



**NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service**

# **Barrington Tops National Park and Barrington Tops State Conservation Area**

**Feral Horse Capture and Rehoming Program – Statement of program intent**





## Acknowledgement of Country

Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands where we work and live.

We pay our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

This resource may contain images or names of deceased persons in photographs or historical content.

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# Feral Horse Capture and Rehoming Program – Statement of Program Intent

## Context

In this document, Barrington Tops National Park and Barrington Tops State Conservation Area are collectively referred to as 'the park'.

The Barrington Tops National Park and Barrington Tops State Conservation Area feral horse management plan outlines NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's (NPWS) management actions to remove feral horses to address their impacts on the park. It delivers on a high priority action in the *Barrington Tops National Park, Mount Royal National Park and Barrington Tops State Conservation Area plan of management*.

The plan provides a framework for implementing approved methods to remove feral horses from the park to protect natural, cultural and recreational values, including World Heritage values. The plan's strategic objective is to aid environmental recovery and conservation outcomes by removing all feral horses from the park as far as practicable, recognising that ongoing control will be required.

The feral horse management plan outlines a 4-staged approach to removing feral horses from the park. Stage 2 provides for horses to be trapped for removal to rehome in 2025 where there is a pre-identified demand for feral horses from approved individuals and organisations.

Trapping for removal to rehome feral horses is being prioritised for areas of the park that are safely accessible by vehicles and are outside of the *Phytophthora* quarantine area and other known areas impacted by *Phytophthora*.

The level of demand from rehoming is qualified by rehoming preferences for feral horses that meet specified criteria relating to sex, age, colour and other characteristics. Feral horses that are captured by NPWS, but which are not wanted by rehoming, are sent to a knackery.

## Program objective

The objective of the Barrington Tops National Park and State Conservation Area feral horse capture and rehoming program is to contribute to meeting the requirements of the park's feral horse management plan by removing all feral horses from the park as far as practicable to aid environmental recovery and conservation.

# Roles and responsibilities in relation to rehoming

## National Parks and Wildlife Service

The roles and responsibilities of NPWS in relation to the capture and rehoming of horses in the park are determined by the NPW Act and the park's feral horse management plan. Noting that NPWS itself is not a rehomer:

- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for assessing and approving rehoming applications for the purpose of ensuring, as far as practicable, the rehomer is suitable, including from an animal welfare perspective.
- NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is responsible for capturing feral horses, transporting them to NPWS temporary holding yards and holding horses in the yards until the horses are collected by or on behalf of an approved rehomer. This must be carried out in accordance with the following standard operating procedures and related requirements:
  - NPWS Passive trapping
  - NPWS Removal for domestication (rehoming)
  - Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines: Land Transport of Livestock (Animal Health Australia 2012).
- Compliance with these standard operating procedures and standards and guidelines will ensure that best practice animal welfare standards are met by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in undertaking these activities.
- Ownership and all responsibility for feral horses transfers to the rehomer on the transportation date, being when horses are loaded onto a transport vehicle and collected by the rehomer (or other person approved by the rehomer) at the NPWS temporary holding yards or other location specified by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service is also responsible for the effective administration of the rehoming program. This includes:

- establishing risk-based criteria against which applications from potential rehomers are assessed
- consistent application of those criteria in deciding who to approve as rehomers
- periodic review of whether approved rehomers continue to meet the criteria
- referring any allegations related to animal welfare, or matters arising from periodic review of data as outlined above, to the appropriate agencies
- effective communication and engagement with agencies who have responsibilities for the welfare of horses
- management of program data.

The NPWS Domestication (Rehoming) Guidelines set out:

- pre-requisites for approval as a rehomer (such as relevant experience and property suitability)
- requirements that need to be met on an ongoing basis in order to retain approved rehomer status.

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The guidelines are applied by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in making decisions about the administration and implementation of the program. A breach of the guidelines by a rehomer is not a breach of the law and NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service cannot take legal action to enforce the guidelines. However, NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service will revoke or suspend the approval of a rehomer who fails to comply with the guidelines.

### Animal welfare and other authorities relevant to private land

Once horses leave the control of NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service (on the transportation date), the rehomer is responsible for the welfare of horses and compliance with all relevant laws.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service does not have statutory powers that enable it to enter private land for purposes related to the management of domestic animals (including rehomed feral horses) or to otherwise regulate private landholders and their management of horses.

A number of other agencies have statutory powers and functions related to the management and welfare of horses on private land. These include the RSPCA NSW (with respect to animal welfare matters under the *Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1979*), Local Land Services (with respect to biosecurity matters) as well as local government and the NSW Police.

Animal welfare agencies, such as RSPCA NSW or their interstate counterparts, are responsible for considering and (if warranted) investigating complaints or allegations about the welfare of horses on private land. This includes horses that were originally sourced from the NPWS rehoming program.

Other agencies may also have a role in relation to the welfare of horses on private land, depending on the particular facts and circumstances, including but not limited to NSW Local Land Services, NSW Police and local government.

Where specific allegations are received by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service in relation to rehomers, or matters are identified through the periodic review of data and returns as set out above, those allegations/matters will be referred to the appropriate authority or organisation, in accordance with the guidelines.

NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service may also suspend the rehomer while that matter is considered.

### Rehomers

Rehomers are responsible for the welfare of horses from the moment they are loaded on to transport at the NPWS yards (or other location specified by NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service) and collected by the rehomer (the transportation date), including in circumstances where the rehomer is using a transport provider.

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Rehomers:

- assume **ownership** of the horses once loaded on to transport and collected at the NPWS holding yards or other specified location
- are responsible for all arrangements and costs associated with the transport of horses from the NPWS yards or other specified location
- are responsible for the **welfare** of feral horses from the moment horses are loaded on to transport at the NPWS yards or other specified location, including obligations under all relevant animal welfare legislation, guidelines and codes
- are responsible for compliance with any legislative obligations applying to the use of land for the rehoming of feral horses, including obtaining landowner's consent (if the applicant is not the landowner), relevant planning, land use, biodiversity, heritage, environment protection, and health and safety laws.