

## Chandler Macleod Study Findings Background

In March 2008, RWWA sought assistance from Chandler Macleod to develop a sustainable Racing Industry Workforce Plan in Western Australia. The motivation for this study arose from concerns raised by Trainers and others within the Racing Industry who were experiencing a number of issues relating to:

- Attracting qualified candidates for roles within the Racing Industry
- Retaining and engaging a sustainable participation rate
- Difficulty in predicting numbers for future requirements
- Limited uptake of available training programs
- National/State and Global market conditions
- Perceptions of limited People Management skills amongst Industry Participants

## Scope

Through a staged approach, the project originally intended to address workforce issues across the three Racing codes in WA, namely thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds.

The project commenced with a focused Pilot Study in the area that was considered to require an immediate response. Specifically, the need for Track Work Riders was targeted due to perceived threats and concerns linked to the longevity of racing, engagement and involvement of Riders, and the ongoing impact on the Industry.

The Pilot Study was to be used to plan and guide the efforts required to investigate the remainder of the Industry, to ensure “Best Practice” process, and to assess the methodology, validity and viability of the process.

## Methodology

The following process was followed in order to investigate factors affecting the attraction and retention of Track Work Riders.



## Chandler Macleod Study Findings Results - Focus Groups

Based on importance rankings the following issues were identified as contributing to a shortage of Track Work Riders.

- Money – Wage, workers compensation and insurance
- Risk – Safety, including horse education/behaviour and Training Track conditions and facilities
- Personal Values/Industry Tradition – Career appeal and education
- Structure – Hours, conditions and communication
- Competitive Market – Overseas visa issues (problems and costs of sourcing international Track Work Riders and associated Visa issues), “WA Resources Boom”
- Resources – Lack of people and horses. Money and Risk were consistently identified as issues of highest importance.

## Results - Survey

- In total, a representative sample of 153 Trainers and 59 Riders (45 Track Work Riders, 11 Jockeys and 3 Apprentice Jockeys) responded to the surveys.
- Taken at face value, this sample appears to be committed to the Racing Industry, as the majority indicated that they intended to stay for several years.
- The survey found that freelance Track Work Riders would prefer to have an additional 10.8 rides per week on average and subsequent analyses sought to investigate why these resources are not being fully utilised.

## Rider Selectivity of Trainers

The following were identified by Riders as factors affecting their decision to ride for a Trainer:

- Safety – The majority of Riders (49%) said that knowing the temperament of a horse influenced their decision to ride. In addition, the majority (73%) also said that knowing the Trainer and how his/her horses usually behave influenced their decision to ride.
- Honesty and Trust – While the majority of Trainers (84%) believe that the relationship between Trainers and Trackwork Riders is based on trust, honesty and respect, less Riders (58%) agreed with this, indicating that some Riders chose not to ride for certain Trainers because this trust relationship is not established.
- Organisation and Efficiency – Riders’ most common responses (in order of importance) to improving Trainers organisation at track work included:
  - o Structure – e.g. Improving how track work is organised and managed on a daily basis
  - o Readiness to start riding – e.g. Having horses ready to ride at specified times
  - o Being on time – e.g. Trainers and Track Work Riders being ready to start on time
  - o Payments made on time – e.g. Agreed payments being provided on time



## Trainer Selectivity of Riders

The following were identified by Trainers as factors affecting their decision to select a Rider:

- Riding Speed – 54% of Trainers said they use Jockeys and Apprentices for ‘Fast Work’ while 77% said they use Track Work Riders for slow work. It is noted that the majority of track work is ‘Slow’ in the preliminary stages of preparing a horse to race.
- Insurance – The vast majority of Trainers (70%) indicated that they required Freelance Riders to have Personal Accident Insurance before using them to ride. With this in mind, of 22 Freelance Riders that responded to the survey, 27% indicated that they did not have Personal Accident Insurance.
- Experience and Horsemanship – 56% of Trainers commented that the temperament/education of a horse ‘Extremely’ affected their selection of a rider to ride that horse, with 35% ‘Very Much’ affected by this information.
- Rider Attributes – Trainers identified the following attributes, listed in order, as being most important in Track Work Riders:
  - o Reliability
  - o Knowledge of horses
  - o Temperament of the rider e.g. calm and stress tolerant
  - o Natural ability
  - o Ability to listen and follow instructions



## Chandler Macleod Study Findings Pay

Findings from the study indicated that there is a discrepancy between what Trainers think is a fair price to pay and what Track Work Riders think is a fair price for their services. The case may be that Riders are choosing not to ride for certain Trainers because of the rate of pay on offer, and likewise that Trainers are choosing not to utilise Track Work Riders because of the rate for services on offer. There was also evidence that a significant number of riders were paid in cash; this could potentially lead to disparity in net income levels for those who declare their income compared to those who do not declare receipts of this income. Consideration also needs to be given to the skill level of Track Work Riders as currently they are not formally recognised nor is their pay matched to the level of skill required.

## Opening Hours

Findings indicated that both Trainers and Track Work Riders perceive track opening times to be a factor that impacts how many horses can be worked at the track.

## Summary of Findings

Overall, findings from this sample indicated that Trainers and Track Work Riders are committed and dedicated to the Industry. Further, there appears to be an under utilised resource of Track Work Riders given most want additional rides. In terms of Workforce Planning, the results suggest that there are obstacles with regards to Track Work Rider participation that need to be addressed so that Trainers and Track Work Riders can more readily and effectively engage with one another.

## Recommendations

Based on the findings from the Focus Groups and surveys Chandler Macleod has identified the following interrelated issues as those which are affecting the supply, use and shortage of Track Work Riders: Workplace dis-satisfiers or 'Hygiene Factors' are affecting employees, specifically: Salary/Pay, Insurance and Safety

Attraction to Track Work (including perceived risk associated with riding track work, training, career development opportunities, Industry image/branding and employee recognition) is not strategic within the current WA market

There is a perceived lack of organisation and structure around some elements of Track Work coordination

These issues have mirrored empirical research literature. The first and third issues noted here, if addressed, will help to reduce the under utilised resources within the current pool of Track Work Riders, whilst the second issue relates to the sustainability of the Racing Industry by attracting and retaining more people.

## Conclusion

In light of the findings from this study RWWA has been encouraged to maintain active support and engagement with the Racing Industry in order to move away from diagnosis toward execution and facilitation of practical strategies. In doing so it is envisaged that the initial presenting problems will be reduced.

The main areas requiring attention to address Track Work Rider shortages include:

- Addressing dis-satisfiers ('Hygiene Factors') – specifically:
  - Reviewing Salary/Pay
  - Education of participants, clarifying insurance requirements
  - Improving Safety
- Looking at Attraction to Track Work – specifically:
  - Clarifying Training and Career Development opportunities
  - Reducing Perceived Risk
  - Promoting Image/Branding
  - Promoting employee recognition
- Improving organisation at Track Work
- Measuring and re-evaluating data and metrics collected for Track Work

While RWWA is encouraged to exercise a degree of control and influence over the implementation of the aforementioned strategies, Industry Participants are identified as playing a pivotal role in the leadership of the changes required. To this end, The Trainers Association, Trainers as employers, and individuals operating as Track Work Riders would need to take responsibility and actively participate in addressing and refining these recommendations in order to see mutual benefits, a reduction in shortages and to strategically prepare for future workforce issues. ❖



## RWWA Response Pilot Study

### Key observations of the trackwork situation

Participation by trainers, trackwork riders, apprentices and jockeys during the pilot study was high particularly for regularly engaged industry people.



On the evidence available, the short and long term impact of a shortage of trackwork riders is very high. However at the time of the survey there was no clear evidence gathered of a "critical" across the board shortage of Trackworker Riders.

It was found that some of the shortage is linked to trust in respect to safety matters which plays greatly on the minds of many riders, the offer of a sufficiently attractive pay rate to ride work and the booking of trackwork riders which does not appear to be efficient in all cases, indicating

that some freelance track riders services may not be fully utilised. As these particular issues contribute to the current gap they need to be addressed as soon as possible.

There is also a set of important findings in respect to recruitment and retention. Strategies to address these issues are increasingly important in a labour market where skilled and capable trackwork riders are in great demand. Fit for purpose initiatives to address these concerns need to be developed further and implemented in the medium term.

RWWA has committed to communicate the independent findings of the pilot, along with facilitating initiatives where practicable.

## Initial Steps

### Pay

The WA Racehorse Trainer's Association will be provided findings of the study, particularly in relation to pay. WARTA will be encouraged to investigate a recommended minimum payment per ride for freelance trackwork riders.

### Safety

All race clubs (at which track work is conducted) will be approached to address track work safety, possibly as an extension of existing health and safety committee agenda or through the formation of track work safety committees where specifically required. The objective is to enhance processes, procedures and knowledge of safety standards or conditions of track work riding by all participants. These groups will be asked to meet the standards set by industry and worksafe in relation to minimisation of accidents and incidents and in taking remedial action to reduce or eliminate risks to trackwork riders, trainers and the racing animals. RWWA will move to have the committee made up of a track /club representative, licensed trainer and a licensed trackwork rider.

RWWA will provide guidance and support to these committees where required.

### Insurance

RWWA will develop an information kit regarding insurance obligations, rights and responsibilities relating to trainers, trackriders and others. A summary of this information will be disseminated to every licensed person affected as soon as practicable.

### Scheduling / Organisation Improvements

RWWA will request all freelance track work riders wishing to take on more rides register their contact details for publication in the Racing Ahead magazine. This can be organized by emailing the RWWA Racing Department at [racing@rwwa.com.au](mailto:racing@rwwa.com.au) or calling 9445 5277.

Trainers seeking the regular services of track work riders are encouraged to place announcements on notice boards at training tracks.

### Track usage review and availability

RWWA will discuss with race clubs and trainers the opportunities that may exist to optimise the use of the track work facilities.

## Related Issues

### Working groups

RWWA will, where it can assist and is requested to, facilitate working groups between the Trainers Association or groups of trainers, track workers and their representatives and race club management to get common agreement on how each of these groups will implement or participate proactively in the resolution of problems and issues.

### Track Work Riders Representative Group

A group of Track work riders have indicated a desire to form a representative group. They are seeking to actively engage and negotiate with trainers, race clubs and RWWA on important issues. This group would need to operate under the relevant industrial regulations and laws. In principle RWWA encourages the use of constructive dialogue towards achieving mutually beneficial outcomes for the industry.

### Workforce Planning Project

The RWWA Board supports the direction of the Chandler McLeod recommendations and wants to align these with racing code strategic plans in the future, however they also want to ensure that industry has some understanding and ownership of any changes and how they are to be implemented. The opportunity for the industry as a whole to learn from pilot implementation is also important. Overall RWWA sees its role as facilitating the best outcomes in support of the industry, this is distinct from the important responsibility that trainers have as the employers of track workers RWWA has put on hold the remainder of the workforce planning project until the benefits of implementing recommendations of the pilot study can be ascertained. ❖

*For more information on the project please contact*  
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