


To: **The Secretary**
Public Works Committee
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600

 <u>Submission No. 09</u> <u>(Quarantine Facility)</u> <u>Date: 19/03/13</u>

19th March 2013

And via e-mail to: pwc@aph.gov.au

RE: FUTURE POST ARRIVAL QUARANTINE FACILITY - HORSES

This submission is lodged on behalf of International Racehorse Transport Pty Ltd (IRT) in respect to the matter of the proposed limited amenities planned for the future Post Arrival Quarantine facility.

Background:

IRT - Formed in 1972, International Racehorse Transport (IRT) has been responsible for the importation of the large majority of horses arriving in Australia since that time. This has afforded our organisation with an opportunity to experience first-hand all quarantine facilities available throughout Australia over the past 40 years. Whilst thoroughbred horses account for a large proportion of equines imported into Australia, other breeds such as Standardbreds (Trotters/Pacers), Quarterhorses, Appaloosa's, Arabians, Warmbloods, Welsh Mountain Ponies, Gypsy Cobs & miniature horses are well represented. These are made up of stallions, colts, geldings, mares, fillies, foals, in-foal mares, mares with foals at foot, weanlings and yearlings – each horse's breed, age, sex and their "use" requires specialist knowledge and specific horse husbandry skills to understand and maintain their health and safety.

Comments:

We strongly recommend that this matter be re-considered in the interests of horse welfare.

Please find following the points we consider require serious consideration.

- The majority of horses arriving at the PAQ originate from the Northern Hemisphere and have undertaken a long and tiring journey, consequently there is a need for constant, consistent and careful attention during the initial acclimatisation period in Australia. Entering a new environment significantly increases the risk of an animal suffering the effects of travel stress/sickness and the onset of colic.
- As the site is located in an area with virtually no availability to suitable accommodation within close reasonable proximity, this precludes having experienced personnel capable of responding quickly and appropriately in an emergency situation. **Refer Appendix 1** – *google map depicting location of **current** available accommodation sites.*
- To support the need for experienced attendants/grooms to be on site for a 24 hour period it should be noted that there are no major equine specialist Veterinary practices within close proximity to the facility - in the case of an emergency it would take a Vet at least 20 - 25 minutes travelling time to get to the facility, then undertake the security processes to enter - all the more need to have capable people able to attend to and suitably support a sick or injured horse whilst awaiting the arrival of a Vet. **Refer Appendix 2** - *google map depicting location of Equine Vet Practices*
- Having dealt with the many and varied issues that arise with live horses undergoing mandatory quarantine over a 40 year period, experience has taught us (sometimes with serious detrimental outcomes) of the importance of having several experienced, well qualified and trained personnel immediately available on site to deal with emergencies promptly. The slightest delay (even in terms of minutes) in reacting to an emergency situation can have serious and ongoing consequences.
- With a good number of high profile horses visiting Australia to compete in major sporting/publicity events, including the shuttle stallions and international mares visiting Australia for breeding purposes and then returned to some of the foremost Studs/establishments worldwide, how well the horse is cared for and tended during the quarantine process will reflect on the quarantine system imposed upon them by DAFF.

- Not only the welfare of the horses should be given the consideration it deserves, but that of the attendants/grooms themselves needs to be taken into account. Again, past experience has shown the importance of having more than one person immediately on site to attend in an emergency. Dealing with an injured horse suffering considerable pain poses risks to a person acting alone. Therefore it is imperative that several people with sufficient experience and knowledge are immediately on hand to respond in an emergency.
- Often when one horse is disturbed during the night, it sets off a chain reaction amongst the entire stable block requiring the attention of several grooms to resettle and attend to other horses to regain equilibrium.
- Reacting to a horse that is suffering from colic or is cast in their stall needs to be attended to promptly to avoid serious injury to the animal – it is also recommended that this be carried out by several people to avoid personal injury to someone acting alone.
- DAFF have indicated a concern for Biosecurity risks with staff living on site however, in the case of an outbreak such as Equine Influenza, surely risk would be minimised if staff remained on site rather than opening up risk factors by staff regularly entering and existing the facility. Accommodation on site would allow a stringent “lock down” process to be undertaken.
- A horse requiring consistent medical attention with saline drips and antibiotic treatment may require the Attendant to be immediately on hand to carryout frequent checks – this may mean being up all night OR sleeping and checking (say) every hour. Under these circumstances, frequent visits/departures from the station (particularly if there is a suspicion of infectious disease), could compromise the quarantine. The sharing of such duties between attendants would not be possible in circumstances where there are several Shipping Agents involved. Whilst there is an indication that closed circuit TV is to be provided, there are no details as to which areas these will monitor.

- Insurance – with a vast number of imported horses being of significant value, insurance is obviously a further consideration – many Underwriters place exclusions on policies where the animal is not receiving what is considered “suitable care/attention” throughout an entire PAQ period – suitable care/attention would be considered 24 hour supervision by an experienced attendant/groom.
- Liability – without the best possible specialist care and attention being given and with the possibility of insurance cover carrying an exclusion/condition regarding care/attention, where would the liability lay if there is a case for humane destruction due to an accident, sickness or disease that perhaps could have been prevented had an appropriate number of experienced attendants/grooms been on hand ?
- Given that personnel accommodated “off site” may be required to attend in an emergency situation they would first need to complete security procedures before they could gain entry, this would lose precious time in dealing with the situation quickly.
- In reviewing the procedures/processes instituted at the Werribee Quarantine Facility as a possible “model”, it is important that due consideration was given to the fact that the quarantine periods undertaken in that facility are only held during the months of Oct/Nov during the Melbourne Cup Carnival and only cater for a small number of horses, all being TB’s in training – horses accustomed to regular handling and the routine of a stable environment. This is not a true reflection of the usual import quarantine where there are larger numbers of horses, all different breeds, types, sexes requiring individual attention according to their individual needs.

This matter has been discussed at length both within the IRT organisation and with our many clients who have imported horses for many years. The unanimous opinion from all those with considerable knowledge both of horses as well as their international shipment, is there should be no question as to the need to provide 24 hour care/supervision by experienced and knowledgeable attendants, it should only be a matter of what would be considered a suitable number to cover the number of horses under quarantine.

As members of the HICC who have regularly participated in the consultative process on matters relating to the import/export of horses, and more recently on this issue, IRT wish to record our concern that despite the strong recommendations from all those members of the HICC that there should be no question as to whether accommodation for attendants should be provided at the PAQ, it would appear the benefit of their experience and knowledge continues to be discounted.

IRT consider the provision of accommodation for attendants at the PAQ to be essential in the interest of both the welfare of the horses and those caring for them throughout the quarantine.

Signed on behalf of
INTERNATIONAL RACEHORSE TRANSPORT PTY LTD

Christopher F Burke – Partner / Operations Manager

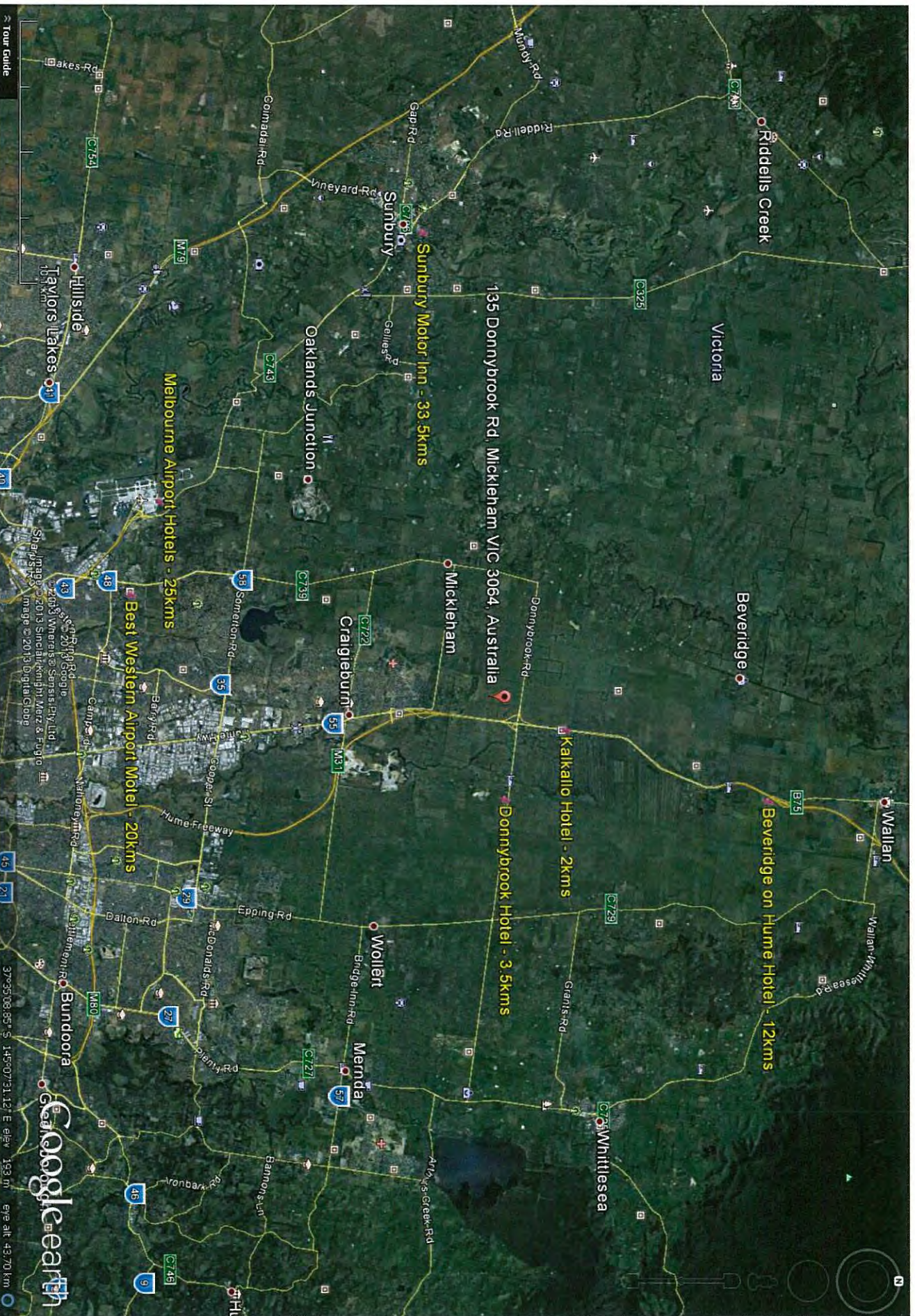


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IMPORTANT: All Services provided are subject to the Company's Trading Conditions of Contract which are endorsed and incorporated overleaf and which, in certain circumstances, exclude the Company's liability and include certain indemnities which benefit the Company

Appendix 1: Accommodation options near proposed PAQ site



APPENDIX 1 – Accommodation

Notes:

- **Kalkallo Hotel – 2 kms** - does NOT offer accommodation - being an establishment only serving food and alcohol
- **Donnybrook Hotel – 3.5 kms** – does NOT offer accommodation – being an establishment only serving food and alcohol
- **Beveridge on Hume Motel – 12kms** – this motel does NOT appear to be in business any more as there is no current telephone number listed for them
- **Best Western Airport Motel – 20 kms**
- **Melbourne Airport Hotels – 25 kms**
- **Sunbury Motor Inn – 33.5kms**

Appendix 2: Veterinary Practices specializing in Equine health near proposed PAQ site

