

Bianca Folber

8<sup>th</sup> April 2019,

To the Committee Secretary,

Please find attached my amended submission on the feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register for all horses. After submitting my submission I received information that was in contrast to part of my discussion so I have amended it. I am happy for my submission to be made public and I am happy for the committee to contact me if required.

Kind regards,

Bianca Folber

## Submission on the feasibility of a National Horse Traceability Register

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission on the feasibility of an Australian National Horse Traceability Register.

I have been involved with horses for many years and in the last few years I have actively been involved in trying to improve equine welfare in Australia. My passion for equine welfare stems from purchasing a filly at the saleyards in Victoria and the horrendous condition she was in. I will attempt to refer to the terms of reference and touch on my personal experience to provide you with supporting evidence.

a. the existence and adequacy of state or industry-based registers;

There are many individual registers, however there is no one register that pulls all the data together. I also question the accuracy of these individual registers as there is no enforcement to ensure the data is up to date and the onus is on the owner to submit changes. I have recently compiled data on a number of saleyards and paid particular attention to the number of thoroughbreds being sold. I checked the status of the thoroughbreds via the Racing Australia website and out of the 172 horses registered with Racing Australia 53 of them were still listed as either Active, Spelling or Transferred even though a number of these horses have been slaughtered for human consumption overseas.

b. the benefits of a national register, including for animal welfare, biosecurity safety (including for the prevention and management of Emergency Animal Diseases, such as equine influenza and African Horse Sickness), backyard breeding and the integrity of trade in horses;

I am particularly passionate about this term of reference especially in relation to animal welfare and backyard breeding. The filly that I purchased should not have been deemed fit for sale and should never have been transported to the saleyard in the first place due to her body score. Her prior owner used the saleyard to dispose of her and they provided the auctioneer with absolutely no information about her and in turn I know nothing about her. I purchased her for a measly \$120. She was so underweight that the transporter I hired to transport her to South Australia had to keep her at their private property for 2 weeks with constant access to hay before she had the strength to survive the journey. I have included her auction pictures and a photo of her on arrival with the transporters tag still attached.



If a national horse register had been in place then I at least would have received general information like age and breed. I also would have received basic health information to confirm whether she had been vaccinated. As she would have been easier to trace it is possible her owners may have made more of an effort to present her in better condition. If people are going to breed horses, they need to be responsible for them. This will hold owners to account and make it much easier for authorities to trace owners that disobey welfare laws.

Currently the saleyards and the knackeries are seen as easy ways for people to dispose of their horses and it's a bonus that they receive payment for doing so. Make it mandatory that only registered horses can be sold at

saleyards or submitted to knackeries. People will soon realise they cannot dispose of their horses so easily and they will either start to register their horses or stop breeding them.

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Make it mandatory for knackeries and slaughterhouses to check a national register before slaughter. Through my volunteer work to improve equine welfare I have seen many cases of people giving away their beloved old horses to be companions and then they discover they have actually been sold for meat. The UK system allows for people to actually flag their horse as not for slaughter and I feel Australian horse owners would benefit from a similar flag.

Regarding bio-security I am gravely concerned that EU regulations are not being strictly enforced. One particular buyer purchases horses at a Victorian saleyard and within the next fortnight delivers the horses to the Meramist factory in Caboolture QLD to be slaughtered for human consumption and export overseas. This particular meat buyer recently purchased 55 horses on the one day at Echuca saleyard. I have been informed that the auctioneer specifically only provides vendor declarations to this buyer. It is debateable whether the sellers fill out the vendor declarations accurately. Many Australian's are unaware of horse slaughter for human consumption and would not be aware of the importance of correctly filling out the horse vendor declaration. When the EU completed their audit in 2013 they themselves identified that horse vendor declarations cannot be guaranteed

“However, the identification system as currently in place does not guarantee that the validity of the HVD can be verified in the case of horses with multiple owners in the six months prior to first purchase for slaughter and therefore if the withdrawal periods had been respected.”

[http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act\\_getPDF.cfm?PDF\\_ID=11617](http://ec.europa.eu/food/audits-analysis/act_getPDF.cfm?PDF_ID=11617)

c. overseas models of national tracking systems for horses;

I recently attended a webinar hosted by Horse SA regarding the UK Central Equine Database. The database is a great example of what could be achieved in Australia. Some of the major positives I discovered were particularly in relation to bio-security and disease management. Horses can be completely tracked and in the event of a disease outbreak alerts could even be sent to users within a particular distance range. I urge you to view the webinar located at this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZA2PAo5B7PI>

d. funding, enforcement and penalty implications; and

For most horse owners to be willing to join a national register the registration fee needs to be affordable. Many horse owners are already struggling with the cost of feed due to the ongoing drought so it needs to be achievable otherwise people just won't join. Horses that are already registered with their relevant breed societies should have a VERY small fee to allow for the transfer of data only. The fee needs to be the same nationally. Currently horse properties are meant to have a PIC code however the fee for this code differs immensely per state. In my state of SA the fee is an extreme \$85.50 every 2 years yet in Victoria a PIC is free!

I believe to assist in a reduction of unnecessary breeding there should be a higher fee for stallions or colts if they do not belong to a registered breeder. There will need to be exemptions for registered charities and rescues. Microchipping will be the most effective form of tracking and we should encourage cheaper microchipping days so horse owners can get their horses microchipped for a reduced rate.

Again, I thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the inquiry and I hope there is sufficient support to implement a national horse register.