

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STANDARDBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION Inc.
(WASBA)

54TH Annual General Meeting Friday 24 November 2023

President's Report

Welcome

Welcome to the 54TH Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Western Australian Standardbred Breeders Association (WASBA). I would like to reflect on our most recent completed membership year and hopefully provide some positives for breeding and racing over that period, as well as impetus for the future.

Achievements

Have we achieved? I would like to think so. We remain committed to more improvements to the breeding scheme and we are also looking to increase RWWA's commitment to different levels of racing to cater for all levels of horses and their owners. For the most recent membership year:

- **Westbred Bonus:** We continued to advocate for the identified improvements to the bonuses since the 2019 Westbred Review, with some of the remaining benefits now flowing through. While we would have preferred to stay with the two tiers, the new three tier Westbred Bonus structure was implemented in January 2023 and sees higher Bonuses in metropolitan and provincial/country level racing for WA born horses from 2020 onwards. WASBA is still pursuing benefits for the existing broodmare pool.

WASBA requested a First Start Bonus and that has been delivered, another benefit coming through from our initiatives to assist breeders and racing owners. To the end of August that amounted to almost \$100,000. We are appreciative of RWWA listening and including this as an encouragement to owners to take their horses through to racing.

Epona Bonus WASBA also advocated for increases to the Epona Bonus in line with thoroughbreds and this has also been delivered by RWWA, commencing 1 January 2023, increasing to \$10,000 and giving owners not only a reason to race their fillies and mares but also some funds to breed from them when they retire from racing.

Harness Code Director Bob Fowler has provided tremendous support for these initiatives, which help all WA breeders – whether racing their own stock or selling.

- **Off The Track/ rehoming sponsorship:** WASBA has increased support for Off The Track (OTT) Westbreds and mares, with subsidies for Royal Show entries adding to the subsidies we already provide to SPPHAWA members who showcase our WA bred and mares at selected shows. WASBA is the naming rights sponsor for one of the major shows as well as sponsoring individual classes. These horses and their owners remain a critical part of our future and their success off the track is extremely important.

WASBA is advocating changes to the OTT conditions to better support our retired horses who don't meet the current "retirement standard". This will be an ongoing effort.

We do expect harness clubs and other organisations to make a bigger effort to support our OTT horses rather than expect RWWA to provide all the responses. WASBA organised an OTT parade on Derby night in 2022 to demonstrate how versatile our standardbreds are and how well they are being supported by their new owners. We want to see standardbreds at the forefront of those looking for their next horse, whether it be for pleasure or for competition. This requires a bigger effort from all those with the venues capable of promoting our retired horses in their life after racing. WASBA assisted the Kulin Bush Race Committee in encouraging nominations for a standardbred only race at their meet in October 2023 and this was achieved for the first time – it was a great success with the inaugural winner being 15yo Red Salute. It shows it can be done with proactive organisations.

- **Monthly News.** Our monthly newsletter continues to grow. We are covering as much international and eastern states news as we can, to provide relevant information for our breeders. The loss of other hardcopy publications has been particularly disappointing.
- **Owners Booklet.** Following strong representations from WASBA to increase promotional activities around harness, RWWA is in the process of producing an owner promotion booklet (similar to The Races booklet produced in 2022 for thoroughbreds) for harness. This will enable Eligible Bodies and Clubs to promote our product.
- **Awards:** Our 2023 Annual Awards Yearling Sale function was one of the best and we hope to repeat the same success in 2024. WASBA provide Awards for each sex and age group as well as Breeders of the Month, Breeder of the Year and other awards including providing a trophy and \$500 service fee voucher to members whose Westbred wins an open Group 1 race. WASBA provides all the Awards and makes a significant financial contribution to the running of the event, ensuring trophies for breeders are the equal of those provided by RWWA to owners at their annual awards.
- **Rewards and Presentations:** We continue to look for ways to revitalise aspects of the industry through reward and recognition. We continue to provide:
 - rug, garland and trophy for the \$30,000 WASBA Country Oaks (Bunbury);
 - trophies for the \$30,000 races - 4/5YO Harry Capararo Westbred Mares, Race For Roses and WASBA 4/5YO Mares;
 - rug garland, trophy and \$2,000 stakes subsidy for the \$14,000 races - WASBA Bob Humphries Memorial (Bunbury), WASBA King-Lethbridge (Pinjarra) and WASBA Virgil Queen Celebration (Northam).

For the past 9 months we have been engaging with RWWA to support new \$14,000 races at Albany and Narrogin, with these races likely to be for Westsired. That work is continuing with the aim of a positive response for next season;

 - trophy for the \$50,000 Kerry Clarke. We were pleased to see this race elevated to Group 3 status as a mares race.

All the above races were created by WASBA with the support of GPHR and RWWA officers of the day.

While we were saddened to lose the Kerry Clarke as a Westbred feature, its new role as a feature race for mares is a great compliment to its namesake. In lieu of the lost opportunity that the original race provided for Westbreds, RWWA has included some \$30,000 Restricted feature races for Westbred mares and combined fields;

 - Winning sashes and rosettes for the Westsired Finals;
 - \$1,500 in incentives for the Busselton Sweetheart Series.

For the second year, WASBA provided ten \$500 service fee vouchers to members who had purchased tickets in the WASBA Raffle or participated in the WASBA Stallion Tender. This proved very popular in the initial year and we are keen to support this going forward to provide members with tangible benefits for their membership and participation in our fund raising efforts.

We appreciate the support we have received from Gloucester Park, Bunbury, Northam, Busselton and Pinjarra clubs to continue our support for the industry.

All in all, WASBA provides over \$22,000 per year in direct support to the industry.

Current Status

Nationally, there have been some adverse results for breeding, with the Victorian numbers for mares served declining by around 20% and the Nutrien Melbourne Sale being a disaster for pacing fillies. This doesn't reflect well on recent national decisions or auger well for future national racing numbers. We were however pleased with some WA results. Our starter and winner numbers are positive, based on information up to the end of 2022.

- ① Statistics – the year in review For the September to August year, in line with the breeding season and our membership year, the change to the timing of the feature race calendar at the start of the 2021 calendar year has made comparisons difficult. Nevertheless the results are quite positive for the latest year, especially considering the smaller 2yo and 3yo crops racing in 2022/23. For year ended 31 August:

	2022/23		2021/22		2020/21
<u>WA bred horses:</u>					
Stakes earned	\$15.98M (55.1%)	↑	\$13.68M (55.0%)	↑	\$12.84M (54%)
Total Bonuses -	\$3.49M	↑	\$3,65M	↑	\$3.58M
Starters –	1061 (67.8%)		1059 (67.7%)		1021 (65.2%)
Wins –	1287 (60.1%)		1306 (60.4%)		1198 (56.4%)
<u>All Fillies and Mares:</u>					
Stakes earned	\$8.57M (29.6%)	↑	\$7.57M (30.5%)	↑	\$7.03M (29.6%)
Starters –	564 (36.1%)		558 (35.7%)		537 (34.3%)
Wins –	659 (30.8%)		670 (31.0%)		650 (30.6%)
Races	308 (14.4%)		306 (14.2%)		288 (13.6)
<u>Westbred Fillies and Mares:</u>					
Stakes earned	\$6.14M (21.2%)	↑	\$4.91M (19.7%)	↑	\$4.40M (18.5%)
Total Bonuses -	\$1.55M	↑	\$1.56M	↑	\$1,61M
Starters –	438 (28.0%)		426 (27.2%)		396 (25.3%)
Wins	471 (22.0%)		463 (21.4%)		414 (19.5%)

The percentages are the comparison with the total racing pool in WA

- ② Stallion Book limits and free returns – we will continue to advocate for the cap on stallion services to be exclusive of free returns and free returns to be subject to the provider/breeder negotiation, not HRA approval. It is clear that the limits have resulted in the most popular stallions being booked out early to the detriment of many small breeders and those needing to look for options for a return service. Many are choosing to wait a year or not breed.
- ③ The extension of the racing season to the end of the calendar year has given WA breeders an extra 4 months in which to earn bonuses. However, the impact on moving nearly all features to the end of the year has impacted racing numbers throughout the year and should be reviewed. It does appear though, that owners are more aware of the additional bonus opportunities in October to December, provided that races continue to be programmed.
- ④ The standalone WA handicapping system continues to cause concern, as does the national system. The suitability of the handicapping system is entirely dependent on the race program and it is here that the complaints appear. Some improvements have been made throughout the year, but the complexity of the conditions and the spread of classes does continue to be an issue for many just looking for races in which they can achieve.

Nevertheless our starters and winners from each crop have increased in recent years, and that suggests something is working.

There is heavy criticism of the national system, especially in the Murrilhy Report prepared for the Tasmanian government. A handicapping review has recently been completed in WA but we are not in favour of changing a system that is producing increases in winners and starters. It just needs more thought in the actual programming of races and with less “also eligible” conditions, which tend to pit a wide range of classes of horse in the same race with relatively predictable results.

We definitely want to see further encouragement in the race program to enable the mid level horses to be more supported with mini features or race series, as is happening in other parts of the harness world - particularly NSW and even the US. We oppose racing 2yos and 3yos together under any circumstances – the financial impact on owners and impact on the longevity of racing careers would be devastating. We would however like to see more 4yo and over races to ensure that group of horses remains viable in the long term.

- The earning levels of fillies and mares needs to continue to improve to encourage more mares, both into the racing system and once there, to continue racing. The disparity between males and females needs to be acknowledged and then addressed. While more mares earned over \$100,000, we want to see further improvements in the racing calendar that provides benefits for all tiers of horses, not just the elite level.
- 🕒 Epona Credits - over 300 mares earning breeding credits totalling \$386,000 and 74 owners made claims – a much better outcome than the previous year and a credit to RWWA for recognising the need to increase the maximum credits to \$10,000 per mare. If we can support mares racing longer as well as rewarding owners, it will make a healthier industry.
- 🕒 RWWA is continuing to undertake microchipping and the lower fees for those who forward their foaling registrations early means a good saving for breeders.
- 🕒 Stallion levy is in. It cant be determined which had the more negative impact – the stallion book limit or the stallion levy. Either way, while we have no objection to those wanting to participate in the national Slot race, it should never have been funded by breeders. It was ironic that it was won by a mare. We do not consider that the many and varied breeders of Australia will benefit from these races, or that more horses will be bred as a result.
- 🕒 The Trots WA Facebook is increasing their audience, and we welcome Sian Hughes back on board. The online TheTrotsWA publication is also benefiting from some excellent support from the team involved and should be acknowledged, although a hardcopy publication should never have ceased.
- 🕒 The Ladies of Racing/Pacing and Chasing events were summarily abandoned and replaced by the Western Trilogy functions. This decision fell well short of expectations, given the commitment of many women to the industry with little or no reward or pay and does not represent the right direction if you are wanting to engage with 50% of the population. RWWA did not listen to our numerous requests to reinstate the events.
- 🕒 RWWA's commitment to Off The Track, OTT Passports and retraining programs has been noteworthy. However, representation of standardbreds is lower than it should be, but can be increased with some changes to the conditions, as referred to earlier. This is important to breeders as broodmares are not currently eligible for retraining programs. These animals have been providing racing stock and should be able to receive some of the benefits that retired racing stock receive, or be supported in some other manner.

With the commencement of Cameron Brown in a new position as Head of Harness Racing and Special Projects at RWWA, and a number of reviews underway, there will be changes going forward. We will need to assess those changes as they occur, with the impact on breeding and on the racetrack unknown at this stage. We would welcome the opportunity to provide input into the decision making process rather than simply providing feedback on the decision.

Fundraising

It has been an interesting year in terms of fundraising. Some of our activities exceeded our expectations whereas others were less favourable.

Our fundraising supports our activities and if we fail to raise sufficient funds then we are unable to continue with all of our support activities.

We had great success with our 2023 Raffle, taking a significant chance to purchase a discounted service to champion stallion Bettors Delight for our annual stallion service raffle. We believed it was a necessary risk to provide impetus to breeders in a depressed market, but it did require us to increase the available tickets to match our outgoings. We greatly appreciate the support from Mark Hughes at Woodlands Stud in assisting us with the provision of the service.

We were also very appreciative of our regular sponsors who supported us on Breeders Stakes night, once again enabling us to raise valuable funds for our various initiatives. Allwood Stud

Farm, Budget Stockfeeds, Larkhill Vets, Milne Feeds, PSC Bloodstock Services, Ramsays Horse Transport and Australian Premium Feeds all provided support on the night.

Our stallion Tender, while providing valuable funds, was considerably less successful than previous years but we greatly appreciate the support provided by sponsors Alabar Farm, Allwood Stud, Westbred Pacing, Cobbitty Equine, KTC Bloodstock, Northern Rivers Equine/Llowalong Farms, Soho Standardbreds and Shanks Standardbreds.

While we aim to introduce two new races, it does mean that any loss of ability to raise funds does result in reduced capacity to provide those funds. Following the club expanding its fundraising to traditional breeding areas, we are discontinuing the financial support for the WASBA King-Lethbridge Mares Pace at Pinjarra, with the club agreeing to maintain the stakes and WASBA to continue to provide the rug, trophy and garland.

I would especially like to thank Mark Hughes (Woodlands Stud), Brett Coffey (Alabar Farms), and Bob Fowler (Allwood Stud) for their support during the 2022/2023 breeding season.

Issues and Opportunities

There has been little progress in a number of areas where we want to see resolution. While there have been a number of small improvements, each step is very slow and we believe a more committed response to solving some of the problems would significantly improve the perception of the industry amongst its participants. We look to newly appointed Head of Harness Racing Cameron Brown to provide more rapid pathways.

We remain committed to:

- ❖ Improving outcomes for fillies and mares and their owners
- ❖ Ensuring the race program is supportive of all levels
- ❖ An Epona type bonus for broodmares with successful race progeny
- ❖ Rescinding the rule that bans mares from racing or breeding when they have elevated testosterone levels as a result of ovarian tumours.
- ❖ Continued support for the use of Regumate and similar products in racing mares
- ❖ Removing the rule restricting free returns to the same mare
- ❖ Return of the rotational Inter Dominion to support the many breeders and owners in every state who can compete in that series
- ❖ Providing information, advice and support for breeders
- ❖ Supporting national outcomes that are in the best interests of WA.

WASBA will continue to focus on delivering the right support to the industry at every level to progress harness racing. The majority of breeders race the horses they breed and providing incentives for these breeders is just as important as supporting those breeders who provide yearlings for new owners at the sales. We will continue to follow through all aspects of racing to ensure our breeders and owner breeders have a future with their horses. We do need more participants to step up and assist.

Recognition

WASBA is committed to *“promoting, assisting and encouraging breeders and the sustainable breeding of standardbreds in WA”*.

The Committee puts in considerable effort to meet the above commitment, and I would like to sincerely thank them for their support of myself and Vice President and Treasurer Howard King in our endeavours to carry out our roles.

I would particularly like to thank Howard for his assistance with all the WASBA fundraising, managing the accounts and many other activities despite not always been in the best of health. WASBA member and Facebook coordinator Denise Trobe had also assisted at every turn, despite her significant health issues.

Our representative on the RWWA Board, Bob Fowler, has worked tirelessly for harness over many years in what is very much an unrewarded role. It will take a special person to replace him when that time is due.

Our workload is ever increasing and it really is time for others to come forward and assist the hardworking WASBA Committee in their endeavours.

This is an entertainment industry. All entertainment costs money, but this is one of the most rewarding pursuits you can be involved in and is one of the few entertainment industries where you can, if the stars align, actually get some money back for what you outlay. There is almost no other industry which offers the opportunity for a return in doing something you can enjoy with friends and family and animals that you love, that additionally can give you the thrill of winning.

In Closing

As always, the AGM is an opportunity to reflect on the past year, to identify areas to progress and to reset. Members have the opportunity to question and challenge, and show their support.

We welcome input from our members and encourage all members to consider whether they can contribute to the WASBA Committee by nominating for a position. Perhaps next year will be the right time for that. Thank you to everyone who attended this AGM.

We would like to see all racing administrators work with breeding organisations and breeders in general to produce an industry that we can all be proud of and recommend to our friends. Transparency and collaboration are fundamental to that.

No breeding = No Horses = No Industry.

It is a very simple equation. Mare owners need the right encouragement to produce the animals of the future. It is up to administrators to work with participants, to be innovative and provide the right incentives.

Help us to make harness racing a success for you. My final word, remains true every year:

"It is important the industry understands the correlation between a strong breeding sector and an increase in the number of Standardbred owners in harness racing. The principle of supply and demand means attracting more owners can play a significant role in increasing future foal crops, which will attract bigger fields and create a product more attractive to punters."



Everybody benefits from a strong local breeding industry

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WASBA RACE WINNERS

2023 WASBA Country Oaks – 3yo **FLAMETREE**

2023 WASBA Allwood Stud Virgil Queen Celebration Westbred Mares 4yo **DAME VALOUR**

2023 WASBA 4YO/5YO Mares 4yo **CYCLONE CHARLOTTE NZ**

2023 WASBA Breeders Stakes – 4yo **TAKING THE MIKI**

2023 the Kerry Clarke - 4yo **WONDERFUL TO FLY**

2023 WASBA King-Lethbridge Westbred Mares – 5yo **BETTORS DESTROYA**

2023 4YO/5YO Harry Capararo Westbred Mares 4yo **ACHARNE GIRL**

2023 Busselton Sweetheart Series winner – 4yo **HOPE**

2022 WASBA Bob Humphries Memorial Westbred Mares – 4yo **CHRYSOPRASE**

WASBA AWARD WINNERS 2022

2YO Male

NEVER ENDING (Sweet Lou USA) 594 points \$274,485 6 starts for 6 wins, 4 metro, 3 Group 1 (Pearl, Westbred Classic, Golden Slipper) **Breeder Steve Johnson**

2YO Filly

ZEPHYRA (Sweet Lou USA) 425 points \$204,709 8 starts for 6 wins (4 metro), 2 places, 2 Group 1 (Diamond, Westbred Classic) **Breeders Marie and Jesse Moore**

3YO Male

TRICKY MIKI (Always B Miki USA) 502 points \$231,741 10 starts for 6 wins (4 metro), 3 places, 2 Group 1 (WA Derby, Westbred Classic), 1 Group 2 (Western Gateway). **Breeder Steve Johnson**

3YO Filly

WONDERFUL TO FLY (Fly Like An Eagle) 588 points Westsired \$252,674 18 starts for 12 wins (10 metro), 3 places, 1 Group 1 (Westbred Classic), 3 Group 2 (Sales Classic, APG, Diamond), 1 Group 3 (Country Oaks) **Breeder Kevin and Annette Charles**

4YO and over Horse or Gelding

LAVRA JOE (Roll With Joe USA) 399 points \$184,373 18 starts for 8 wins (8 metro), 3 places, two Group 2 (4YO Championship, August Cup), 3 Group 3 (Pinjarra 4YO Classic, Past Presidents Cup, Howard Porter Memorial) **Breeder Kevin and Annette Charles**

Mare

AMERICAN ARMA (American Ideal USA) 156 points \$91,106 22 starts for 5 wins (3 metro), 7 places, one Group 2, (APG) **Breeder Kemprust Pty Ltd (Jim Currie)**

Broodmare of the Year

HARRIET ELISABETH (Modern Art USA) 3 starters, 2 winners, 10 wins incl 8 metro and 13 places, \$303,625 **Breeder Steve Johnson**

Breeder of the Year

K J F and A G Charles, 50 starters, 37 winners of 102 races, 158 places \$1,139,460, plus \$160,000 as managing breeder of other horses. Two Group 1s and 11 other Group or Listed races

Open Group 1 Winning Westbreds

Tricky Miki (Always B Miki (USA) Breeder Steve Johnson – WA Derby
Never Ending (Sweet Lou USA) Breeder Steve Johnson – Golden Slipper
Taking The Miki (Always B Miki USA) Breeder Patrician Park – WA Oaks

Breeders of the Month

MONTH	WINNER	BREEDER
January 2022	SONIC SUZY	P C (Patrick) O'Boyle
February 2022	SWINGBAND	Karnup Racing Pty Ltd
March 2022	INFINITE SIGN	Lancaster Lodge
April 2022	VULTAN TIN	P J and D A Costello
May 2022	NEWSLETTER	M J (Mike) Howie
June 2022	LITTLE DARLING	B J, L E and J R Howlett, Geographe Tree Services P/L
July 2022	AUGUST MOON	H A (Harry) Capararao
August 2022	NEVER ENDING	S A (Steve) Johnson
September 2022	STRAUNY	W P (Wayne) Morrison
October 2022	TAKING THE MIKI	Patrician Park
November 2022	SHOWPONY	N A Turvey, D R Young, T Sermon, P Ensel
December 2022	ELLI MIRANDO	K D and G G Strahan, G A and V S McRae