

Media Release

Royal Hobart Show 2020

Too much risk and cost involved in mounting a COVID-safe Show

The Royal Agricultural Society of Tasmania (RAST) announced today that the 2020 Royal Hobart Show has been cancelled due to the restrictions put in place by governments to counter the coronavirus pandemic. It was due to be held over four days from October 21 to October 24.

However, the Society is exploring a smaller scale event that could be substituted for the Show this year – an event which would not require the logistical time lines which would normally now be well underway to deliver an October Show.

“The cancellation of the Show is a major financial blow to the Society”, said Scott Gadd, CEO of the RAST. “It’s also a hit for the local economy. We have advised hundreds of organisations and individuals, ranging from suppliers to exhibitors and entertainers, that we are unable to mount an event the size of the Royal Hobart Show this year.”

The decision is also likely to have repercussions for many of Tasmania’s 23 other agricultural shows. “We’ve developed a COVID safety plan for the Hobart Show, which we’ve now reviewed against all the currently available information in regards to COVID-19 and the restrictions to counter it.

“Our review concluded it is impossible to adhere to a COVID Safety Plan for the event and at the same time mount a viable Royal Hobart Show. The risks involved in staging a Show this year include higher operating costs and the potentially crippling legal and insurance issues if a patron was to contract COVID-19 at the Show despite all the increased spending on Safety Plan requirements such as extra cleaning, sanitation, monitoring, controls and signage”.

The RAST had been hoping restrictions would be eased in time for the Show’s lead-in organisational activities to occur. “Given the long lead times required to mount the Show, and given the extra costs of staging the Show this year, there remain too many unknowns and too many variables about what the landscape will look like in October.

“In these circumstances it would be unwise for the Society to commit to spending significant funds now to deliver a Show which may have to be cancelled later due to the continuing pandemic and associated government restrictions.

“While the traditional, large scale Show as we know it will not occur this year, we have been discussing with the State Government opportunities that may permit an event of an agricultural nature to occur about Show time in October. We shall continue exploring this with the Government”.

The Society will meet with the committees that undertake the organisation of different aspects of the Show to consider whether some agricultural-related activities and events could occur that don't breach social distancing and other requirements.

The Society is one of Australia's oldest institutions at nearly 200 years of age.

“The cancellation of the Show means the Society is almost without any cash flow in 2020 because all its major activities have been curtailed by the coronavirus restrictions.”

Seventeen of the Showground's staff are on Job Keeper allowances, and the Society is urging that the federal Government retain the scheme beyond September for organisations that have lost their income stream this year due to the restrictions imposed by state and federal governments.