



The Hon. (Matt) Matthew John KEAN, BBus, GradDipCA MP  
Treasurer, and Minister for Energy and Environment  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

Dear Mr Kean,

Five years ago, 41 scientists from 16 universities urged the Premier of NSW to remove an estimated 6,000 horses from Kosciuszko National Park, with research from around the world, and first-hand reports, showing that Kosciuszko was at risk.

Since then, research has shown that feral horses threaten native Australian ecosystems and species in Kosciuszko National Park, from mossy alpine wetlands to the dry valleys of the Snowy River.<sup>1,2</sup> Populations of stocky galaxias, Riek's crayfish, broad-toothed rat and other species, many wholly restricted to the Australian Alps, are facing imminent extinction.

Without an effective management plan, feral horse numbers have more than doubled since 2014 to an estimated 14,380 in 2020.<sup>3</sup> With an 18% annual growth rate numbers could approach 20,000 by 2022.<sup>4</sup>

To protect native plants, animals and ecosystems from feral horses, we now urge the NSW government to strengthen the *Draft Kosciuszko National Park Wild Horse Heritage Management Plan*.<sup>5</sup>

The most important steps to take are:

1. Reduce feral horse numbers rapidly to well below the preliminary target of 3,000. Reducing numbers rapidly minimises the number of horses that must be removed. Evidence from the Victorian high country<sup>6</sup> shows that alpine wetlands continue to degrade even with very small numbers of feral horses. Kosciuszko cannot begin to recover from drought, extensive bushfires and overgrazing if, as currently proposed, 3,000 feral horses remain.
2. To reduce numbers, use all available methods that are effective and meet animal welfare standards.
3. Protect *all* of Kosciuszko National Park. Do not compromise one third of Kosciuszko National Park by designating horse retention areas. NSW has only 10% of its land area in conservation reserves, well below global targets of 30%,<sup>7,8</sup> and all of that area is needed for conservation.

To protect the native Australian plants, animals and ecosystems of Kosciuszko National Park, and other national parks affected by feral horses in NSW, such as Barrington Tops, Guy Fawkes, Oxley Wild Rivers and Blue Mountains National Parks,<sup>9</sup> we recommend a goal of removing all feral horses from NSW protected areas.

This is feasible because horses can be kept on private property,<sup>10</sup> protecting the cultural values they have for some people, and because new research shows that 71% of the Australian population believe that feral animals can be killed to protect threatened native Australian species.<sup>11</sup>

The final change that would uphold the protection of native Australian plants, animals and ecosystems is to rescind the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*, which is a legal impediment to effective evidence-based national park management, and is completely at odds to the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1974*.

Yours sincerely

Professor John Shine AC PresAA FAHMS(Hon) FRS

**President**

Professor Alan Andersen FAA, Professorial Fellow, Charles Darwin University

Professor Mark Burgman FAA, Director of Centre for Environmental Policy, Chair in Risk Analysis & Environmental Policy, Imperial College, London

Professor Chris Dickman FAA, Professor in Terrestrial Ecology, The University of Sydney

Professor Jane Elith FAA FNAS, Professor, The University of Melbourne

Professor Richard Hobbs FAA, Emeritus Professor, The University of Western Australia

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Professor Bill Laurance FAA, Distinguished Research Professor, James Cook University

Professor David Lindenmayer AO FAA, Research Professor, Australian National University

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Emeritus Professor Rick Shine AM FAA, Professor, Macquarie University

Professor Mark Westoby FAA, Professor Emeritus, Macquarie University

Professor Alan Welsh FAA, E.J. Hannan Professor of Statistics, Australian National University

The following scientific societies and researchers express their support for our position

Society for Conservation Biology Oceania Section

President, Professor Nicola Nelson; Chair of Policy Committee, Dr Tim Doherty

Ecological Society of Australia

President, Dr Bek Christensen; Vice-President policy, Dr Ayesha Tulloch

Australasian Wildlife Management Society

Acting President, Dr Thomas Newsome

Australian Freshwater Sciences Society

Vice President, Associate Professor Bradley Moggridge

Australian Mammal Society

President, Dr Kenny Travouillon; Conservation Officer, Dr Harriet Mills

Australian Society of Herpetologists

Vice President, Dr Glenn Shea; Secretary, Dr Eridani Mulder

Australasian Cave and Karst Management Association

President, Ian Eddison

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Professor Don Driscoll, Director Centre for Integrative Ecology, Deakin University  
Dr Hayley Bates, Centre for Ecosystem Sciences, University of NSW.  
Dr Ami Bennett, School of Ecosystem and Forest Sciences, The University of Melbourne  
Professor David Bowman, Director of the Fire Centre Research Hub, University of Tasmania  
Professor Saul Cunningham, Director, Fenner School of Environment & Society, Australian National University  
Professor Richard Duncan, Director Centre for Conservation Ecology and Genomics, University of Canberra  
Dr David Duncan, School of Ecosystem and Forest Science, University of Melbourne  
Professor Fiona Dyer, Centre for Applied Water Science and the Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra  
Professor David Eldridge, Centre for Ecosystem Science, University of New South Wales  
Dr David Freudenberger, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University  
Professor Richard Fuller, School of Biological Sciences, University of Queensland  
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Professor Philip Gibbons, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University  
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Professor Graciela Metternicht, Earth and Sustainability Science Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.  
Professor Angela Moles, Director of Evolution & Ecology Research Centre, UNSW Sydney  
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Dr Michael Nash, Department of Ecology, Environment and Evolution, La Trobe University  
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Professor Stephen Sarre, Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra  
Dr Ben Scheele, Fenner School of Environment and Society, Australian National University  
Dr James Shannon, Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology, La Trobe University  
Associate Professor Ewen Silvester, Director – Research Centre for Applied Alpine Ecology, La Trobe University  
Dr Annabel Smith, Lecturer in Wildlife Management, University of Queensland

Dr Kate Umbers, School of Science & Hawkesbury Institute for the Environment, Western Sydney University

Professor Peter Vesk, School of Ecosystem and Forest Science, University of Melbourne

Dr Susanna Venn, Centre for Integrative Ecology, Deakin University

Professor Eric Warrant, Visiting Fellow at the Research School of Biology, Australian National University

Professor David Watson, Environmental Science, Charles Sturt University

Professor James Watson, Centre for Biodiversity and Conservation, The University of Queensland

Professor Dick Williams, Research Institute for Environment and Livelihoods, Charles Darwin University

Dr Desley Whisson, Centre for Integrative Ecology, Deakin University

Associate Professor Duanne White, Institute for Applied Ecology, University of Canberra

### References:

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