



final report

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E-learning for NLIS implementation in meat processing

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Abstract

The purpose of this project has been to develop accredited training programs to assist meat processing plants to meet their National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) requirements. The project is being driven by an increasing desire on the part of regulators and industry to achieve a higher level of compliance with NLIS requirements.

In order to achieve this MINTRAC has worked with a technical reference group consisting of representatives of industry and regulators to develop:

- tasks descriptions for plant personnel interacting with the NLIS from stock buying through to NLIS data uploads
- model work instructions and SOPs to address these tasks
- accredited Units of competency to cover these tasks
- training and assessment materials to support the delivery of the Units.

Following the accreditation of the Units and the development of draft materials there have been pilot training sessions run in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. These sessions have enabled the piloting of the materials and the training of trainers.

Executive summary

The importance of the NLIS for the biosecurity of the Australian livestock industry and meeting importing country requirements is well established and an accepted prerequisite for having a sustainable and viable red meat industry.

However, ensuring the compliance of all the players in the red meat supply chain is the ongoing challenge for industry and regulators. This project has focused on equipping the red meat processing sector with the QA and training resources necessary to achieve compliance with the NLIS requirements and provide a means for addressing the challenge of staff competency in the face of ongoing staff turnover.

The purpose of this project has been to develop training programs that will improve the overall competency of meat industry personnel in complying with NLIS requirements. The courses and training materials will allow processors to enhance the consistency of their reporting for the NLIS on cattle, sheep and goat processing activities nationally.

Additionally the project enabled the development of model work instructions and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for NLIS processes. The availability of these will assist processors in documenting their own NLIS procedures for inclusion in their Approved Arrangements if they choose or if at some point regulators mandate their inclusion. Formally documenting NLIS related procedures will facilitate the routine internal auditing of NLIS procedures and enable more structured assessment of these processes by regulators and or third party auditors.

With the view to achieving these objectives the following activities have been undertaken:

- facilitate the participation of industry and regulators in the development of training NLIS programs
- review existing Units of Competency dealing with NLIS to ensure that they are adequate to deliver competencies required by the industry
- establish, utilising the State Government and MLA examples to date, a training process and materials for processing establishments to be able to meet their NLIS requirements
- establish a framework for the use of e-learning to facilitate NLIS training
- develop documented standard operating procedures and guidelines to assist abattoir staff in meeting their NLIS requirements
- develop an e-learning (CD-Rom) tool that can be utilised by meat processors for ongoing in-house training
- trial and validate the training materials with the working group
- develop and run a train the trainer program for RTO and in-house trainers
- develop and promote, with AMPC, MLA and AMIC, three trial workshops – one in each of three state jurisdictions.

The initial task was to identify the NLIS related procedures undertaken by meat processing plant staff. The identified procedures varied according to the species and identification system employed i.e. RFID versus mob based identification. The NLIS tasks included the work undertaken by stock buyers, lairage managers, livestock clerks, slaughter floor NLIS data station operators, QA managers or those responsible for NLIS data uploads.

Having identified these tasks model work instructions and SOPs were developed to describe the activities undertaken and once this was done it was possible to define the skills and knowledge necessary to perform these duties.

These identified NLIS roles then became the basis for individual Units of competency which define the required skills and knowledge necessary to competently undertake NLIS related tasks. There were fifteen individual Units of competency identified and submitted for accreditation. These Units, and were approved and added to the MTM11 Australian Meat Industry Training Package (v3) released in November 2012. These Units form electives for the Certificate III in Meat Processing (General) and can be undertaken as lone Units or as part of a qualification.

Training and assessment materials were then developed with the assistance of Ken Evers (Vic DPI) for each of the Units and these formed the basis of the train the trainer and pilot courses run. The materials and delivery options were discussed and reviewed at each of the training and QA manager network meetings

Because of the overwhelming demand for train the trainer courses it was decided to combine the pilot and train the trainer courses in each state to maximise industry and RTO capacity to deliver this program.

This means there are now RTO and company NLIS trainers in Victoria, NSW and Queensland with courses having been run in Melbourne, Wagga and Brisbane. The courses were well attended with over 75 participants having enrolled either in the Units relevant to their plants operations or to their duties. Out of the 75 enrolled 37 of the students are either company or RTO trainers.

As a result of this project industry can now roll out a comprehensive NLIS training program and where appropriate underachieving companies can be assisted to up-skill workers and improve compliance rates. An AMPC funded project scheduled to commence immediately will underpin this roll out of NLIS training.

The accrediting of the Units will also enable the industry to access government funding in some States and this will further reduce the impost on processors and indeed encourage the uptake of the training.

The availability of the training and the model NLIS work instructions and SOPs will also make it easier for companies to integrate NLIS procedures into their Approved Arrangement should this become a mandated requirement of their licence.

Equally important is these resources will enable the NLIS training of regulatory officers which will be consistent with that provided to the industry.

The training and assessment materials are made available to users as Word documents so that they can be easily customised to the particular requirements of each State jurisdiction. Likewise as the NLIS requirements change or are amended or are clarified training materials can be modified immediately by RTOs and will also be kept up to date via MINTRAC's annual review and update process.

The benefits to industry of having a well functioning NLIS are significant because without a well operating NLIS system it is impossible to respond effectively to livestock biosecurity emergencies.

The red meat processing industry is currently revisiting its biosecurity procedures and protocols through the development of industry biosecurity standards. A corner stone of these standards will have to be competent staff at abattoirs routinely meeting the company's NLIS obligations.

The industry is now in a position to ensure that staff can be trained and their competency assessed in a systematic way against accredited standards.

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1 Background

The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) is Australia's system for identifying and tracking livestock for food safety, biosecurity, market access and industry-related purposes. To date, NLIS has implemented schemes into the cattle, sheep and goat industries. The pig industry is also currently developing a national identification and traceability system.

The Australian Meat Industry Council (AMIC) has identified a need to develop a framework for further training on NLIS systems for meat processing industry personnel. Staff turnover, technological developments and the need to demonstrate compliance and validate traceability are all obvious drivers for a systematic training system.

AMIC have in the recent past entered into discussions with three State jurisdictions (DEEDI Queensland, Industry and Investment New South Wales and DPI Victoria) regarding NLIS training for processors as a means of addressing regulator concerns about NLIS compliance issues. Coincidentally, each state jurisdiction had also identified the need for NLIS training as a critical aspect of improving NLIS compliance.

Therefore AMIC has proposed that the introduction of NLIS training in the meat processing sector would best be facilitated in collaboration with the various State Governments. In turn this training will help provide the staff competencies required to meet the NLIS requirements for the industry. Indeed this was supported by the high level of interest and support by AMPC and AMIC members for NLIS training, across both export and domestic sectors.

Based on feedback from members, AMIC has also identified a very real need to develop documented standard operating procedures and guidelines to assist abattoir staff in meeting their NLIS requirements.

The purpose of this project was therefore twofold. Firstly to develop systematic training programs for meat processing sector staff interacting with the NLIS that will allow processors to enhance consistency and repeatability in application, verification and reporting of NLIS for slaughter activities nationally. Secondly, to support the development of documented standard operating procedures and guidelines to assist abattoir staff in meeting their NLIS requirements.

To scope the project, AMIC planned, in collaboration with AMPC, MLA and MINTRAC, to coordinate a working group that will identify the training requirements and develop the training framework. Upon completion of these activities, discussions will be held with the various State jurisdictions towards encouraging collaboration and state-based delivery (jointly between industry and Government) for the proposed workshops.

The learning outcomes for the training programs will include raising the awareness of NLIS as a means collecting and storing accurate cattle movements, promoting skills in accurate data collection, promoting skills in accurate data transfer and providing accurate information to third party clients. At the conclusion of the training, industry participants should be able to use readers to collect electronic tag numbers, download electronic data using appropriate software, open third party accounts, transfer data to MLA database, and provide accurate information to clients regarding transfer, amongst other activities.

The development of the e-learning and/or CD-Rom systems will be overseen by the working group. MINTRAC will then, in collaboration with AMIC and AMPC, train the trainers, trial the trainers and materials in the three jurisdictional workshops and prepare a plan for the on-going roll out of training through the accredited training system.

The key objective is to create a support package that underpins the NLIS and national reporting requirements for traceability and that embeds understanding and competency within industry to

ensure effective implementation, verification and communication of requirements. To achieve this, the package will include Standard Operating Procedures and other materials that can be directly integrated into on-plant quality assurance and reporting and training arrangements.

2 Project objectives

The objectives of this project were:

- participate in a working group which will oversee the program and all development
- review existing Units of competency dealing with NLIS to ensure that they are adequate to deliver competencies required by the industry
- establish, utilising the State Government and MLA examples to date, a training process and materials for processing establishments to be able to meet their NLIS requirements
- establish a framework for the delivery of e-learning NLIS training
- develop documented standard operating procedures and guidelines to assist abattoir staff in meeting their NLIS requirements
- develop an e-learning (CD-Rom) tool that can be utilised by meat processors for ongoing in-house training · trial and validate the training materials with the working group
- develop and run a train the trainer program for RTO and in-house trainers
- develop and promote, with AMPC, MLA and AMIC, three trial workshops – one in each of the state jurisdictions.

3 Methodology

3.1 Scoping the project

To scope the project, MINTRAC in collaboration with AMPC, MLA and MINTRAC, coordinated a working group that identified the training requirements and develop the training framework. This scoping identified the NLIS activities to be covered, the Units to be developed and the broad nature of the content to be covered.

Upon completion of the initial scoping activities discussions were held with the various State jurisdictions towards about how best to collaborate in the delivery of state-based pilot workshops. The working group also scoped out the extent of the tasks to be covered in the model work instructions and SOPS

3.2 Developing nationally accredited Units of Competency

Having scoped out the NLIS tasks to be addressed in the training programs these were then systematically broken down into the various sub-tasks and documented in model work instructions. This then enabled the Units of competency to be developed based on the tasks to be completed and the skills and knowledge required to perform these tasks.

At this point it was also possible to identify the relevant NLIS requirements or performance indicators as well as the relevant regulatory requirements.

The Units once developed were then submitted to review by the project's working group and subsequently far more intensively by the meat industry training and QA network meetings. At this point a final draft was put to the AgriFoods Meat Standing Committee for final approval before being submitted for national accreditation. In all fifteen NLIS Units at Certificate III level were accredited.

3.3 Developing SOPs and Work Instructions

In conjunction with Ken Evers of the Victorian Department of Primary Industries (Vic DPI) model work instructions for the 12 identified tasks were developed as well as two overarching SOPs.

3.4 Developing Training and assessment support materials

The development of the training and assessment materials to support the delivery of the accredited Units was a three step process. In the first instance MINTRAC developed the framework and preliminary content for the materials. This was followed by a further more intensive development step involving Ken Evers again in editing, reviewing and researching the first draft. This penultimate draft was then used at pilot training programs to allow for further scrutiny. The materials will be subject to ongoing review and amendment as part of the usual MINTRAC arrangements for training materials update.

3.5 Developing E-learning materials

The e-learning component of the training materials has focused on developing a virtual NLIS database which can be interrogated and uploaded to as trainees develop their skills and understanding of the NLIS processes and procedures.

3.6 Trialling and validating the training program

The Units, materials and delivery strategies were discussed and reviewed at the training network meetings by industry and RTO trainers. The training materials were also circulated to the working group for consideration prior to use.

The training programs have been trialled in three workshops in Victoria, NSW and Queensland with 75 course participants. Ninety percent of workshop participants have gone on to enrol in NLIS Units according to the NLIS duties they are responsible for and the species processed at their establishment.

The pilot courses participants included:

- company and RTO trainers
- personnel from the state and commonwealth regulators
- industry person responsible for stock buying, lairage, IT and NLIS data.

The workshops involved a day's face to face instruction and a review of the training materials. The Units themselves then involved additional student exercises including:

- a distance education project to assess the students understanding and knowledge of the NLIS and its requirements of red meat processors
- a work place project
- a work place referee's report on competency in performing the Unit designated tasks.

The trainers will have a follow up program at the training network meetings to discuss delivery and assessment strategies.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Scoping the project

The scoping of the project was done under the guidance and supervision of a working group which comprised representative of processing companies, AMIC, State and Commonwealth regulators. The members were as follows:

- Christian Mulders Australian Meat Industry Council
- Stephen Doughty Meat and Livestock Australia
- Bomber Lancaster Biosecurity Queensland
- Steve Bailey NLIS Monitoring Group Chairman
- Ed Klim Export Standards Branch, DAFF
- Ken Evers Vic Department of Primary Industries
- Noel M Kelson Midfield Meat International Pty Ltd
- Michael Beer NSW Department of Primary Industries
- Lisa Perfect Milton District Meats
- Phil Evers Teys, Beenleigh QLD
- Terry Mitchell Fletchers International Pty Ltd
- Adrian Palmer JBS Longford Processing Plant
- Billy Rootes JBS Devonport Processing Plant.

The working group gave initial direction to the project and then provided feedback on:

- NLIS tasks to be covered by the training
- task descriptions
- model work instructions and SOPs
- Units of competency
- Training and Assessment materials.

The representatives of the regulatory agencies and the MLA have been particularly helpful when preparing and reviewing the training Units and materials.

4.2 Nationally accredited Units of Competency

The working group identified 12 individual NLIS related tasks that were unlikely to be performed by the same staff member and therefore would be an area of discrete training for individual staff members and could therefore form a logical Unit of competency.

In addition to the 12 tasks the working group was also able to identify a body of knowledge which all personnel who interacted with the NLIS system should know. This core knowledge was broken into an 'overview' unit for mob based NLIS and an 'overview' Unit for RFID based NLIS.

The fifteen Units that were accredited are as follows

- MTMP3108A Overview of the NLIS for sheep and goats
- MTMP3109A Overview of the NLIS program utilising RFIDs
- MTMP3110A Manage NLIS data for livestock in lairage
- MTMP3111A Manage NLIS data for sheep and goats in lairage
- MTMP3112A Manage NLIS for direct purchase of stock identified with an RFID
- MTMP3113A Manage NLIS for direct purchase of sheep or goats
- MTMP3114A Manage NLIS data for saleyard purchase of livestock
- MTMP3115A Manage NLIS for saleyard purchase of sheep or goats
- MTMP3116A Manage, report and upload NLIS slaughter data from RFIDs
- MTMP3117A Manage, report and upload mob based NLIS data for sheep and goats

- MTMP3118A Conduct start up procedures and preoperational checks on slaughter floor NLIS data equipment
- MTMP3119A Manage NLIS data from RFIDs on the slaughter floor
- MTMP3120A Prepare a kill sheet
- MTMP3121A Undertake pre slaughter checks of NVDs and PICs for NLIS for sheep and goats
- MTMP3122A Undertake pre slaughter checks of NVDs, PICs and RFIDs

4.3 SOPs and Work Instructions

In conjunction with Ken Evers of Vic DPI model work instructions were developed for the tasks identified and these covered the following areas:

- preparing a kill sheet direct purchase of stock identified with an RFID
- saleyard purchase of livestock identified with an RFID
- managing RFID NLIS data in lairage
- undertaking pre slaughter checks of NVDs, PICs and RFIDs
- conducting start up procedures and preoperational checks on slaughter floor NLIS data equipment
- managing NLIS data from RFIDs on the slaughter floor
- managing, reporting and uploading NLIS slaughter data from RFIDs
- direct purchasing of sheep or goats
- saleyard purchasing of sheep or goats
- undertaking pre-slaughter NLIS checks of NVDs and PICs for sheep and goats
- managing NLIS data for sheep and goats in lairage
- managing, reporting and uploading mob based NLIS data for sheep and goats

These work instructions are supported by a model NLIS SOP for sheep and goats and another for cattle or RFID identification.

4.4 Training and assessment support materials

Training and assessment materials have been prepared in a written format for all of the Units listed above. These materials will have to be customised to meet the training requirements of each plant and customisation must take account of:

- State NLIS requirements
- specific company work instructions and SOPs
- species being processed.

The materials are in Word and customisation is an easy process. The materials will form part of MINTRAC' suite of material and will be reviewed on an annual basis or as requested by any of the stakeholders to reflect changes to regulation or database protocols.

4.5 E-learning materials

The e-learning materials developed are for use by students to practice interrogating or uploading to the NLIS data base. The most common form of course delivery will see students work their way through the training materials and where appropriate they will be directed to the e-learning CD to visit the virtual NLIS database to complete exercises there.

4.6 Trial programs

The Units and materials were discussed with industry and RTO trainers to get their feedback at the MINTRAC Training Managers network meetings. From these discussions it became apparent that trainers in general had little knowledge of the NLIS system and to address it was

decided to run the training for trainers and industry personnel at the same time. To facilitate the increased numbers of trainees more presenters were incorporated into the program. Presenters were utilised from Vic DPI, MLA and MINTRAC.

5 Success in achieving objectives

5.1 Objective 1 - participate in a working group which will oversee the program and all development

The working group members on the whole have maintained a significant interest in the project and when called on to provide specific assistance have been particularly helpful. The involvement of the state DPIs, MLA and DAFF with this project's outputs will be ongoing. The review of the training and assessment materials will be ongoing as more workshops are delivered and industry/regulator discussion becomes more informed.

5.2 Objective 2 - review existing Units of Competency dealing with NLIS to ensure that they are adequate to deliver competencies required by the industry

When this project commenced there was only one Certificate II Unit MTMP2011C Identify animals using electronic systems which was used principally to train RFID reader operators and that had the most significant coverage of the NLIS. A short review of the Unit against the relevant tasks identified by the working group demonstrated that there had to be a major expansion of the coverage of the NLIS within the Meat Industry's National Training Package.

5.3 Objective 3 - establish, utilising the State Government and MLA examples to date, a training process and materials for processing establishments to be able to meet their NLIS requirements

The NLIS Tech Tips materials prepared by the MLA have been used extensively in the development of the training materials. Likewise the NLIS information sheets supplied by the State DPIs have either been directly quoted from or formed the source documents for the research for the development of these training materials. A collection of NLIS Tech Tips will be supplied as additional resources to students.

5.4 Objective 4 - establish a framework for the delivery of e-learning NLIS training

Eighteen trainers from six RTOs attended the NLIS workshops held in the three states. These trainers (in addition to the company trainers who attended workshops) create more than sufficient capacity for the industry to roll out a comprehensive NLIS training initiative.

There are now fifteen accredited Units covering all the tasks undertaken by processing plant staff where there is interaction with NLIS data. These Units cover activities from stock buying through to uploading slaughter data to the NLIS database.

Supporting the delivery of these Units is a comprehensive suite of training and assessment materials as well as electronic materials. The electronic training materials enable students to practice interacting with the NLIS data base.

5.5 Objective 5 - develop documented standard operating procedures and guidelines to assist abattoir staff in meeting their NLIS requirements

The project developed model work instructions and SOPs to support the integration of company NLIS practices and procedures into their Approved Arrangements. The model WI and SOPs are generic and indicate to the QA managers what should be covered under each of the procedures.

There will obviously need to be significant customisation but the models are only meant to function as a starting point.

5.6 Objective 6 - develop an e-learning (CD-Rom) tool that can be utilised by meat processors for ongoing in-house training - trial and validate the training materials with the working group

The written and e-learning training materials are now available to RTOs to deliver accredited training and alternatively to companies who wish to deliver training in house. The materials have now been circulated to the working group, to DPI representatives and trialed at three NLIS workshops. There is scope for further modification as the RTOs utilise the materials in accredited training and provide feedback to MINTRAC.

5.7 Objective 7 - develop and run a train the trainer program for RTO and in-house trainers

The introduction of the Units and materials to RTO staff was undertaken in conjunction with the training managers meetings. The trainers discussed purpose, content and delivery strategies for their client processors. The meetings revealed that RTO staff in general had a very limited knowledge of NLIS to the point that they were currently unlikely to be able to deliver the NLIS Units because of a lack of technical knowledge with-in their organisations.

Similarly industry training personnel knowledge seemed very ill equipped to deliver the Units. What became apparent was that very few individuals in the industry had a comprehensive knowledge of the NLIS. Rather most individuals had a fragmented knowledge of NLIS related only directly to their particular task or responsibility. Anecdotal evidence from the recent EU audit supports this view and is probably the result of staff turnover reducing the benefits of any initial training associated with the roll out of the NLIS over a decade ago.

For this reason the train the trainer exercise was incorporated into the three general workshops (objective 8) to allow trainers access to the technical training given at the state workshops. At these workshops technical trainers from Vic DPI, MLA and MINTRAC were able to give very in-depth instruction to the trainers and industry personnel.

The development of the best delivery and assessment strategies with the RTOs will now form a greater part of MINTRACs project plan for the second phase of the roll out of the industry's NLIS training.

5.8 Objective 8 - develop and promote, with AMPC, MLA and AMIC, three trial workshops – one in each of the state jurisdictions.

These workshops which now embraced both RTO and industry personnel were all fully subscribed and feedback from all three workshops was overwhelmingly supportive of the concept, the materials and the delivery. Ninety percent of those attending the courses enrolled in the accredited program with the participating RTOs who have identified technical experts in their states to assist with delivery and assessment. These students will receive up dated versions of the training and assessment materials in distance education packs.

6 Impact on meat and livestock industry – Now and in five years time

6.1 Immediate impact on the meat and livestock industry

The meat industry now has the means to address underperformance in the NLIS by meat processing companies through:

- having model work instructions and SOPs to assist with the incorporation of NLIS procedures into Approved Arrangements
- access to a structured means of improving and assessing the knowledge and competency of existing staff interacting with the NLIS
- an accredited and formal way of training new staff to ensure competency as and when they start using NLIS data
- access to capable RTOs that can bring an understanding of and proficiency in NLIS procedures to support meat processors in meeting their NLIS requirements.

6.2 Anticipated impact in five years time

The most important long term impact of this project will be that NLIS training is now embedded into the national training system and it is capable of rapid revision and updating as needed.

NLIS training can now be an established part of the industry training agenda and where necessary part of a well rehearsed corrective action which can be implemented when companies fail to meet their NLIS requirements.

Both industry and regulators now have a tool to ensure the competency of industry and regulatory staff. This will be important in maintaining the ongoing sustainability and integrity of the NLIS.

7 Conclusions and recommendations

7.1 Conclusions

The National Livestock Identification System is critical to the long term sustainability of the red meat industry and a high level of performance and compliance from all sectors in the supply chain is necessary for it to operate effectively. The NLIS is the cornerstone of our livestock biosecurity, and traceability programs without which our access to international markets is not possible.

This project has sought to address only the issues associated with the interaction of the processing sector with the NLIS and the level of compliance being achieved. This project has given the industry a range of tools to systematically address the NLIS competency requirements of trainers, regulators and staff working in this area. What has to be noted is that the MLA's NLIS division has produced through its Tech Tips and the State DPIs have created incredibly useful NLIS materials for industry. In many ways this project has just provided a means of systematically delivering this material to staff and assessing they have understood it and can follow the required procedure to ensure compliance. These training tools accompanied by a more rigorous and QA approach to NLIS processes and procedures should assist companies to improve their compliance rates.

Regulatory and RTO staff members who are systematically trained and assessed in this area will also have a more comprehensive and holistic understandings of the system which means in turn they will be more able to assist companies meet their NLIS requirements.

Where companies are struggling to meet their NLIS requirements the regulator now has more than just a penalty system to assist in achieving compliance. With the training more responsibility can be placed back on the companies and take the pressure off regulators to provide what in many states is a technical support network.

Given the critical nature of the NLIS and the increasing sophistication of livestock systems overseas there will be increasing pressure on Australian processors exporting to those markets to demonstrate the effectiveness of our NLIS. In large part this will also involve demonstrating the competency of the people who implement, oversee and regulate this system.

The industry and regulators may well have to review how the competency of those operators is assessed. There seems to be a misplaced belief that an osmotic transferral of knowledge of skills in this area is happening and to be frank this is just not happening. These NLIS workshops have confirmed the need to address the need for a systematic approach to training both industry personnel and regulators. This is despite the fact that the regulators assured me that the worst performing companies did not attend these workshops.

Recommendations

1. That the roll out of the training be continued throughout all states (note, AMPC and MLA have already committed to support this process)
2. That all RTOs delivering training in meat processing establishments be encouraged to develop the technical skills in this area to be able to effectively deliver NLIS training for their clients
3. That MINTRAC, via the training networks and professional development programs, work with RTOs to improve and develop delivery strategies to best service what will be of its nature a 'thin market'
4. That MINTRAC through its usual processes work with AMPC, MLA, industry and regulators to maintain and where necessary upgrade the training materials
5. That regulators be encouraged to ensure that staff overseeing the NLIS receive adequate formal training and assessment
6. If deemed appropriate work with other sectors of the red meat supply chain to use this model to increase compliance in those sectors.