



29 June 2010

## MEDIA RELEASE

### Harness Strategic Plan Recommendations Endorsed

Racing and Wagering Western Australia (RWAA) announced today that the recently released harness strategic plan will begin implementation in the new racing season following Board endorsement of the recommendations.

*'Protecting Our Product'*, a vision paper designed to articulate the challenges facing harness racing and the resulting strategies required for a sustainable future, was released to industry in early April. Consultation via industry presentations took place throughout the ensuing two months, followed by a request for industry submissions from stakeholders.

The RWAA Board met yesterday to determine the recommendations contained in the Plans following industry consultation and feedback. Thirty harness submissions were received from Clubs, stakeholder groups and individuals specific to the Harness Vision Paper.

On the subject of Geraldton Harness Racing Club and its recommended closure from 2010/11 onwards, the Board has reserved its decision. The Club has been informed that its future is the subject of further consideration by the Board, with a final outcome anticipated by the 26 July RWAA Board meeting.

RWAA Chief Executive Officer Richard Burt said, "The harness strategic plan is vital for stabilising and protecting the industry into the future.

"In the context of a rapidly changing landscape affecting racing bodies throughout Australia, we need to know where we are heading and how we are going to get there.

"Our harness industry deserves a sustainable and positive future. I believe the implementation of this strategic plan will assist in delivering that outcome." Burt said.

The following key recommendations were discussed and determined at yesterday's Board meeting:

- Closure of Geraldton Harness Racing Club - RWAA Board reserved its decision; subject to further consideration. Final racedates along with incremental distribution increases to funding (training and stakes equity) that will be communicated to Clubs this week will be subject to change based on the final outcome of the Geraldton decision.
- Digital Video Network (DVN) uplink provision for Narrogin Race & Pace Club and Harvey Trotting Club – Ratified.
- Non-Sky Clubs to race some meetings at DVN venues (ie. Albany- Narrogin; Wagin- Narrogin; Central Wheatbelt – Northam) – Ratified. However, with the level of reluctance shown by the three country clubs to race at Sky venues, RWAA will instead work closely with those clubs to determine the financial sustainability and vision opportunities available to their respective venues in the event that consultative agreement cannot be reached.
- WATA/Fremantle Harness Racing Club amalgamation – Ratified.
- Retention of Trotters – Ratified.
- Mares/Fillies handicapping concessional opportunities – Ratified.
- Environmental Audit- Ratified. Commencing with Byford Training Complex



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- Ownership Strategy- Ratified. Tri-code programme to be devised with input of respective owner stakeholder groups and Clubs.
- Tri-Code marketing campaign - Ratified. First opportunity – November 2010
- Young Ambassador programme - Ratified. Commencing 2010/11 season.
- Economic Breeding Review (both equine codes) – Ratified. Will commence following outcome of national breeding review.

All other elements of the Plan highlighted in the Vision Paper including the areas of Animal Welfare, Integrity, Industry Communication, Training and Education, Marketing and Promotion will be progressed on operational levels in the coming season.

In addition to the Plan's strategic objectives, RWAA will also be assessing the long-term impact of Sky Channel's 1 and 2 programme, with particular attention paid to the potential dislocation of customer bases in the harness and greyhound codes. This issue will be subject to further strategic analysis.

RWAA will continue to consult and work with industry on key elements of the strategic plan, with a view to achieving a cohesive and effective outcome for all industry participants. The strategic plan recommendations will be progressed through the formal Code Consultative Group process.

ENDS.

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