

Blu & Nav help expose Professor Don Driscoll's LIES re claims of Brumby Cannibalism and Population numbers.

By Gary Cotchin

In September of 2014 Professor/Dr **Don Driscoll** (left) and Dr **Sam Banks** (right) of *the Australian National University* published an article on the Universities website that claimed that Brumbies eat each other i.e. are Cannibalistic.



This claim, along with the Invasive Species Council and Reclaim Kosi anti-Brumby distorted propaganda that followed, was widely distributed within the media.

Driscoll and Bank's claim was based on a single alleged observation (and associated blurry image – see below) of a Brumby close to a deceased fellow Brumby in the snow in the Kosciuszko National Park [or KNP]. An image that clearly is the best image they had, and yet is blurry/out of focus (probably because it was taken a long way away). It's a supposedly supportive image that clearly is totally inconclusive in term of his and Sam Bank's ludicrous claim that followed.



This particular Brumby 'observation' was part of what clearly was an ongoing project of theirs in 2014 to gather (or invent) as much information against the Brumbies presence in the KNP as they could in support of their ongoing anti-Brumby agenda.

Around this same time (in September 2014) the academic website The Conversation, saw Driscoll and Banks wrote (in regard to their claim that Brumbies eat each other): "As far as we are aware, this behaviour has never been documented before."

I wonder why that is Mr Driscoll and Mr Banks ?

Perhaps it is because your claim is a complete LIE?

Driscoll then goes on the say that "The noble brumbies of the silver screen have been reduced to starving cannibals in Kosciuszko National Park."

In fact the extent to which Driscoll and Banks show their blatant personal bias against the Brumby can be found within a YouTube program they compiled and released to the public that same year.

In this 2+ minute ‘story’ Sam Banks points to some random trees and bush in the Park and says: “We just saw three large and dangerous looking horses coming up the road here and heading into the bush, you can still hear them crashing through the regrowth.”

Well of course the viewer couldn’t see nor hear a horse as he spoke.

Then Driscoll states: “We’ve nearly been knocked off our bikes riding down here because of these dangerous mounds (of horse manure) left by feral horses”.

And these are ‘academics’ supposedly doing research?

I mean seriously – you can’t make this stuff up – but they can ?

Driscoll doesn’t ‘let the facts get in the way of a good story’ even many years later.

In ‘The Conversation’ piece, authored by Don Driscoll (and Mr D Watson and Mr E. Ritchie) dated December 16th 2019, Driscoll went with the following heading for another of his anti-Brumby articles.....

“Double trouble as feral horses gallop past 25,000 in the Australian Alps”. (see below)

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Double trouble as feral horse numbers gallop past 25,000 in the Australian Alps

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Feral horses are a growing problem for the NSW government. Shutterstock/Constantin Stanciu

Feral horse numbers have more than doubled in the past five years in the Australian Alps, according to results just released from the [Australian Alps Feral Horse Aerial Survey](#). In one of the three survey blocks, [North Kosciuszko](#), feral

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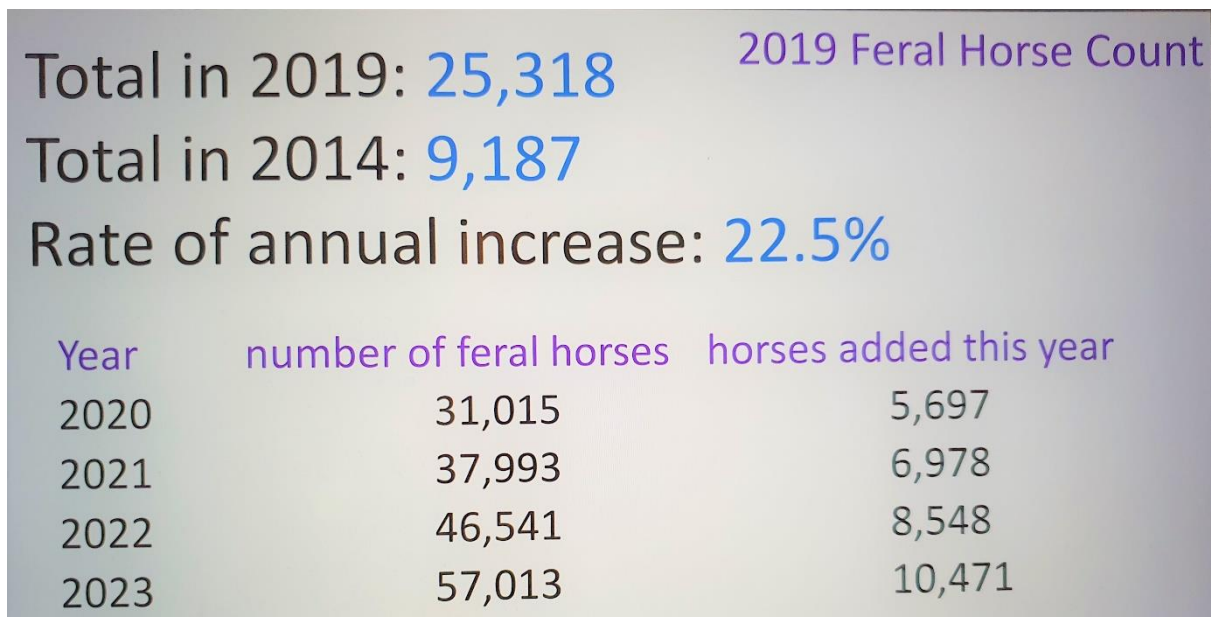
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Don Driscoll

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And as if using Cairns flawed Brumby population numbers as the basis for his claims (numbers that are proven now to be terribly inflated) is not offensive enough, less than a year later, as part a Driscoll's PowerPoint Presentation (5th Oct 2020) he presented the following chart to the public



I mean you can't make this stuff up can you? But he seemingly did, again.

And wouldn't 'Reclaim Kosi' and 'The Invasive Species Council' have loved hearing Driscoll throw these hopelessly inaccurate Brumby population numbers out there in the media. Numbers now, just a few years later in 2023 when he predicted there would be 57,013 Brumbies in the Australian Alps, are horribly inaccurate by many tens of thousands of Brumbies.

So here is a few FACTS re Brumby Population numbers Mr Driscoll.

There have been at least nine head/population counts of Brumbies in the Northern end of the KNP these past 3+ years (2019 > 2023). The Northern end of the KNP being the large area/location where just about everyone (including Cairns) agrees that around 85% of all the Australian Alps Brumbies exist/live.

Eight of these nine Brumby Survey/Counts have been thoroughly conducted by Helicopter using a variety of count methods, flight plans and elevations. Cairns

(2019, 2020 and 2022). Parks NSW (2019, 2020 and 2021). And the Snowy Brumby Management Sustainability Management Group (in 2021 and 2022).

There was also an extensive Community Count conducted by the SMBSMG that was overseen by a highly regarded Biostatistician in June 2023 that utilised 72 people who drove then walked or rode horseback over 2 full days across much of the northern KNP to count every single horse seen.

These thorough counts all reported definitive numbers of 'Brumby/Horses Seen' across these few years (2019 to 2023).

In 2019 Cairns only saw 1,298 Brumbies, Parks NSW saw 3,110 Brumbies.

In 2020 Cairns only saw 723 Brumbies, Parks NSW saw 2,468 Brumbies.

In 2021 the SMBSMG Helicopter only saw 863 Brumbies, Parks NSW saw 3,699 Brumbies.

In 2022 Cairns only saw 1,255 Brumbies and the SMBSMG saw 992 Brumbies.

And in 2023 the SMBSMG Community Count only saw 653 Brumbies.

Northern End KNP ACTUAL Brumby head-counts 2019 > 2023.						
Survey conducted by	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Ave
Cairns (Gov't)	1298	723		1255		1092
Parks NSW (Gov't)	3110	2468	3699			3116
SMBSMG (Lanyon)			863			863
SMBSMG (Roberts/AJP etc)				992		992
SMBSMG Community Count					653	653

= Parks NSW used a low flying Helicopter that likely ensured multiple counts of the same horses. Note: All Helicopters flew over that same area yet Parks NSW count is 3+ times higher than the other three Helicopters surveys?

= Dec 2019/Jan 2020 KNP's extensive Bushfire

So a reasonable person would logically assume that even though the terrain surveyed is, for the most part, wide open and relatively flat (i.e. Long Plain in the KNP being one of the survey areas) not all of the Brumbies in that area are seen in any of the aforementioned Surveys.

However I note that in six of the nine surveys (including Cairns three surveys) the 'Brumbies Seen' ranged from 653 to 1,298 (an average of 964 across the period). However Parks NSW counts across the same area, using much the same method came in at an average of 3,116 'Brumbies Seen' and it is reasonable to suggest that the manner in which Parks NSW (who are in charge of this cruel Brumby Cull) flew

its Helicopter quite close over the Brumby Mobs as they meandered around the entire area, would surely have spread Mobs from one place to another only to be recounted again later.

Add to these Brumby population estimates/considerations is the highly regarded work of Ms Joanne Canning (BSc Equine Sports Science, HND Equine Sports Coaching, BHSII) who has thoroughly researched the KNP Brumby numbers for many years now, and after taking into account broadly accepted population numbers in this same area, then adding likely births and subtracting known 'removals' (mainly to Slaughterhouses) Ms Canning is of the view that this same area likely had approximately 1,381 Brumbies there at the start of 2023.

So after eight Helicopter Surveys and an extensive Ground Survey over a four year period it would be reasonable to suggest that the number of Brumbies in this area is somewhere around 1,500 Brumbies give or take.

Yet Cairns (who's flawed data continues to inform the slaughterers view and justify in their mind this current unjustifiable Cull) said that in 2022 there were 12,774 Brumbies in this Northern end of the KNP.

It should also be pointed out that the current cruel Brumby Cull in NSW has, and still is being conducted as part of the 'Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan' that obliges that Brumby numbers be reduced to 3,000 by 2027.

Clearly it is unlikely that there are even 3,000 horse left in that Park right now. However Parks NSW (who continue to perpetuate the population lie) keep cruelly slaughtering our Brumbies in their many hundreds each year with their horrible and offensive methods, driven by the continued and ongoing pressure coming from those that care less about animal cruelty, namely the ALP, Liberal and National Party MP's as well as 'Green' pressure groups who of late are now demanding that Parks NSW start a massive Cull/Slaughter using Shooters in Helicopters as the preferred method of slaughtering.

But if a Shooter in a Helicopter can (they say) kill a horse humanely (see below just how unlikely that is) then how is it that eight Helicopters flying over this same area over a four year period can only ever see about 15% of the Brumbies that Cairns and the Government and Parks NSW and the Slaughterers say are there?

Clearly the Cairns estimated Brumby population numbers at 12,774 in the northern end of KNP are bewilderingly inaccurate. And the 'Distance Software' Cairns used

to turn 1,255 Brumbies 'Seen' into 12,774 Brumbies there has been proven to be fundamentally flawed.

Ms Claire Galea, a highly regarded Independent Biostatistician, was a key witness in a 2021 NSW Inquiry into the Health and Wellbeing of Kangaroos. Within this Inquiry Ms Galea raised serious concerns surrounding the methodology, statistical modelling and reliability of population estimates for kangaroos as produced by, you guessed it, Cairns. Ms Galea's review of Cairns work to do with Kangaroos, and now Brumbies led her to state the following in her most recent Report to do with Cairns Brumby Population Counts, "The concerns surrounding implausible population increases are evident in both the kangaroos and wild horse population estimates provided by Cairns". This was one of many 'serious concerns' established/raised by Ms Galea to do with the manner in which Cairns arrived at his Brumby population numbers within numerous Reports to the Government.

All these lies, all this deception, by Academics, MP's and Government Agencies, all based on Cairns flawed 'Distance Software' population numbers that Driscoll and the like use as a baseline to then inflate even more offensively predicted Brumby population numbers moving forward.

Driscoll is one of the main offenders in this regard using Cairns numbers for his inflated predictions (see his PowerPoint chart above) to persuade authorities to start a mass cull/slaughter of thousands of Brumbies from Helicopters. A Cull method proven many times over to be totally inhumane and disgustingly cruel.

Yes Don Driscoll has for many years been telling anyone who will listen that Aerial Culling is the way to slaughter our Brumbies.

So we have to see these ludicrous claims by Driscoll (and Banks) about Brumby Behaviours and Brumby Population numbers in the context of them both being hell-bent in their attempts to have Brumbies in the KNP slaughtered into extinction, ideally (in his words) by Aerial Shooting from Helicopters.

On the ABC News in Feb 2019, Professor Don Driscoll argued that aerial culling had (compared to the alternatives) fewer animal welfare concerns, because it is fast, cheap, and minimised horse stress.

Seriously ?

Driscoll even justifies this method of slaughter by citing the following figures in his aforementioned PowerPoint presentation titled "Feral Horses in the Australian

Alps" (dated 5th October 2020) wherein Driscoll says that 63% of horses shot from a Helicopter will die relatively instantaneously.

However this 63% figure quoted (based on observations in easier shooting terrain that the Australian Alps it appears) also means that about one in every three Brumbies shot from a Helicopter (after a 'Chase Time' that ranged between 2 seconds and 11 minutes) suffered, and that suffering took between 3 seconds to 4 minutes to end.

From Driscoll's perspective this is apparently an acceptable level of animal cruelty.

Perhaps Mr Driscoll would like to place his hand over a lit candle for up to 4 minutes to see what that level of pain/suffering feels like (prior to death in the experience of our Brumbies)?

So lets go back to this very poor quality image Mr Driscoll shared with the world to justify his (and Banks') ludicrous claim that Brumbies are Cannibals.

At worst, this image is of a Brumby that went to where a now deceased fellow Brumby had been partly devoured by resident wild pigs and wild dogs (as is the norm in the KNP). And this Brumby's presence over the deceased Brumby, given the winter conditions and a possible absence of surrounding food, MAY have been it sniffing out/investigating what might have been some remnant stomach contents/food left by these wild dogs and wild pigs?

Or much more likely, this is an image of a Brumby that is grieving the loss of one of its own (mob).

Those with actual knowledge of the behaviour of the sentient, non-predatory animals that are our horses, including of course our Australian Brumbies, tell us of how strong the sense of grief is within a horse to the loss of one of their own.

In fact a recent couple of images to do with a terribly sad experience of two friends of mine, and the loss of their much loved & cared for horse named Navajo (or 'Nav') and his 'bestie' mare Blu, reminded me of this ridiculous claim (and associated image) of Mr Driscoll and Mr Banks.

In short, Nav and Blu were pretty much inseparable (see image).



But sadly, just a few weeks ago, Nav died of impaction colic which was, and still is a terrible end to a life well lived, and a very difficult time for all concerned who still miss Nav so much.

What followed Navi's passing were countless examples of the impact Navi's loss had on Blu who was (still is) struggling with the loss. Behaviours that included laying in the exact place where she saw Navi pass away the day prior (see pic).



And frequently revisiting the very area where she last saw Navi being laid to rest in his grave site below (see image).



So for me, Blu's extensive and protracted grieving process gave us all some vivid clues as to what more likely happened on this day that Driscoll and Banks took the image they took to justify their disgusting claim that Brumbies are cannibals.

For I would argue that both these images (see below) are images of a sentient animal grieving the loss of one of their own.



And it is disturbing to think that so set on demonising all of our Australian Brumbies are Driscoll and Banks, that they would state as fact, matters that are completely unproven, exaggerated and/or likely untrue so as to pursue their cruel illegitimate ongoing agenda to kill off most if not all of our Australian Brumbies by cruel slaughter.

Clearly there are huge 'red flags' around the credibility of Professor/Doctor Don Driscoll when one reviews the manner in which he (in particular) collects and

presents/disseminates the data that he does to justify the slaughter of a beautiful innocent animal.

Worse still is a media, and pressure groups (such as the Invasive Species Council and Reclaim Kosi) that enable these lies and deceptions to be widely disseminated to both the public and to 'Cull' decision-makers (in this case the NSW Australian Labour Party MP's such as Ms Penny Sharpe and Mr Chris Minns) that direct this cruel slaughter of our Brumbies on the back of repeated lies, misrepresentations, and deceptions by those that clearly will say and do whatever they need to, to justify the unjustifiable, and to pursue their personal goals and disturbing/distorted agendas to cruelly slaughter a perfectly innocent, sentient, beautiful, non-predatory animals for absolutely no good/valid/legitimate reason.