

ONLINE ARTICLE

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LTAV president Kevin Keenan, Yarrowonga (right) with the association's newly elected executive Alan McKenzie, Bulla, Trevor Fry, Broadwater, Shane Knight, Moe, and Michael Debenham, Leongatha.

LIVESTOCK transporters at their annual Victorian conference in Bendigo last weekend accepted an offer of State funding to help plan the development of an electronic version of the National Vendor Declaration (NVD).

While there is no legal obligation in this State for transporters to carry NVD statements with livestock consignments, the huge number of transcription errors being experienced in NVD information, along with the continued use of outdated versions of the statement, have forced authorities in Victoria, at least, to explore the e-NVD option.

In a letter tendered to the conference, Victorian DPI Animal Biosecurity and Welfare director Tony Britt said he hoped funding could be made through the DPI this year to advance the commercial potential of implementing e-NVD into Victoria.

The closing date for funding applications is this Friday (24th) and it is hoped the result will be known by mid-September.

Livestock Transporters Association of Victoria president Kevin Keenan said while the LTAV was not an advocate of the scanning of electronic ear-tags for sheep and goats under proposed NLIS changes, they believed implementation would eventually take place and along with it a swing to e-NVD.

"On these grounds it is better to be proactive and have a say in its development rather than being told what has been forced on to us," he told delegates.

"The scanning of e-tags for sheep will come, and while it is not our job, we are the people who deliver the livestock so it is in our interests to have an involvement."

Earlier in the conference, Dr Britt told delegates the current system of NLIS-NVD for sheep, which was modified in 2006, failed the industry.

He said the high level of transcription errors, incorrect tag details and wrongly completed forms identified on vendor statements, which were legal documents, ran between 10 and 20 per cent inaccuracy and was most unsatisfactory.

And the use by vendors of outdated editions of the NVD remained unacceptably high.

"The bottom line is the system is not working and is unlikely to work at the levels required," he said.

"And while NSW and South Australia each have an army of inspectors at saleyards assisting to correct the problem, Victoria does not."

If Victoria were to go down that track, he said, it would require the employment of 10 inspectors costing about \$1.7 million, with continuing costs of \$12m annually.

In an era of user pays, he doubted if the Victorian industry would bear this cost.

Dr Britt said the DPI encouraged the use of electronic ear-tags for the sheep industry by helping peg the cost of tags at 90 cents a piece.

"There is an acceptance in Victoria that the NLIS-NVD must move forward," he said.

"A national working group of industries will report soon on the possible implementation of national electronic tagging for sheep and goats by 2014.

"If it goes forward it must have the co-operation of livestock transport associations."