



THE NATIONALS



**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN THE
NSW LIBERAL/NATIONALS COALITION**

AND

**A COALITION OF NSW HORSE RIDERS
20 November 2006**

The NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition recognises that the management of our National Parks Nature Reserves, Wilderness Areas, Regional Parks, State Recreation Areas, State Forests and other public land ("all referred to as reserve areas") requires a sensible balance of conservation and public access, and should contribute to enhanced appreciation and understanding of our natural environment and our cultural heritage across the community.

Any decisions about the management of our natural environment and cultural heritage must be based on evidence and science, and involve the community in transparent decision-making.

This Memorandum of Understanding between the NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition and the Australian Horse Alliance (AHA), Snowy Mountains Bush User Group (SMBUG), and Snowy Mountains Horse Riders Association (SMHRA) sets out a positive approach to providing the opportunity for broader access for horse riders to reserve areas, and any prohibition of access to reserve areas and the management of these areas must be backed by an improved and scientific evidence based approach.

The Memorandum also sets out undertakings by the AHA, SMBUG, and SMHRA underpinning this agreement and sets out a range of benefits to the NSW community including a strengthened voluntary partnership between horse-riders and park staff on issues including fire trail maintenance, and additional care and stewardship of accessible areas.

Principles

The NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition:

1. Recognises horse riding as an appropriate '*self reliant*' activity for reserve areas;
2. Recognises the importance of horse riding in our Australian cultural heritage and the value of encouraging and promoting safe and responsible horse riding activities in reserve areas;

3. Endorses the Bicentennial National Trail, which was founded by RM Williams as a national horse trail and, launched during the Bicentennial as a multi use non motorised recreational trail, run by a not-for-profit volunteer board;
4. Understands the importance of horse riding to our tourism industry;
5. Understands the broad appeal of horse riding to thousands of NSW families;
6. Supports the notion of promoting and encouraging public access by horse riders to our reserve areas;
7. Recognises that many areas have been shut off to horse-riders for reasons other than scientific evidence;
8. Believes that conservation and cultural heritage awareness and engendering broad community support for conserving reserve areas is best developed through encouraging individuals to experience and appreciate natural areas for themselves;
9. Supports the principles of Adaptive Environmental Assessment and Management(AEAM) as a management approach for reserve lands; and
10. Recognises that existing policies of restricting areas for horse riding have the potential to concentrate the activity, which may lead to unacceptable impacts to reserve areas.

Accordingly the NSW Liberal/Nationals Coalition will:

1. Amend and sponsor necessary legislation, regulation and policy to ensure horse riding is accepted as a '*self reliant*' activity and is an appropriate recreation in reserve areas;
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 - a. Remove the blanket prohibition against riding in Wilderness and Nature Reserves within three months of coming to government.
 - b. Within six months of coming to government, adopt new Plans of Management to reinstate horse riding to all reserve areas where it had been permitted prior to the classification of those areas as Wilderness or Nature Reserves or the Adoption of a Plan of Management.
 - c. Provide that horse riding may be subsequently modified if there is expert scientific evidence to suggest that there will be serious or irreversible detrimental impacts if horse riding is permitted, and following an AEAM process.
3. Ensure that all new Plans of Management are drawn up on the basis that horse riding is an appropriate activity unless scientific based and appropriate evidence shows that there will be serious or irreversible detrimental impacts if horse riding is permitted, and such impacts are not manageable by AEAM techniques, and that input from the AHA and local horse riding interest groups on potential riding trails is transparently and expertly considered;

4. Reform the way consultative committee decisions are made to ensure that departmental committee representatives are limited to expert advisory, rather than voting, roles;
5. Secure the route of the Bicentennial National Trail where it crosses public lands;
6. Undertake investigation of opportunities to route the BNT through public land where possible, to ensure the connectivity of the route is not dependent on private land-owner goodwill;
7. Work with private owners where appropriate to try to secure permanent access arrangements through private land on the BNT where public land alternatives are not possible;
8. Ensure that recruitment policies for the Department of Environment and Conservation seeks a broad range of skills including tourism and recreation;
9. Ensure that advisory and consultative committees under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act* include as many representatives of recreational organisations as there are representatives of "conservation organisations" to ensure public access interests are properly heard; and
10. Ensure that through appropriate Government Departments and ministries that "Brumbies" are recognised as part of the cultural heritage of New South Wales and through Statutory instruments and Plans of Management and in consultation with the AHA and local horse riding interest groups this heritage is recognised and protected and appropriate viable populations are protected in reserve areas. Shooting will not be permitted as a management tool.
11. Endorses the concept of identifying for use by horse riders heritage tracks, trails and places within reserve areas. These would include but not be limited to former and current stock routes and reserves, old mail, coach and other historic routes.

The Australian Horse Alliance and other signatories:

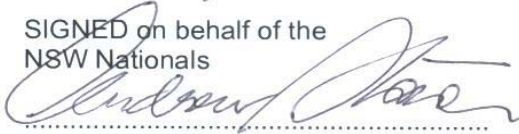
- Are not seeking indiscriminate access to all reserve areas;
- Support the need to develop and implement scientific, evidence based plans of management in reserve areas;
- Support the use of AEAM techniques and tools in the management of reserve areas;
- Will undertake the production of educational information for its members on the responsibilities of riders in reserve areas;
- Agrees that all riders in Alpine areas will abide by the " Horse Riding Code – Horse Riding in the Australian Alps National Parks" Code of Practice;

- Will promote the benefits of a partnership relationship between riders as 'volunteers' in the management of reserve areas, and park staff as partners in a cooperative arrangement
- Will develop, in cooperation with the national parks service, protocols to ensure that relevant information collected by riders is passed back to park managers, and activities such as clearing fire trails or other minor maintenance is guided by expert advice.

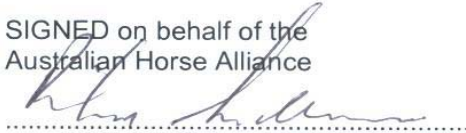
SIGNED on behalf of the
NSW Liberal Party


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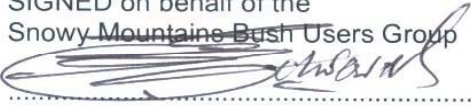
SIGNED on behalf of the
NSW Nationals


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SIGNED on behalf of the
Australian Horse Alliance


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SIGNED on behalf of the
Snowy Mountains Bush Users Group


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Snowy Mountains Horse Riders Association


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Date: 20. 11. 06