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# **RACING PRODUCT REVIEW**

# **WORKING PARTY REPORT**

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# INDEX

	Pages
Introduction	1
Statement of Future Direction	2
1. Length of Race & Distance	3
2. Distance of Race	4
3. Racing Pattern	5
4. Starting	6
5. Programming	9
6. Image Areas	10
7. Consistency	12
8. Stewarding	13
9. Sky Channel Interface	15
10. Referred Areas to Discussion Forums	15
<u>Appendices</u>	
A. Racing Product Review	17
B. Internet Racing Product Survey, Summary	29

## **INTRODUCTION**

- On Friday 15 September 2006, the Working Party appointed by the Executive met to consider and discuss the Consolidated Summary Papers prepared.
- The Working Party comprised of Ray Sharman (Chair – NSWHR), John Anderson (HRV), John Dumesny (NSWHRC), John Bagshaw (AHC) and Rod Pollock (AHC) with John Doherty (HRV) offering apologies.
- It was decided that **the key objective** was to provide  
**“ATTRACTIVE PRODUCT TO THE PUNTER/VIEWER”**  
AS THIS WAS CONSIDERED **THE BEST WAY TO MAXIMIZE**  
**TURNOVER** AND THEREFORE **“INDUSTRY REVENUE”**.
- The Working Party reviewed the following Series of Papers in detail to formulate their identified Issues, which form the basis of the Report attached.
  - A. Chairman’s Correspondence, 12 July 2006
    - a. Working Party
    - b. All Members.
  - B. Response Evaluation & Summaries
    - a. Internet Racing Product Survey
    - b. Detailed Survey Summaries
  - C. Totalisator Responses
  - D. Working Party Individual Responses
  - E. Issue Matrix

Note: Some Summary Detail edited

- A set of all relevant Member submissions and other key papers will be consolidated and provided under separate cover at a later stage after the Annual General Meeting, if required. For the purpose of the Annual General Meeting only the papers provided to the Working Party will be provided for consideration and discussion of this Agenda Item.
- The Working Party considers to achieve its identified objective that Council adopt the following Primary Recommendations:

### **INITIAL ACTION – PRIMARY RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A. Formalisation of the National Product Working Party as a continuing Council Committee.**
- B. This Committee to continuously review the Racing Product and to meet and make recommendations to Council not less than Annually.**
- C. This Committee to be a specific national harness racing forum that meets with Sky Channel with a view to improve Product Presentation, and**
- D. To incorporate all Members views with Sky Channel but with representation numerically limited to facilitate progressing our industry’s national issues to resolution.**

**In the event that these above recommendations are adopted by Council, a further opportunity will be given to Council Members to make a supplementary written submission for consideration by the Working Party at their next meeting.**

### **STATEMENT OF FUTURE DIRECTION**

- This paper is for consideration and discussion at Council’s Annual General Meeting on the range of propositions advanced. They are the key areas developed by the Working Party in summing the consultation process developed from the initial Discussion Forum to this point. The development of the issues to be debated in this Annual General Meeting are those sourced from the surveys undertaken, the position papers from Members and the thoughts explicitly defined by the Working Party Members themselves. In the end, however, they are propositions for further development and implementation into the future.

- At the Annual General Meeting the Propositions advanced can be considered for adoption and acceptance either from then on or as recommendations at the next Mid Season Meeting in Perth in March.

## **1. LENGTH OF RACE & DISTANCE**

- Grand Circuit and Feature Races are traditionally on our National Major Events Racing Program. In these races, tradition and competitiveness are crucial to their running. These should be encouraged as “Special Events” and marketed as attractive to the punter and industry participant.
- It was considered that the majority of normal races programmed should be 1609 metre to 2000 metre races to ensure that the race elapsed time is shorter than currently. Unnecessary programming of longer races should be discouraged. The Working Party advocated that ideally races should not go around the track three times.
- The Working Party’s conclusion differs from those opting for longer races (mostly licensees) who have not taken media/picture broadcasting requirements into account.

### **Propositions**

- 1.1 The Event Management of traditional Grand Circuit and Feature Races should be marketed by their Clubs to be commercially attractive.**
- 1.2 Normal races should, in the main, be programmed in the distance range of 1609 to 2000 metres.**
- 1.3 The programming of races 2400 metres or longer should be strictly limited as they reduce opportunities for pre race TV exposure.**

## **2. DISTANCE OF RACE**

- The time taken in a race equates to its distance in a direct relationship. To achieve racing efficiency handicappers and race programmers should ensure that ***not less than 50% of races*** are for the 1609 metre to 2000 metres distances. Respondents to the Survey indicated this and the Working Party agreed.
- The programmers choice of “shorter distance” races places a greater emphasis on the standardbred’s speed in a race. This is so where mile races are included in the race program. The “mile rate” is a key determinant used throughout all jurisdictions.
- Importantly, scheduling and co-ordination of races with direct liaison between jurisdictions should occur to optimise the racing logistics of despatch etc. This was considered particularly important where longer races are programmed as they could impact pre-race TV time of the event following. This is an initiative to add considerable value to the racing schedule given “race crowding” in broadcasting and media transmission. The Working Party believes that this co-ordination should be undertaken pre race and during race day by email and/or telephone co-ordination through telecommunications.

### **Propositions**

- 2.1 State Controlling Body programming areas should ensure that not less than 50% of races be programmed for races between 1609 to 2000 metres.**
- 2.2 In the balance of races, the majority should be programmed at no longer than the individual track distance greater than but nearest to 2000 metres with few exceptions.**
- 2.3 Other jurisdictions to be notified when races of 2400 metres or longer are planned to ensure such races are not programmed to precede major races at other tracks.**
- 2.4 The speed of the standardbred be emphasised by these shorter races in their marketing, particularly where mile races are programmed.**
- 2.5 State Controlling Bodies develop race(s) scheduling and co-ordinating for more effective race day management with all parties similarly engaged.**

### 3. RACING PATTERN

- Three “key” issues were important in boosting “attractiveness”. The first was a consideration of the “give way” practice. The survey respondents did not favour this. However those that did advocated that the application of the “give way” practice should occur in the first lap.
- Importantly, the charge to the first turn and the retention of the lead were discussed from a range of viewpoints including advantageous barrier draws, having earned the right to be in front, safety considerations in crossing etc. So it was considered that given the variety of racetrack facilities nationally a give way rule should not occur early in the race.
- It was decided that the “give way” rule had a significant place. After the first turn at the commencement of each race and continuing to the finishing line with a lap remaining in each respective race. This would invigorate this segment of the race. Importantly, the practice would involve the drivers of both the horse leading and horse in the “death seat”. This should be proposed to trainers/drivers and piloted at official trials to gauge whether the suggested mechanism has a place in our racing.
- It was decided that sectional quarters are an important indicator of a “truly run” race. Maximum quarter times should be set for different classes on individual tracks. ***Consideration should be given to penalizing a driver sitting outside the leader as well as the driver of the leader when maximum sectionals are exceeded.*** Sectional quarters should be displayed on Sky Channel with an appropriate comment by the broadcaster to alert punters whether this time was fast or slow. The State Controlling Body to issue appropriate guidelines, if this is accepted.
- “Easing out” was considered to be another important capability available to the driver. Safety is the paramount consideration for the driver and the standardbred involved. The process of “easing out” wheel to wheel etc needs greater definition and stewarding instruction to licensed driving participants. The role of the candy pole and the point at which easing out can vary between jurisdictions. This is not seen as an impediment to further encourage this driver initiative. Note that relegation/disqualification rule(s) will be dealt with in Stewarding.

## **Propositions**

- 3.1 The “Give Way” rule should be trialled in Official Trials in the first lap after the start and around the first turn. The trial should include both the leader and death seat horse in the instructions to the drivers.**
- 3.2 Sectional quarters should be introduced in consultation with Trainers and Drivers in all jurisdictions to ensure race elapsed times are achieved.**
- 3.3 Consideration be given to penalizing drivers sitting outside the leader as well as the leader when maximum sectional times are exceeded.**
- 3.4 “Easing out” should be consistently introduced given safety considerations and implemented through regulatory and steward administration.**

## **4. STARTING**

- In this area the role of the Regulatory State Controlling Boards have a significant role in instructing their Starters (& Stewards) to do a range of actions to ensure that starting is a consistent, short and efficient despatch in the least possible time at the barrier. These strict instructions to undertaken the following practices will determine compliance to their racing policies. It is considered that “the Rules are already in place“, however the racing policies utilised by the starter (& stewards) on occasions do not allow for action to proceed in the best perceived fashion as an attractive example of our product.
- Gear adjustments and changes should be continually monitored to ensure that they do not delay the process pre-race in starting from the 5 minute warning whistle. Accidents or breakages do happen but pre-race inspections by Stewards should minimise this aspect of racing pre-race delay.

## **Standing Starts**

- The internet survey considered by a significant majority (89%) that the ***starter should call the field up and “let them go”***. This is important

rather than wait for one fractious horse to settle often to the detriment of other starters. It is considered that the approach of placing the horse ODS on the same line should be considered early by the starter, particularly in standing starts. **The principle 'One mistake and you go to the outside' should apply.** In this way, the starting process can be tidied up allowing starts to occur as close to the scheduled starting time as possible. This action is considered better than the option of disrupting the field or scratching the horse. Consideration should be also given to declaring a starter **ODS** or the New Zealand term of **UNRULY** in future racing occasions at the pleasure of the Stewards not at the request of the Trainer.

- It is the view of the Western Australian Trotting Association that standing starts should no longer occur. Other Members, including Racing & Wagering Western Australia from the same Racing environment, do not share that viewpoint. Harness Racing Victoria favoured standing starts from both a wagering and racing product variation basis.
- In the Working Party considered that **only mature horses should participate in standing starts.** Another view was that it is part of a horse's education. The Working Party was not in favour of standing starts for 2 year olds. Importantly, in a standing start, must the horse address the barrier? Should the current practice of limiting horses in a stand to a certain field size and line number be continued, given the interference which could occur after despatch? Should the runners on a given handicap be limited to a smaller number?

### **Mobile Barrier Starts**

- The mobile starting mechanism from the barrier must be a consistent uniform process given the variety of racetracks nationally. The Steward's role is to determine that consistency and to have horse(s) address the barrier as instructed with equal starts and no "flying" the mobile start. The field should always be in position well before the start point. **Penalties should be severe for drivers who disobey the Rules and either pull out of line before the start or try and get a flying start.**
- In considering the racing of younger horses, particularly 2YO's, it was considered that because of their education, manners and disposition the majority of starts for younger horses should be programmed as mobile barrier starts.

- Occasionally with young horses after the start and into the race, the driver utilises the whip in tapping the horse or sulky to keep the young horse's mind "on the job". Whilst whips are considered in the Image Areas section, ***should the whip be a part of the driver's gear and equipment for 2YO races or be dispensed with?***
- Critically, the Stewards already have the power to do this and consistency of starting outcomes should occur. The Regulatory Boards exercise control through their Chief Executive instructing their Stewarding Panels. The Chairman of Stewards directs and implements their policies cognizant of the Rules.

## **Propositions**

- 4.1 Stewards to ensure that "the start" is consistent, short in time duration and an efficient despatch.**
- 4.2 To avoid punter confusion, starting procedures should be consistent throughout Australia.**
- 4.3 In Standing Starts, the starter after finalising the pre-starting process should "call the horses up and let them go". Fractious horses should be placed ODS on the same line at an earlier opportunity rather than scratch them.**
- 4.4 In standing starts, consideration should be given to smaller numbers of horses being allowed on a given line.**
- 4.5 Consideration should also be given to moving the second line of a handicap mark to half way between the front line and 10 metres, for example.**
- 4.6 Consideration of the New Zealand "Unruly" declaration system or ODS at the Stewards discretion should be the norm for future starts.**
- 4.7 Pre-race gear inspections should be vigorously applied to minimise gear change(s) and delays.**
- 4.8 Standardise the mobile starting process for consistent national implementation. All State Controlling Bodies to co-operate and derive standard guidelines in accordance with their Board's policies and instructions.**

## **5. PROGRAMMING**

- Our overall objective is to enhance the attractiveness of the product. This means different things to all. It can mean that races are competitive contests. Importantly, they must be “truly run”.
- The initiatives and constraints of the race programmer are many it means knowing the local pool of horse availability then constructing races with workable clauses and conditions to attract nominations. The acceptance process decides whether this is achieved or not. Varying programming initiatives are necessary to structure attractive competitive programs. In order to identify the range of programming initiatives which can be undertaken for use in programming within the handicapping system, this area was examined further.
- Emphasis should be continued to provide continual and enhanced opportunities for fillies and mares to race. Importantly, these opportunities should be against their own age and gender from the normal races to State Breeding type Series. State Controlling Bodies review further and guidelines to achieve this occurs regularly in race meeting programs.
- The other area requiring further work is claiming races. This area is important not only to assist horses “on their mark” in normal race programming but also as a viable complimentary alternative to normal races. The examples of claiming racing success at Albion Park together with different programming initiatives by HRV and HRSA have provided variety. The use of allowing claimers in all races in New South Wales without dedicated claiming races requires re-evaluation given mixed response by the Working Party. Differing programming in claimers between elite, high graded and normal claiming races should be considered. It should also be determined by State Controlling Bodies in Guidelines that claimers should have a diversity of ownership and training arrangements. This ensures for perception purposes that a common ownership cannot provide a significant portion of starters in this type of race for obvious reasons.

### **Propositions**

- 5.1 Determine the establishment of a Programmers Working Party at the executive level to research and identify all variations of race programming terms and conditions.**
- 5.2 The Working Party to identify further parameters to ensure and enhance racing opportunities for fillies and mares.**

**5.3 Conduct an examination of Claiming races, their success and how they could be further utilised within the National Handicapping System. The review should include the New South Wales claiming variation and the “drop back” system.**

**6. IMAGE AREAS**

- The area of colours and identification of owners, trainers and drivers is the first. ***Primarily, the Working Party advocates that the colours worn by the driver should be determined by the horse’s connections.*** Drivers interviewed by Sky Channel should be in their colours as an essential guideline.
- The current difficulty with racing images allows considerable confusion with colours which cannot be sufficiently distinguished in running. This occurs where sets of similar/identical colours are used including circumstances that necessitate the use of club colour sets. Consistent national guidelines should be developed particularly in association with the proposed centralisation of the registration function. It is noted in some overseas jurisdictions, which do not have the diversity and quantity of driver licensees as Australia, ***only limited numbers of drivers participate*** at some elite meetings. State Controlling Bodies, particularly Harness Racing Victoria, have endeavoured to promote this image feature. It is not suggested that this be changed however it should be noted that it is detrimental to promoting consistent identification for wagering purposes. Importantly, similar colouring patterns cannot be worn in a race.
- The second area of perception is the use of whips. The technique and its enforcement have periodically been emphasised by Council and Regulatory Bodies. This powerful image is compelling to those who view our industry’s approach to whip use in racing as “harsh and cruel”. The Sky Channel image of South Australia’s racing is particularly so because no education/information is provided on the usage of their rump protective pads. Importantly, they should also restrict the use of whips in races for image perception purposes. At some future time, the issue of a total ban will be required to be addressed despite licensee opposition. Some European jurisdictions have already undertaken the necessary transitional approach and implemented the abolition of their use.
- Another area emphasised is that of “track image” broadcast over Sky Channel. Both Regulatory Bodies and Race Conducting Clubs should

view broadcasting of their televised image. The regular need to audit and monitor the picture image presented including effective signage and physical features should be viewed from the viewpoint of our objective to provide an “attractive” image.

- Tracks are our “retail shop face” on the racing product presented. The presentation of the track and geographic locality are important as they impact significantly on the attractiveness of the image presented. Is it necessary to telecast from the stabling and parade ring facilities where these are obviously not up to standard? Can our wagering operators and betting products be latently advertised both on-course and in Sky Channel’s transmission for the knowledge and information referral of punters and participants of their involvement and product awareness.
- All participants involved in the racing product presentation are significantly interested in the outcome of the race at the “finish line”. This is the key objective for any punter and has to be the focus of presentation. Can a virtual finishing line be included on Sky Channel? Can the leader going to the virtual finish line be highlighted? Other televised sports are utilising this mechanism and it should be considered. The use of the finishing line and place determining photos are also important and should be used for the information of the punter. These camera perspectives are powerful and positive images.

### **Propositions**

- 6.1 Determine that Council and its Members policy on drivers colours shall be solely determined by the horse’s connections. However, no two runners in any race should wear colours that are indistinguishable.**
- 6.2 It shall be a mandatory guideline that all drivers interviewed by visual media be in their driving colours to promote their colour identification in encouraging pre-race exposure for wagering.**
- 6.3 Consider whether the image of the horse/driver can be specifically identified during racing and by what means. Council to consider how this can be developed.**
- 6.4 Council to have a further debate on whips, their current and future usage.**

- 6.5 State Controlling Bodies to review the televised picture of Club tracks on Sky Channel, then rectify physical areas which do not fit our “defined” objective of displaying an “attractive” perception.**
- 6.6 Conduct a review of the race finish image, the surroundings, including signage of the finishing line for image perception.**
- 6.7 Work with Sky Channel to implement a virtual finishing line and include photo finishes as part of this important result determination.**

## **7. CONSISTENCY**

- In all policies developed by our State Controlling Bodies, both Commercial and Regulatory, together with Conducting Clubs the policies surrounding our Racing Product and its delivery varies from State to State.
- In the areas described before in this paper, each State has developed the uniqueness of their own environment resulting in a non-standard approach. On the track, the variety of facilities ensures that this occurs. In racing we have differing numbers in standing and mobile starts, long and short straights some with sprint or passing lanes and others without. Colour identification systems are different. Racing and other policies for implementation are different so that racing approaches for licensees are not the same. Innovation and initiatives in programming etc are biased correctly to suit State and Local circumstances. In reality, we all promote diversity of approach rather than consistency. Do we wish to harmonise all of those areas to produce a national consistent approach or will we change only if all accept our approach as the correct one? Are policies developed with input and consultation from other jurisdictions to achieve wider acceptance and consensus? We have National Rules which are recommended for adoption. Do we accept and implement them or do we vary and alter them by adding local rules and policies?
- A “glaring” example of inconsistency in treatment lies in the area of offences. Our Stewards impose reprimands, penalties, suspension and disqualifications. These differ between jurisdictions so there is no parity based on the premise that each charge is unique in its circumstances for natural justice purposes. Appeals Bodies adjudge participant’s appeals. When viewed nationally these significantly differ internally within a State jurisdiction in application and quantum of penalty, differ

between State jurisdictions and then bear no resemblance to penalty outcomes when compared to the thoroughbred code. This area requires considerable thought and review. The aspect of prohibited substance administration is highly visible and the media reports on our industry's decisions on penalties regularly. Such reporting is often negative and detracts significantly from the objective envisaged by the Working Party. The development of analysing equipment and its sensitivity are also areas requiring policy parameters to be scientifically researched and policies/guidelines formulated for the future. This is an emerging key future issue.

## **Propositions**

- 7.1 Identify further areas of inconsistency and State Controlling Bodies direct Stewards to implement nationally consistent approaches.**
- 7.2 Research and develop a consistent approach on the area of offences and penalties with both the Stewards and the Appeal Boards.**
- 7.3 Review nationally the treatment of offences and penalties.**

## **8. STEWARDING**

- The most important area in this Review pertains to the area of Stewarding and its management control over the Racing Product. As such, it is subject to comment and criticism both positive and negative based on their actions, omissions and consistency of approach through the individual circumstances and issues which confront this critical role.
- Initially, it is relevant to define the Stewards Role and its relationship within the Regulatory Jurisdiction. The Stewarding Panels implement the Rules, Policies and Guidelines determined by their Regulatory Boards. The Chief Executive Officer is the delegated Officer of the Board and communicates and implements the decisions of their Board. Obviously, the Stewards Panel are consulted prior to policy formulation by the Stewards then implement the Racing Policy determined in accordance with the Rules adopted. The Rules are in place and they can seek advice on interpretation from the Chief Executive in circumstances to clarify the interpretation of the Board's decision. Importantly, the Stewarding Panels must at all times be accountable to

the directions of their Chief Executive for their respective Regulatory Bodies. Inconsistency of application significantly detracts from the control and delivery of the racing product. The ability may well lie in removing areas subject to interpretation through policy establishment by Boards. If the rule is adopted, then the Working Party believes that it should be implemented.

- The use of consistent means of evaluating offences and penalties administration development follows to the Stewards in their enquiry processes. Can these be expedited and adjourned to after a meeting to conclude the racing business at hand? Can decisions on reprimands and other minor fines be dealt with by communication to drivers immediately after a race as in overseas jurisdictions? The Stewards need to consider and provide solutions to vary this constraint on proceedings impacting on the race meeting processes.
- Much comment has been made on the Stewards Powers to disqualify or relegate. The Rule is there and occasionally used in a most inconsistent fashion, yet New Zealand utilise it regularly. This Stewarding dilemma and reluctance has confused many and provoked negative response where the punter believes that there was a racing serious incident in which it could have been used. It is assumed that punters are talking “through their pockets” and rightly so, as wagering is the industry’s principal source of revenue. Only when a formal protest is lodged are the Stewards confronted with the opportunity to determine whether the serious incidents of interference would have changed the race placings and outcome.
- The Working Party considers that where a driver by his actions causes interference in a race and it ***affects the current position of another horse(s)*** in running then relegation ***should automatically occur*** prior to declaring “correct weight”. Then an enquiry should be opened after the meeting to charge and determine penalties on the participants involved. The ability to ***“ease out” also confers an accountability on the driver to do so safely and without interference.***
- The area of starting a race comes squarely within the Steward’s management role, as instructed by their Regulatory Boards. Clear unequivocal instructions should be provided to make this an efficient and short procedure.
- The Working Party acknowledges the difficulties of the Stewarding Role together with its co-ordination and control functions. It notes that any implementation of action will require their direct and focussed management to make the racing product both effective from a

procedural viewpoint and consistently attractive from an observer and punter perspective.

## **Propositions**

- 8.1 All State Controlling Bodies to review and make a significant endeavour to identify and implement consistent national guidelines, regulations and policies within the Racing environment.**
- 8.2 Chief Executives as the delegated officer of their Boards will coordinate with the State Controlling Body Chairman of Stewards the development of common nationally consistent areas of the Racing environment. Areas to be identified and ranked for evaluation and negotiation to advance common outcomes in policy and practice.**
- 8.3 The National Rules adequately include the ability for the Stewards to both relegate and disqualify in appropriate racing circumstances. It is considered that the Stewards consistently exercise these Rules and powers.**
- 8.4 State Controlling Bodies to instruct their Chairmen of Stewards and Stewarding Panels that where a driver(s) by their actions causes interference in a race which affects the current position of another horse(s) in running then relegation should automatically occur.**
- 8.5 The “Ease Out” rule to be evaluated to ensure that it occurs safely to both other drivers and horses.**

## **9. SKY CHANNEL INTERFACE**

This area of the Report has been withheld at this stage pending discussions with Sky Channel in the near future.

## **10. REFERRED AREAS TO DISCUSSION FORUMS**

- The Working Party also referred the following two areas for consideration by the Discussion Forums.

**1. MARKETING FOCUS/TARGETS**

- Thoroughbred Conversion
- Message to Owners & Punters  
“We are Value”
- Baby Boomers
- Reliable Form

**2. RESEARCH**

- TAB Customer Research
- Warm Feeling Research



## **RACING PRODUCT REVIEW**

New computer and communication technologies are rapidly changing the Gaming and Wagering Industry, and the Australian Harness Racing Council believes it is essential that we take a critical look at our racing product and how we present it, if we are to retain our current place as a significant industry player into the future.

Council is thus carrying out a wide- ranging review of the National Racing Product to ensure it meets the future needs of our participants and enthusiasts.

I now seek your support in obtaining your participation and that of all those under your control. To be effective, it is essential that this review fosters input not only from Council Delegates but also both internally (Stewards, Handicappers, Race Programmers etc) and externally (Clubs, Industry Associations representing owners, trainers, breeders and industry participants} and the media.

Chaired by Ray Sharman (NSWHRC], Council has to date conducted two Discussion Groups on our current Harness Racing Product) and a wide range of issues and ideas have been identified for consideration. The output from these meetings is now being distributed to stimulate discussion and input into this review.

The feedback from this review, which is presented in the form of a survey, will be used to:

- Assist Council and its Members to better support and grow the harness racing industry nationally,
- Better plan and program each State's racing program for consistency,
- Develop time effective programming and scheduling of race product, and
- Contribute to our partnerships with Sky Channel and the TAB's in our joint operation more efficiently.

We invite you to participate in this survey and also to distribute it widely within your organization so that they may all contribute. Your participation and support will be greatly appreciated. To ensure that the industry generally has the opportunity to participate, a brief internet survey form will be available on our web site and a copy is attached as Appendix B for your information.

So that the next Council meeting can further progress this project, **it will be essential that all responses are received no later than 22 March 2006**.

When compiled, the Survey Findings will be published on our website ([www.harness.org.au](http://www.harness.org.au)) and made available to the media,

John Bagshaw  
Chairman

## INDEX

<b>Key Areas</b>	<b>Index</b>
Area 1	The Race Itself
Area 2	Standing Starts
Area 3	Mobile Starts
Area 4	Race Programming
Area 5	Licensees
	<b>Other Areas if you wish to comment</b>
Area 6	Trotters – A Complimentary Product
Area 7	Tracks
Area 8	Gear & Equipment
	<b>Further Issue Areas Considered</b>
Appendix A	Issues Listed in Alphabetical Order
Appendix B	Internet Survey

***Please consider the key areas identified by the Discussion Groups and provide comments in your submission. Note that the appendix lists other areas considered but not included in the key issues areas.***

**AREA 1 – THE RACE ITSELF**

- Please consider the distance of the race and whether they should be longer or shorter?
- Should all races have the same starting procedure?
- Are sectional times relevant? In quarters or halves?
- How can we ensure races are truly run and not just a sprint home?
- Should Drivers have the ability or be required to “give way” in the lead, and, on what conditions and at what point in a race?
- Should Drivers be allowed to “ease out” and where in the race?
- Should the relegation and disqualification rule(s) be used in some or all circumstances?
- What length of time should occur between races 20 min, 25 min, 30 min or other?
- What type of race meetings do you prefer and attend? e.g. Day, Night, Twilight
- Should races start on-time “all the time regardless”?
- When (at what time) should night race meetings finish?
- How can races be made more effective for on-course and Sky Channel coverage?
- Should there be different starting procedures for Open Class Feature Races recognising their history and tradition?
- Should there be different approaches in programming races for Aged Open Class Horses and Young Horses (2YO & 3YO Pacers/Trotters)?
- Other comments, you may wish to make.

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***Please note of the 15,967 races conducted in season 2004/2005 some 13,769 races were mobile starts. In catering for segments 938 were for trotters, 970 for two year olds and 1894 races were for three year olds. These were conducted at 2010 meetings.***

**AREA 2 – STANDING STARTS**

- Should there be **more, less or no** Standing Starts?
- Should the off and on track process “to the starting point” be identical at all tracks?
- How should horses marshal and proceed to their barrier starting position?
- Should the starter simply call them up and release the field, exclude a fractious horse to the outside of its existing row and release the field or endeavour to get all horses to the barriers within a reasonable time?
- How long should the start be allowed to take?
- How many should comprise the field with front and second rows, ODS conditions and handicapped horses?
- What methods other than “strands across” could be used for a Standing Start?
- Must a standing start horse in its barrier position address the barrier or can it stand back?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

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**AREA 3 – MOBILE STARTS**

- Should the off and on track process “to lining up” behind the barrier be identical at all tracks?
- Noting there are variations in track sizes, different mobile barriers, despatch procedures etc please comment on the lead up, the speed of despatch and other operational guidelines?
- As the barrier position often determines the competitiveness of a given horse comment on the field size in mobile events, the barrier positions and other handicapping/programming techniques used.
- Consider the handicapping/programming race clauses used in allocating barriers and comment.
- Is there “a sameness” about mobile barrier races as they are?
- Should races be delayed for gear adjustments or should the horse become a late scratching?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

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#### **AREA 4 – RACE PROGRAMMING**

- Should programming be undertaken to make racing more even or should the “good” horse never be penalised?
- Does race programming and scheduling provide enough encouragement for specific segments of the racing product – Fillies & Mares, 2YO, 3YO, 4YO pacers and trotters?
- When should various age groups commence racing?
- Should claiming races be standardised?
- Should claimers be allowed in normal races using the New South Wales approach?
- Should Feature Races be treated differently other than their major promotion as an event?
- Should all programming be centralised at the State level to ensure consistency of nomination opportunity (and the HaRVEY Point System)?
- What forms of programming conditions do you consider relevant in framing race programs? Distinguish between the stand and mobile start conditions.
- Consider and advise on the use of trials, penalty free education type restricted races, graduation races and their usage.
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

.....

#### **AREA 5 – LICENSEES**

- Should all owners be licensed by the State Controlling Body of their domicile? Note: They are currently registered.
- The question of colours - is it a choice to be left to the trainers, drivers and/or owners?
- Should we have one national license with consistent conditions but issued by each State recognising the high mobility of our licensees?
- Should Stewards Enquiries be conducted during or after race meetings?
- Should another form of Steward evaluation and during races charging/penalty determination be developed?
- Should winners (trainer, drivers & owners) be recognised on-course with a simple recognition ceremony?
- In what other ways can the race be conducted to assist licensed participants?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

.....

## **OTHER AREAS**

- Trotters – A Complimentary Product
- Tracks
- Gear & Equipment

**If you wish to comment  
on them.**

• **AREA 6 – TROTTERS – A COMPLIMENTARY PRODUCT**

- Should they continue to be encouraged by all State Controlling Bodies and Clubs?
- What current and different approaches are necessary to make them a more effective part of the racing product into the future?
- Should they have different development needs and requirements recognised in the education and racing?
- Should 2YO, 3YO & 4YO have specific guidelines on their racing careers?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

.....

**AREA 7 – TRACKS**

- Given that a number of jurisdictions now have a variety of “new and modern” types of tracks, what are the comments on the tracks, their size and surface etc?
- Some have sprint lanes but many of the established tracks do not. What are your thoughts?
- For the on-course patron does the race book convey all the information needed?
- Comment on the quality of tracks, and their surrounds in terms of presenting our product professionally? Over Sky Channel?
- Should the course broadcaster advise licensees, participants and the public of the meeting’s key scheduled times?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

.....

**AREA 8 – GEAR & EQUIPMENT**

- There are different types of sulkies used in Australia and overseas. Should we consider their use as an experiment on suitable tracks in races? (Note: no mixing of different types of sulkies in an official race is suggested)
- Are numbering, driver colours and coloured wheels effectively used for horse and licensee recognition?
- Should we add “vented” helmets for drivers in their own painted designs?
- Other Comments, you may wish to make.

Appendix A.

2YO, 3YO & 4YO Races	Field Limits	Professional Licensee
Advertising on Colours	Field Sizes	Programming Devices
Aged Horses Races	Fillies & Mares Races	Protective Whip Pads
American Sulkies	Front Row	Punter
Australian Sulkies	Gear Adjustments On-track	Race Duration
Balloted Out	Gear Changes	Race Scheduling
Barrier Limits	Give Way/Handover Rule	Race Start Time
Barrier Numbers	Grading Races	Racebooks
Barrier Position(s)	Handicapping	Research
Bookmaker	Handicaps	Right of Way Principle
Broadcasting	HaRVEY Computer System	Run-arounds
Call-up to Start	Hobbyist	Same Front, Different Row
Claiming Races	Horse Numbers	Score Up
Coloured Gear & Equipment	Horse Numbers	Second Row
Colours – Drivers	Integrity Processes	Sectional Times
Colours – Owners	Licensees	Seeded Barrier Draw(s)
Colours – Trainers	Manual Start	Splitting Nominations
Continuous Race Action	Meeting Finish Time	Standing Start Bonus
Correct Weight	Mile Racing	Standing Start Races
Death Seat Position	Mobile Barrier Operation	Start Holding Duration
Discretionary Handicaps	Mobile Start Races	Starting Procedures
Driving Styles	National Rules	Stewarding Practices
Duration between Races	Nomination Points (Ranking)	Stewards Enquiry
Ease Out Rule	Nominations	Surveys on Racing Variations
Electronic Start	Open Age Racing	TAB
European Sulkies	Operational Guidelines	Time between Races
Factor of Horse Ability	Out of Draw	Time Minimisation
Factor of Licensee Skill	Preferential Barrier Draw(s)	Timing
Feature Races	Presentations	Trial Performance
		Trials, Role of Whip Usage

***Note: These other areas/issues were advanced and discussed in the Working Party Discussion Forums.***

**The AHRC is currently undertaking a wide ranging review of our Racing Product and how it is presented. You are invited to participate by completing this survey. Written submissions outlining your further comments and suggestions are WELCOME.**

## **INTERNET SURVEY**

1. **What is your State?** Drop Down Box  
Queensland  
New South Wales  
Victoria  
Tasmania  
South Australia  
Western Australia
2. **What is your Primary Role?** (Choose one only)  
 Trainer     Driver     Owner     Breeder     Other

### **THE RACE ITSELF**

3. **Should races be?**  
 Longer     Shorter
4. **What distance should they be?**  
 Less than 1000m     1609m     2000m     2400m     Longer
5. **Should Sectional Times be in?**  
 Halves     Quarters
6. **Are they important?**  
 Yes     No
7. **Should minimal sectional times be enforced?**  
 Yes     No

8. **Should drivers have to “give way” in the lead if headed?**  
 Yes       No      At what point?      Drop Down Box  
 First Corner  
 First Lap  
 Middle Lap
9. **Should drivers be able to “ease out”?**  
 Yes       No      At what point?      Drop Down Box  
 First Lap  
 Middle Lap  
 Home Turn
10. **Should Stewards use AT ALL TIMES?**  
 Relegation Rule(s)       Yes       No  
 Disqualification Rule(s)       Yes       No

*(In answering the next sections please note of the 15,967 races conducted in season 2004/2005 some 13,769 races were mobile starts. In catering for segments 938 were for trotters, 970 for two year olds and 1894 races were for three year olds. These were conducted at 2010 meetings.)*

### **STANDING STARTS**

11. **Should the starter call the field up to their marks and “let them go”?**  
 Yes       No
12. **Should the starter wait for the fractious horse?**  
 Yes       No
13. **Should the fractious horse delaying the start be immediately placed ODS on the same row?**  
 Yes       No
14. **Should the fractious horse delaying the start be scratched?**  
 Yes       No
15. **Should there be more standing starts?**  
 Yes       No
16. **Should there be less standing starts?**  
 Yes       No

## **MOBILE STARTS**

17. Should there be **more** mobile barrier starts?

Yes       No

18. Should there be **less** mobile barrier starts?

Yes       No

## **RACE PROGRAMMING**

19. Should programming

Yes       No      Make races even more competitive?

Yes       No      Favour the “good” horse with Random Barrier Draws?

Yes       No      Encourage specific types & ages of horses i.e. Fillies & Mares?

20. Should “Claimers” be nationally allowed in normal races like in New South Wales?

Yes       No

21. Should Mares & Fillies be given

Yes       No      Preferential Barrier Draws in all races?

Yes       No      Mare’s Concession in all States?

**Please add your email address below if you wish**

**Submit Survey**

**Next Page**

***Thank you for participating in this short survey, which has now been submitted.***

*A complete copy of the full Survey that was sent through AHRC Members to all Clubs and Associations is available. (Click here)*

*If you would like to make a **further written submission**, please send it no later than Wednesday, 22 March 2006 to:*

**Rod Pollock, Chief Executive  
Australian Harness Racing Council Inc  
Level 7, 390 St Kilda Road  
Melbourne, Vic 3004**

## **COMPLETE DETAILED SURVEY Not Internet Survey**

Responses were received from the following:

- AHRC Members
  - Albion Park Harness Racing Club
  - Harness Racing South Australia
  - New South Wales Harness Racing Club
  - Queensland Harness Racing Board
  - Racing & Wagering Western Australia,
  - Western Australian Trotting Association
- Industry Associations
  - Victorian Square Trotters Association,
  - Victorian Standardbred Breeders & Studmasters Association
  - New South Wales Standardbred Breeders Association
  - Western Australian Standardbred Breeders Association
- Totalizators
  - Unitab
- Media
  - Sports 927
  - Sky Channel
  - P Wharton (Trackbred)
- Clubs
  - Ballarat Trotting Club (Vic)
  - Cobram HRC (Vic)
  - Collie Trotting Club (WA)
  - Golden Mile Trotting Club (WA)
  - Northam HRC (WA)
  - Penrith HRC (NSW)
  - Stawell HRC (Vic)
  - St Arnaud HRV (Vic)
  - Williams Trotting Club (WA)
  - York Trotting Club (WA)
- Individuals (Not identified)
  - NSW (1), WA (1), Vic (3) & SA (1)



**AUSTRALIAN HARNESS RACING COUNCIL Inc.**

390 ST. KILDA ROAD MELBOURNE VICTORIA AUSTRALIA  
Telephone (03) 9867 8033 Fax (03) 9866 8356  
Email: ahrc@harness.org.au

ABN 19 877 460 923

## **RACING PRODUCT INTERNET SURVEY**

### **RESPONSE ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Thank you to the nearly 400 harness racing enthusiasts who responded to our Racing Product Survey. Your input will be very valuable when we combine it with responses received from harness racing clubs, racing administrators and officials, gaming organisations, the media and others with committed interest in the future success of our industry.

Of particular interest was the overwhelming support for the Relegation and Disqualification Rules to be used at all times. Also the vast majority of respondents were in favour of speeding up our starts by simply calling fields up and letting them go. It was also the view of most that our State programming guidelines need to be reviewed to make racing more competitive.

At the recent AHRC meeting held in Hobart, it was decided that a small working party would be convened to assess all input received both on the internet and the more detailed extensive Survey which can still be viewed at <http://www.harness.org.au/ahrc/race-prod-survey.pdf>. The preliminary policy areas of discussion and suggestions for evaluation as proposed by the working party, will be submitted to Council's Annual General Meeting to be held in October 2006.

Thanks again.

John Bagshaw  
Chairman



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## **RACING PRODUCT REVIEW** **Internet Survey**

Dear Harness Racing Participant,

New computer and communication technologies are rapidly changing the Gaming and Wagering Industry, and the Australian Harness Racing Council believes it is essential that we take a critical look at our racing product and how we present it, if we are to retain our current place as a significant industry player into the future.

I now seek your input in completing the attached brief Survey Form. All Council Members, their racing-focussed Staff (Stewards, Handicappers, Race Programmers etc), Industry Associations, Clubs and the Media have been requested to provide information for this Review.

Chaired by Ray Sharman (NSWHRC), Council has to date conducted two Discussion Groups on our current Harness Racing Product and a wide range of issues and ideas have been identified for consideration. The output from these meetings is now being distributed to stimulate discussion and input into this review from the above groups.

The feedback from this review, which is presented in the form of a survey, will be used to:

- \* Assist Council and its Members to better support and grow the harness racing industry nationally,
- \* Better plan and program each State's racing program for consistency,
- \* Develop time effective programming and scheduling of race product, and
- \* Contribute to our partnerships with Sky Channel and the TAB's in our joint operation more efficiently.

We invite you to participate in this brief focussed survey. Your support is greatly appreciated.

So that the next Council meeting can further progress this project, **this Internet Survey will close on 22 March 2006.** When compiled, the Survey Findings will be published on our website ([www.harness.org.au](http://www.harness.org.au)) and made available to the media.

Click here to open the Survey.

John Bagshaw  
Chairman

# INTERNET RACING PRODUCT SURVEY

## Summary

### Profile of Respondents

- The Survey was completed by Owners and Trainers principally. As the question asked for one choice it can be assumed that most of the trainers would be trainer/drivers.

### Length of Race

- Races should be longer (60%) not shorter (40%)

### Distance of Race

- The preferred distance was 2000m (37%), 2400m (30%) and 1609m (22%) with sectional times considered to be very important to racing and measured in quarters. Minimum sectional times should be enforced by Stewards.

### Racing Pattern

- The majority (70%) considered that drivers should not “give way” in the lead, if headed. Of the 30% minority indicating that they should, the positions were the first corner (18%), first lap (52%) and middle lap (29%).
- Respondents considered that drivers should be able to ease out (80%). The positions nominated were at the first lap (7%), middle lap (44%) and the home turn (49%).

### Stewards Race Powers

- A significant majority (83%) advised that the Relegation Rule should be utilised. In addition, the use of the disqualification process should also be employed (68%).

### The Start

- The survey disclosed that a significant majority (89%) considered that the starter should call the field up and “let them go” in Standing Starts.

Starters should not wait for fractious horses (73%) and they (78%) considered that fractious horse(s) delaying the start should be immediately placed ODS on the same row. The fractious horse delaying the start should not be scratched (67%).

- On Standing Starts, the current level in the racing mix is favoured by most respondents (60%). Whereas the same survey population did not want more standing starts. With Mobile Starts only 40% wanted mobile barrier starts whereas 76% considered that they should not be reduced.

### **Programming for Competitive Racing**

- The objective of utilising programming to make racing even more competitive received agreement by 90% of the survey respondents. The next answer received stated that the “good” horse should not receive Random Barrier Draws (66%) but should be handicapped. However a similar number (90%) wanted to encourage specific types and ages of horses. The examples of Fillies & Mares was used. This is reinforced with 70% wanting the Mares Concession (1 Class lift) to be used in all States. Also that Mares & Fillies be given Preferential Barrier Draws in all races received only 35% agreement whereas 65% opposed this programming concession.

## AHRC Racing Product Survey Results

	NSW	QLD	SA	TAS	VIC	WA	No Answer	Total
<b>Question 1 - What is your state?</b>								
	111	43	33	13	137	40	1	<b>378</b>
<b>Question 2 - What is your primary role?</b>								
Trainer	33	10	13	2	38	13	0	<b>109</b>
Driver	3	1	1	2	4	1	0	<b>12</b>
Owner	46	24	10	5	55	8	0	<b>148</b>
Breeder	7	3	4	0	17	7	0	<b>38</b>
Other	22	5	5	4	23	11	1	<b>71</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Question 3 - Should races be?</b>								
Longer	70	25	16	7	87	15	1	<b>221</b>
Shorter	39	18	15	6	47	22	0	<b>147</b>
No answer	2	0	2	0	3	3	0	<b>10</b>
<b>Question 4 - What distance should they be?</b>								
Less than 1000m	2	0	0	1	0	5	0	<b>8</b>
1609m	50	19	8	4	33	20	0	<b>134</b>
2000m	67	21	24	8	77	28	1	<b>226</b>
2400m	61	22	9	6	69	20	0	<b>187</b>
Longer	12	8	4	1	19	7	0	<b>51</b>
<b>Question 5 - Should Sectional Times be in?</b>								
Halves	12	4	2	2	20	8	0	<b>48</b>
Quarters	99	39	31	11	115	32	1	<b>328</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>
<b>Question 6 - Are they important?</b>								
Yes	103	40	29	13	122	36	1	<b>344</b>
No	8	3	4	0	15	4	1	<b>34</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Question 7 - Should minimal sectional times be enforced?</b>								
Yes	68	27	20	8	98	14	1	<b>236</b>
No	43	16	13	5	39	26	0	<b>142</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>
<b>Question 8 - Should drivers have to "give way" in the lead if headed?</b>								
Yes	27	13	13	3	53	9	0	<b>118</b>
No	84	30	20	10	84	31	1	<b>260</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**- If so at what point?**

First Corner	5	4	3	1	9	0	0	<b>22</b>
First Lap	15	9	5	1	24	6	0	<b>60</b>
Middle Lap	7	0	5	1	19	3	0	<b>35</b>

**Question 9 - Should drivers be able to "ease out"?**

Yes	92	34	26	12	107	33	1	<b>305</b>
No	19	9	7	1	29	7	0	<b>72</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

**- If so at what point?**

First Lap	8	1	1	1	4	4	0	<b>19</b>
Middle Lap	46	15	6	6	40	19	1	<b>133</b>
Home Turn	38	17	19	5	60	8	0	<b>147</b>

**Question 10 - Should Stewards use AT ALL TIMES?**

Relegation Rule(s) - Yes	98	36	27	11	110	27	1	<b>310</b>
Relegation Rule(s) - No	12	7	6	2	21	13	0	<b>61</b>
No answer	1	0	0	0	6	0	0	<b>7</b>
Disqualification Rule(s) - Yes	80	29	21	8	93	25	1	<b>257</b>
Disqualification Rule(s) - No	29	14	10	5	32	15	0	<b>105</b>
No answer	2	0	2	0	12	0	0	<b>16</b>

**Question 11 - Should the starter call the field up to their marks and "let them go"?**

Yes	100	38	28	11	126	36	1	<b>340</b>
No	11	5	5	2	11	4	0	<b>38</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>

**Question 12 - Should the starter wait for the fractious horse?**

Yes	29	10	5	4	37	16	0	<b>101</b>
No	82	33	28	9	99	24	1	<b>276</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

**Question 13 - Should the fractious horse delaying the start be immediately placed ODS on the same row?**

Yes	85	32	27	9	116	24	1	<b>294</b>
No	26	10	6	4	20	16	0	<b>82</b>
No answer	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 14 - Should the fractious horse delaying the start be scratched?**

Yes	46	13	9	1	45	6	1	<b>121</b>
No	64	30	24	12	91	34	0	<b>255</b>
No answer	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 15 - Should there be more standing starts?**

Yes	46	18	9	4	54	14	0	<b>145</b>
No	64	25	24	9	82	26	1	<b>231</b>
No answer	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 16 - Should there be less standing starts?**

Yes	46	16	16	5	50	10	0	<b>143</b>
No	64	27	17	8	86	30	1	<b>233</b>
No answer	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 17 - Should there be more mobile barrier starts?**

Yes	57	21	17	5	53	10	0	<b>163</b>
No	54	22	16	8	82	30	1	<b>213</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 18 - Should there be less mobile barrier starts?**

Yes	34	13	4	2	31	6	0	<b>90</b>
No	77	30	29	11	104	34	1	<b>286</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	<b>2</b>

**Question 19 - Should programming****- Make races even more competitive?**

Yes	102	40	30	12	122	35	1	<b>342</b>
No	9	3	3	1	14	5	0	<b>35</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

**- Favour the "good" horse with Random Barrier Draws?**

Yes	32	13	10	3	49	13	1	<b>121</b>
No	78	29	21	10	87	26	0	<b>251</b>
No answer	1	1	2	0	1	1	0	<b>6</b>

**- Encourage specific types & ages of horses i.e. Fillies & Mares?**

Yes	103	41	29	12	123	37	1	<b>346</b>
No	8	2	2	1	13	3	0	<b>29</b>
No answer	0	0	2	0	1	0	0	<b>3</b>

**Question 20 - Should "Claimers" be nationally allowed in normal races like in New South Wales?**

Yes	90	30	26	8	104	24	1	<b>283</b>
No	21	12	7	5	30	15	0	<b>90</b>
No answer	0	1	0	0	3	1	0	<b>5</b>

**Question 21 - Should Mares & Fillies be given****- Preferential Barrier Draws in all races?**

Yes	37	12	7	3	59	11	0	<b>129</b>
No	74	31	26	10	77	29	1	<b>248</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	<b>1</b>

**- Mare's Concession in all States?**

Yes	72	30	25	11	103	20	1	<b>262</b>
No	39	13	8	2	34	20	0	<b>116</b>
No answer	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	<b>0</b>