

Tabled Richard
Smallwood
Australian Horse Alliance
Sydney 12 May 06

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSIONS BY
AUSTRALIAN HORSE ALLIANCE
TO SENATE COMMITTEE ENQUIRY INTO NATIONAL PARKS
2006**

Risk to National Parks and Reserve Lands in Australia

The Australian Horse Alliance agrees with the need to set aside lands within a reserve system for conservation purposes. It agrees with many of the sentiments expressed by the peak conservation groups when they talk of the need to conserve lands for an adequate and representative reserve system and many of the motherhood statements they espouse, regarding conservation per se. The AHA even agrees with the concept of Wilderness and keeping some areas in a wild state.

However we part company with them when their ideology leads to their policies of blanket prohibition of access to many of the public. Such policies risk the long term viability of a reserve system.

Groups such as the Wilderness Society, the National Parks Association of NSW, the Australian Conservation Foundation and the Nature Conservation Council, for example, propound an elitist view that these areas must be locked up and only walkers (for wilderness) or 2 wheel drive vehicles (for National parks) be permitted to enter.

The AHA submits that those policies risk the long term viability of the "reserve system".

The people who form "middle Australia", the "mums and dads", the "ordinary folk", if I can borrow some political expressions, will not support a system which needlessly excludes them from public land while using their hard earned taxes to acquire land (sometimes compulsorily) and manage these areas.

The management of these areas is becoming more and more exclusionary. The so called environmental groups argue that there is a need to exclude, to ensure preservation. When one looks carefully at their arguments one sees that it is based on ideology and not sound conservation management principles.

Ultimately there will be a backlash by the majority and the people including neighbours to these areas. They are now saying enough is enough. We have seen the demonstrations down Macquarie Street in Sydney, Queanbeyan, Tumut, Jindabyne and Cooma to name a few, against the management policies of Wilderness in NSW of excluding access for recreational horse riding.

There have been demonstrations in Queensland against the Beattie Governments declaring, State Forests and by their management policies exclude traditional access by horse riders from the new National Parks under the Nature Conservation Act 1992.

The Procedural guide – visitor management, published by the Queensland Parks & Wildlife Service,(p4 of 8), assesses horse riding as "nature based", when used as a

means of transport, facilitating visitor access to QPWS managed lands to appreciate its natural attractions. Using its own criteria to assess "nature based" it concludes that the activity

- Does not require substantial modification of the natural environment
- A natural setting is critical to client participation
- Fosters an appreciation of natural places or their management

Why then does its policy state:

"Horse riding is not generally permitted on National Parks and will not be permitted as a recreational activity (except on the Bicentennial National Trail)" (policy 4.2 – Horse riding on protected areas)

The answer lies in the fact that the extreme greens have a hold over the Beattie Government as they do in NSW.

These policies of unnecessary exclusion have led to minority political parties being formed such as the Outdoor Recreation Party, the 4WD Party and the Horse Riders Party in NSW. When one considers the time and effort required to form these parties feelings must be running high.

And for those who think that horse riders are an unimportant group, I refer to the report by the Centre for International Economics which concludes that in 1999/00 the 3.1 billion dollar contribution to the economy associated with **recreational horse riding** is approximately one sixth of the primary industry contribution to the Australia's GDP.

Apart from their hard earned taxes people will not donate money or time to conservation efforts through the various conservation trusts of Government.

I find support for the theory that needless exclusion risks the viability of a reserve system from internationally highly regarded sources;

"The elitist overtones of biocentricity concern us. Are we endorsing a philosophy that offers access only to a privileged few at the expense of the majority?" (Behan 1976; Hardin 1969; Julber 1976 "Wilderness Management", Hendee, Stankey and Lucas, 1990, p22)

"...if purity is to be an issue in the management of wilderness, let it focus on preserving the natural integrity of the wilderness environment – and not needless restriction of facilities necessary to protect the area while providing for human use and management" (University of Idaho, ibid p23)

"In a democratic society, we see little chance that a biocentric philosophy of Wilderness management can survive unless an equitable range of outdoor recreation opportunities is provided"(ibid p22)

“ Our hope is that the philosophy that ultimately prevails will emphasize the natural integrity of wilderness eco systems , with common sense applications that respond to the needs of individual areas” (ibid p23)

Policies of Exclusion Contradict World Practices

The Wilderness movement had its genesis in the United States. The NSW Wilderness Act is similar to and was obviously modeled on the USA Act.

However the management policies of the NSW DEC (National Parks & Wildlife Service) are very restrictive. The policy recognizes that horse riding may be “self reliant” (one of the requirements for recreation in NSW wilderness) but determines it will not be permitted in Wilderness.

Similarly there has been a blanket prohibition to Nature Reserves many of which were State Forests. These prohibitions were driven by an extreme green culture within the Service. This is exemplified by a senior manager within the NSW Service and at one stage head of the Wilderness unit, is now a senior office bearer of the NSW National Park Association, an association, which has a policy of no access for horses to **any** land within the reserve system.

One must note that Wilderness forms in excess of 30% of the Reserve system in NSW and closer to 70% to 80% of the reserve lands down the great divide of NSW.

Australia is out of step with the nations, which originally promoted wilderness as a concept such as Canada, USA and South Africa.

All of these countries permit access by horseback and mule and donkey in wilderness areas.

The CEO of the Parks Canada Agency, as recently as March 2006 wrote

“It is increasingly clear that public education and memorable visitor experience contribute to our protection objectives and vice versa This was confirmed by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development in her report to Parliament... the Commissioner stated that enhancing public education and visitor experience is ‘fundamental to maintaining and restoring ecological integrity”

SUMMARY

- If the AHA's submission has not convinced the committee that the debate is largely an ideological one I leave you with a quotation from the former Director General of the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service when he addressed a conference in Maitland NSW in 2002 when he said.

'...the policies relating to wilderness and nature reserves are more about social science than physical impact'

He went on to say that there are fundamental political issues, which will not be changed by proof of physical impact studies

- Sara Beavis of the Australian National University, whose work has help to negate much of the extreme green hyperbole in relation to horse riding in reserve land, advocates a standardized data base of recreational use at regional, state and national levels.
- Dr Beavis also wants to see whether social conflicts exist between user groups and if they do – why, so we can move forward and develop useful strategies to assist to minimize these conflicts.

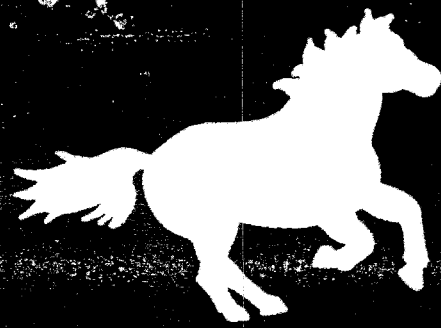
The AHA supports such strategies and urges this committee to support and foster inter governmental co- operation and communication with and between all stakeholders.

Often there is misunderstanding of the needs and wishes of stakeholders on the part of bureaucrats and a misunderstanding of management issues facing government agencies on the part of stakeholders.

- **The AHA also presses for external auditing of the performance of Park agencies as well as their income and expenditure . The figures disclosed in the various reports regarding expenditure on such items as weed eradication, pest control etc mean very little. For example they must be related to the total area under management, their classification etc. The budgets must be outcomes driven. Have grants been appropriately spent? what are the man power requirements?**

These issues need government support and political will to address.

Australian Horse Alliance
May 2006



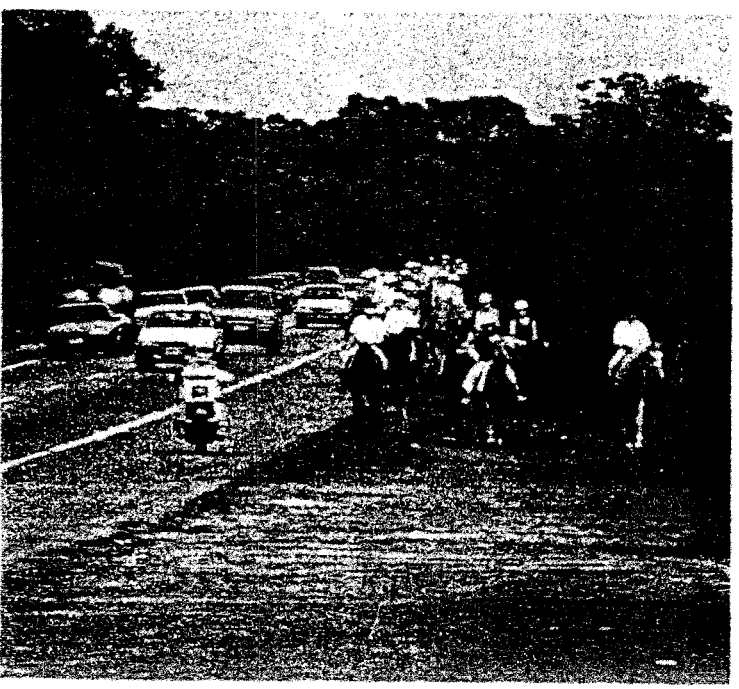
TRAIL!

The Newsletter of the North Shore Horse & Pony Association

87% OF PEOPLE SUPPORT RIDING IN PARKS

Research
Results

A new research study conducted in NSW by independent research company Quadrant Research among over 300 people revealed that 87% of those interviewed support horse riding on prepared trails in National Parks. This finding is totally opposite to the position of the National Parks Association which is lobbying for the total ban on horses in



National Parks, nature reserves or on Crown Land. "The survey was conducted through telephone interviews on the weekend of 26 and 27 June with respondents randomly selected by computer throughout the state," commented researcher Paul Korbell. "There was clear support for horse-riding as an acceptable activity in National Parks as opposed to activities such as trail bike riding which only received 23% support."



A MESSAGE FROM RICHARD SMALLWOOD, THE ASSOCIATION'S NEW PRESIDENT

When I was first approached to lend support to the Association, I had no proper understanding for the reasons for its existence nor its aims. After looking through the mountain of correspondence, file notes and reports, I was struck by two things, firstly, the power of bureaucracy and secondly, the tenacity of past committees and executives of your Association in trying to achieve justice for horseriders in Ku-ring-gai National Park and its environs. After hearing Chris Bourne, the National Co-ordinator of Trails

...problems faced by local horseriders are mirrored in many other areas of the State ...

- objectives are:-
1. To ensure adequate trails are retained for horseriding in Ingleside, Terrey Hills, Duffys Forest, Oxford Falls and adjacent National Parks of Ku-ring-gai and Garrigal.
 2. To ensure safe and adequate access trails are provided for horseriders between the areas of Ingleside, Terrey Hills and the St Ives Showground.
 3. To lay the foundation for a safe, URBAN TRAIL SYSTEM in these areas.
 4. To increase membership awareness and support of this association.

for the Australian Trail & Horse Riders Association (ATHRA) at the AGM and after subsequent discussions with her, it is clear to me that the problem faced by local horseriders are mirrored in many other areas of the State where National Parks are increasing in number and size. For this reason, your committee has decided to lend support to ATHRA in helping to coordinate a meeting of all interested parties in the State to consider these problems. However, in doing so, we must not lose sight of our local objectives. As President, my aims and

To achieve these objectives, the Association needs the support of all horseriders who, at any time, use the trails in our area. Support will also be required from outside the Association, such as local Councils, the Department of Sport and Recreation, the Lands Department and sponsors. For example, by the time this newsletter goes to print, I am hopeful that the National Parks and Wildlife Services (NPWS) will have granted access to the Park between Myoora Road and St Ives Showground. This Association will need to fund the construction of a portion of the fencing along the (cont..3)