

22 September 2008

Mr John Carter  
Inquiry Secretary  
Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Sent via email: [rrat.sen@aph.gov.au](mailto:rrat.sen@aph.gov.au)

Dear Sir,

### **Inquiry into Horse Disease Response Levy Bill 2008**

Harness Racing Australia (HRA) appreciates the opportunity to provide a submission to the Senate Rural and Regional Affairs and Transport Committee Inquiry into the Horse Disease Response Levy Bill 2008 and related Bills.

The introduction of a horse disease response levy has been supported by HRA conditional upon the rate of levy being established at zero and a commitment to close consultation with harness racing and other equine industry bodies when framing regulations regarding its operation and implementation.

HRA has indicated it will become a signatory to the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement (EADRA) on this basis.

The harness racing industry does however have some concerns with the provisions of the Levy Bills, summarised as follows:

1. That the levy collection mechanism must be comprehensive in that it captures all horse owners and not just those within existing regulated industry bodies.

It is not appropriate that registrations be used as the means of gathering any levy, given there are estimated to be more than 1.2-million horses in Australia, of which 10-15% are registered. Even in the highly regulated racing industry there are significant numbers of horses which are not registered (eg. in the 2005-2006 breeding season there were 17,854 thoroughbred foals, of which 13,618 were registered).

It is illogical to suggest the racing industry should bear a disproportionate part of the burden because it is "commercial". Indeed, the vast majority of harness racing owners do not profit from their ownership.

2. That the circumstances which trigger a change to the amount of the rate of levy, particularly in the first instance when lifting from zero, be defined.
3. That any changes to the rate of levy be equal for all horse industry bodies and horse owners.
4. That consideration is given to liability issues surrounding the introduction of a disease requiring an emergency response before calling on funds collected under the Bills.

Government assistance was provided during the equine influenza outbreak detected in August 2007, although this fell well short of compensating for the full financial cost, the social impact or the disruption to the industry. Given the findings of the Callinan Inquiry on the causes of the outbreak, many felt the government assistance was inadequate. It would be improper to insist on the equine industry bearing the burden of any future outbreak without considering liability.

5. That any levy funds collected prior to an emergency disease outbreak should be held in trust by approved horse industry bodies until such time as required by the Commonwealth for the response.
6. That any levy funds held in trust must not be released for research or any other purpose without consultation with, and agreement by, approved horse industry bodies.

HRA looks forward to this matter being resolved, and a fair and rational formula for any future disease outbreaks being finalised, in the near future.

Yours sincerely,



**Geoff Want**  
Chairman