
Considerations for the Inquiry

Preamble

We have concluded from reviewing the submissions made to the Inquiry and from listening to the evidence so far that there is general agreement to the need for a register of horses.

Purpose of note

We are writing this note following the evidence we gave on 20 September 2019. Its purpose is to ensure that the points we made are adequately recorded, notwithstanding that there is a Hansard record.

Key questions

There are at least three critical questions relating to the creation of a national equine traceability register:

1. How would it be funded? Who would pay for development and who would pay for ongoing maintenance?
2. Who should operate the register?
3. What would be the scope of the register?

In considering these questions we offered several comments at the Inquiry.

Benefits / opportunities

Traceability we need, and we should use state legislation already in place for livestock movements and transform from paper based to real time digital. Identification can be achieved from registration. Considering only traceability and identification would leave other benefits and opportunities on the table. These other benefits and opportunities include:

- (a) **Individual value:** A well-designed system that records **provenance** will help improve the value of owners' assets (their horses);
- (b) **Collective value:** The system as a whole would underpin the opportunity to create / increase an **equine export** market;
- (c) **National branding:** we can demonstrate Australian leadership in biosecurity, safety and technology **innovation**;
- (d) **Administrative efficiency:** an integrated approach to equine information management will improve **efficiency and effectiveness** for competition and event organisers and for the administrators of biosecurity and safety regulations.

Costing and scope

Any numbers currently bandied about are at best ill-informed. You cannot budget a system unless you have a set of requirements to budget against.

All systems developments are risky: the creation of a register, whether centralised or not, would be no different.

A register focussed solely on traceability runs the risk of being perceived as imposing a compliance obligation on horse owners. While it is fair to say that the collection of data might assist in managing matters of biosecurity and safety it may not be clear to horse owners what immediate benefit they are getting. In our experience the users of systems need to see a clear and quick return on the effort they expend on inputting data. A register focussed solely on traceability is an opportunity for avoidance as much as it is a tool for compliance.

Design considerations

There are some useful design principles that apply to any successful system and in particular should apply to any registration system:

- (a) **Individual:** Design the system around the user: if the user sees no benefit to her then she won't use it or will try to find a way to avoid using it;
- (b) **Industry:** Ensure the system works for the industry; in other words, design for an eco-system that is comprised of individuals and their connections;
- (c) **Nation:** Make the system work for the greater good. Ensure that the system is seen by outsiders as at least necessary and preferably as demonstrably useful;
- (d) **Strategy:** ensure that the system is strategic rather than transactional: e.g. an individual horse passport is an important transactional requirement, but its value is considerably enhanced if it is well-integrated with the system context.

Way Forward

We believe that the Inquiry should facilitate the Australian equine industry to consider contemporary technologies that not only support the key issues that have been raised but also increase the economic and social value of our industry at home and internationally.