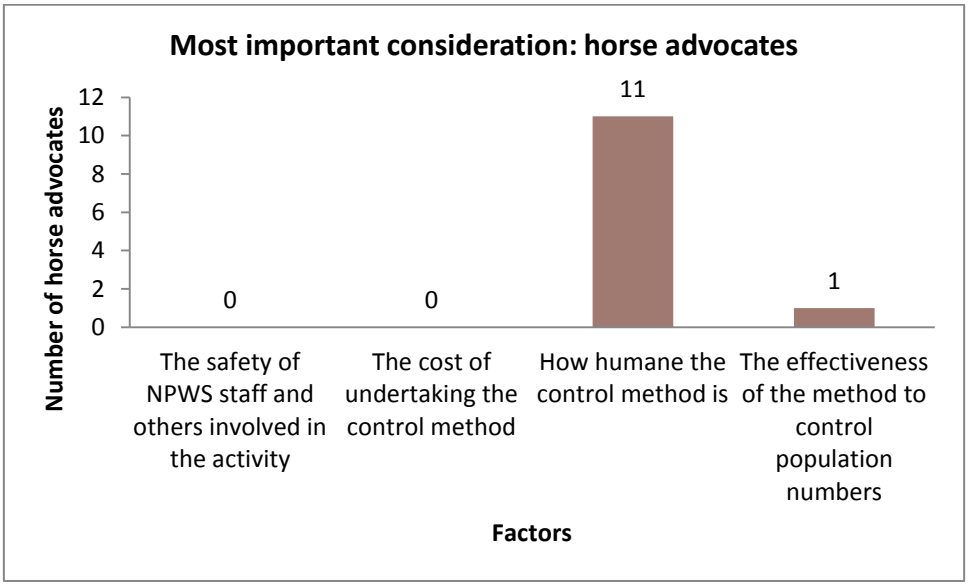


Getting the balance right

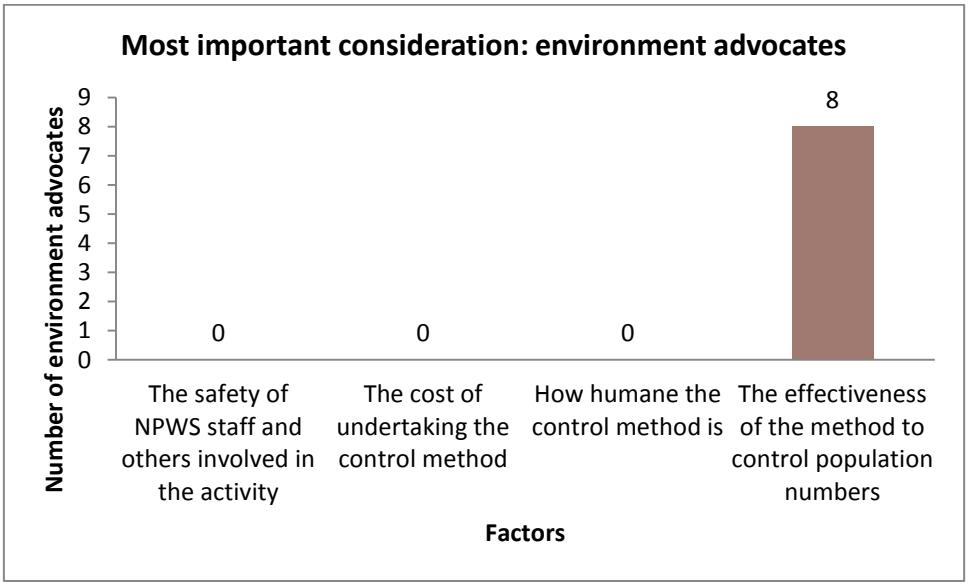
The following two Keepad questions asked participants to select the most important and then least important consideration for control methods, out of four options; effectiveness, humaneness, safety of NPWS staff and cost.

Keepad question 12: ***Which of the following do you think is the MOST important thing NPWS should consider when deciding on the control methods to be included in the Plan?***

The majority of horse advocates thought that the humaneness of the control method should be the most important thing NPWS should consider when deciding on the control methods to be included in the plan.

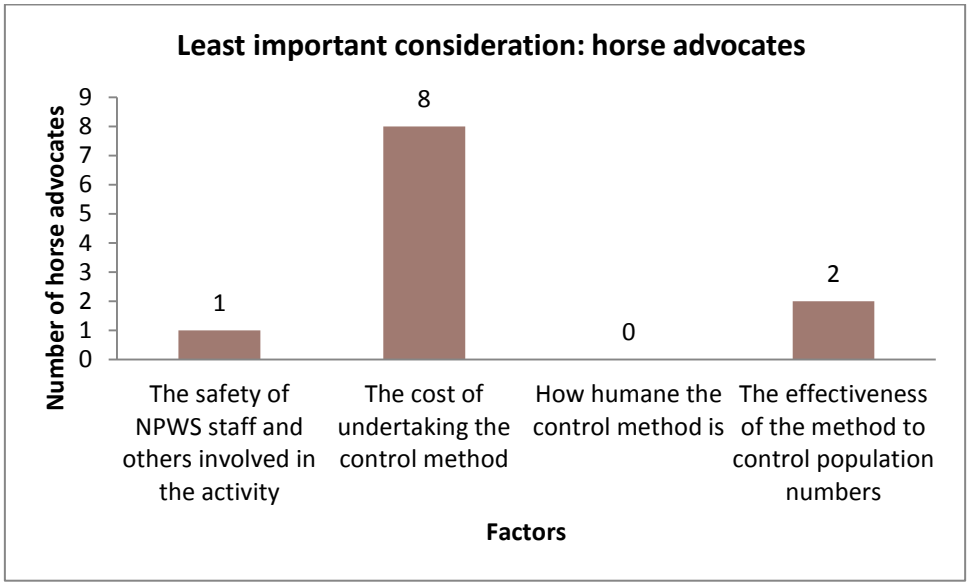


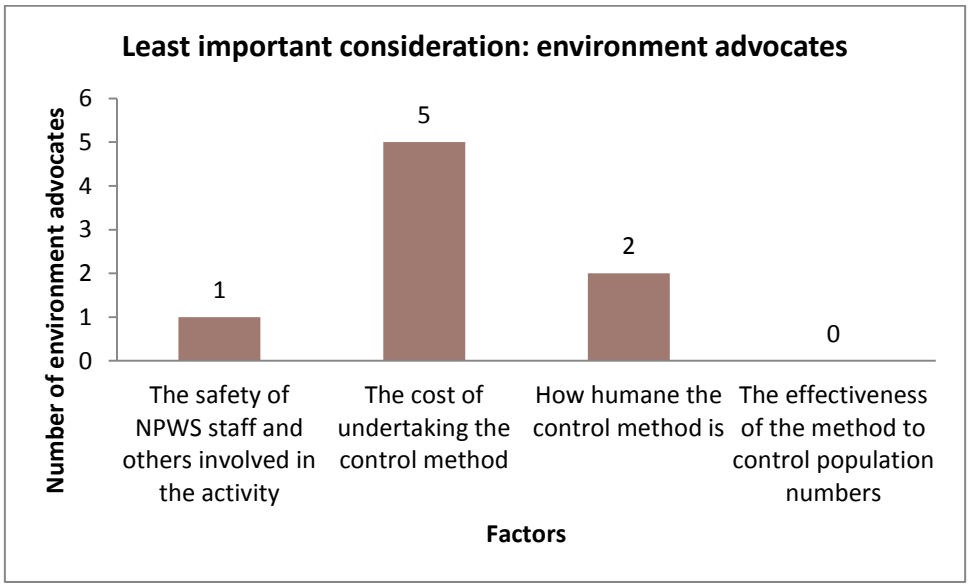
All the environment advocates thought the effectiveness of the method to control population numbers should be the most important consideration.



Keepad question 13: ***Which of the following do you think is the LEAST important thing NPWS should consider when deciding on the control methods to be included in the Plan?***

The majority of respondents in both stakeholder groups thought the cost of undertaking the control method should be the least important consideration when deciding on the control methods to be included in the plan. Overall, responses to this question were less consistent than the responses of community members.





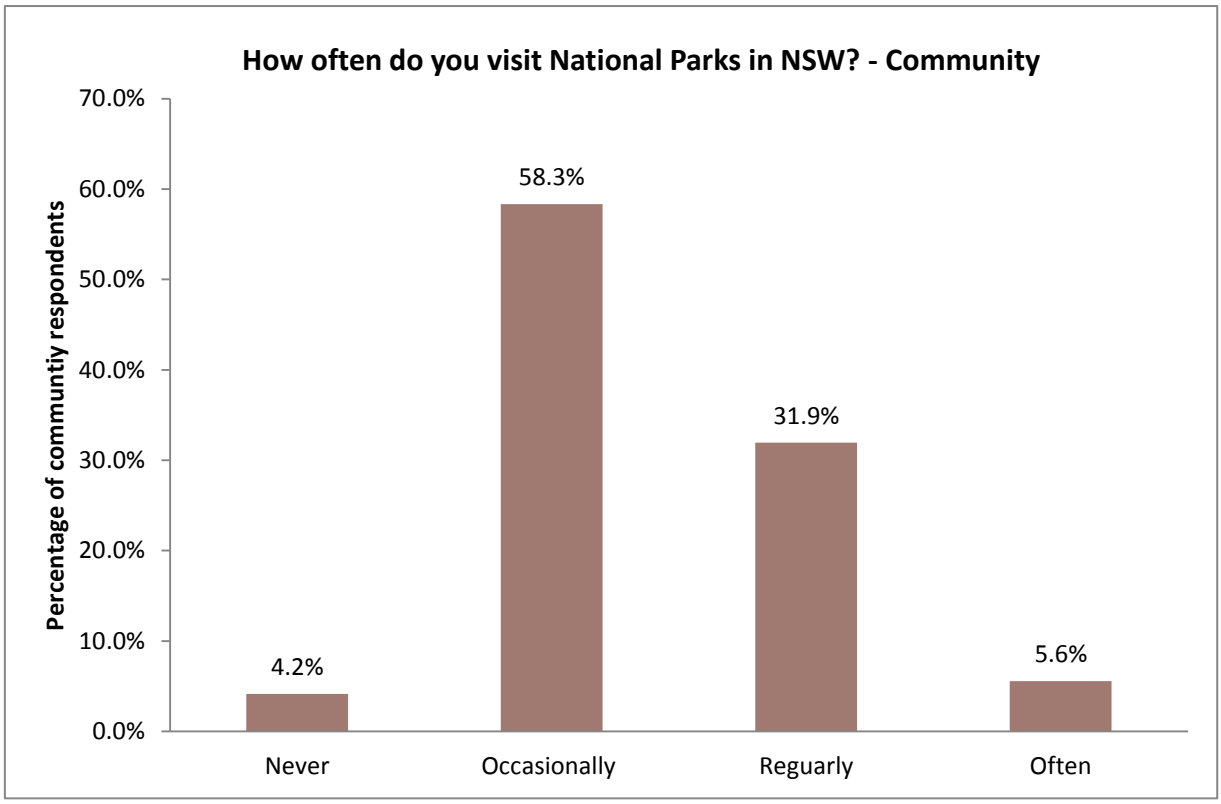
6 Event surveys

Pre event survey

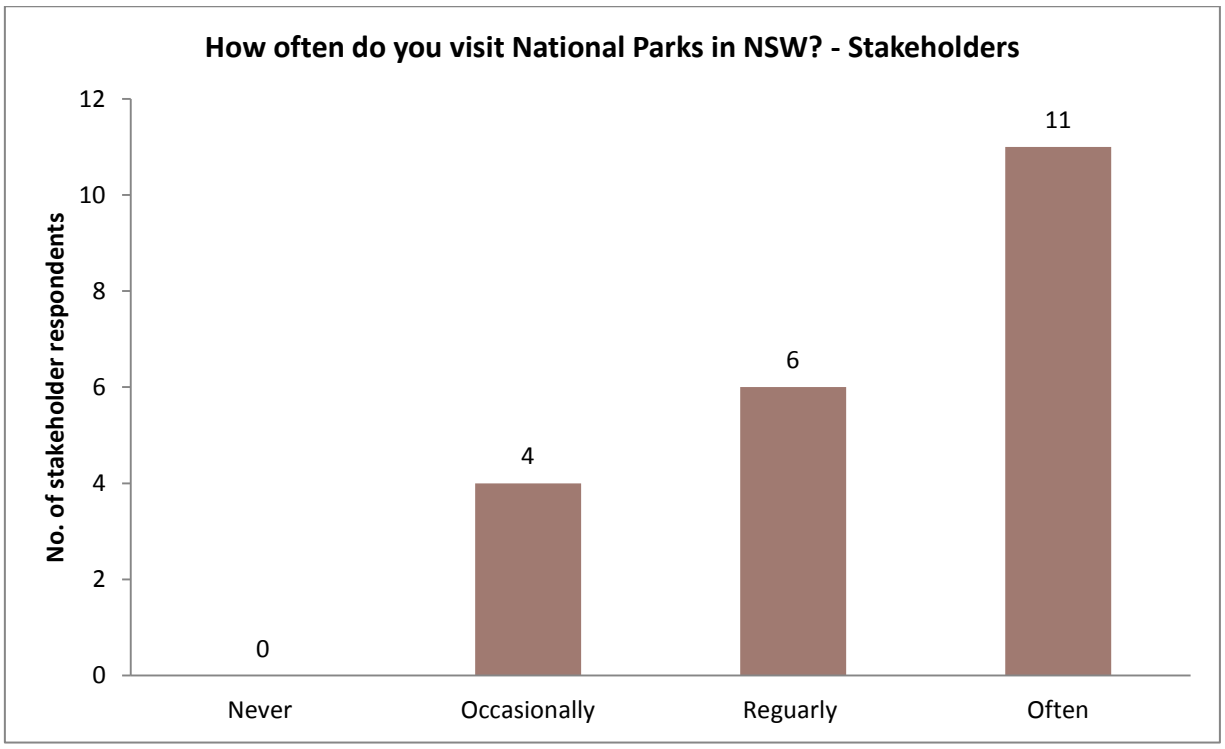
Immediately prior to the commencement of the 21st century town hall meeting, participants were asked to complete a survey about their beliefs and understanding of the issue of wild horse management. A total of 93 surveys were returned which comprised 72 community respondents and 21 stakeholder respondents. Responses by community participants are reported separately from stakeholders. Due to the difference in the size of the data sets involved, community responses to quantitative questions are reported as a percentage, and stakeholders are reported as raw numbers.

Survey responses

How often do you visit National Park NSW?

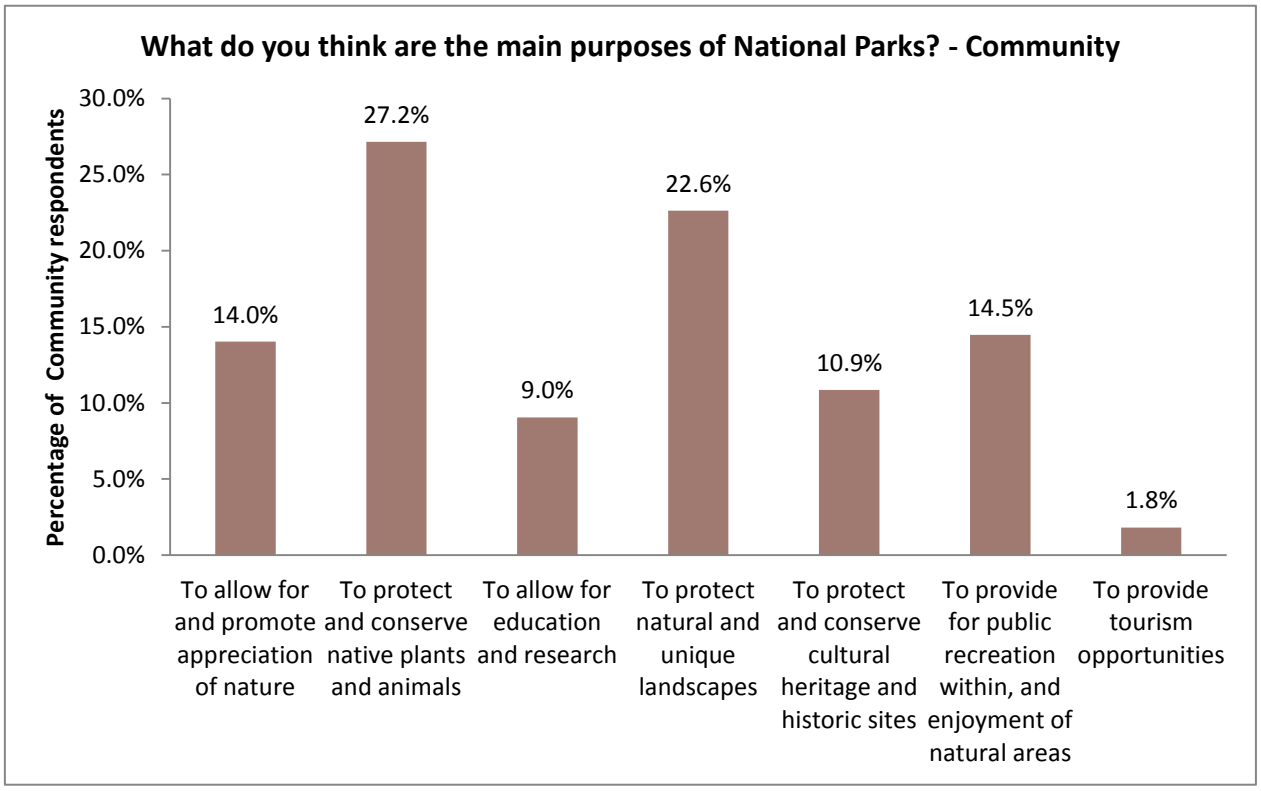


The majority of community respondents indicated that they visit National Parks 'Occasionally' with the remainder claiming to visit parks either 'regularly' or 'often'. 4.2% of respondents stated that they had never visited a National Park.



Both horse and environment advocates (stakeholders) indicated that they mostly visit national parks 'often'.

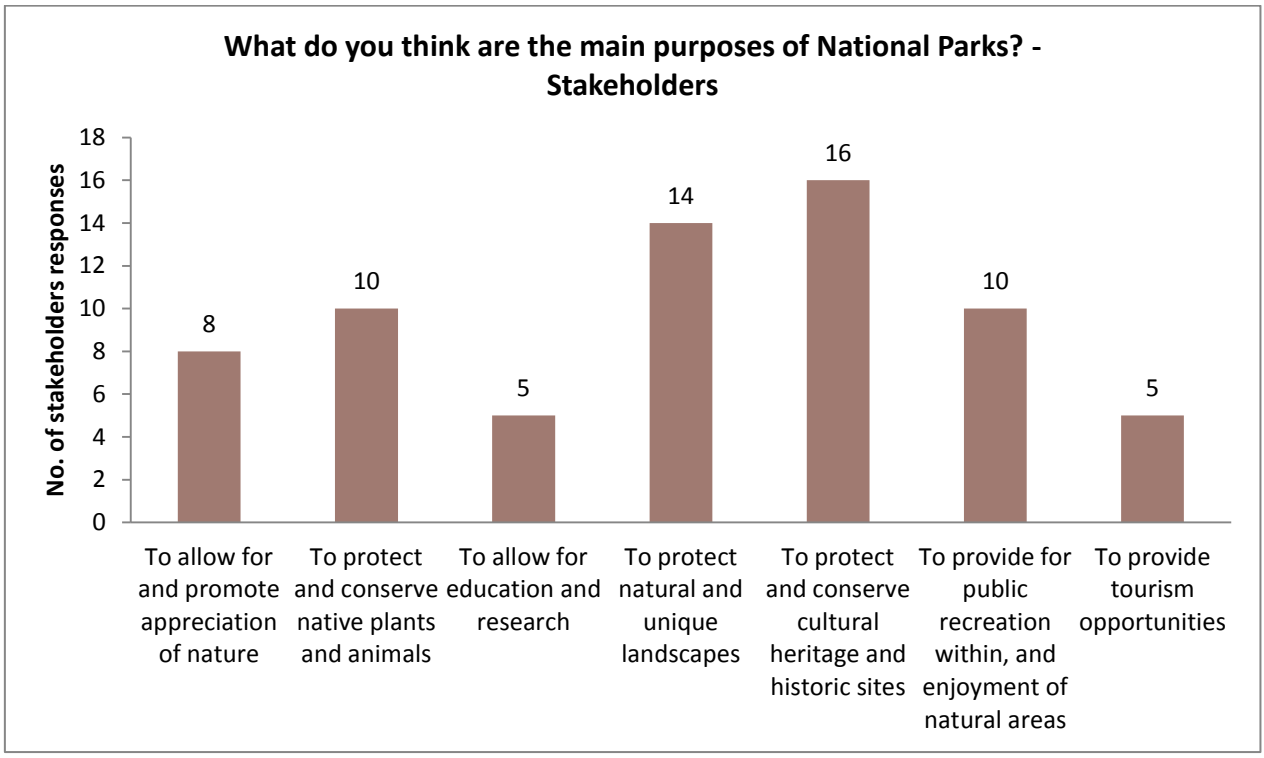
What do you think are the MAIN purposes of national parks? (Tick up to THREE)



Community respondents indicated their beliefs that the main purpose of national parks is 'To protect and conserve native plants and animals', as well as 'To protect natural and unique landscapes'.

This result is similar to that of the environment stakeholders who also ranked those two purposes most strongly. For horse stakeholders the role of national parks was more about protecting and

conserving cultural heritage and historic sites, providing recreation and promoting an appreciation of nature (results below show the combined stakeholder responses).



Have you heard of Kosciuszko National Park?

All attendees except one community participant indicated that they had 'heard of Kosciuszko National Park'.

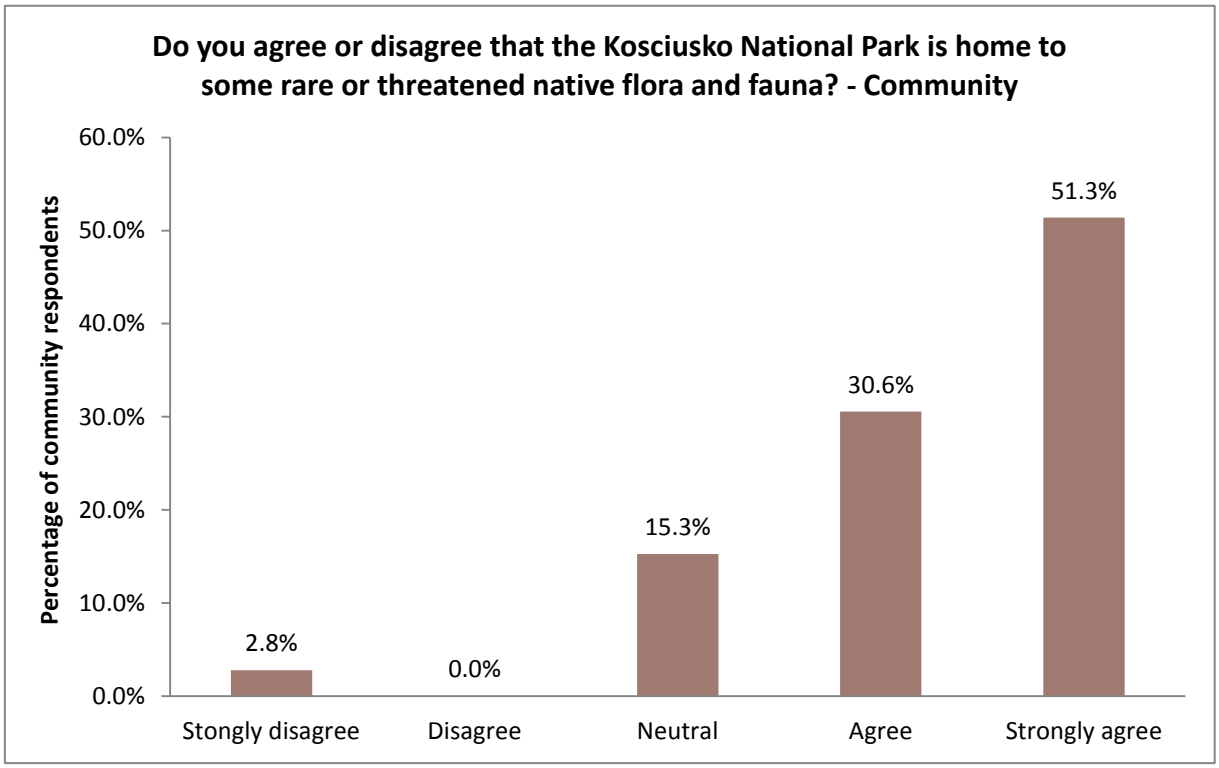
Have you ever visited Kosciuszko National Park?

87.5% of community participants and all stakeholders had visited Kosciuszko National Park.

If yes to 4, approximately how many times?

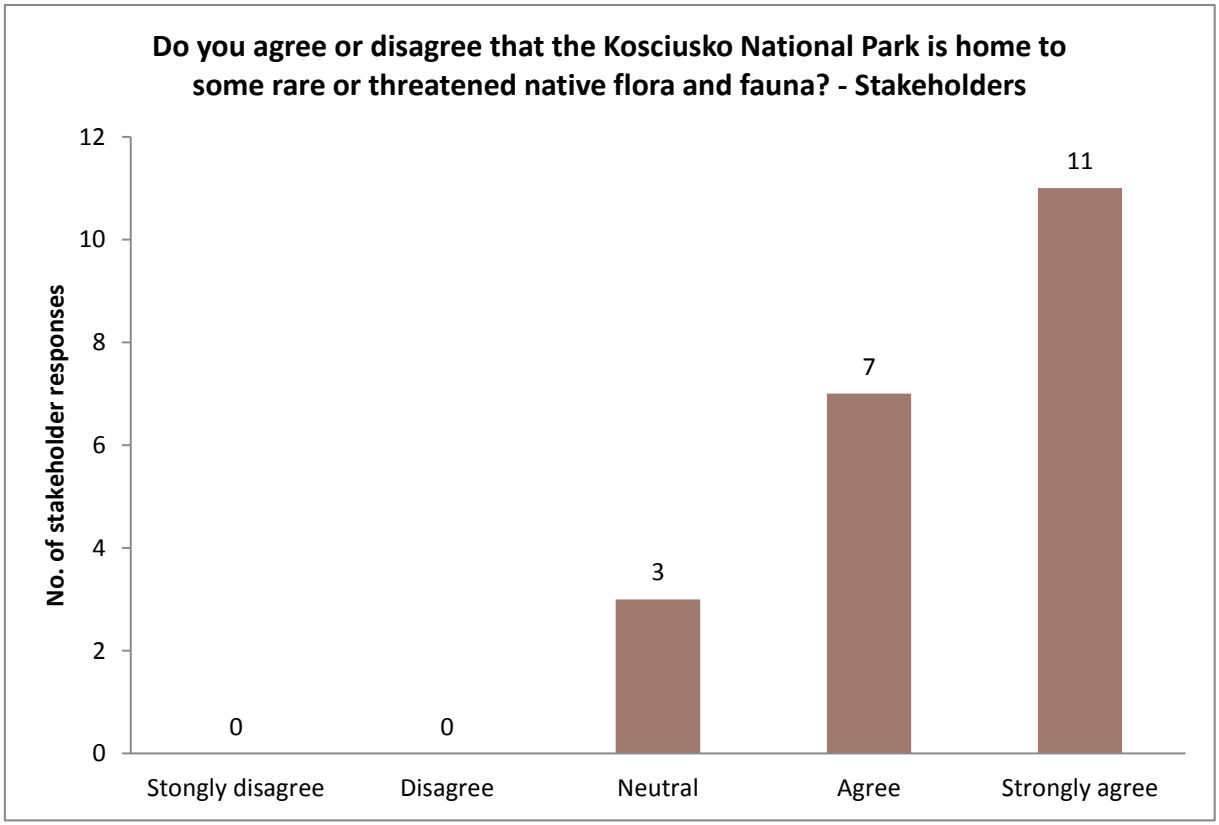
Of the community participants who had visited the park, 85.7% had visited on more than one occasion. Stakeholders had also visited the park multiple times.

To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Kosciusko National Park is home to some rare or threatened native flora (trees and plants) or fauna (animals and birds)?

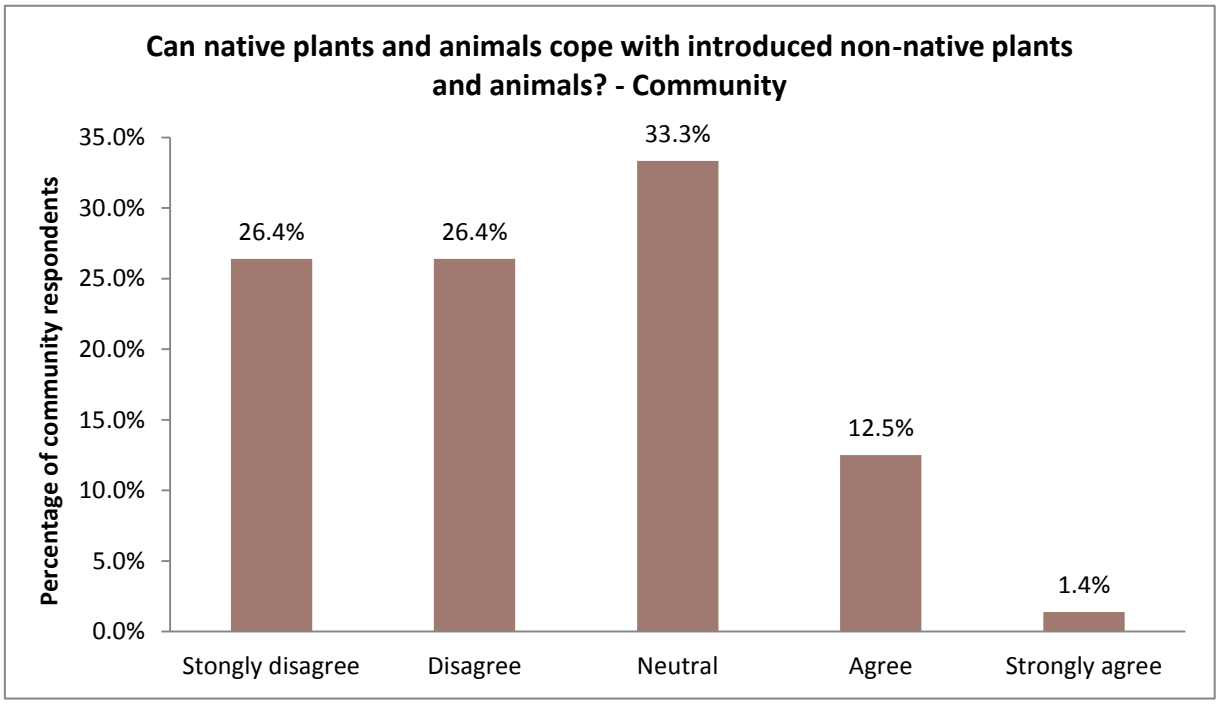


Community respondents predominantly agreed that Kosciuszko National Park is home to rare or threatened native flora and fauna.

These responses were mirrored by stakeholder groups.

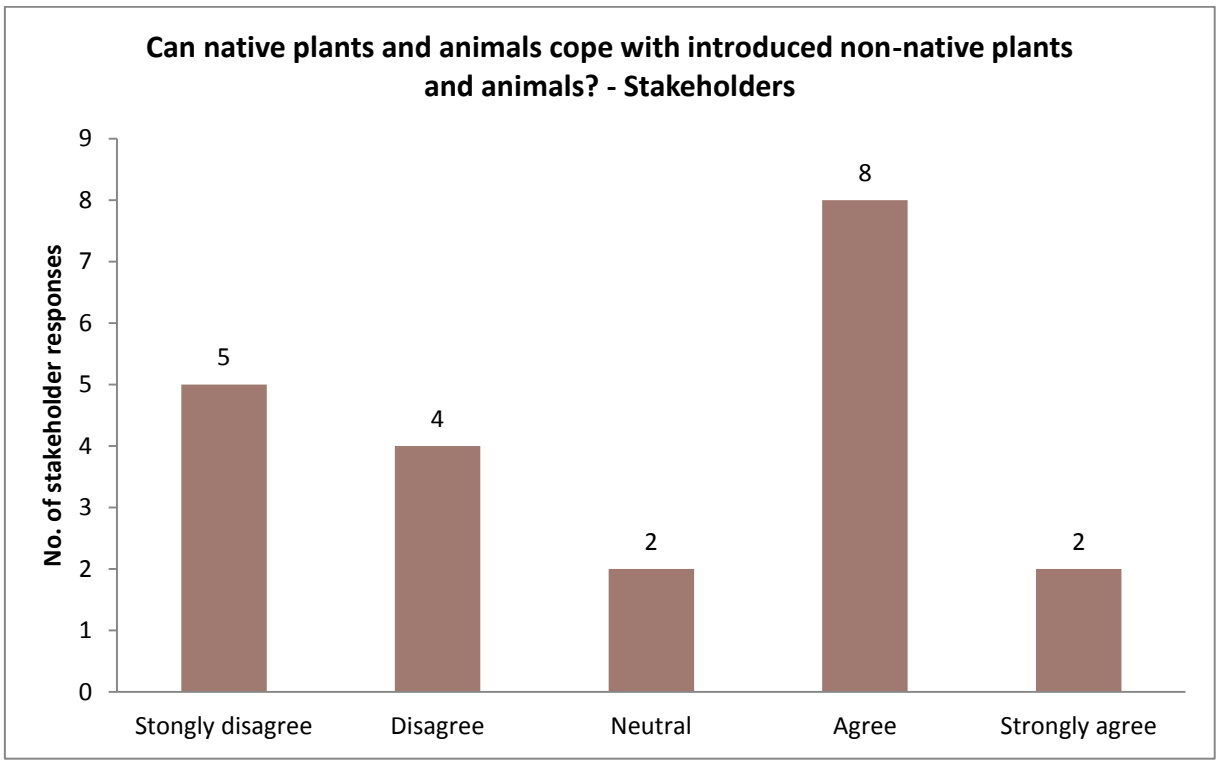


To what extent would you agree or disagree that native plant and animals in Kosciusko National Park can cope with non-native introduced plants and animals?

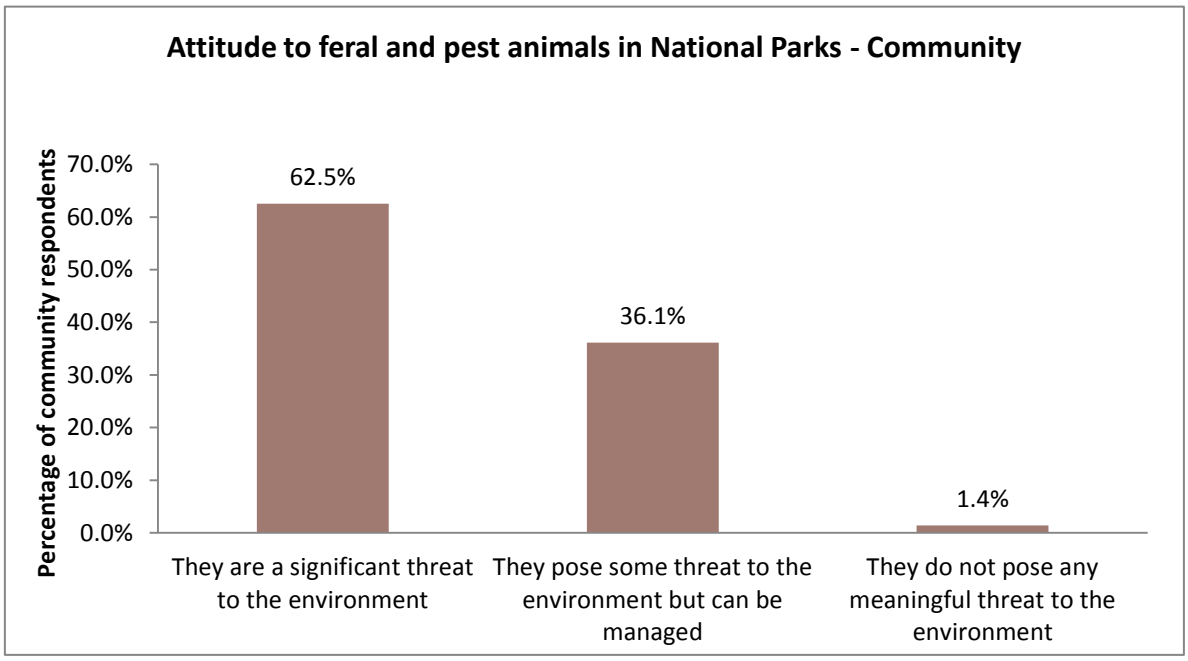


Over 50% of respondents do not believe that native flora and fauna can cope with non-native plants and animals introduced into Kosciuszko National Park. 33.3% of participants were neutral.

Stakeholders had a quite polarised response to this question. For environmental advocates native plants and animals were unable to cope with non-natives species (5 strongly disagreeing, 4 disagreeing), while horse advocates indicated they believed they could (8 agreeing, 2 strongly agreeing). Unlike the community, only two stakeholders were neutral about this question (results below are combined).

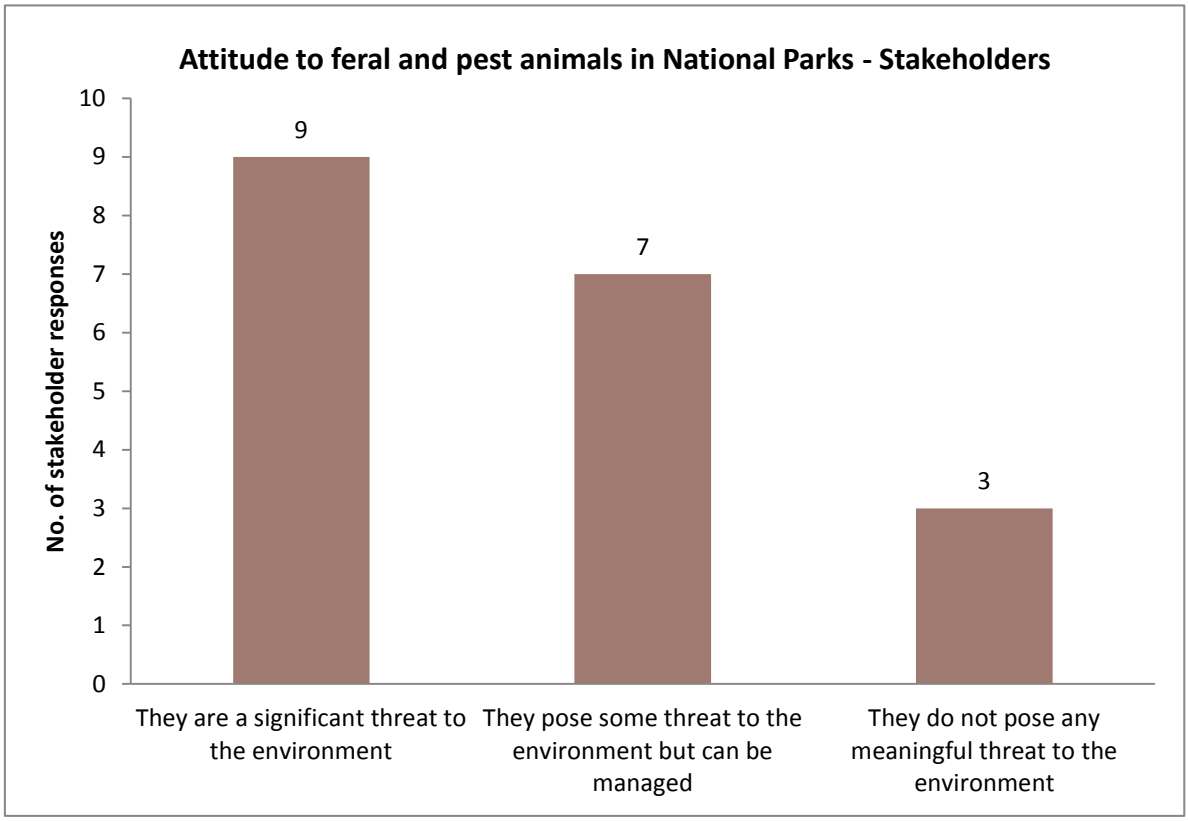


Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude to feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?

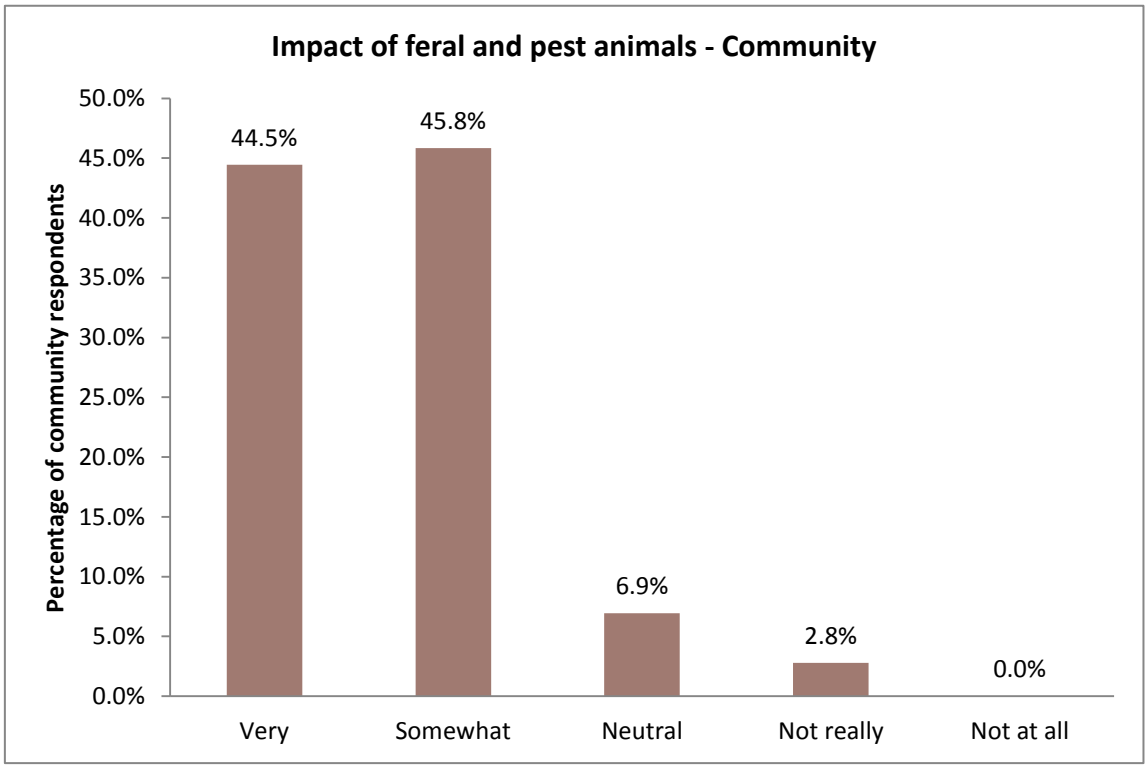


98.6% of community respondents indicated that feral and pest animals pose some threat to national parks with two thirds indicating that they pose a 'significant threat to the environment'.

These results were also reflected in the combined stakeholder responses. All responding environmental advocates (seven) indicated feral and pest animals were a significant threat, while the majority of horse advocates indicated they pose some threat. Three horse advocates did not think they pose any threat in national parks.

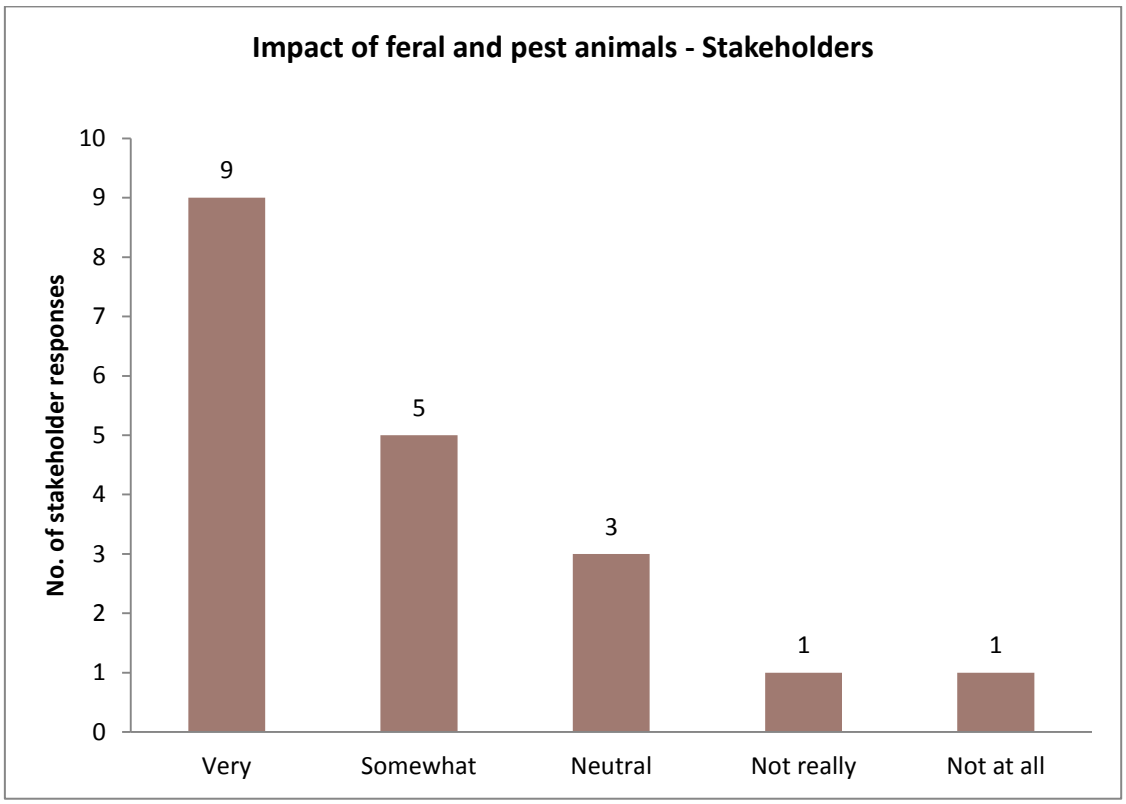


How concerned are you about the impact of feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?

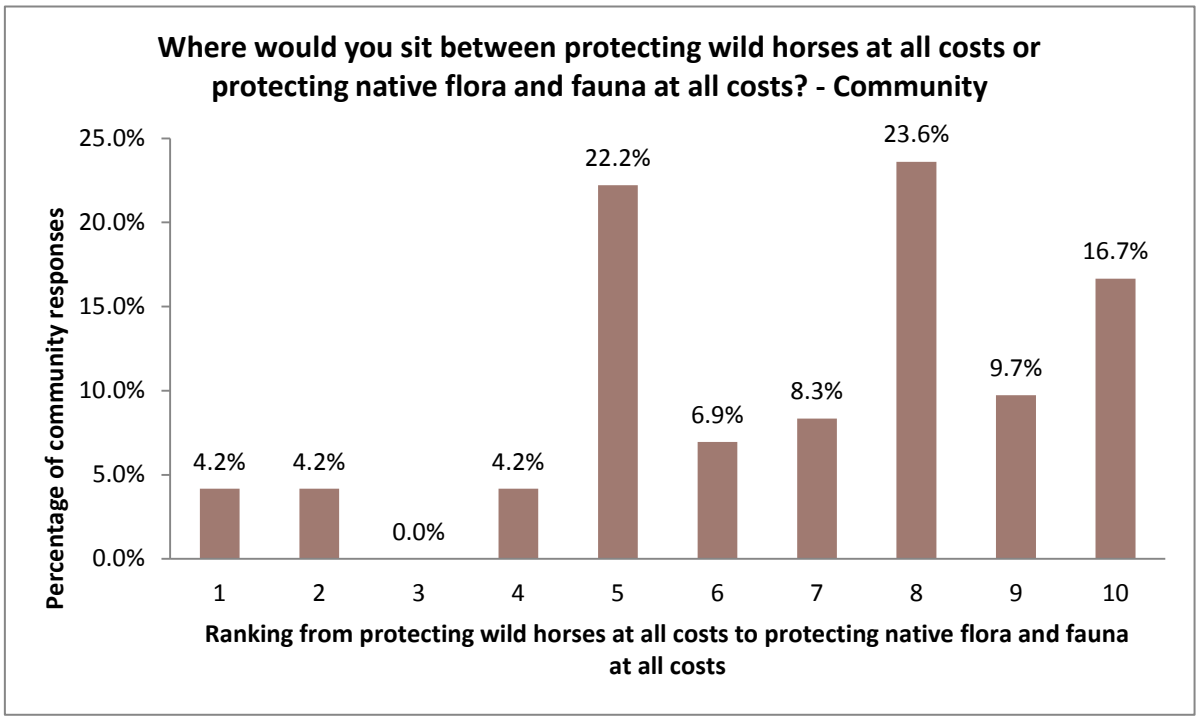


The vast majority of respondents (90.3%) indicated that they do hold concerns regarding the impacts caused by feral and pest animals in national parks.

These results were again paralleled by the combined stakeholder responses. However, all environmental stakeholders (nine) were very concerned about their impact, while the horse advocates were more ambivalent.

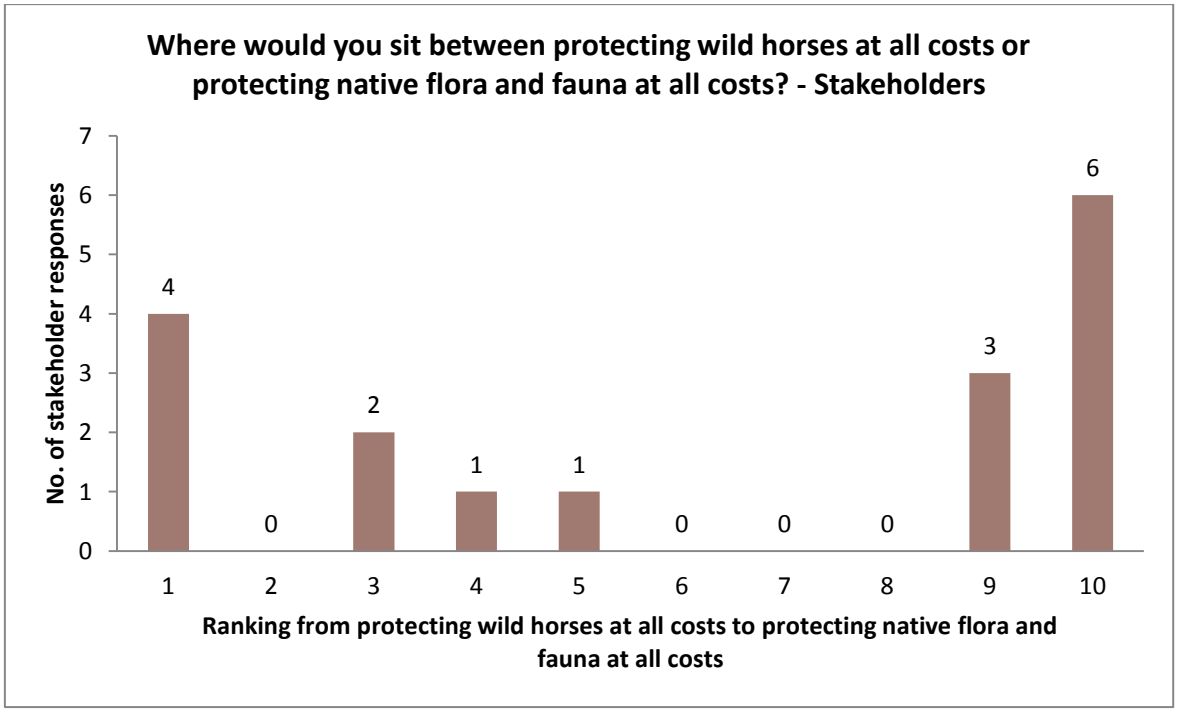


Where would you sit on a sliding scale of 0-10, where 0 means you think the wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs, and 10 means you think the native flora and fauna in Kosciusko National Park should be protected at all costs?

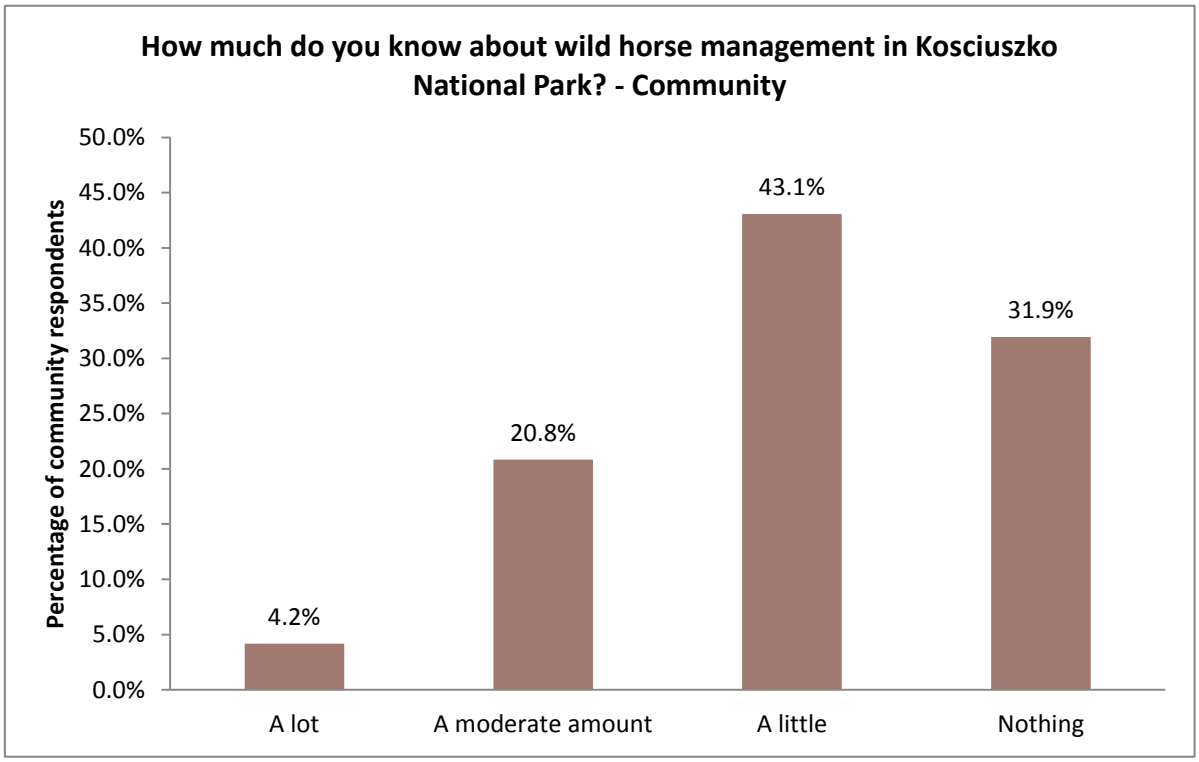


Community respondents results were weighted more towards 10 'native flora and fauna in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs' with 50% scoring between 8-10. It is worth noting that 22.2% of respondents scored this question as a 5.

The results from the stakeholder groups was much more polarised than the community. All but one horse advocate rated this question 1 to 4, while all environmental advocates, rated it 9 or 10.

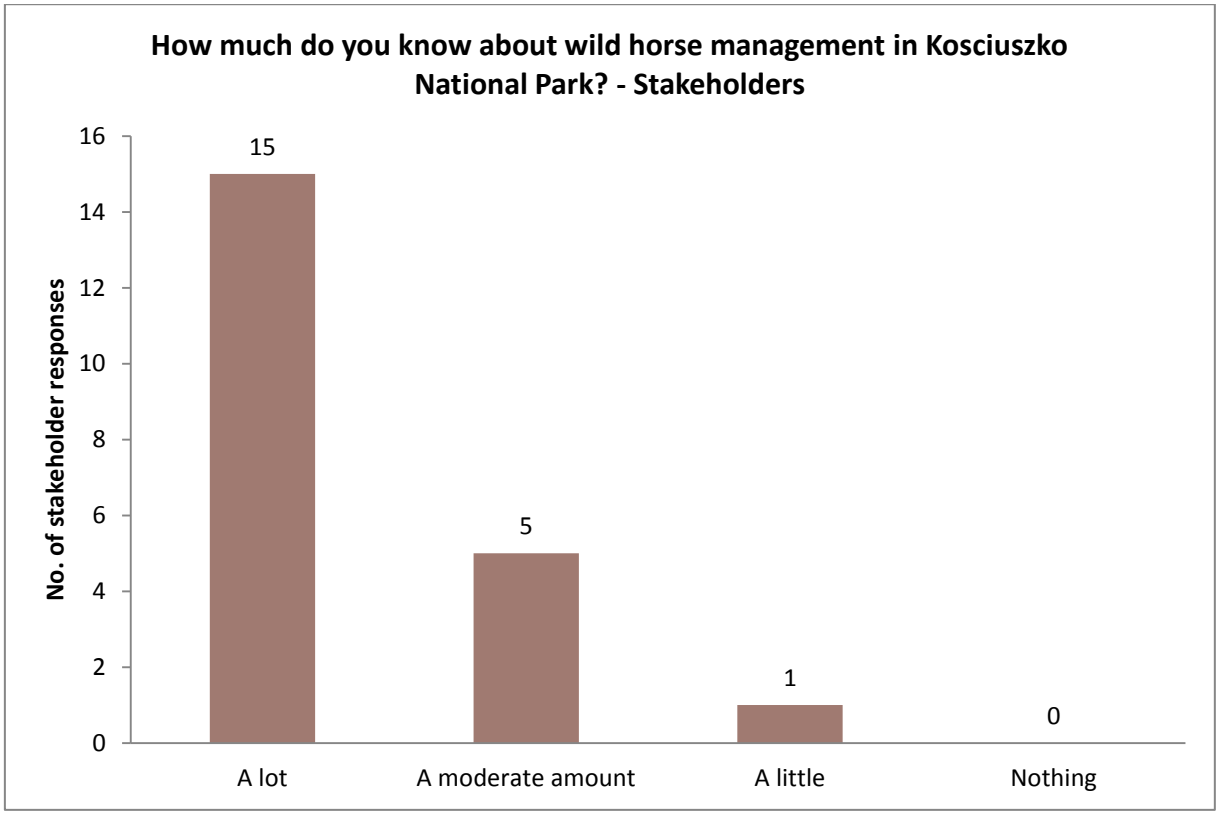


How much would you say you know about the issue of managing the wild horse population in the NSW Snowy Mountains or Kosciuszko National Park?

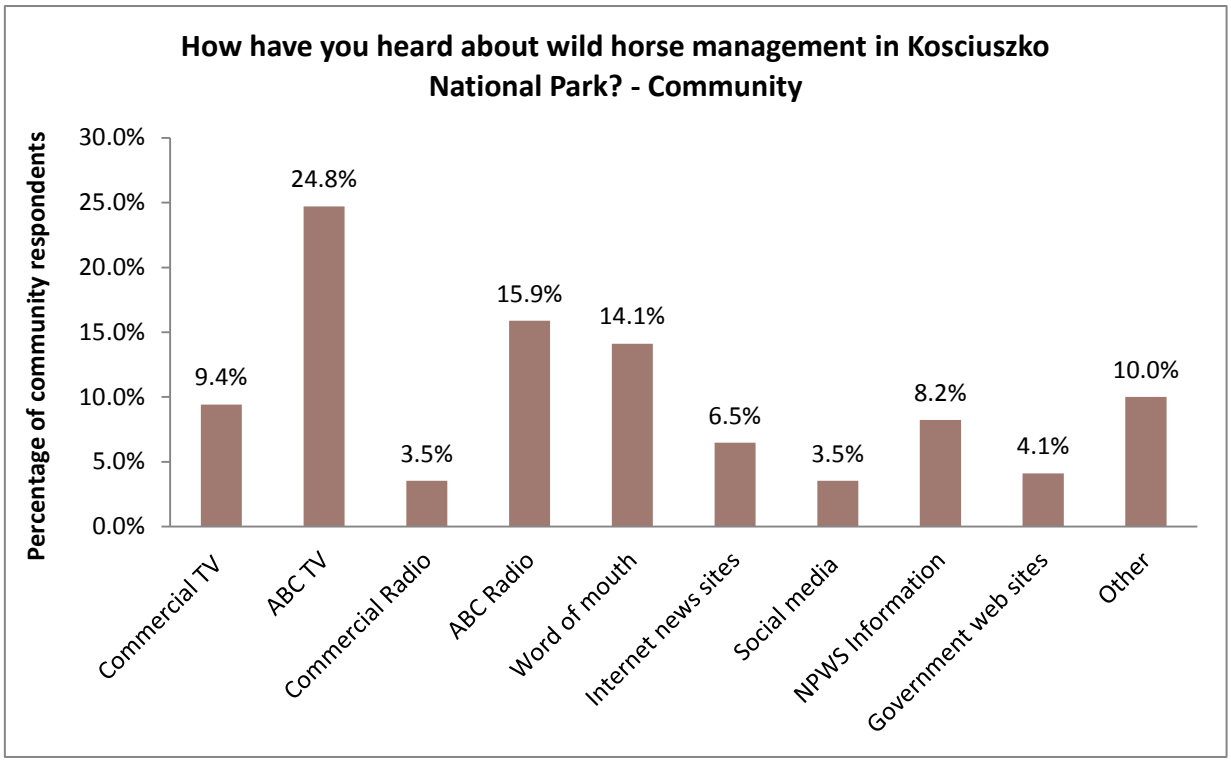


75% of community respondents indicated that they knew 'a little' or 'nothing' about this issue prior to the 21st century town hall meeting.

This was in distinct contrast to stakeholder results with the majority of stakeholders indicating that they knew 'a lot' about this issue.

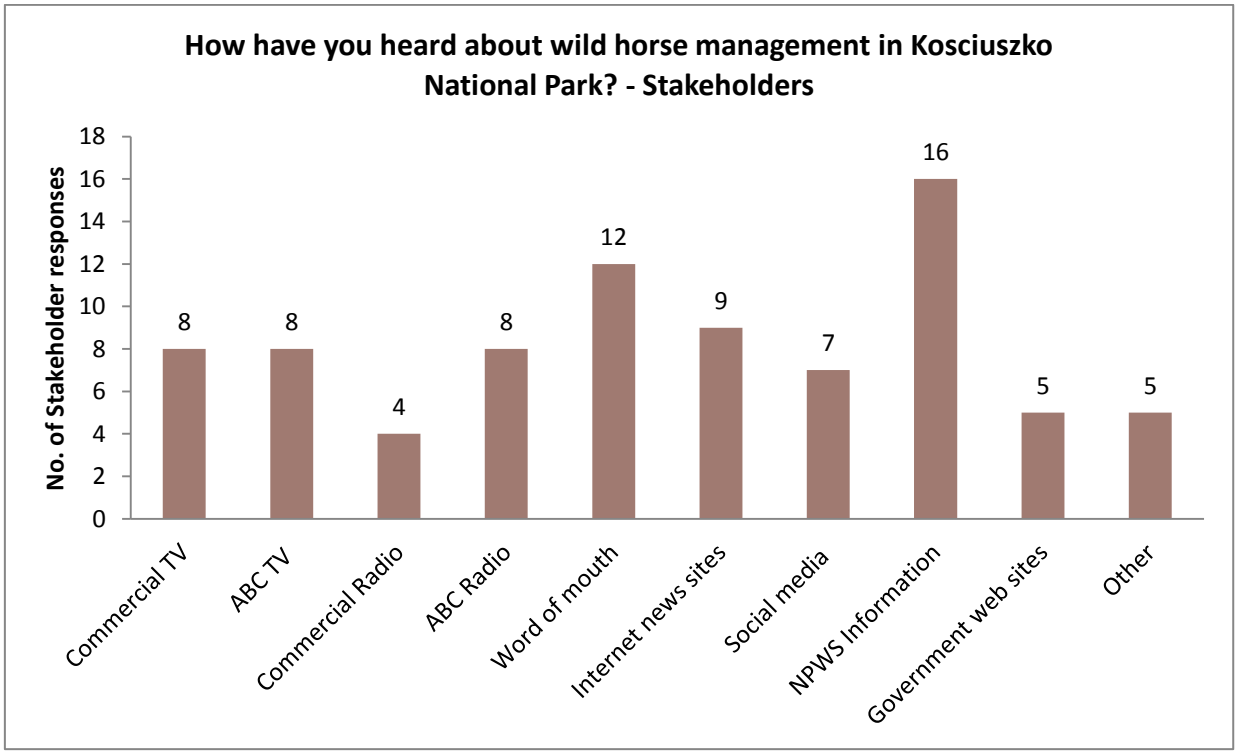


Where have you heard about the management of wild horses? (please tick any that apply)



A significant proportion of public participants who had heard about wild horse management issues in Kosciuszko National Park indicated that this was through the ABC TV, including news and current affairs programs as well as ABC radio (40.7%).

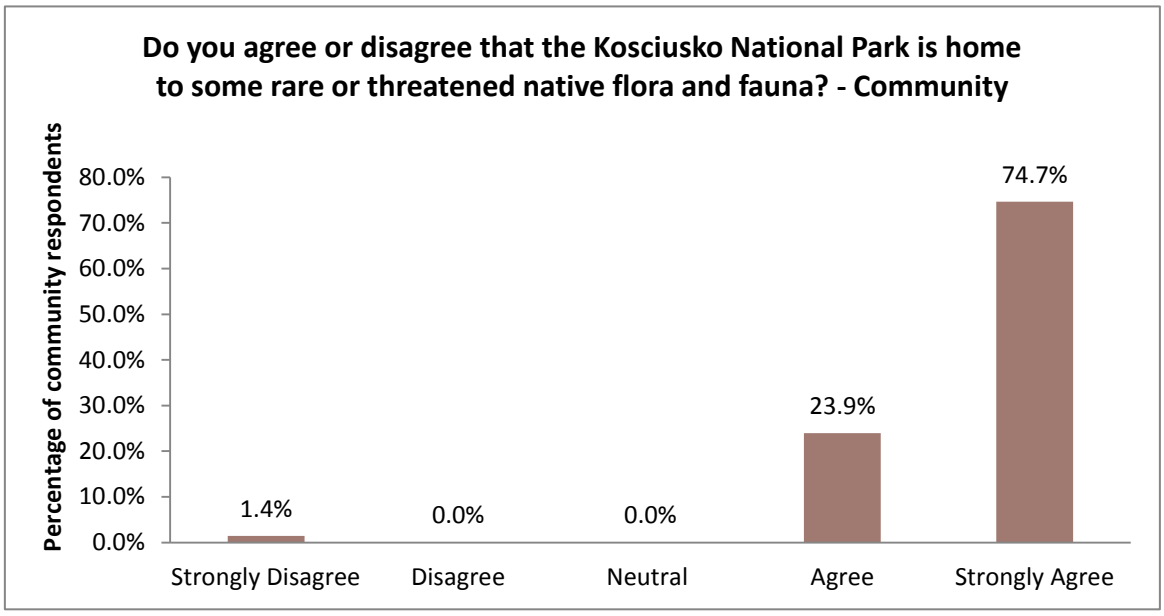
Stakeholders indicated that they gained information about wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park through a variety of sources, but mostly through 'National Parks and Wildlife Service information' and 'word of mouth'.



7.2 Post event survey

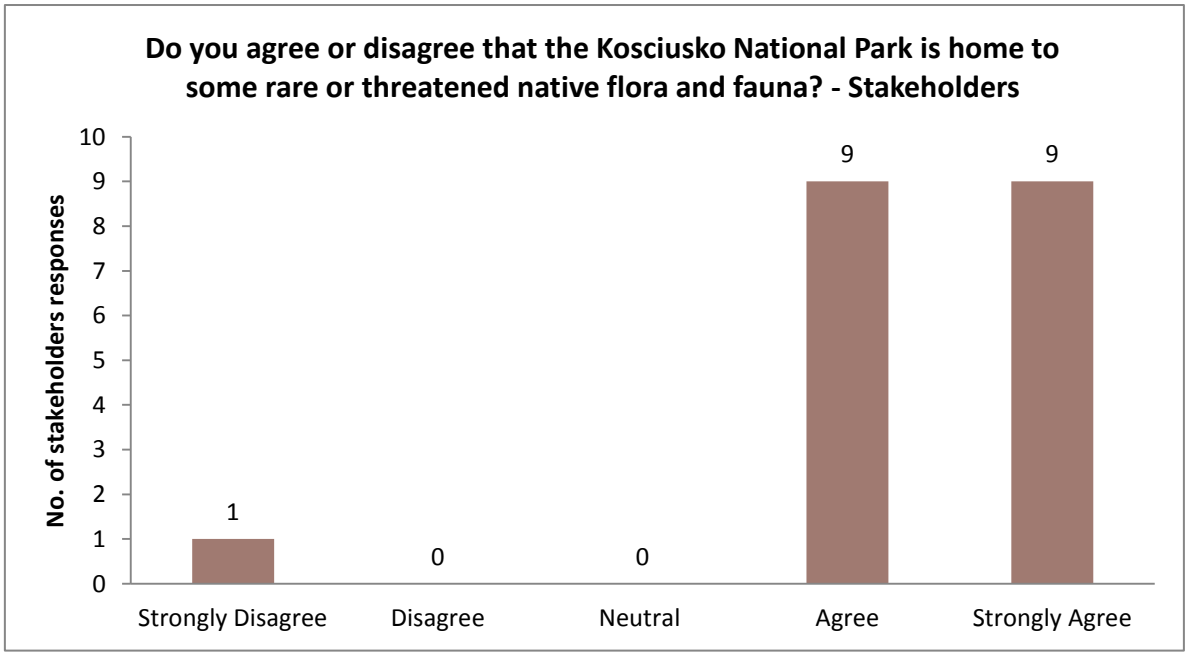
Following the event, participants were asked to complete a post event survey. A total of 91 completed surveys were returned, which was made up of 72 from community participants and 19 from stakeholders.

To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Kosciuszko National Park is home to some rare and threatened native flora (trees and plants) or fauna (animals and birds)?

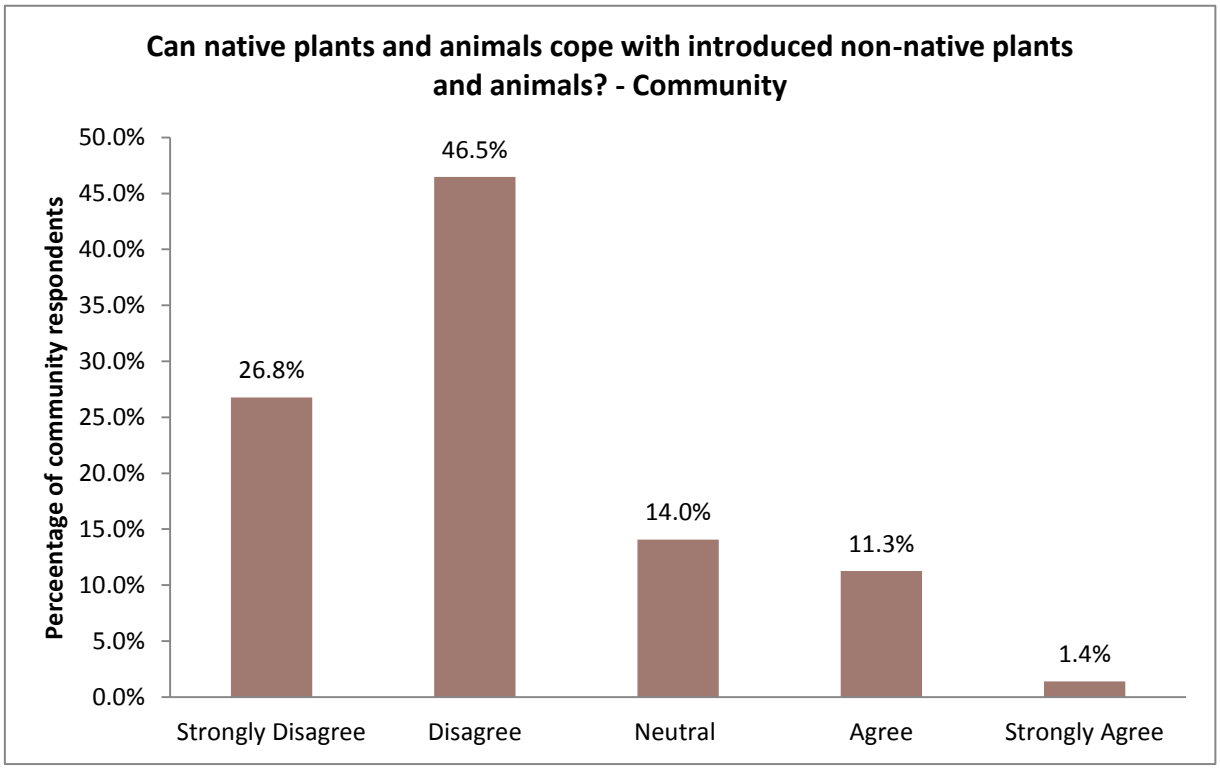


Amongst community respondents there was an increase in those that strongly agreed that Kosciuszko National Park is home to rare and threatened native flora and fauna compared with pre-survey results, (51.4% - 74.7%)

Amongst the 19 respondents from stakeholder groups the results were in line with pre-event survey however more respondents selecting 'agree' rather than 'strongly agree' in the post event survey.

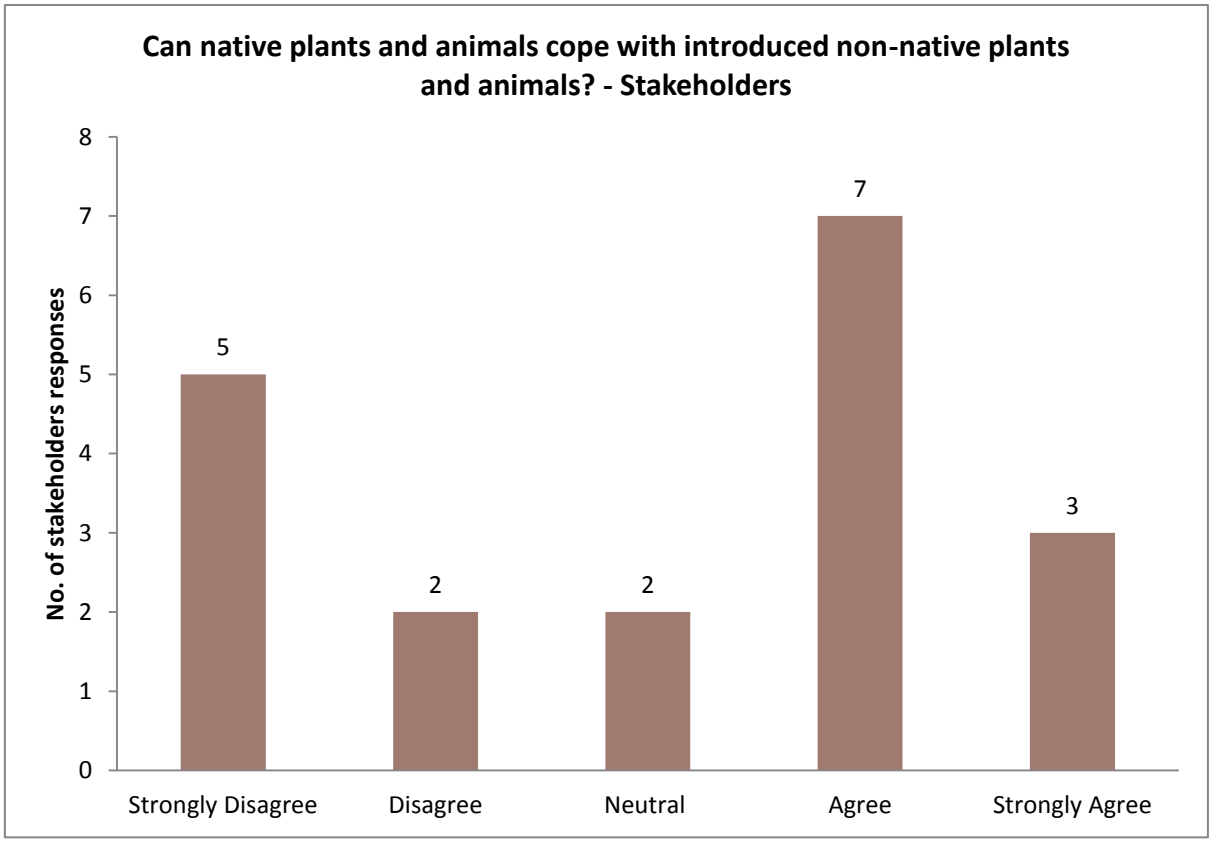


To what extent would you agree or disagree that native plant and animals in Kosciuszko National Park can cope with non-native introduced plants and animals?

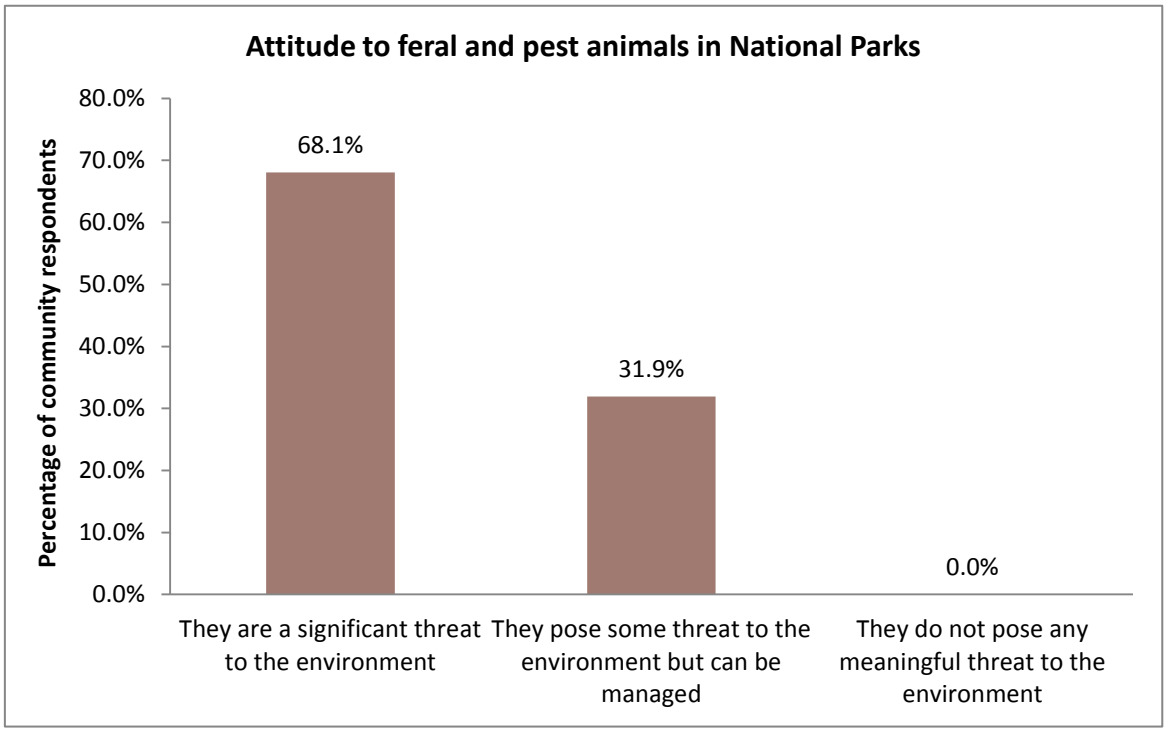


There was an increase in respondents that selected 'strongly disagree' or 'disagree', from 52.8% to 73.3%, and a reduction in respondents that selected 'neutral', from 33.3% to 14.0%.

Stakeholder responses were consistent with pre-event results.

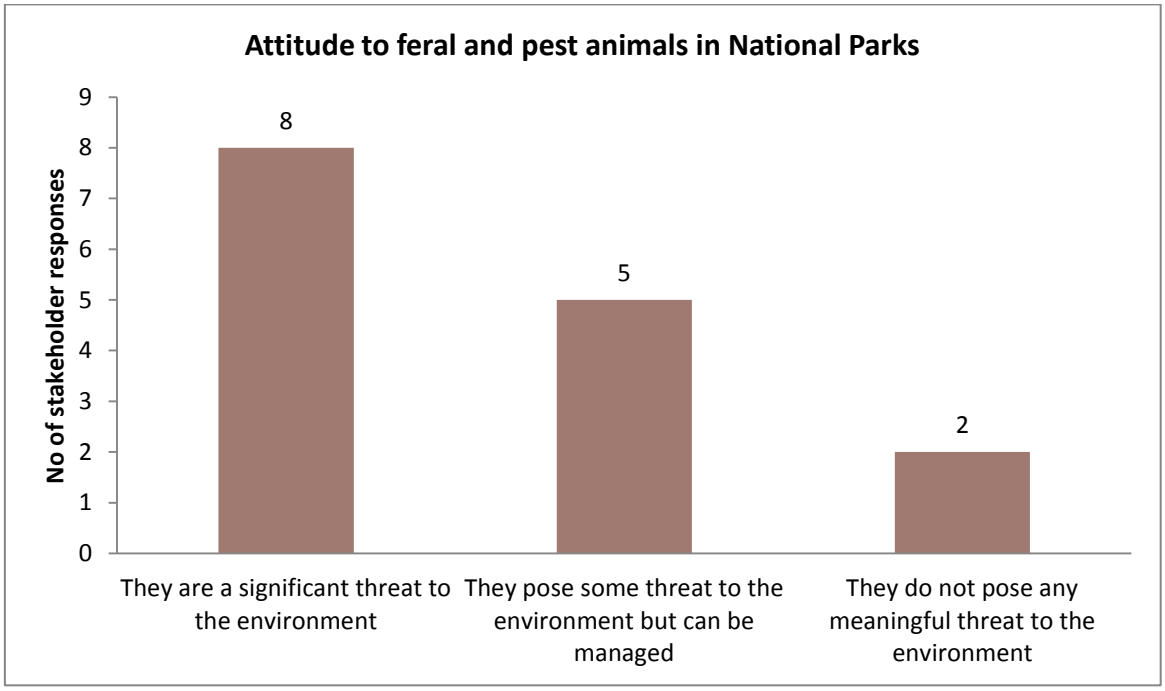


Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude to feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?

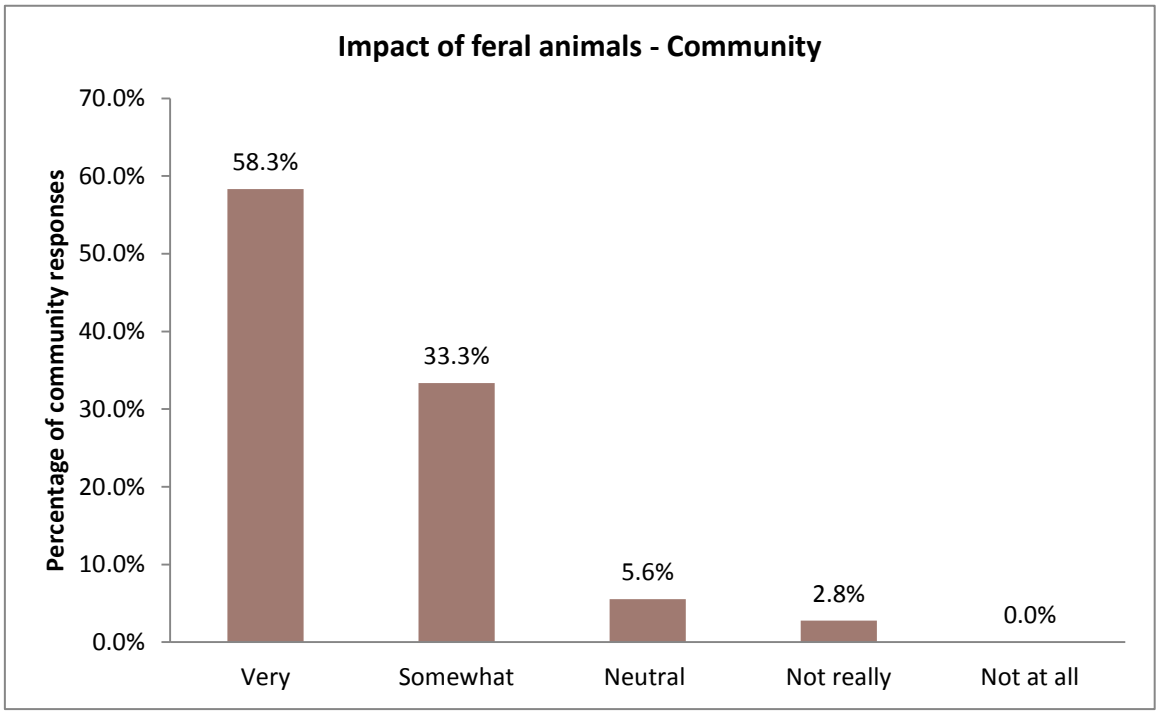


Community respondents had almost identical results to their pre event survey results with no significant variation.

These results were also mirrored by stakeholder group results. It should be noted that a number of stakeholder respondents chose not to respond to this question, as such there is a reduction in overall respondents for this question.

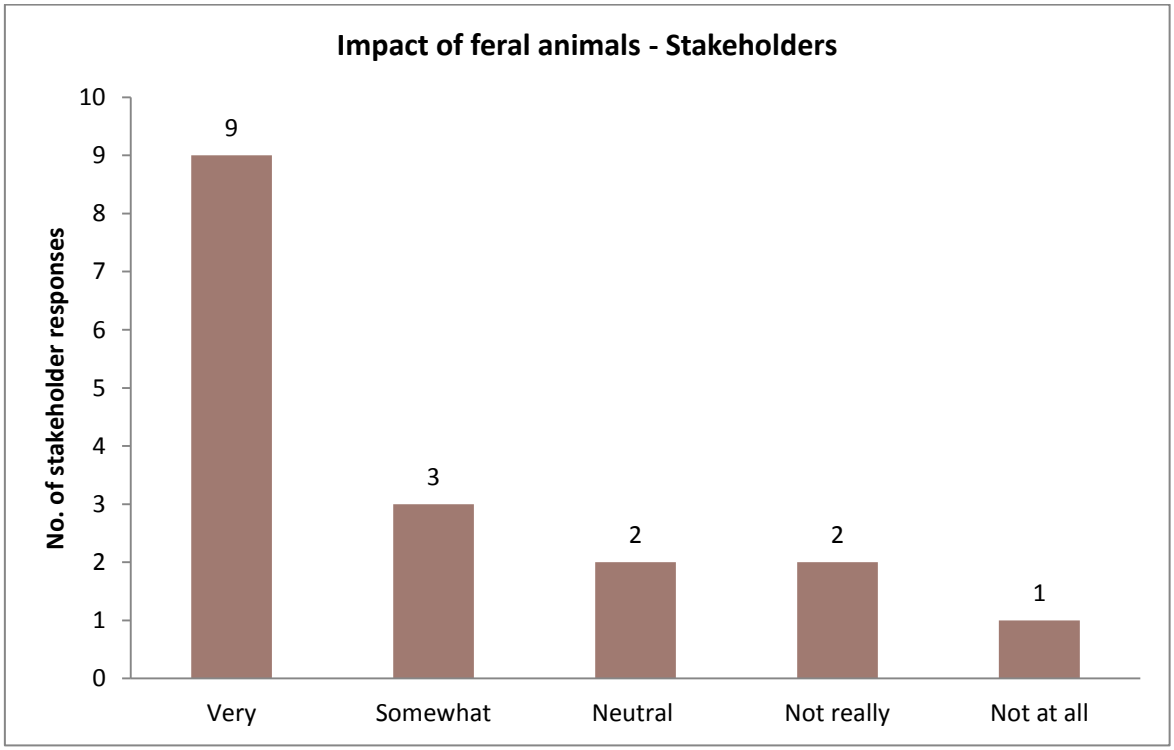


How concerned are you about the impact of feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?

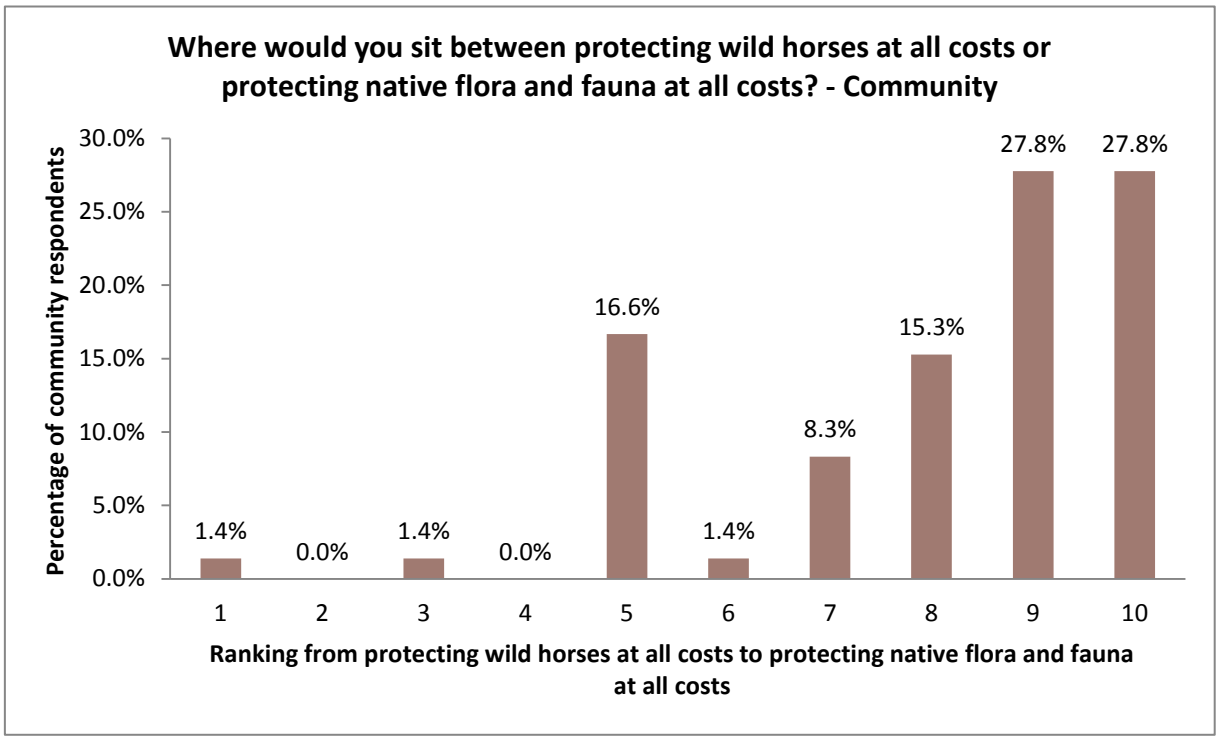


For community respondents the main variation in this result was a larger proportion of respondents who indicated that they were 'very' concerned, which increased from 44.4% to 58.3% of respondents, and the concomitant decrease in respondents who were 'somewhat' concerned (33.3%, down from 45.8%).

Stakeholder responses were again similar to pre event results. There was also a slight reduction in responses from pre to post results from 19 to 17 responses.

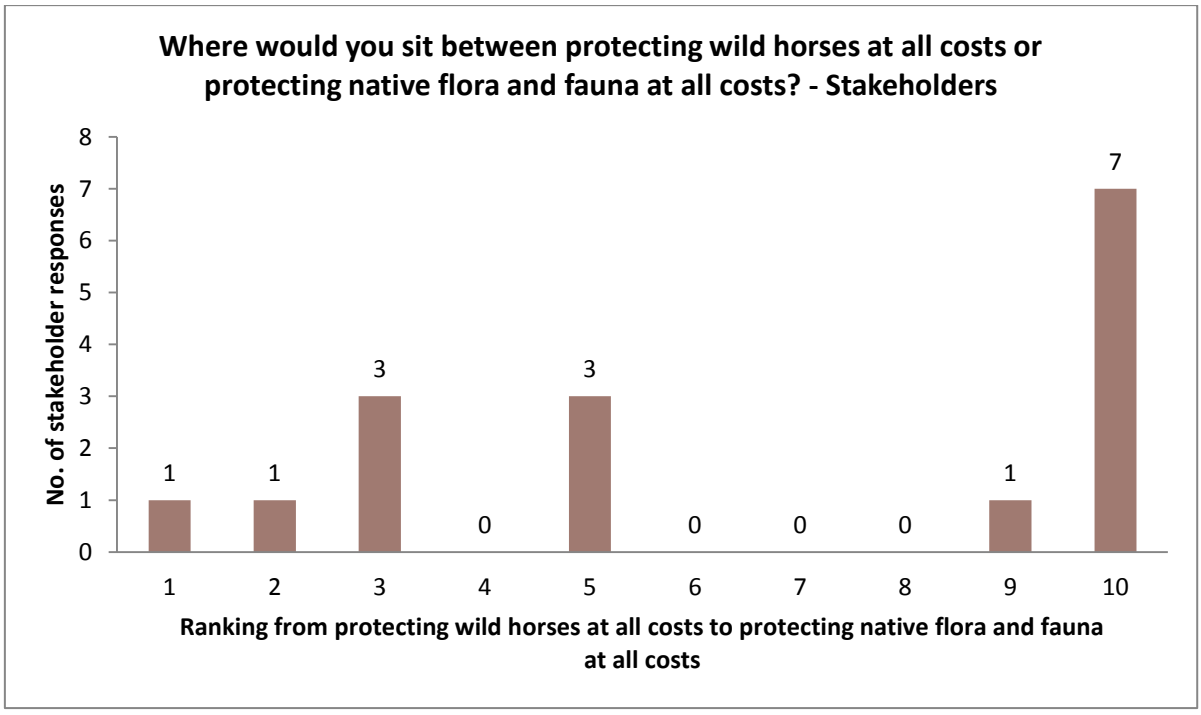


Where would you sit on a scale of 1-10, where 1 means you think the wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs, and 10 means you think the native flora and fauna in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs?

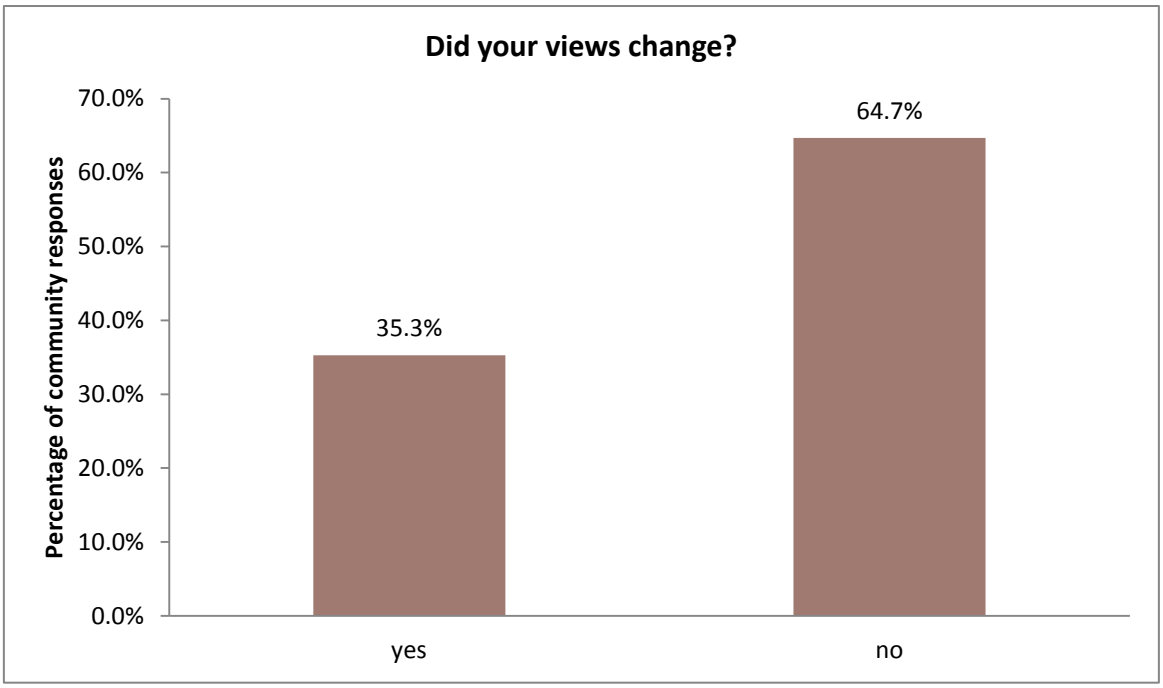


There is a significant shift in results with the majority of respondents scoring themselves as 9 or 10, more than doubling the previous responses from 26.4% to 55.6%, indicating their belief that native flora and fauna in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs.

Stakeholder results are similar from pre to post surveys. It needs to be noted again that there was a reduction in the response rate from pre to post surveys for stakeholders.



Did your views change through the course of the day? Yes/No (Please circle one) if so, how?



As can be seen, two-thirds of respondents indicated that their opinion had not changed through the course of the day. Participants were offered space to provide the reasons for their response. A large proportion (35%) of community respondents indicated that they were more aware/informed about the issues surrounding wild horse management. In some cases respondents indicated that this had affected a change of their views. Other participants indicated that their views had not changed but they felt more informed about the issue which supported their views.

For stakeholders only one respondent indicated a change in views and stated “Yes, horses more a problem than when I entered but also more concerned humane management occurs, probably quick cull.”

7.3 Pre and post survey overarching results

The results obtained through the pre and post surveys for community respondents indicated a general increase in knowledge and understanding regarding the complexity of wild horse management in Kosciuszko National Park. One community respondent stated in their post event survey that their views had not changed, "[b]ut became much more aware of the complexity of the issues."

Amongst stakeholder groups there was little change in results from pre to post, indicating that they believe they have an already high level of knowledge on the issue of wild horse management as well as strongly held views which were unlikely to change, regardless of information presented. As stated by one stakeholder respondent “No change because I have spent years developing, researching and refining these views.”

Considering results from both the pre and post survey results, there appeared to be a slight shift in the views of community respondents. It was more the case that the 21st Century Town Hall Meeting served to affirm respondents previously held views. Qualitative information demonstrated that community respondents felt more informed about the issues. For stakeholders, views did not change over the course of the event.

7 Key findings

Community members

Key findings for community members were:

- Biodiversity, the subalpine environment and recreational space were the most commonly raised reasons for the importance of Kosciuszko National Park. Community members agreed that wild horses in the park should be controlled to protect the flora and fauna, as they are unique species. The majority of community members supported the removal of horses from the park, one-third of whom supported the complete removal of horses. Consistently, the majority of community members supported or strongly supported the protection of flora and fauna
- Community members' views on trapping and removal, then rehoming or transport to abattoir were spread evenly across the spectrum. Responses to discussion questions indicate that there was considerable concern about the stress endured by horses during transport as well as stress associated with the separation of horse social groupings. Differences in the fate of horses, either rehomed or euthanised at abattoir, may have influenced the range of views
- A majority of community members supported trapping and euthanasia at trap site as a control method. Responses to discussion questions suggest that respondents may have supported this method as it avoids the stress transportation to an abattoir put on a horse
- Views on aerial or ground mustering varied widely, with large proportions of community participants both strongly supporting and opposing the control method, as well as a significant proportion that remain neutral. The differences between aerial and ground mustering, may in part, account for this variation. Discussion question responses indicate participants may have been concerned about the stress put on horses and other animals
- Views on fertility control were similarly polarised with a quarter of community members ranking the method either completely unacceptable or completely acceptable. Discussion question responses suggest that respondents may have been concerned about the effectiveness of fertility control but liked the humaneness of the method
- Community members had divergent views on ground shooting, with approximately half of all respondents ranking it as acceptable and half as unacceptable. Slightly more respondents viewed ground shooting as completely unacceptable. Discussion question responses indicate that respondents may have been concerned about who would conduct the shooting and the effectiveness of the method
- While some community members were neutral, the majority of respondents thought brumby running or roping was unacceptable or completely unacceptable. Discussion question responses suggest that concern for the stress and/or pain inflicted on horses and concern about its effectiveness may have been reasons for not supporting this method. The fact it was viewed as a traditional method may have been a reason for some participants supporting the method
- There was strong opposition to fencing as a control method, less than a quarter of community members thought fencing was acceptable or completely acceptable. The visual impact, cost and applicability only to small areas, were issues raised in table discussions about fencing and may be reasons for community members' opposition to the method
- Community responses to aerial shooting were polarised at either end of the scale, however the majority of respondents thought the method was acceptable or completely acceptable. Points raised in table discussions indicate concern about the carcasses being left on site but participants were encouraged by the ability to follow up a non-fatal shot.

- The vast majority of community members felt strongly that the effectiveness of the control method to control population numbers should be the most important consideration and the cost of undertaking the control method should be the least important consideration.

Stakeholders

Key findings for stakeholders were:

- Both horse advocates and environment advocates viewed national parks as very important. However, their views on control methods were highly polarised
- Horse advocates supported trapping and removal, then rehoming or transport to abattoir, although approximately half the horse advocates strongly supported rehoming and strongly opposed transport to an abattoir. There were considerable differences in the views of environment advocates regarding trapping and removal, however more environment advocates did not support the method than supported it
- Half the horse advocates considered trapping and euthanasia unacceptable while the remainder were divided between neutral and acceptable. Environment advocates considered the method acceptable
- One table of horse advocates thought ground mustering was acceptable but aerial mustering was unacceptable. The majority of horse advocates on the other table thought both mustering methods were acceptable. Environment advocates agreed that ground and aerial mustering was acceptable or completely acceptable
- The majority of horse advocates considered fertility control completely acceptable while all environment advocates considered it completely unacceptable
- All horse advocates considered ground shooting completely unacceptable while all environment advocates considered it completely acceptable
- Horse advocates did not have a consistent view on brumby running or roping with views split between completely acceptable, neutral and completely unacceptable. Environment advocates considered the method unacceptable or completely unacceptable
- Horse advocates and environment advocates were polarised in their views on fencing with horse advocates strongly supporting the control method and environment advocates strongly opposing fencing
- Stakeholder groups were similarly polarised in their views on aerial shooting, with all horse advocates strongly opposing the control method and all environment advocates strongly supporting aerial shooting
- Horse advocates thought the humanness of the control method was most important and the cost of undertaking the control method was least important. Environment advocates thought the effectiveness of the control method was most important and agreed with the horse advocates that cost was the least important consideration.

Comparative findings

When comparing outcomes from community members with those of stakeholders, the key findings were:

- Both community members and stakeholders attributed a high level of importance to national parks
- Horse advocates and environment advocates had opposing views in response to most questions. Similarly, many questions regarding population control methods polarised community members, these included aerial or ground mustering, fertility control and ground shooting

- Aerial shooting also divided community members, however the majority of community members thought aerial shooting was acceptable. This is consistent with the views of environment advocates
- Community members largely supported trapping and euthanasia at trap site and opposed brumby running or roping and fencing. These views are consistent with environment advocates who also considered trapping and euthanasia to be acceptable and who also opposed brumby running or roping and fencing
- Community members' views on trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir were evenly spread across the spectrum
- While neither stakeholder group represented the views of community members, community views were more closely aligned with those of environment advocates than horse advocates.

8 Conclusion

The 21st century town hall meeting provided an opportunity for a representative group of 72 randomly selected community members to deliberate about the complex issues underpinning the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park.

Feedback on the event was obtained via a survey, which found that participants thought the content was of interest, the facilitator presented clearly and logically, and that there were opportunities to participate in an engaging and appropriate way.

A pre and post survey was also conducted which showed that participants' felt that while their knowledge and understanding of wild horse management had increased, the event generally affirmed participants' previously held views.

Results showed that community members were divided on their views on aerial or ground mustering, fertility control and ground shooting. The majority of community members supported aerial shooting, and trapping and euthanasia at trap site. The majority of community members opposed brumby running or roping and fencing as control methods.

While neither stakeholder group represented the views of community members, community views were more closely aligned with those of environment advocates than horse advocates.

9 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Agenda

Appendix 2 – Thank you letter to participants

Appendix 3 – Rationale for approach

Appendix 4 – Facilitators Q&As and Fast Facts

Appendix 5 – Management strategies handout

Appendix 6 – Pre event survey

Appendix 7 – Post event survey

Appendix 8 – Event feedback form

Appendix 9 – Transcripts of filmed presentations

Appendix 1 – Agenda

straight Talk

Hear every voice
Know where you stand

Meeting agenda

Meeting:	21st Century Town Hall Meeting - Wild Horse Management Plan Review
Date:	Saturday 29 November 2014
Location	Comfort Inn Airport International Auditorium 57 - 73 Yass Road Queanbeyan NSW 2620
Time:	9:30am – 4:30pm (9:00am arrival for a 9:30am start)

Time	Topic
9:00am	Registration/Sign in
9:30am	Welcome
9:45am	Keepad testing
10:10am	Introduction – Wild Horse Management Plan Review
10:40am	Comfort break
11:10am	Understanding the complexity of wild horse management
12:30pm	Lunch break
1:30pm	Population control methods
3:15pm	Comfort break
3:45pm	Getting the balance right
4:15pm	Thank you and next steps
4:30pm	Close

Appendix 2 - Thank you letter to participants

straight Talk

Haberfield NSW 2045
02 9797 8004
talk@straight-talk.com.au
ABN 79 312 791 934
www.straight-talk.com.au

29 November, 2014

Welcome,

Thank you for your attending this 21st Century Town Hall Meeting as part of the consultation process for the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park. We hope you find the event to be informative and engaging.

Your feedback today is a key input to the review and helps us to understand the values and issues of importance to the community regarding the management of wild horses in Kosciuszko.

In addition to today's event, we are currently collecting feedback through a Kitchen Table Discussion Guide (a copy of which is in this pack) and is also available at: https://engage.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectsnowies.

If you are interested in this review process and would like to discuss this with family, friends and colleagues please hold a kitchen table discussion and forward your feedback before Friday 12 December, 2014 so that this can also be included in the review process. If you know of anyone else who may be interested in being involved in this review process, please pass these details on to them.

In addition to the feedback collected through the consultation process, an independent Technical Advisory Group is also reviewing the plan and providing advice and recommendations to National Parks and Wildlife Service. National Parks and Wildlife Service will consider all this information in its review of the current Wild Horse Management Plan.

Once again, thank you for attending the 21st Century Town Hall Meeting and for sharing your thoughts and suggestions. We greatly appreciate your involvement and assistance by providing your voice to this important issue.

Yours sincerely

Lucy Cole-Edelstein
Director

Appendix 3 - Rationale for approach

21st Century Town Hall Meeting

The 21st Century Town Meeting is a trademarked process developed by the non-partisan, non-governmental organization AmericaSpeaks, based in the USA. It is a public forum that links technology with small-group, face-to-face dialogue to allow hundreds or even thousands of people to deliberate simultaneously about complex public policy issues and express a shared message to decision-makers.

The 21st Century Town Meeting should not be confused with a town hall meeting as the latter is an informal public meeting which gives the members of a community an opportunity to get together to discuss emerging issues and to voice concerns and preferences for their community.

The 21st Century Town Meeting aims to create a level playing field on which citizens can be fully engaged with each other in policy and planning discussions that are directly linked to decision-makers and real governance processes.

*As each meeting begins participants talk about why they attended. They also use their keypads to provide demographic information, thus indicating how accurately the target population is represented. A representative group of participants is important to ensure the results are legitimate to the community and decision makers. (**Carolyn Lukensmeyer, Founder and President, America Speaks)***

The Review of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park is a complex, contentious and important project. It involves identifying and understanding the impact that wild horses are having on this unique National Park and how these can be managed to balance the protection and enhancement of the ecological values of the Park while recognising that for some people wild horses, particularly in this location, represent cultural, historical and animal welfare values that are also strongly held.

The use of a 21st Century Town Hall Meeting as an engagement method for this project has come about for a number of reasons.

Firstly, the debate about these issues has been dominated by the views of the pro-horse and environmental sectors. Both these positions are strongly held and well known, having been involved in formal and informal engagement with NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service for an extended period of time. Both sectors remain concerned that their key objectives – the protection of the wild horses and the environment, respectively – are not and may not continue to be the focus of this next Management Plan. Both sectors have not reached agreement on the level of impact or the most appropriate management methods that should be employed in the Park.

National Parks hold a special place within Australian society in their own right. Not only are they legislated to protect, preserve and enhance the native flora, fauna and ecology of the nation, they are also a major recreational resource for millions of visitors each year. Kosciuszko National Park alone has over four million visitors each year, skiing, bushwalking, camping and riding in the Park.

Identifying and hearing the views and values of everyday citizens whose taxes pay for the Park is therefore an important part of any public policy debate about the Management Plan. It is for this reason that we have identified 75 randomly selected, demographically representative participants to work through some of the major issues for the Management Plan in a 21st Century Town Hall Meeting. Each participant was identified by an independent third party market research firm and those who identified strongly with either the environment or with horses were excluded, leaving us with a group of people who have been invited to attend to discuss issues relating to National Parks.

This form of engagement is designed to bring together complex policy issues and provide the opportunity for small group discussion to identify shared values and views, together with anonymous keepad polling on key questions so the group as a whole can indicate their opinions based on the information presented and the table discussions. Results from the polling will be immediately available to everyone in the room so that a high degree of transparency and accountability can be achieved.

Representatives from both the pro-horse and environmental lobbies have also been invited to attend, to both articulate their views at table discussions but also to observe the proceedings. Video recordings of the key positions of both groups will feature today as will information from National Parks and the RSPCA. As there are not equal numbers of representatives from each group, they will not be indicating their preferences for key questions via the keepads, as this could skew the results; instead, they will be using paper at their tables to indicate their preferences and this will be shared with the room.

At the end of today, National Parks will have available to them a robust set of data which identifies what ordinary everyday citizens think of the key issues for the Review of the Management Plan and the values that underpin these. We will also be talking about specific management measures with a view to understanding the general communities understanding of and willingness to pursue these, and why.

The Review of the Management Plan is being informed by two main data sources – the engagement process, which includes this event, an online forum and website, an online survey, self-directed focus groups or workshops knows as Kitchen Table Discussions and research including focus groups and a telephone survey conducted earlier in the year. The outcomes of all these activities will be reported and provided to National Parks in late January, 2015.

In addition, an Independent Technical Reference Group comprising a range of specialists in the environment, ecology and animal welfare, wild horse population dynamics, and invasive species management is about to commence a review of the Management Plan. The findings of this Group, together with the engagement outcomes, will be considered by National Parks in the drafting of a new five year Management Plan for Wild Horses in Kosciusko National Park. The Draft Management Plan is expected to be exhibited for public comment in the middle of 2015.

Appendix 4 - Facilitators Q&As and Fast Facts

Facilitators Q&As and Fast Facts

Q. What are pest and feral animals?

A. Pest animals are non-native wild animals that have been introduced to the Australian environment, such as foxes and deer.

Feral animals are introduced domesticated animals that have escaped into the native environment and become wild.

Q. How are other pest and feral animals managed?

A. NPWS have a suite of pest and feral animal management plans which utilise a range of different control methods, including baiting, ground and aerial shooting, and trapping.

Q. How are wild horses currently managed in Kosciuszko National Park?

A. The only control method being used under the current Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park is passive trapping and removal.

Q. How many wild horses are there in Kosciuszko National Park?

A. There are an estimated 6,000 wild horses living in the Kosciuszko National Park (Australian Alps National Parks 2014 aerial survey data)

Q. What is the role of the independent Technical Reference Group?

A. The independent Technical Reference Group has been established to: review the available information which identifies wild horse numbers, distribution and impact across the park; provide advice on the most effective and appropriate methods the NPWS could use to control the wild horse population; identify objectives for managing the park's wild horse population.

Q. Is this the only way NPWS is collecting feedback from the community?

A. No, during 2014 a comprehensive engagement program has been implemented, which in addition to this event, includes: an online forum and website (www.environment.nsw.gov.au/protectsnowies); an online survey; self-directed focus groups or workshops known as Kitchen Table Discussions; and research including focus groups and a telephone survey.

Q. What happens next?

A. The engagement program will continue until 12 December 2014, when feedback from the Kitchen Table Discussion Guides closes. The outcomes of all engagement activities will then be analysed and a report to NPWS prepared.

The independent Technical Reference Group will continue its review into 2015 and will also provide a report to NPWS once its review is complete.

NPWS will draft the next iteration of the Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park, which will then be put onto public exhibition, around mid-2015.

NPWS will review submissions on the draft plan, amend it accordingly and then finalise and realise the next Wild Horse Management Plan for Kosciuszko National Park.

Fast Facts

- In the early 1800s there were estimated to be around 3,500 wild horses across all of Australia and less than a few hundred in the Snowies. There are now around 400,000 wild horses in Australia, the largest wild horse population in the world (2011 Commonwealth Feral Horse and Feral Donkey info sheet on www.environment.gov.au)
- Research shows that the numbers of wild horses in KNP increases annually between 6% - 17% with current management practices (Aerial surveys of Australian Alps 2001, 2003, 2009, 2014)
- 2,600 horses have been removed from KNP through trapping since 2002
- In recent years, there has been re-homing demand for approximately one third of the horses trapped and removed. The remainder are transported to abattoir.
- Aerial shooting has not been used as a control method for horses in NSW national parks since 2000.

Appendix 5 - Management strategies handout

Methods that could be considered for the management of the wild horse population

Trapping and removal then rehoming or transport to abattoir

Horses are lured to portable and semi-permanent yards using mineral blocks or molasses. Horses enter the yard of their own will, triggering a gate that encloses them in the yard. Horses may be trapped singularly or in whole groups up to 10 at a time. Horse social groups can be disturbed if some are not trapped. Horses are loaded directly on to a truck or trailer for removal from the park therefore yards can only be placed in areas that have vehicular access. Horses may become highly stressed or injured during this process. It can be very labour intensive taking many weeks to establish and lure horses to a yard which must be checked daily.

Trapping and euthanasia at trap site

Horses are trapped as above, however if there is no option of re-homing they are professionally euthanased at the trap site, removing the stress to horses of loading and transport to abattoir for euthanasia.

Aerial or ground mustering

Horses are mustered using either (or a combination of) helicopter, horse riders or all-terrain vehicles to herd and move them into a yard using long fences and suitable terrain to guide them to the yard. They are then loaded for transport and removed or euthanased on site as above. This method relies heavily on access and finding a suitable location and terrain. There are safety and injury risks to personnel and horses. Mustering places more stress on horses than lure trapping. It is possible to capture a large number of horses at one time where populations are dense.

Fertility control

Several techniques of fertility control exist or are under development, and vary in cost and effectiveness. These include:

- surgical de-sexing (gelding or spaying) of males or females
- contraceptive implants for females
- immunocontraception - where males or females are immunised against their own sperm or eggs.

All three techniques require horses to be trapped or mustered and handled so the method has risk of injury and practical and financial limitations. While surgical de-sexing is permanent, it requires sedation and veterinary assistance. Although some fertility controls can be administered by dart rifle, the range of these rifles means that horses must be trapped or mustered and yarded for the dose to be delivered effectively. These controls wear off over time meaning horses need to be re-captured and retreated every few years.

Methods that could be considered for the management of the wild horse population

Ground shooting

Using trained and qualified shooters, this can be effective in relatively accessible country and was a traditional method of controlling horse numbers when their populations were smaller. In some terrains it can be difficult to follow up a wounded animal and ensure it is killed quickly. Ground shooting is currently used to euthanase injured or very ill horses.

Brumby running or roping

Brumby running involves pursuing and roping horses from horseback, then leading them to where they can be loaded on to a truck and removed or yarded and euthanased. It can target horses in more remote areas than trapping but only removes individual horses and requires suitably skilled riders. With this method there is a risk of injury to riders and horses, both those ridden and pursued, in remote and difficult terrain so not all areas are suitable. There can be high and prolonged stress for horses being pursued, roped and then led to yard or transport. Horse social groups can be disturbed. This practice was a traditional method to manage horse numbers when their populations were smaller.

Fencing

Fencing horses out of sensitive areas is an option for very small areas of particular concern. It is not commonly used to control animals on public land because it can restrict public access and affects the movement of native species. For larger areas such as the alpine area, or along the Alpine Way or Snowy Mountains Highway, fencing would be very expensive to erect and maintain. It would also have significant visual impacts, require grids for public access roads and trails, and could hinder management operations such as firefighting. It could pose safety risks to the public in creating a barrier across the landscape and to horses that become stranded on the road side of a fence. Many areas are not suitable for fencing due to terrain, vegetation and ongoing maintenance requirements.

Aerial shooting

This involves the shooting of animals from helicopters using highly trained, qualified single shooter, pilot, and navigator. An advantage of aerial shooting is that the shooter can locate and get close to the animal, keep track of and follow all animals in a group, and if in rare occurrences, an animal does not die immediately, it can be rapidly followed up and euthanased. Recent research has shown that aerial shooting conducted in appropriate circumstances is very humane with minimal cumulative stress on an animal due to short pursuits and a rapid time to death. Aerial shooting is very cost effective for densely populated areas, but as densities drop the cost can rise. Aerial shooting has not been used as a control method for horses in NSW national parks since 2000.

Appendix 6 - Pre event survey

Pre – event survey

21st Century Town Hall Meeting

Saturday 29 November 2014, 9:30am to 4:30pm

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the 21st Century Town Hall Meeting. The event is being conducted by Straight Talk, a communication and engagement consultancy, who have been appointed by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (NPWS).

Please complete this short survey to help us in our research, it should only take 5 minutes.

1. How often do you visit a National Park in NSW?	Never	Occasionally	Regularly	Often	
2. What do you think are the MAIN purposes of national parks? (Please tick up to THREE)	To allow for and promote appreciation of nature				
	To protect and conserve native plants and animals				
	To allow for education and research				
	To protect natural and unique landscapes				
	To protect and conserve cultural heritage and historic sites				
	To provide for public recreation within, and enjoyment of natural areas				
	To provide tourism opportunities				
3. Have you heard of Kosciuszko National Park?	Yes		No		
4. Have you ever visited Kosciuszko National Park?	Yes		No (go to Q6)		
5. If yes to 4, approximately how many times?	Once	2-3 times	4 or more		
6. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Kosciuszko National Park is home to some rare or threatened native flora (trees and plants) or fauna (animals and birds)?	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
7. To what extent would you agree or disagree that native plant and animals in Kosciuszko National Park can cope with non-native introduced plants and animals?	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**

Please turn over to answer the questions on the back →

Pre – event survey

8. Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude to feral and pest animals in National Parks generally? (Please tick ONE)	They are a significant threat to the environment	
	They pose some threat to the environment but can be managed	
	They do not pose any meaningful threat to the environment	

9. How concerned are you about the impact of feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?	**Very**	**Somewhat**	**Neutral**	**Not really**	**Not at all**

10. Where would you sit on a sliding scale of 1-10, where 1 means you think the wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs, and 10 means you think the native flora and fauna in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs?

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

11. How much would you say you know about the issue of managing the wild horse population in the NSW Snowy Mountains or Kosciuszko National Park?	A lot	A moderate amount	A little	Nothing

12. Where have you heard about the management of wild horses? (Please tick any that apply)	Commercial TV news and current affairs	
	ABC TV News and Current affairs	
	Commercial Radio	
	ABC Radio	
	Word of mouth	
	Internet news sites	
	Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Blogs etc.)	
	NPWS Information	
	Government web sites	
	Other/have not heard	

Thank you. We appreciate your time and feedback.

Appendix 7 - Post event survey

Post – event survey

21st Century Town Hall Meeting

straight Talk

Saturday 29 November 2014, 9:30am to 4:30pm

Thank you for participating in the 21st Century Town Hall Meeting. To help us understand if this day has been informative, can you please complete this short survey. It should only take 5 minutes.

1. To what extent would you agree or disagree that the Kosciuszko National Park is home to some rare or threatened native flora (trees and plants) or fauna (animals and birds)?	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
2. To what extent would you agree or disagree that native plant and animals in Kosciuszko National Park can cope with non-native introduced plants and animals?	**Strongly disagree**	**Disagree**	**Neutral**	**Agree**	**Strongly agree**
3. Which of the following statements best reflects your attitude to feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?	They are a significant threat to the environment				
	They pose some threat to the environment but can be managed				
	They do not pose any meaningful threat to the environment				
4. How concerned are you about the impact of feral and pest animals in National Parks generally?	**Very**	**Somewhat**	**Neutral**	**Not really**	**Not at all**
5. Where would you sit on a sliding scale of 1-10, where 1 means you think the wild horses in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs, and 10 means you think the native flora and fauna in Kosciuszko National Park should be protected at all costs?					

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

6. Did your views change through the course of the day? Yes / No (Please circle one)
If so, how?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you
This is the end of the survey. We appreciate your time and feedback.

Appendix 8 - Event feedback form

Event feedback form

21st Century Town Hall Meeting

Saturday 29 November 2014, 9:30am to 4:30pm

To help us continually improve the way we engage, we ask you to complete this very short feedback form. All responses will be treated confidentially.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
The meeting timing was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
The meeting venue was appropriate	1	2	3	4	5
The meeting objectives were clearly stated	1	2	3	4	5
The event facilitator presented clearly and logically	1	2	3	4	5
The meeting content was interesting	1	2	3	4	5
The table facilitator allowed me and others to have a say	1	2	3	4	5
There were opportunities to participate in an engaging and appropriate way	1	2	3	4	5

Do you have any suggestions about how the meeting could have been improved?

_____

_____

_____

What did you value most about today's meeting?

_____

_____

_____

Do you have any other comments about the review of the Wild Horse Management Plan?

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your feedback. Please return this sheet at the end of the meeting.

Appendix 9 - Transcripts of filmed presentations

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Mick V2_1

M My name is Mick Pettitt. I'm the Regional Manager of Southern Ranges Region. The National Park's, ah, ha-has as its main regulation to manage the parks for the, the flora and fauna so, so for animals and plants and the biodiversity and the, and the unique, ah, features that occur through those, ah, the geological features as well so the land forms and land masses. So our main role is to make sure that these reserves are protected, conserved, managed and used by the, the public and are there for the future of, ah, of our children and grandchildren.

The Snowy Mountains, ah, are very important to us, um, within National Parks, within Australia, within the world as well. Ah, as I mentioned we do manage a lot of reserves so seventy-five plus reserves across the Southern Ranges region but by far the biggest is Kosciuszko National Park. It is an iconic park for a number of reasons and when you think of Kosciuszko it ranges from around about two hundred metres above sea level right through to the tallest mountain in Australia at two thousand, two hundred and twenty-eight metres in a very ancient land mass as well which is Australia so, ah, in that area we have unique sort of features that don't appear anywhere else either in Australia or the world and we have some plant species, ah, that only exist here and we have some animal species that only exist in Kosciuszko itself, nowhere else in the world so it's, it's quite a, um, a unique, um, setting, quite important, ah, for a variety of reasons not just 'cause of the plants and anim- animals as well but it is the, the story to water, um, so water is very important for our dry continent and, ah, obviously from Kosciuszko feeds into the Murray, the Murrumbidgee, the Snowy River so it's a very important system and we need to make sure that we protect that system. It's a fine balance between, ah, being able to use it for recreation, allow people in to enjoy the, the sights but also protecting it for its environmental values and of course we've got some, um, great geological issues, ah, with cast which is basically limestone so cave

systems. All of these take hundreds of thousands of years to get where they are and so our concern is if we're impacting on those, ah, the ability to recover is very, very slow. For cave systems for example they take thousands of years to develop so if we're damaging cave systems then it's, they're not going to recover and, um, they'll, ah, and if they do it's going to take thousands of years.

The issue for us is that we have a management plan. We've had some horse management plans, there's a third iteration of that and it's the reason why we're going through that is because it's been five years and we need to review that plan but, um, what we're seeing is that it, it is not, ah, doing what we wanted to do was actually reduce the impact of horses within Kosciuszko. Numbers are still growing, the impacts are still there, in fact some increasing so we need to look at, um, ways of managing horse population.

What we're doing at this stage is trying to understand what people's views are, ah, about horses themselves, about the management of horses, how we interact with horses as a society and as a, a National Park and that's the reason why we're going through this community engagement to actually understand what people think and try and, ah, help inform us as well. The other, um, stage is to get a scientific approach to, um, the impact of horses, how you manage horses and how you manage, ah, ah, horse removal on, in a, ah, humane approach as well and what works and things have, you know, as a, as an agency we have to, ah, have things that we can use at various, ah, times of the year or various, um, geographic reasons and things that are effective as well and when I say effective, ah, in ability to remove horses but in a cost effective manner at the same time. We have to be very mindful that we are using, you know, the state's resources to manage a, an issue so we have to be very careful how we do that.

The, with, with every pest management programme we have, ah, we have very strict controls on how we, um, impact on the animal itself so the cornerstone for all pest management practices for us is the humane treatment of any animal, whether it be a pig, a rabbit through to the horse itself so we're very mindful of the fact that we don't want to put the animal under, ah, too much stress or duress, ah, before its actually removed, ah, from

the park as well. So, um, the basis to our whole, ah, review is to have humane treatment of horses.

I think the, the issue of horses as I mentioned is a very emotive, ah, topic and one that, um, there's going to be a whole range of views but what we have to do as land managers is understand, respect those views, respect the horse itself and how we manage it in a humane process but really looking at protecting the core value of Kosciuszko. The core value of Kosciuszko is a, ah, a reserve of national, ah, heritage significance and recognising that it [background noise] has a key recreational mode as well [background noise], ah, within it that people love to come [background noise] to Kosciuszko so it's, it's trying to manage all those things, um, ah, which makes it quite [background noise] a complex process.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Dr Linda 1

L My name is Dr Linda Broom. I'm a Senior Threatened Species Officer with the Office of Environment and Heritage.

I look after small furry animals, um, such as the Mountain Pygmy-Possum, um, the critically endangered Smoky Mouse and other small n-native species.

The Snowy Mountains are very important because they're a unique environment and very little of Australia is above twelve hundred metres which is mainly where I work and where these endangered fauna that I work on occur. Um, it, it's also very unique flora in that there are species like the Mountain Plum Pine that o-occur associated with Mountain Pygmy-Possum and a lot of, um, native heathland shrubs and they're all very vulnerable to, um, influences such as trampling and grazing and lack of water, um, things that we're worrying about at the moment with, with increasing temperatures and less rainfall.

Kosciuszko is special because it's a very, well, ah, a, a number of ways. It's a very small area. It's a very unique area. Um, you can see this [background noise], I took a flight from Canberra down to South Australia and the plane goes on the western side of Kosciuszko. You can see Kosciuszko in the distance and it, it's this line of mountains and at that time there was snow on the top and it's this wild remote area and you look down and as far as you can see from the aeroplane in the other direction are crops. There's canola, there's wheat, it's all man disturbed for as far as the eye can see and it just brings home to you how special this tiny little mountain environment is that's sitting up there in the corner of Australia and it is had very few impacts relatively compared to the rest of the surrounding area and it's something that's so special that we really must look after it.

The plant species and the animal species do interact because for example some of the, the little alpine herbs, um, will get sheltered by the shrubs from extreme winds or from snow in the winter. The shrubs will hold the snow above the ground which then will protect what's

underneath the snow layer. If you lose the shrubs then the snow will sit directly on the ground, um, and that will then affect some of the herbs that are underneath, um, and again to keep the Mountain Pygmy-Possums or the small animals like the, the Mastacomys, the Broad Toothed Rat which is actually active during the winter underneath the snow, um, to provide a habitat for it you need the shrubs to support the snow for those animals to move around under and to eat the grasses that, that also occur under there. So once you start removing one element like either the shrubs that break off easily or the grasses that might be trampled or eaten then you're disrupting the habitats of those native animals that rely on that whole ecosystem.

The water system up there is very important too because the bogs act like a big sponge. You have, um, a lot of, um, sphagnum moss in a, in an untouched, untrammelled swamp, they absorb water. Um, it provides habitat for little insects, dragonflies, frogs, native frogs, um, corroboree frogs which still occur in some areas but used to be much wi-wider spread and we still have a hope of re-establishing those corroboree frogs once we tackle the problem of the, the fungus that's affecting them so we need these, these little swamps to stay in a pristine condition.

So once you trample the bogs and you lose the sphagnum moss and the sponge like effect, the water runs faster through those areas and then starts scouring out the bogs, um, removing the, the vegetation layer and then it's very hard to reconstitute those bogs after that happens because it becomes a running stream and you no longer have the bog, um, and, and that causes deterioration in the whole water system because you no longer have the, the slow release of water from the bogs during the summer so it dries out much quicker, um, the vegetation around the area then changes and you've completely d-destroyed that whole ecosystem.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Rob 1_1

R I'm Rob Pallin. I'm, um, I'm the Executive of the Nature Conservation Council of New South Wales.

Nature Conservation Council, I, um, I mainly got involved through bushfire issues, um, in u-using bushfire for, um, or fire for, ah, ecological outcomes, um, and, um, I, I also have got a long term interest in, ah, management of National Parks. I was on the National Parks Advisory Council for eight years and I'm on the South Coast Advisory Committee for National Parks.

The Snowy Mou-Mountains are important to me and, and to Australia, um, because, um, they're, they're the only large area of alpine and sub-alpine vegetation and the animals that live within that environment. Um, it, it's, i-it's very special in Australia, um, and it, it's also important for low key recreation like bushwalking and ski touring.

I've grown to love the, the Snowy Mountains, um, over many years because my wife and I have been walking and ski touring in the Mountains for at least fifty years, um, and, ah, it, it's, we've, we've grown to know it really well and we've grown to, to love the area and, and all its diversity from, from the high alpine areas around Kosciuszko, um, to the, ah, the lower areas around Long Plain and that area and we have noticed more and more damage especially in that Long Plain northern area, um, from feral animals.

The main animal species that, um, ah, that threaten, um, conservation and, and this, the, ah, existence of, of native species would be foxes, cats and then hard hooved animals like, like horses. There also are weeds which are a major issue but that's, um, but that's being dealt with in a different way, um, but the, it, it's, the, the Aus-, the Australian wildlife conservancy has estimated that there are seventy-five million, um, native animals eaten each night across Australia by cat, by feral cats and that's an enormous number. Um, how right it is we don't know but, but i-it's, it is a large number but in Kosciuszko the main, um, threats would be

foxes that eat a lot of the, the small animals and cray-, and the native crayfish and horses which tend to trample a lot of the wetland areas.

I suppose the, the, the main elements that are important i-is, is that the, the horses do a, ah, ah, enormous damage to the, to the wetland areas, um, and, and this effects the, the animals, the native animals that live in those areas and it also affects the, the, the, ah, increases the erosion out of those wetland areas. I, I think it's important to understand that, um, that only five to six percent of the state is reserved in National Parks and they're the only areas that the prime purpose is conservation, um, and I think we ought to be making sure that, that that's protected as well as possible. Um, if, if animals like horses are causing enormous damage to, to the area then we've got to either remove them totally or get them down to a number, um, where they're, they're not, where they're causing minimal damage. It's sometimes not possible to remove all, all of, ah, a, a feral animal, um, out of a National Park but I think horses it can be done. Um, the other, the other things are the, um, ah, we're, i-if we're removing animals but they've got to be done, it's got to be done humanely as possible. Um, some people complain about using ten eighty for foxes and that, that ha-, that is not the mo-, you know, it, it's not a humane, ah, way of doing it 'cause they do suffer a bit but it, it's, um, but, ah, they're eating large numbers of native animals so there's other damage happening at the same time so it's the best way we have of removing foxes. Horses can be done in a much more humane way either by aerial shooting or by trapping, um, and, and then dealing with them at that point, um, and I, I, I think it's, wh-where there's, where there is a conflict, um, between the natural values of, of a National Park and the cultural values like some people claim that these feral horses have cultural value, um, then I think the natural values must be supreme, they must be paramount.

I think, I believe the National Parks and Wildlife Service should be very, doing, doing all they can to protect the natural environment within National Parks. Um, it's really important that those areas are protected from feral animals and from, um, weeds, um, so that, so that the, the natural, um, eco systems can continue to develop, ah, and well can continue to exist and to evolve.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Leisa 1

L My name's Leisa Caldwell. Um, I'm an Office Bearer and one of the founding members and a life member now of the Snowy Mountains Horse Riders' Association.

The Horse Riders' Association, ah, began in the early 1985, um, after the, ah, 1983 Plan of Management was adopted. In 1981 the draft of the Plan of Management came out on public exhibition which stated that horse riding would continue as it always had done and that brumby running would continue to be used as a management tool with a permit system so we had, um, no problems with that. Then when the Plan of Management was finally adopted and gazetted we had been prohibited and pretty much our heritage had been hijacked.

Here in the Snowy Mountains the brumbies are not just part of, um, an integral part of the high country natural environment, they're, they reflect our history, our ancestors and our culture. Um, that's a heritage that gives us our, our own identity and a sense of belonging I guess, um, and riding in the Mountains and riding with the brumbies it's, it's what we do. We know nothing else. It's what our fathers handed down to us and our grandfathers.

The Association started to, ah, preserve the heritage of the Snowy Mountains which includes the protection of the, ah, Snowy Mountain Brumbies that, ah, we and our families had protected and managed for over a hundred and sixty years.

In the past fifty years the people of the Snowy had their cattle and livelihood taken from the Mountains, their towns flooded and much of their history lost and then the Snowy River riders were prohibited from even riding their beloved horses in the Mountains as their fathers and grandfathers did. Once the brumbies are gone there will be nothing left to demonstrate that our Snowy Mountain history since white settlement even existed.

We are the last people on earth to want to harm our beloved Mountains or our brumbies and we take offence at those kind of allegations. Similar to our Indigenous friends we too have a

profound and unique culture and history in the Mountains and it also deserves preservation as well as celebration.

Our heritage may be only two hundred years old but it's all we have and it's important to us.

We believe that it's vitally important to maintain sustainable populations, um, in the Snowy Mountains as the Mountains have long been their home. They've, they've earned the right to, to run free and to carry on their now unique genetics which are found nowhere else in the world. Um, at the same time we also concede(?) that horses shouldn't be up in the high alpine areas. Um, we agree that the high alpine areas above the tree line and other areas that they're not historically found should be kept horse free and we've always said that and we have offered, um, on several occasions to remove those horses for Parks.

We think it's spurious to suggest that, um, brumbies are having any permanent or serious environmental impacts on wilderness areas or catchments when compared to, ah, fires and landslides and resorts and developments and fire trails and many other things. Um, we think that Mother Nature can pretty much look after herself. Um, many of the anti-horse people will, um, talk about the regeneration of the bush after fire and yet they don't mention the regeneration of the bush a-after, ah, other impacts and that's vitally important. They don't see that, they don't see the life cycle and that's the difference between us and them. We live here and we see it every day.

As for the difference between horses and other fem-, feral animals, our grandfathers did not ride foxes into battle at Beersheba. It was not pigs, deer or cats that transported humans throughout the world for over eight thousand years and partners, partnered humans, um, in the field for survival. It's not the other introduced animals that still partner humans today in the Olympics. Um, there's no other animal on the planet that has such a relationship or has that interaction with humans so horses should be viewed very differently and yes it is emotional.

The most intense fires in the Mountains' history in 2003 has now caused so much heavy regrowth of woody plants that has encroached in on the brumbies' usual grazing areas that

they've now needed to move to new areas. It's not because their numbers have increased at all.

Um, the horse riders believe that it's absolutely impossible to shoot horses humanely from helicopters or from the ground after the first shot. Euthanasia by shooting should only be considered by horse experts or vets in controlled areas and never as a management tool.

As horse lovers with several decades of wild horse experience we believe that we must continue to play a significant role in the management using our traditional methods and humane meth-methods which should be a win, win for all. It's, it's part of who we are and, and it's what's been handed down for generations. Um, if anybody in Australia knows how and what to do for wild horses it's us.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Keith 1

K I'm Keith Muir, Director of the Colong Foundation for Wilderness.

I work on the protection of large intact natural areas. They are usually National Parks and wilderness areas. Some of the wilderness areas are in National Parks and some are not. Some of them remain unprotected and are actively under threat.

I came to the Colong Foundation because I had an opportunity then to work with Milo Dunphy, Alex Colley and Jim Somerville, three of the greats in the environment movement of Australia. They've all passed on unfortunately but I learnt a great deal from each and every one of them about Australia and about the reasons why we have to fight so hard to protect our natural landscapes.

The Snowy Mountains are important because there's only about point o-sev-, well point seven percent of Australia is alpine or sub-alpine. It's a very small part of Australia and luckily a lot of that area is, ah, protected in National Parks. Ah, the alpine area stretches from Victoria into New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory and contains, ah, in New South Wales about, ah, four hundred and fifty thousand hectares of wilderness and I've had many enjoyable bushwalks in those wilderness areas. They are beautiful and remote and, ah, some of the most, ah, enjoyable bushwalking in Australia is up there especially in summer, ah, it's lovely.

Well there are both animals and plants and, ah, other things like phytophthora, the, ah, cinnamon root fungus that threaten our, ah, wildlife and plants, our native plants so we have Bell Miner Dieback on the north coast which is, ah, totally out of control and devastating, ah, so far about fifty thousand hectares of forest. It stretches from National Parks interstate forest and there is no real known, ah, solution to that. Then we have all the mammalian pests which are, such as, ah, wild dogs, pigs, goats and of course horses. Horses is just one but they are the biggest of the herbare-, herbivore, ah, mammalian, ah, ah, pest species

that we have on the coast and so its impacts are much greater than the others and also it is the only one that isn't effectively controlled of all those mammalian pests.

That, ah, currently the, the control methods are ineffective, expensive and, um, as a result the, the wild horse population is growing towards its ?? capacity and as it does tow(?) it is causing serious damage to Kosciuszko National Park. The damage now is that you cannot drink out of most of the streams. They are polluted as a result of these feral horses and that's a tragedy. The, there, there's so much foul waste from the horses that it makes it unattractive to visit areas that even ten years ago were just wonderful to go to and so the feral horse population is now out of control. We need an effective means of controlling those pests, one that will knock down the population by about seventy percent. The scientists say that if you, ah, control, ah, feral pests you need to knock down the population by seventy percent at least to start to get on top of the issue. None of what we are doing now in the Kosciuszko National Parks does that.

The National Parks and Wildlife Service has a duty to protect the natural and cultural heritage of our National Parks and in doing so it must control feral pest species including feral horses. Unfortunately the feral horse issue is a highly politicised issue. An effective means of pest control have not been available to the Park Service and as a result we have a growing problem which is overwhelming the resources of the Service to deal with it. They cannot throw more money at it. It cannot have more resources because, ah, passive, ah, trapping and mustering is just too expensive and ineffective, ah, relative to the size of the problem that we have now and as a result the natural heritage of our wonderful Kosciuszko National Park is being degraded and the enjoyment that people get from going to that Park is being diminished.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

Madison V2_1

M So my name's Madison Young. I'm the Vice-President of the Hunter Valley Brumby Association. Um, the Hunter Valley Brumby Association started in 2009, um, and I joined in 2012. Um, my main role with the Association is to be involved in working with the brumbies. Um, I also do a lot of research. I'm an Environmental Scientist in my day job so I work with the Association to try and look at all the research papers, decipher some of the science that's out there.

The Snowy Mountains are important to me, um, coming from that conservation background and the environmental science background. I've always know that they're important, that they're an important ecosystem. Um, they're such a beautiful place to visit and, and they've got so many beautiful creatures that live in them and everyone who thinks about the Snowys, um, thinks about these wide open spaces and the snow and to me when I think about them I think about the brumbies. I didn't know before I joined the HVBA that brumbies lived anywhere else. I thought they only lived in the Snowys. Um, I've since learned that they're all across Australia but still when I think of brumbies I picture the ones from the Man from Snowy River, the ones running across the mountains.

The Hunter Valley Brumby Association doesn't like to use the term feral. It chooses to use the term brumby instead and the reason we don't like the term feral is that when people hear that term they think that that means they can treat the animal differently. Um, they believe that its welfare doesn't matter, that it's somehow lesser than other animals. Um, a brumby is a horse, that's what it is. It's a breed of horse and just because it lives in a place where it is unwanted by the people managing that land even though the scientific term for that type of animal is feral unfortunately when people see that term they think that that means that they can treat this animal differently to how they would treat a normal horse, a domestic horse. When people see the term feral fox or feral rabbit they think it doesn't matter that a fox is

poisoned with ten eighty and that it suffers terribly when it dies after it takes that poison. They don't think that when they go bunny bashing that that matters to that rabbit because it's feral and it does matter.

To the HVBA and to me personally humaneness means that an animal is able to live a life that is free of pain, fear, stress, of, of any suffering but it also means that when they die that that death is free of fear and pain and suffering and when we're looking at management options it's important that those management options meet that definition of humaneness, that's the most important thing to us. Before we start talking about cost, before we start talking about practicality, you know, there's all these other issues that come when you're looking at a management option but to us the most important thing is humaneness and it's the first thing that we should look at with each individual management option and once we have gone from there then we can start looking at other things. To us the most humane management options are things like physical barriers, putting up fencing to keep them out of areas where they're not wanted, um, and then you go onto things like, ah, fertility control which is a management issue that's not really being discussed, ah, within this management plan which is strange because it offers something really great and it could be used as a tool with other management options. Ah, as part of a trapping programme why not get some fertility control out there and get the horses to stop breeding so that when you're trying to remove them from an area you're not fighting against this never ending breeding cycle? Um, next for us is passive trapping. Um, so far the programme that is g-, running at the moment has been great. The passive trapping of these horses is working in our opinions really well. Ah, they've put in excellent facilities that every time you go there they're changing them a little bit, they're tweaking them to make them better, to make them easier on the horses and for us it's working. Um, we'd like to see some improvements. We'd like to see more horses, a larger proportion of horses to be rehomed. At the moment it's still a very low number. Um, that's partly because not many associations can take them on, there's not the experience out there. We would like to be able to offer our knowledge that we've gained the past five years training these horses to be able to get more associations to be able to train them to get more

people to take them on but it's very difficult for us to do that from the Hunter Valley. We need to be able to work with the Parks guys to organise, um, if, if they had a list of people that would, were interested or . . .

We want to see as many brumbies as possible that come out of the Park taken and given a new life.

We [background noise] need to get more of them into new homes. That's what, that's what we want to do, that's what we want to achieve and we hope that this management plan can start talking about that because at the moment we're stuck with this issue of aerial culling as the only option and to us that's not an option.

Milk Money

Straight Talk

David 1

D My name's David O'Shannessy. I'm the Chief Inspector with the RSPCA in New South Wales.

My role is to manage the RSPCA New South Wales Inspectorate which involves the co-ordinating the activities of thirty Inspectors that are all authorised under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act to investigate complaints of animal cruelty. In addition to the fifteen thousand or so complaints that we receive each year of alleged animal cruelty we're also involved in animal rescue as well as assisting with the management of livestock, companion and wildlife animals in times of declared emergencies. In addition to those primary functions the RSPCA's Inspectors are also involved with, um, providing advice I guess to various government departments, stakeholder groups regarding the welfare of animals and how best that they might be managed to ensure that that's done humanely and causing limited or as little pain, distress or suffering as possible.

When we talk about humane control methods we talk about control methods that don't cause pain, distress or suffering. However when we're, when we're managing, um, species of animals in National Parks we need to refer to the relative humaneness of our interaction or involvement with them in that every control technique or, or management practice has its own inherent pain or distress associated with it. So in, in developing management plans it's important for us to assess the relative humaneness o-of the different control techniques or management options and ensure that what ultimately gets [background noise] put in place is a plan that causes the least amount of pain, distress and suffering to not only the, the animals themselves, the horses but also the non-target animals that might be affected by our interaction with the horses. If we take for example, you know, the, the programme at the moment where horses are being passively trapped and removed from the National Park, i-if those animals are being passively trapped and removed, there's stress associated with the

initial yarding of the horses, the subsequent transport of the horses out of the National Park and then they're made available for people that want to adopt them or rehome them. Um, if the person adopting the animal has the appropriate skills, um, knowledge and ability to care for them, you know, it's quite possible we're going to get a, a, a positive welfare outcome for that individual animal. If, you know, on the other side of the coin we get someone that is well intentioned but doesn't necessarily have the skills, knowledge or facilities to adequately care for the animal, you know, we've got an animal that's gone through the, the relative of stress of, you know, capture, transport and adoption to wind up in a, an environment that's not the most appropriate for its welfare because of the, you know, the available resources of the person adopting the animal and then we've got animals that are, you know, passively trapped, um, and removed from the Park, there's no, ah, option or availability for homes for those particular animals, they subsequently get loaded again onto vehicles and transported long distances to wind up in a knackery. Now, you know, assuming that everything's done appropriately and with, ah, humaneness in mind we've got to assess the relative humaneness. We're talking about an animal that is trapped essentially, trucked and transported long distances to ultimately be euthanized and we compare that, you know, if the outcome, um, is that the animal or there is a necessity for some animals to be euthanized, is it more appropriate for that animal to be euthanized in the Park or do we put it through the cumulative and additional stress of capturing the animal, transporting it a long distance only for it to wind up being euthanized at a knackery.

National Parks and Wildlife have a, ah, as I understand it, an obligation to manage the natural environment. Um, ah, it's a difficult situation. We're talking about, you know, animals that, that may be and there, there's certainly other people that are more appropriately skilled to provide that advice but animals that may be, you know, having an impact on the natural environment and then, you know, there are people that, you know, are concerned about the management of horses because of social, historical or, um, you know, emotional ties so it's, it's a difficult discussion and I guess there are, there are groups of people and organisations that are better placed than the RSPCA to make an assessment of

those environmental impacts and if as a consequence of that assessment it's, it's deemed necessary for these animals to be managed or controlled that's where the RSPCA becomes more intimately involved in ensuring that the various control or management techniques that might be employed are the most humane techniques available to ensure that there's a minimal amount of, you know, pain, distress or suffering, um, inflicted upon, you know, the animals that we're trying to manage.