



Minister for Environment and the Great Barrier Reef  
Minister for Science and Minister for the Arts

Our Ref: CTS 04194/19  
Your Ref: A417930

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14 MAR 2019

Mr Neil Laurie  
The Clerk of the Parliament  
Queensland Parliamentary Service  
Parliament House  
George Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

*Neil,*

Thank you for your letter dated 18 February 2019 regarding Parliamentary Petition 3007-18 and the protection of the remaining brumbies on Curtis Island.

The land on which these activities were conducted was a mix of national park, conservation park and environmental reserves, which are set aside for the purposes of protecting Queensland's native species and natural environment. These areas are a major part of what makes Curtis Island so valuable to locals and to the Gladstone community.

Curtis Island's protected areas are home to a number of unique habitats and endangered species. Some of these are very restricted in their distribution or at critical levels for sustaining a healthy population, therefore, every effort is made to protect them from threats. One such threat is impacts from feral and domestic animals.

Over recent years, the Queensland Government, through the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service and Partnerships (QPWSP), has implemented extensive pest control programs targeting pigs, foxes and feral cattle. This program has led to the recovery of these ecosystems and breeding success of native species. Unfortunately, and due in part to not being targeted in previous feral animal control programs, Curtis Island's population of feral horses has increased unabated and expanded into areas where they had not previously been recorded. Studies conducted by QPWSP, in conjunction with the Central Queensland University (CQU), identified that the population was impacting the island's protected areas.

To address these impacts and negate the need for a far more extensive control program later, a decision was made to address the expanding population now. Alternative control techniques were considered including mustering and relocation.

However, such activities are highly stressful for the animals and the future home and welfare of so many feral horses could not be guaranteed.

QPWSP is experienced in aerial shooting control programs and conducts them regularly across Queensland. The control program on Curtis Island engaged QPWSP's most experienced and best aerial marksmen to ensure the greatest respect for animal welfare. The activity occurred strictly in accordance with nationally recognised codes of practice and standard operating procedures.

To further ensure these outcomes, an independent vet was on site during the program and undertook a full audit of the program and its welfare practices. This verified the program was delivered humanely and in full compliance with best practice animal welfare standards. Biosecurity Queensland also recently completed an investigation, reaching the same conclusion.

QPWSP has assured me that contrary to many of the claims that have been made, QPWSP did not chase or ground shoot the animals nor lure them away from the South End township, private property or onto the protected area estate. Additionally, the claim that the feral horses were tame and could be easily rounded up is not accurate, nor had QPWSP trained or attracted feral horses to stay in a fenced yard.

The Department of Environment and Science is obliged under Queensland legislation, including the *Nature Conservation Act 1992* and the *Biosecurity Act 2014*, to manage pest animals on protected areas and other land it manages. However, given the strong community concerns and at the request of the Member for Gladstone, Mr Glenn Butcher MP and the Mayor of Gladstone Regional Council, I have requested further independent monitoring and scientific analysis be conducted before any further control efforts are undertaken. This evaluation will also identify the improvement in the values of Curtis Island protected areas by the reduction in wild horse population and inform any future programs. I have also assured the Member for Gladstone and the Mayor of Gladstone Regional Council that this independent monitoring and scientific analysis will be shared with the community prior to preceding with any future activity of this nature.

I would be pleased if you would arrange for the tabling of this letter in response to the Petition in accordance with Standing Order 31.

I trust this information has been of assistance to the Petitioners.

Yours sincerely



Leeanne Enoch MP

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