

Submission No. 20

(Quarantine Facility)

Date: 21/03/13

Dear Secretary

The Australian Racing Board (ARB) wishes to express its support for the submission by Harness Racing Australia (HRA) in relation to the need for an exercise facility at the proposed Mickleham post entry quarantine facility.

The internationalization of Thoroughbred racing has transformed Australian racing as it has other jurisdictions such as Britain, France and Hong Kong. International competition has substantially increased the appeal of racing in all countries in both spectator and wagering terms. It is widely accepted that the introduction of foreign competitors by the Victoria Racing Club (VRC) in 1992 saved the Melbourne Cup and Spring Carnival to the point where the Victorian Government estimates its annual contribution to the state economy at \$475m. Several French, Irish, Japanese, British and New Zealand trained or bred horses have won the Cup since Vintage Crop pioneered the long journey from the Northern Hemisphere to win in 1993.

The 2012 Melbourne Cup saw 21 out of the 24 runners either internationally trained or bred. In all, some 40 international horses traveled to Australia for the Spring Carnival. The internationalization of Australian racing has brought many benefits to Australian racing including raising the profile and investment in our breeding industry.

It goes without saying therefore that the Australian racing industry strongly supports and endorses the strategy of the harness racing industry to open up their sport to greater international competition. It is exactly the right strategy to follow for the future. The training requirements of racehorses are such that they are beyond the capacity of any quarantine facility to provide other than a purpose built facility alongside a functioning racecourse. For that reason Australian racing authorities have invested in the Werribee facility which meets the space and quarantine requirements of AQIS and trainers alike.

However, it is not feasible for the harness industry to invest in a stand alone and purpose built facility such as Werribee especially as it unnecessary given the basic requirements for an exercise track and associated infrastructure proposed by HRA. The HRA submission is eminently sensible, practical and affordable within the existing footprint of Mickleham. The harness industry is unlikely to reap the benefit from the internationalization of racing taking hold around the world unless it can provide an exercise track to facilitate the international movement of horses. The simple fact is that horses in competition, unlike breeding stock, must be able to train and exercise during their period of confinement or they cannot and will not travel. It is unreasonable to require the harness industry to build a stand alone and separate facility to Mickleham when it is both unaffordable and unnecessary given the space available at Mickleham.

The harness industry is deserving of the support of AQIS and the Government given the pivotal economic, cultural and social role it plays in communities across the nation. The ARB respectfully requests the Public Works Committee to recommend incorporation of an exercise track constructed at the expense of HRA at the new quarantine facility. The future of harness racing is largely dependent on international competition and without the support of this Committee, its future may not be realized.

Yours Sincerely,

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CEO

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