



THE KOSCIUSZKO SCIENCE ACCORD

We agree that scientific evidence shows that there is a clear and present threat to the natural water catchments and the natural ecosystems of Kosciuszko National Park and other Australian Alps national parks caused directly by thousands of feral horses.

Research clearly shows that feral horses in the Alpine National Park (Victoria) and Kosciuszko National Park (New South Wales) have already caused widespread and, in some cases, irreparable damage to wetlands and streams. Evidence demonstrates that feral horses threaten Australia's native alpine plant and animal species and their habitats, some of which are endangered and found nowhere else in the world.

The research indicates that, to conserve the natural values of Kosciuszko National Park and other Australian Alps national parks, there is a need to substantially and urgently reduce feral horse populations in these protected areas. We are extremely concerned that the NSW Government has passed legislation giving special protected status to feral horses in Kosciuszko National Park.

We call on the NSW Government to:

1. Acknowledge the extensive, serious, and potentially irreparable damage being done to Kosciuszko National Park by feral horses;
2. Recognise that NSW national parks are extensive natural areas gazetted for conservation of natural ecosystems under the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Act, with obligations for their management also arising from a number of international agreements;
3. Repeal in its entirety the NSW *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018*, and restore the protected status of Kosciuszko National Park, its 2006 Plan of Management and implement the 2008 Horse Management Plan;
4. Cooperate with Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory to remove feral horses from the protected areas known together as the Australian Alps national parks, through aerial culling and other effective means;
5. Restore systematically the mountain catchments, wetlands and the Byadbo–Lower Snowy lands in Kosciuszko National Park which have been extensively damaged by feral horses; and
6. Use scientific evidence as the basis for management that strives to protect the native Australian species, ecosystems and water catchments.



Background to The Kosciuszko Science Accord

The Kosciuszko Science Accord was developed by leading Australian scientists who attended the “Feral Horse Impacts: The Kosciuszko Science Conference” on Thursday 8th November 2018 at the Australian Academy of Science, Canberra.

The Conference was co-convened by the Australian Academy of Science, the Fenner School of Environment and Society at the Australian National University, and Deakin University. It provided the opportunity for scientists to present the latest scientific evidence on impacts, caused by thousands of feral horses, to the natural water catchments, stream water, and flora and fauna of Kosciuszko National Park and other Australian Alps national parks.

The research presented demonstrated that damage by feral horses was widespread: vegetation structure had been damaged, stream morphology degraded, alpine wetlands drained, populations of Broad-toothed Rat eliminated, and habitat for populations of native fish and Corroboree Frog negatively impacted.

When combined, the research provided unequivocal scientific evidence that the large populations of feral horses severely compromise the natural heritage values of the Australian Alps, for which the Park is listed by the Commonwealth Government as a National Heritage Place.

The Conference highlighted that the *Kosciuszko Wild Horse Heritage Act 2018* requires horse protection areas to be identified within the Park, and transfers decisions and advice on the management of parts of Kosciuszko National Park from the National Parks and Wildlife Service to a Community Advisory Panel with neither scientific representatives nor land management professionals. The Act overrides the provisions of the 2006 Kosciuszko National Park Plan of Management, and transfers land management planning away from the professional guardians, the National Parks and Wildlife Service, to a community group that is narrow in focus.

The Act is seen as the greatest attack on the conservation of Kosciuszko National Park in its 75 years of history. At a holistic level, it undermines the concept of national parks as protected areas and the integrity of Australia’s National Heritage. The scientists called on the NSW Government to repeal the Act, and in its place, to adopt effective feral horse control by implementing the 2006 Plan of Management for the Park and its 2008 Horse Management Plan.