

### Executive summary

South Australian Jumps Racing, the body that represents the jumps racing industry in South Australia, requests that the Board of Racing SA urgently reconsider the decision announced on 1 October not to program jumps races in SA in 2022.

The Committee of SAJR also requests a meeting with the Board at the earliest possible opportunity.

It is our view that the Racing SA Board has neither sought nor been provided with sufficient information and data on which to take such a momentous decision, and that there is a pressing need for more accurate and up-to-date information to be considered before ill-advisedly consigning jumps racing to history.

Likewise, the lack of consultation and engagement with industry participants and representatives, including SAJR, AJRA and racing clubs, means that the Board has not received a comprehensive picture of the state of jumps racing in SA, making it virtually impossible for it to arrive at a well-informed decision.

### Background

#### Average field sizes

In the press release accompanying the announcement to abandon jumps racing on 1 October, it was stated that, “A total of 12 jumps races were held in 2020-21 with field sizes falling to less than five horses per race.”

This is inaccurate. In 2021, a year in which all racing (and jumps racing in particular) was severely impacted by border closures due to Covid-19, the average field size in SA jumps races was 5.4 (5.3 in hurdle races, 5.5 in steeplechases).

In recent years, there have been no seasons where the average jumps race field has fallen below 5:

- 2016: 5.7 (5.9 in hurdle races, 5.4 in steeplechases)
- 2017: 7.2 (7.3 in hurdle races, 6.9 in steeplechases)
- 2018: 6.5 (6.5 in hurdle races, 6.4 in steeplechases)
- 2019: 6.3 (6.3 in hurdle races, 6.3 in steeplechases)

The fact that incorrect information (i.e., “field sizes falling to less than five horses”) was used publicly to support its decision would seem to indicate that the Board was not provided with the appropriate or necessary data.

It should also be noted that SA trained horses won 7 of the 12 jumps races held in the state in 2021, including the Great Eastern Steeplechase — in our view, a more positive representation of the health of the industry.

#### SA jumps horses in training

SAJR also takes the view that there has been insufficient due diligence in ascertaining the number of locally-trained jumping horses being prepared for the 2022 season.

In the aforementioned press release, it states, “Racing SA’s current data shows there are fewer than 10 jumps horses currently in South Australia.” However, it is understood that Racing SA has not undertaken a recent survey of trainers and/or owners to determine the actual number of jumping horses in the state.

Instead, SAJR has undertaken this important work, and since the announcement on 1 October it has discovered that there is potentially upwards of 30 horses being prepared for the 2022 jumps season.

Trainers have provided SAJR with the following information (this list is not exhaustive)

- Jumps horses which raced in 2021
- Jumps horses that would have raced in 2021 had they been able to trial
- Jumps horses that trainers anticipate will race in 2022

| Trainer               | Jumps horses which raced in 2021 | Jumps horses that would have raced in 2021 had they been able to trial | Jumps horses that trainers anticipate will race in 2022 |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------|--|---|
| <b>John MacMillan</b> |                                  |  | Gondalier   |
| <b>David Huxtable</b> |                                  | Lipson Reef  |   |
| <b>John Dunn</b>      |                                  | Foraoise   | Foraoise  |
| <b>Sue Jaensch</b>    |                                  | Just Rolling   | Just Rolling  |
|                       |                                  |  | Native Blue   |
|                       |                                  |  | Fast Plan   |
|                       |                                  |  | Pie Train   |
|                       |                                  |  | Bronsky   |
| <b>Garret Lynch</b>   | Rough Habit                      |  | Tiza  |
| <b>Sue Nolan</b>      |                                  | Final Prince   | Final Prince  |
| <b>Trevor White</b>   |                                  | Clever Man   | Clever Man  |
| <b>John O'Connor</b>  |                                  | Rosstart   | Ablestock   |
|                       |                                  | Grosvenor Bridge   | Excited Lady  |
| <b>Barry Brook</b>    | Searaven                         | Drop the Orange  | Buckeye Nation  |
|                       | Buckeye Nation                   |  | Aristocat   |
|                       | Aristocat                        |  | Drop the Orange   |
|                       |                                  |  | Praise the Power  |
|                       |                                  |  | Jophiel   |
|                       |                                  |  | Fizzique  |
|                       |                                  |  | Meandering Benny  |
| <b>Jordan Frew</b>    |                                  |  | Le Dupe   |
|                       |                                  |  | Bear Arms   |
| <b>John Hickmont</b>  |                                  |  | Turf Man  |
| <b>Karen Byrnes</b>   |                                  | Seminole   | Seminole  |
|                       |                                  |  | Fat Impacte   |
| <b>Grant Young</b>    | Spying on You                    | Sostenido  | Spying on You   |
|                       | Pentelegentsia                   | Red Sea  | Pentelegentsia  |
|                       |                                  |  | Sostenido   |
|                       |                                  |  | Red Sea   |
|                       |                                  |  | Santelmo Fuego  |

|  |  |  |             |
|--|--|--|-------------|
|  |  |  | Yensir      |
|  |  |  | Lady Nelson |
|  |  |  | Caliburn    |

Other trainers who have indicated to SAJR that they are planning to race jumpers in 2022 if facilities, riders and trials are available, include Ron Daniel, Shane Oxlade, Ros Day and Sue Murphy.

These are conservative, early year numbers but clearly demonstrate that the figure of, "10 jumps horses currently in South Australia," as quoted in the aforementioned media release, is not based on any recent data obtained from trainers and so misrepresents the current state of the industry.

### **Numbers of SA jumps horses racing**

In conjunction with the above, it should also be noted that the rate of participation of local horses competing in SA jumping races compares favourably with other sectors of the industry.

As a consequence, SAJR takes the view that jumps racing is being unfairly singled out in a manner which is not merited by the data.

For instance, over the course of the 2021 Adelaide Racing Carnival, 37% of race starters were local horses (83 out of 223). Of particular interest are the Australasian Oaks (1 runner out of 16), the TAB Classic (1 runner out of 16) and the SA Derby (4 runners out of 16), where only 13% of runners were trained in SA.

Even in the Covid-affected 2021 season, 35% of all participants in jumps races in the state were trained in SA (23 out of 65). In previous seasons, the figures were:

- 2016: 48% (55 out of 114)
- 2017: 44% (63 out of 143)
- 2018: 41% (53 out of 130)
- 2019: 36% (52 out of 144)

Therefore, if the same logic were applied to feature races as to jumps races, there would appear to be little or no case for continuing to hold the Adelaide Racing Carnival either.

### **Lack of consultation with SA racing clubs**

It has become clear that Racing SA did not consult with a number of the Clubs that have previously staged jumps races prior to this decision being announced. Therefore, the Board in making its decision has not accurately represented or reflected the views of the wider racing community.

- Murray Bridge, which hosted three jumps meetings in 2021 and where, ironically, a new schooling lane and bull ring have recently been installed (albeit too late for trainers to use during the 2021 season), was not consulted or informed about the decision. They were fully expecting to host jumps races in 2022.
- Naracoorte likewise was not consulted or informed. They were especially surprised and disappointed at the news, as jumps racing had only recently returned there and, in the words of the Club Secretary, "It had bought some excitement towards racing down this way that they haven't seen in a while."
- The Club Secretary at Strathalbyn also reported that they had no consultation about the decision, which was particularly disappointing as two local trainers are preparing jumps horses for 2022.

### **Support for jumps racing by Racing SA**

SAJR believes that despite its best efforts, and those of others in the racing industry here and interstate, Racing SA has not provided adequate support for jumps racing. Therefore, as the

governing body, Racing SA must acknowledge responsibility for jumps racing becoming, in its words, “unsustainable and unworkable.”

We consider that, “declining participation levels and horse numbers,” are in large part due to the failure of Racing SA to deliver the necessary infrastructure and conditions that would enable the industry to grow and thrive.

This includes (in some instances) reneging on reassurances accepted in good faith that specific barriers to increased participation in jumps racing would be addressed.

It should also be noted that SAJR raised a number of these and other concerns in a letter to individual Racing SA Board members in December 2020, to which we received neither acknowledgement nor reply.

### **Upgrade to training facilities**

At a meeting between SAJR and Racing SA on 24 September 2020, we were informed that there would be upgrades to the jumps training facilities (including chutes and bullrings) at Strathalbyn, Oakbank and Gawler. It was agreed by all that this infrastructure was essential to facilitating the work of existing jumps trainers, and encouraging new ones by making it easier for them to school and prepare jumping horses.

To date, there has been no progress on the installation of this infrastructure. This has severely hampered the work of existing and potential jumps trainers, making it unnecessarily difficult for them to prepare horses.

Therefore, until Racing SA is willing to provide suitable facilities as agreed, it is unreasonable to then expect any increase in the number of people willing or able to train jumping horses in SA.

### **Jumps jockeys**

A key impediment to progressing the jumps racing industry in South Australia has long been a lack of skilled, qualified jumps jockeys to school and trial horses, or ride in jumps races.

At the meeting on 24 September 2020 referred to above, we were informed that plans were in place to have three jumps jockeys based at different tracks in SA. Such a move would have a hugely positive impact on the industry, cutting overheads and potentially growing the pool of local trainers by making it easier and cheaper for them to school, trial and race their horses.

We acknowledge that Covid-19 conditions have made it extremely difficult (if not impossible) to deliver on this pledge. However, this in turn also makes using low rates of local participation as a justification for scrapping jumps racing extremely unjust. With no local riders, and riders from Victoria not allowed to cross the border, there could not possibly be a reasonable expectation that the number of local participants would or could increase in 2021.

However, at the same time we would like some discussion as to what steps have actually been taken to recruit jumps jockeys to SA, either from interstate or abroad, as well as an indication of the barriers to recruitment that have been encountered, along with the steps that have been taken by Racing SA to overcome them.

Furthermore, it would appear that both formal and informal communications have taken place between staff at Racing SA, jumps trainers, and jumps jockeys located in Australia and overseas, about coming/returning to SA to ride, but these have not been followed through on by Racing SA, nor do they appear to have been accounted for in the Board's decision.

- Adam Roustoby (with his partner) has committed to relocating to Murray Bridge, and communicated this to Nick Redin and John Cornell.
- Eric Musgrove had previously made arrangements with three jockeys to come from Ireland to Australia, with two to be based in SA. However, Racing SA was not able to guarantee an income, notwithstanding the shortage of track riders in SA.

- Rob David has a sponsored visa to return to SA and will be based at Morphettville, He is expected to be in situ before Christmas 2021. Racing SA would appear either to be unaware of his return, or has chosen not to make this information known to trainers.
- Darren McLeod is returning to Gawler.
- Martin Kelly has been guaranteed work with Grant Young.

Given the pressing need for jockeys outlined above, if these potential solutions to this constant problem are not being followed up by Racing SA, it is beyond unreasonable to cite rates of local participation as a reason for not scheduling jumps races in 2022.

### **Jumps racing at fewer tracks**

As we outlined in our December 2020 letter to Board members, the removal of jumps racing from Morphettville has likewise had (and will continue to have) an impact on local participation.

However, the Board does not appear to have considered this in coming to its decision.

We consider that not holding jumps races at Morphettville acts as a bar and disincentive to both new and existing participants. There is no greater thrill or pleasure for an owner than to see their horse run at the headquarters of racing in South Australia, and taking away that possibility means it has become more challenging to encourage owners in particular to make the long-term investment required for a jumping horse.

Further to this, the removal of jumps races from Gawler and Strathalbyn in 2021 meant that opportunities for trainers at these locations to race jumpers at their home tracks have gone, a further disincentive to greater local participation.

### **Incentives**

In March 2019, SAJR met with Racing SA, where it was agreed that a bonus would be instituted for owners of locally-trained horses that win their first jumping race in SA. This has not been carried out and since then there have been no incentives for new or existing owners to participate, unlike some other sectors of the industry.

### **Stake money**

The proposed changes in prize money for the 2020 jumps seasons (which did not ultimately take place), and the changes that were implemented in 2021, have also been a barrier to consistent local participation.

Most notably, races at Morphettville that were previously worth \$45,000 or \$50,000 were moved to other tracks for lower purses, usually \$22,760. As discussed above, not being able to race in the city is already seen as a disincentive for owners, but this was compounded by the fact that stake money for the corresponding races was reduced.

In addition, the overall (proposed) stake money of \$754,940 for the 2021 jumps racing season was significantly lower than in previous years. Again, this has not helped to retain existing owners or encourage new jumps racing owners to enter the industry. In previous seasons, the total prize money was:

- 2016: \$840,050
- 2017: \$907,000
- 2018: \$941,100
- 2019: \$1,001,650

### **Next steps**

Given the above, we urge the Racing SA Board urgently to reconsider its decision to abandon jumps racing in South Australia.

To this end, we are requesting an immediate meeting between the Board and the Committee of SAJR to discuss the above and potential courses of action.