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# Albany Racing Club Inc

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YOUR REF: DOCUMENT NO. 381.20090714.RWWA INVITE SUBMISSION

18 January 2010

The Chairman  
Joint Standing Committee on the Review of the Racing & Wagering Western  
Australia Acts  
Parliament of Western Australia  
Parliament House  
PERTH WA 6000

By email: [ddickinson@parliament.wa.gov.au](mailto:ddickinson@parliament.wa.gov.au)  
Confirmation by post

Dear Chairman

We refer to your letter dated 19 October 2009 inviting us to make submissions in relation to the following terms of reference:

*The Joint Standing Committee (JSC) will review the operation and effectiveness of the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Act 2003 (RWWA Act) and the Racing and Wagering Western Australia Tax Acts 2003 (Acts) and is to consider and have regard to:*

- a. The effectiveness of the operations of Racing & Wagering Western Australia (RWWA);*
- b. The need for the continuation of the operations of RWWA; and*
- c. Any other matters that appear to the Joint Standing Committee to be relevant to the operation and effectiveness of these Acts.*

The Albany Racing Club Incorporated (ARC) thanks the JSC for the opportunity to make submissions in relation to the Acts and provides its submissions below.

The ARC acknowledges the effectiveness of the operations of RWWA. It is obvious to the ARC that RWWA is imperative to the continued development of the Western Australian thoroughbred racing industry and supports the continued role of RWWA in its administration, regulation and development.

In relation to the terms of reference the ARC submits the following matters should be seriously considered by the JSC to be relevant to the continued operation and effectiveness of the Acts.

Section 35 of the RWWA Act states that (amongst other things) "it is a function of RWWA:

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- (b) to foster the development, ***promote the welfare*** and ensure the integrity of ***metropolitan and country thoroughbred racing*** ... in the ***interests of the long term viability*** of the racing industry in Western Australia [*emphasis added*];
- (g) in ***consultation with racing clubs***, to establish policies for ***stake money levels*** and ***race conditions and programs*** [*emphasis added*]....

The ARC submits that RWWA does not always comply with its obligations under section 35 and that the following specific areas should be improved.

# 1. Communication and consultation by RWWA

Notwithstanding RWWA's obligations pursuant to section 35(g), the ARC is generally disappointed with the level of communication and consultation RWWA has with it. Particular examples of the lack of communication and consultation are as follows:

## (a) Programming

Currently the programs for the ARC are scheduled together with those of Narrogin and Mt Barker. The ARC agrees that it is relevant to the Albany racing program that Mt Barker be considered and that the two clubs' racing programs be scheduled together. This is because each of the racing clubs are only 30 minutes from each other and it is generally accepted that the trainers, horses and public will participate in the races at each of those turf clubs. However, it is submitted that the Narrogin program is largely irrelevant to that of Mt Barker and Albany by reason that it is two and a half hours by car from Albany and approximately only 10% of horses compete in both in Narrogin and Albany, and Mt Barker. Albany needs to be able to field more 20 days than the current 12 to enable it to increase turnover and create a surplus to develop their facilities. This last point is particularly relevant given that no infrastructure funding is now available through RWWA.

As a practical measure to address the issue, the ARC suggests that RWWA issue a draft program for all provincial racing by mid July to enable clubs to consider and promote sponsorship, consult with trainers, correct any scheduling errors and liaise with other racing clubs as to the appropriateness of the program. The final program could then be issued in mid August once the clubs submitted their views as to the draft program.

## (b) Ratings System

When the rating system was brought in it was done so without consultation of the ARC. The ARC submits that the system is not as effective as it might be because it creates an anti-competitive environment for horse racing. For instance, horses which win outside the metropolitan area receive the same rating increase as a horses winning in the metropolitan area. Accordingly, it is submitted that ratings should be increased in accordance with the stake money the horse has won as this is a better guide to the quality of the race in which horses compete.

## (c) Committee Representation

The ARC submits a delegate from each provincial racing club should be entitled to an audience with RWVA each quarter. Although there are some common themes that the provincial clubs share, they each have issues which are unique to their race club and which deserve to be ventilated. It is submitted that section 35(g) of the RWVA Act contemplates this type of consultation and that section 35 (b) requires RWVA to *foster the development and promote the welfare* of country thoroughbred racing. It is submitted that one of the best ways to achieve this function is to make it mandatory for RWVA to meet with a delegate from each club once a quarter.

It is also submitted that it should be mandatory that there should be one representative who is a member of a provincial race club committee on the board of RWVA. This would better achieve the objectives of the RWVA Act and ensure that provincial clubs are properly represented at the highest level.

## **2. Funding**

Of particular concern to the ARC is that it does not receive any increase in funding in recognition of its role as a training facility for horses competing in races at Albany and Mt Barker. It is estimated that the ARC's role as a training facility costs \$250,000 per annum which should be recognised and funded by RWVA. It is submitted that being a training facility puts Albany in the same category as Bunbury and Pinjarra as Albany is the capital city of the Great Southern, a region which takes in over 55,000 people.

In particular, some of the ARC's facilities are substandard and require significant investment if the ARC is to remain a viable and developing club. The administration building, which also houses the jockeys' facilities is in a deplorable state and since the abandonment of the regional funding program, there are apparently no funds to upgrade the building. It is well known that many jockeys will not travel to Albany because of the poor state of the facilities and this will obviously affect the degree to which Albany remains a viable racing facility. The patrons' facilities are also substandard. The TAB area and main bar facility is essentially a converted shed. It is submitted that these facilities do not promote the standards of conduct and behaviour that is expected on a racecourse or provide the amenity that the public demand.

## **3. Stake Levels**

Section 35(g) of the RWVA obliges RWVA to consult with *race clubs* in relation to stake levels. The ARC has not been consulted in relation to stake levels for many years. RWVA must be made to comply with the RWVA Act in this regard.

It is submitted that the substantial increase in stakes for Perth racing has occurred at the expense of stakes for provincial and country meetings. This obviously damages the country racing industry in that it makes the participation of owners and trainers relatively less economically viable than racing in Perth. Ultimately, this will result in participants leaving the industry in the country in favour of Perth or leaving the industry completely. For owners and trainers to continue to buy and train thoroughbreds the rewards of success must be improved.

It is submitted that an equitable formula must be adopted for the calculation of stake levels for all races in Western Australia. RWWA should not be given the discretion to weight stake levels in favour of races held by the PRC as it has proved that when it has that discretion, provincial racing is unfairly dealt with.

#### **4. Ongoing Review**

It is submitted that the RWWA Act should be reviewed by the JSC every three years. This will ensure that there is a regular check on the relevance and appropriateness of the Act through the passage of time and that any amendments can be made within an appropriate time frame.

Please let me know if you would like to discuss any of these issues further or require any further information.

Yours sincerely

  
**Mrs Lesley Solly**  
**Albany Racing Club Inc**