



## Australian Horse Industry Council

### **Opening statement by Mark Burnell, President of the Australian Horse Industry Council.**

I would like to thank the Senators for the opportunity to come before this inquiry today.

I am the president of the Australian Horse Industry Council, a peak body promoting the economic vitality and viability of the horse industry.

The AHIC has been in existence for over 30 years and is a representative organisation which includes breed society's, performance groups, service providers, equestrian businesses, State Horse Councils and horse enthusiasts.

The Australian Horse Industry Council is a volunteer Board with Directors from various sectors within the Equestrian community.

We aim to support the health, safety and well-being of horses, people and the Australian Environment.

Our purpose is to ensure that horses continue to hold a significant place in Australian life and culture.

Today, the recreational horse industry continues to bring much value to our society.

The AHIC can see benefits in the creation of a National Horse Traceability Registry but we are also aware that this is no small undertaking.

The issues are complex, compliance could be difficult and the costs could be significant. The AHIC can be a useful meeting point for industry participants to garner support and develop strategies for future improvements.

The benefits to the horse owners, the horse industry and associated businesses and the Government must ultimately outweigh the costs.

A primary area of benefit for all horse owners is to safeguard the disease free status of Australian horses, ponies and donkeys. Traceability, identification and protecting biosecurity are all interlinked.

As the inquiry has already heard, there are a number of different ways horses are registered in Australia. Whether a stud book from a breed society, a competition horse with a performance organisation or a race horse. All industry participants have, over time have developed their own methods of identifying their live-stock to suit the organisational needs, limited by administration support.

One of the key components of Biosecurity is traceability. Horses which intermingle a lot or which can travel great distances when sick are potentially the greatest risk. Knowing where all horses are would give a greater understanding of what potential risk is at play if there is an emergency situation. Such as a Fire, a flood or an exotic disease.

In reading the transcripts of the first public hearing, a common theme was the inability to accurately estimate horse population size let alone know where they are. If the PIC system was harmonised across the Country there would be a greater understanding of the horse population.

This could be further developed with an educational and marketing campaign implemented to fill many of the objects of a new Horse Traceability Registry.

The AHIC can assist with consultation amongst the different sectors of the horse community. Additional data could be added to existing registration platforms which will be of benefit to understanding the dynamics of the National herd. Potentially implement the use of a Unique Life Number for all active horses.

Thank you once again for the opportunity today and I'm happy to elaborate and take questions on this opening statement and our submission.