

The Hon Tony Burke MP

Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities

Alpine grazing

E&OE Transcript
Press conference, Alpine National Park
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QUESTION: Mr Burke, I have a question here with being out on the cattle grounds today. Here in the Alpine National Park, should these cattle be grazing in the National Park?

TONY BURKE: It's really simple. I don't regard us as being on cattle grounds. I regard us as being in a National Park. It's a National Park here, not a farm. You can already see, I mean you just look around, you can see already, in just a few weeks the damage that's been done.

QUESTION: Will the Federal Government act on getting them out?

TONY BURKE: Well the first thing, I've got a job as Minister for the Environment to advocate on behalf of the environment and so before you get to any question of legality there's a principle here and that's, using a National Park as a farm is wrong. Simple as that. There's a separate question as to whether or not it also breaches Federal law. That's something that I need to take further advice on from the Department, as to whether Federal law is breached, but I can see from the damage that's already being done in just a few weeks, the urgency of me receiving that advice.

QUESTION: Is the Baillieu Government putting politics over science?

TONY BURKE: We've been, my Department has been asking for information about this so called scientific grazing for some time. A few weeks ago, I was involved with arguments with the Japanese Government over so called scientific whaling. Now I'm here having – what the Victorian's Government's wanting to describe as so called scientific grazing. The information that's come to us so far, hasn't showed any evidence that they even did a base line study as to what the situation was before the cattle were introduced. If there is something genuinely scientific going on, it certainly hasn't been evidenced by what we can see here today or, by the information Victoria has so far provided to my Department.

QUESTION: Are there any other comments you'd like to highlight from your visit here today, from what you've seen and what action you're likely to take?

TONY BURKE: The action that I'll take will be within the limits of the law that I have to deal with, whether or not they've broken Federal law. I will be dealing with the Act and the Act alone.

Beyond that, there is a really simple principle here. Every national park has problems with invasive species. Every national park has problems with animals that are not native Australian animals and trying to manage them and get their numbers down. But this is the first time in living memory, that a State Government has deliberately introduced an invasive species, has deliberately introduced an animal that is not an Australian animal into a national park.

Now, Australians will have a whole range of views on a whole range of different environmental issues but every Australian has a pretty simple attitude that our national parks are there for Australian animals and it might come as a surprise to the Victorian Government that cattle don't qualify as Australian native animals.

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