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Associated Entity:



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## Victorian Branch – Members Update

Dear Member,

It is with pleasure that I enclose an update for our Victorian Branch Members.

This update informs members on the status of relevant issues.

We encourage members to provide any input on these issues.

Yours Sincerely,

**JOHN ALDUCCI**  
Chief Executive

### Victorian Branch Committee

**Branch President**  
Colin Alderson

**Vice President**  
Robert Smerdon

### **Committee Members**

Pat Carey  
Fran Houlahan  
Colin Little  
Peter Moody  
Tony Noonan

**State Executive**  
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# Victorian Branch - Members Update

## COMPULSORY TRIALS

The ATA has again reaffirmed its complete opposition to the introduction of compulsory trials for unraced horses.

The ATA has provided RVL with examples of the additional costs (totaling approximately \$300 in transport, labour and trials fee costs) which would be incurred by owners if the proposal were to be adopted.

RVL is yet to provide the ATA with information comparing turnover on 2yo races in Sydney (where compulsory trialing is in place) with Victoria, or statistics on the number of horses racing without having competed in a trial in Victoria.

Pending a review of the feasibility of converting jumpouts to trials at training centres, the availability of metropolitan tracks for such trials and the costs, RVL has committed to further discussions with the ATA, prior to the proposed adoption of the proposal on June 1.

## TRACK PREPARATION AND RATINGS

Responding to recurring problems with track preparation and inaccurate ratings, RVL is considering upgrading the skill set of Track Managers to address both problems.

The ATA has called for the imposition of penalties on Clubs that fail to comply with the RVL Track Preparation Policy.

## ACCEPTANCE TIMES

The ATA has reiterated its strong opposition to the push to bring forward acceptances for Saturday meetings to Wednesday.

The proposed change would disadvantage owners and trainers by adding further increases to the costs of racing through an increase in the number of scratchings.

Retaining the present Thursday arrangements enables trainers to decide final acceptances as late as possible and enable horses which would

otherwise face the risk of being balloted from races from gaining a position in the final field.

The ATA did however support the retention of the present arrangements for final acceptances being declared on Wednesdays for Saturday Group One races.

## **MINIMUM WEIGHTS**

The ATA has supported Chief Handicapper Greg Carpenter's proposal to increase the minimum topweight in Handicap and Listed races from the current 58kgs to 59kgs and for all Group One handicaps from the current 57kgs to 58kgs.

The ATA also supported the minimum weight in all Group One handicap races being increased by 1kg to 52kgs.

## **DIRECTIONS PAPER**

The ATA's response opposing the implementation of the Directions Paper was presented to RVL.

RVL has assured the ATA that no Race Club will be denied funding. Furthermore, RVL will also undertake a review of each Race Club's funding requirements under its Training Tracks Maintenance Fund requirements, before deciding each individual annual allocation. It was recognised that some Race Clubs needed more funding and a five year plan would be developed in conjunction with CRV.

A major change would also result in the pooling of CRV and RVL funding to Country Clubs whereby they would receive one allocation. RVL would assume responsibility for ensuring the Clubs are held accountable for the funds and their expenditure, and the setting of performance standards.

The role of the Country Race Clubs will be redefined in conjunction with CRV following a two day conference in April where the Directions Paper will itself be further refined, before being presented to the RVL Board for consideration and adoption.

## **MORE 3YO CLASS/RATINGS COUNTRY RACES IN APRIL/JULY**

Responding to feedback from the ATA regarding the lack of 3yo class/ratings races, RVL has programmed an additional 20 races (a 40% increase) during the non-carnival months of April-July this year.

## **SYNTHETIC TRACKS**

Following concerns expressed by the ATA, RVL has deferred any decisions on the installation of any further synthetic tracks at Victorian racetracks until more conclusive research is available on such factors as performance, maintenance and injuries.

RVL will continue to monitor the Geelong thoroughtrack where maintenance work is underway and are currently examining the feasibility of installing strath-ayr surfaces at selected venues.

## **30 MINUTE GAPS BETWEEN RACES**

The ATA has supported a proposal from RVL to extend the trial of 30 minute gaps between races, with the exception of feature race days and racing carnivals.

Issues including the impact on turnover and the possible use of areas closer to the mounting yard at Sandown and Caulfield for saddling horses and jockeys weighing out a race in advance, will all be monitored.

## **NEW SEASON RACEDATES**

Responding to requests by the ATA, RVL is negotiating with both the MRC and the VRC to select a metropolitan venue to host the Sunday race meeting, the day after the AFL Grand Final in September.

With the arrangements for the quarantine centre for international horses scheduled to be moved to Werribee (unlikely to be completed in time for the 2009 spring racing carnival), it is doubtful at this stage that Sandown will be available to conduct the Sunday race meeting.

The ATA is of the firm view that this is a critical time in the spring racing carnival program.

A metropolitan venue with appropriate races is vital in ensuring horses spring carnival preparations are not compromised by being forced to compete at venues and on surfaces that may not be of the required standard.

## **WAGERING LICENSE AND PRODUCT FEE**

The ATA was given an update by RVL on negotiations between the Victorian racing industry and the State Government on the wagering license renewal process currently in progress.

Negotiations on this issue - which is fundamental to the future of the racing industry in Victoria - are continuing and RVL is in no hurry to sign off on Agreements unless they are of clear benefit to the industry and secures the funding that is required to adequately underwrite the future viability of thoroughbred racing in the State.

On the contentious issue of the Product Fee for corporate bookmakers, the decision to base the Product Fee on turnover OR profit will be finalised pending the outcome of the legal action between Racing NSW and Betfair/Sportsbet.

To date, Tabcorp wagering turnover is exceeding forecasts, while revenue from Corporate Bookmakers has also increased.

## **NOTIFICATION OF GEAR CHANGES**

Following ATA concerns at the extent of the number of gear changes which have to be formally notified and approved, the ATA will provide a list of what it considers to be the more important gear changes, for consideration by Integrity Services.

## **INELIGIBLE NOMINATIONS**

Integrity Services has informed the ATA that despite trainers being advised, the number of ineligible nominations for races continues to increase, prompting RVL to consider introducing penalties for repeat transgressions.

Trainers and their staff are advised to exercise the necessary care and check the eligibility of horses when nominating.

## **NEW INDUSTRY LIASION POSITION**

RVL has responded positively to the ATA's continuing calls for the establishment of a proper mechanism to resolve disputes between trainers and owners, particularly relating to debts, with the creation of a new position within Integrity Services.

Rob Montgomery has been appointed to the position and will work closely with the ATA in carrying out these functions.

Integrity Services is also examining other avenues within the Rules of Racing to address problems with serial defaulters.

## **TWILIGHT RACES**

Clubs will be required by RVL to publish twilight race meetings in two consecutive issues of Inside Racing, prior to the meeting being conducted.

## **2YO RACES PRE JANUARY 1**

RVL has advised of a continuing decline in the number of nominations for 2yo races conducted from the start of the racing season and January 1, prompting the VRC to transfer the Maribyrnong Plate to their New Year's Day race meeting and furthermore, resulting in race clubs reviewing the viability of staging 2yo races with small fields and resultant low turnover volumes.

RVL will instigate a process of consultation with TROA, TBV, the Sales Companies and the ATA to review the 2yo racing season.

## **SUMMER/AUTUMN RACE DATES**

Following the decision by Racing NSW and the AJC and STC of fixed race dates for the Sydney Autumn racing carnival, RVL will review race dates and programs for the Melbourne Summer/Autumn carnival, to avoid clashes of feature races between the two States and the feature South Australian races during March and May.

## **FEEDBACK REQUESTED**

The ATA's Inside Racing Column will keep members informed of decisions and issues discussed at Victorian Branch Committee meetings and on progress with the resolution of outstanding issues.

Members are invited to raise issues for consideration by the Victorian Branch. The Committee consists of Colin Alderson (President), Robert Smerdon (Vice President), Tony Noonan, Peter Moody, Fran Houlahan, Colin Little and Pat Carey.