# Introduction and Research

For me brumbies have always been a strange entity, and as far as I was aware, one lacking controversy. Thus, when we were approached with the idea of a brumby conspiracy, I was instantly hooked, and immediately set out to begin my brumby journey. Bringing Alexis and I together was a mutual interest in geospatial visualisation and environmental issues. Therefore, from the very beginning we knew we wanted to create some form of map as our central data visualisation, therefore the topic of brumbies and how many there are in the Australian Alps matched our interests greatly. The goal of the project was to create a narrative driven scrolly telling article, inspired by projects such as ABC's story lab. With the core information distributed through a designed map. Showing, where are the brumbies, and how many are there.

Research: Miro link - https://miro.com/welcomeonboard/dzZoU1FyQjBCV1QvRTI0NkNoRHVncXRWTFp1YzM1M2FPUFh4OXpwRVhteXhvQThrM0ZDMTRoYmUxdGUwNGtKaHwzNDU4NzYt0NTI0MzkyMTc3OTTcwfDI=?share_link_id=33151461981

The first step of the project was research and data gathering. The information on brumbies was small and scattered, with no one large dataset to pull from. The data came in many forms, and much of the reports with strong information were shortened or adapted for a larger audience and didn't show the full information of the study. Thus, we began a process of data scraping, pulling information from various sources and mediums to create a comprehensive story of where the brumbies are, and their impact on the highlands. To add a more dynamic and trustworthy image to our article, we reached out to a Professor James Pittock from the Fenner school of Environment and Society, who provided us with first hand information on true effects of brumby damage along with specific instances to showcase to the viewers of the article. This overall created a strong narrative ready for us to move into the next step of our project creating the article.

Notes from 2 research articles
and things discussed in W10 class
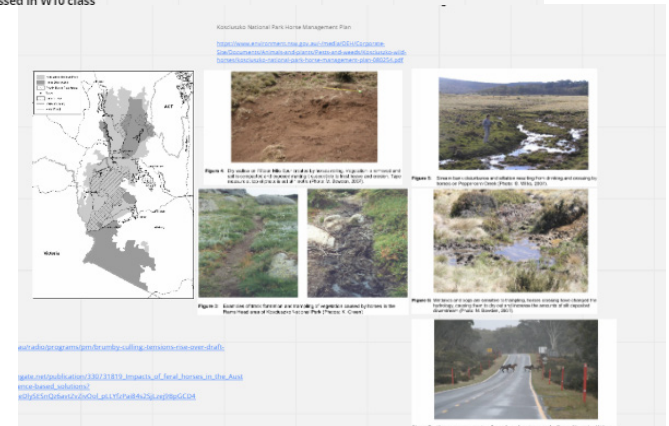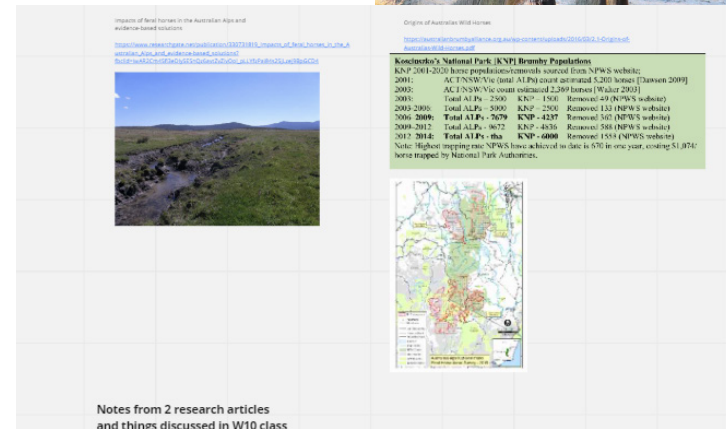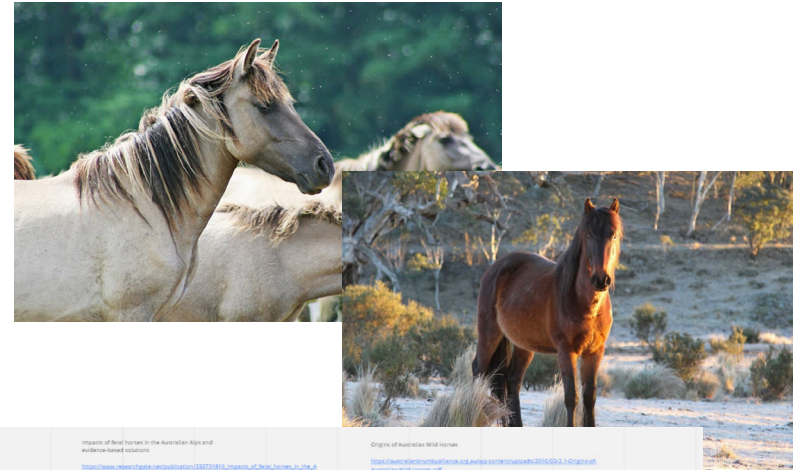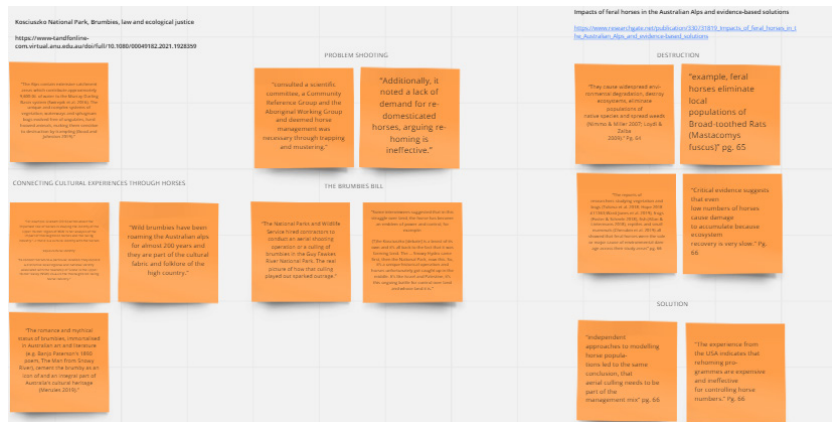
Design Inspiration

Through our research we came across three key sources which inspired the core elements of our assessment. The first being ABC's Battle for the Brumbies StoryLab article.

Particularly what stood out was the narrative storytelling, the core interaction of scrolling being used to create a visual experience for the reader. The language used in the article is simple and easy to read, while also evoking strong emotions as it is paired with beautiful imagery. These elements together create a reading experience which is significantly more satisfying to the viewer than a regular article. However, the article lacks in displaying any tangible data, instead focusing on the people and the conflict of the high country. Along with this, the article discounts the scientific community by only showing serene landscapes with elegant wild horses trotting through them, thus missing a chance to show images of the real impact caused by the brumbies. A reader would not be faulted in believing that the impact is minimal due to this. Therefore, we found that our project has purpose, by conveying the information that the article omitted.

Our second inspiration was Mitchell Whitelaw's tracker data project website, which provided the framework of the core HTML and CSS coding within the article. In particular, the structure of splitting the HTML up into 'steps' creates a dynamic and customisable workflow, allowing for the article to be built one step at a time. Similarly, the CSS was able to compensate for the content as it was added, using additional 'div' 'ID' and 'class' elements. My CSS knowledge is still developing, so this extra leeway was very beneficial, despite making our code less organised. (Unfortunatley no images are available due to website going down)

Finally, our inspiration for our geospatial visualisation was provided by our core data set – the 2019 feral horse survey, conducted by the Australian Alps National Parks. Within the report, a map was included which highlighted the core areas within the Alps which had a significant brumby population. Using this image as a base, we were able to create a standardised map with changing geospatial information. By highlighting these areas, the connection to the information is stronger, and the viewer can tangibly see the impacted areas, not just words and numbers.
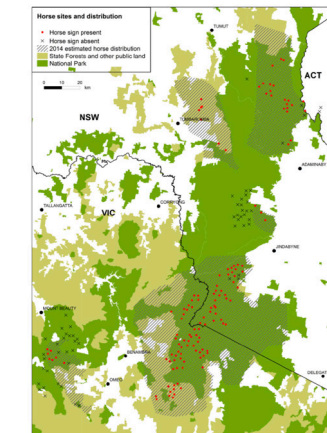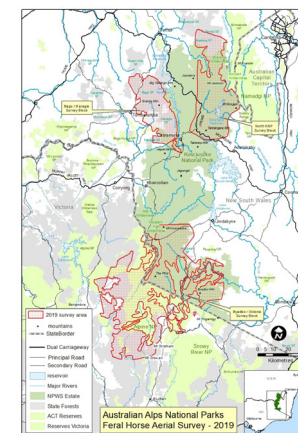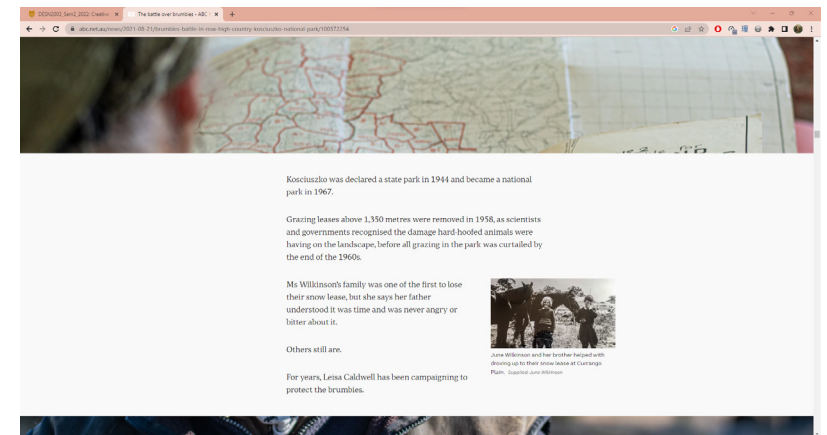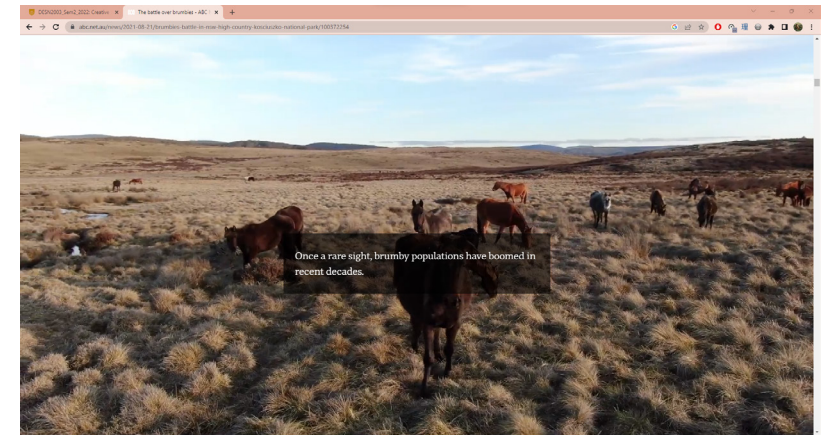
Code

The code itself is built only of HTML and CSS. Originally, we planned to use the Scrollama framework, incorporating JavaScript into our workflow. However, as our scope and research consistently increased we found that the adaptability and simplicity of the HTML and CSS was more convenient for the changing content. Despite this, there are many positive additions that JavaScript can make to the project, allowing for a more comprehensive article. In particular, being able to fade and change HTML content would allow for the map visualisations to flow smoother and give a more interesting image gallery. Though, the HTML and CSS core are still built with JavaScript implementation in mind, as it allowed for a stronger control over content.

Each section of the HTML is split into story 'steps' with each step symbolising a change in topic. Within these steps is the content, usually containing one image and accompanying text.

By giving the image the 'sticky' display property, the user can scroll through the text while the image stays present on the screen, until the next step is called in the code. This is accomplished by assigning the element of 'div' a 'class' allowing for specific instances of the HTML code to be referred to in the CSS. By making several variations of this framework, a dynamic and flowing story is built.

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Further Rationale and Distribution

The distance between each step is variable depending on the flow of the content before it. starting at a standard 60 view height taken from the tracker data project, we manipulated this distance to show how different content relates to each other. Some images and text need to occur straight after one another, in particular the before and after shots of the moss banks have no margin due to them having a cause-and-effect relationship. Along with this, changing up the flow also creates a more dynamic pace fore the article to move, creating peaks and troughs in the information distribution.

The map visualisations were created in adobe illustrator, taking many different visualisations from studies and surveys, standardising them into a simple and easy to consume piece of media. A downside to their simplicity however, is that they lack a point of reference and possibly alienate the viewer from the scope of the problem.

I am quite proud of the final product and I think it is a testament to our hard work. I learned a lot from the process, particularly coding in CSS. However, it is very likely that the code I wrote is overcomplicated, and it starts to falter under aspect ratios that arent 1920x1080, particularly the images.

Overall Project Distribution:
Each team member worked all portions of the project, however, certain portions lead by an individual:

Alexis - Reseach and Script Writing

Anders - Coding and Map Creation