

24<sup>th</sup> August 2023

**Inquiry into vulnerable road users in Victoria – Opening statement**

Good morning, my name is Karri Nadazdy and I am the Horse & Livestock Representative for Animal Care Australia.

ACA is a national incorporated association established to advocate for real animal welfare by those who keep, breed and care for animals. Our goal is to promote and encourage high standards in all interactions with the animals in our care.

I am here today, on behalf of all Victorian Equestrians, whether they are ACA members or not.

ACA was concerned to learn that the laws for vehicles passing ridden and driven horses on our roads are so lax, they are effectively non-existent. The current rules put the responsibility of staying safe on the equestrian, and not the motorist.

In 2019, Melbourne City Council reacted to an issue with how motorists were behaving around horse drawn carriages. Instead of resolving the issues, they decided it was just easier to ban the horses. This is NOT the answer. The horses were not hitting the cars, the cars were hitting the horses. The elderly, the disabled and children are also hit by cars but I doubt anyone on this Committee would agree that all vulnerable road users should be banned from using the roads. It sounds ludicrous to say that, but that’s exactly what the Council did to the carriage horses.

The problem was not solved and 3 years later, we are still discussing the same issues.

Despite horses sharing the roads since the very early days of settlement there has been no substantial changes to protect them. Currently there is a recommendation to slow down when there is a horse on the road ahead but there is no enforceable law. We cannot re-educate drivers on laws that don’t exist.

I hope that today, we can make some progress to include and protect horses and ~~their~~ humans under Victoria’s legislative umbrella, and ensure that bans and restrictions of horses and their humans isn’t repeated.

ACA thanks you for the opportunity to speak today and for recognising that equestrians deserve to be safe on our roads too.

I welcome your questions.