

SUBMISSION TO THE

**SENATE RURAL AND REGIONAL AFFAIRS
AND TRANSPORT REFERENCES
COMMITTEE**

**INQUIRY INTO THE FEASIBILITY OF A
NATIONAL HORSE TRACEABILITY
REGISTER FOR ALL HORSES**

**SUBMISSION OF
HARNESS RACING AUSTRALIA**

4 APRIL 2019

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Harness Racing Australia (HRA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the Australian Government Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport References Committee Inquiry into the feasibility of a national horse traceability register for all horses.

As the peak national body for the harness racing code of racing in Australia, this submission is made on behalf of HRA Members, consisting of harness racing Controlling Bodies and Principal Clubs in the States of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, all of whom operate within the various *Racing Acts* of their respective States to regulate, nurture, foster and promote harness racing at all levels within the industry.

Harness racing in Australia enjoys not only a rich heritage but continues to provide significant cultural and economic contributions to the community on a daily basis.

In doing so, HRA represents more than 48,400 individuals who are involved in the process of breeding and preparing Standardbreds for racing in Australia. Of these, there are 24,000 owners of Standardbred racehorses who provide significant capital investment into the industry, over 5,900 trainers and drivers and more than 5,500 breeders.

The process of breeding and preparing Standardbred racehorses to compete in the industry is worth more than half a billion dollars in direct expenditure alone to the Australian economy. The majority of this is spent in regional Australia. In all, 19,000 Australians rely on harness racing for part or all of their income.

Sustainability of the harness racing industry, including participation and employment, is underpinned by public confidence; hence we demand and command such high standards of integrity and regulation.

One of our highest priorities is equine health and welfare.

Equine health and welfare has no finish line and will always occupy the minds of harness racing industry regulators and participants as recent events have quite rightly put added focus on the issue, frank assessment, review and continuous improvement of our activities and industry culture.

More specifically with regards to this inquiry, while comfortable with the veracity, compliance and regulation of our own industry registration regime, HRA supports any practical and cost-efficient initiatives designed to bring about improvements in regulating and enforcing horse traceability across all equine sectors.

Despite the passing of time, the memories and devastating effects of Equine Influenza (EI) episode of 2007 remain. Throughout the containment and eradication processes, the advantages of well managed and maintained registration databases were clearly evident.

At such times, it is not necessarily who the horse is, but where it is that is most important and hence the benefits of a national horse traceability register for all horses would be many and varied.

The issues then become feasibility. Success and effectiveness will hinge not only on an operational design which captures common information and attains high rates of compliance, but also the cost and maintenance - both those up front and those ongoing.

Compliance within industries/bodies that do routinely capture individual horse

information, such as the harness racing industry, is already valuable and, in the case of harness racing anyway, available when required.

Therefore, it would not be acceptable to HRA to overlay additional administrative or cost burdens should new or alternative *Horse Registry* solutions ultimately be found to be feasible.

HRA would therefore support the introduction of a national horse traceability register for all horses as long as it does not significantly impact or present an administrative burden on current industry registration practices or costs.

SUBMISSION ENDS.