

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STANDARDBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION Inc.  
(WASBA)

55TH Annual General Meeting Friday 29 November 2024

## *President's Report*

### **Welcome**

Welcome to the 55TH 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 confidence for the future.

### **Achievements**

It has been an interesting year, probably characterised by uncertainty. However, there have been positives, including the improved 2023 foal crop. There have been some gains in other areas that we hope will provide some optimism for the future. We will continue to promote additional benefits for our breeders and put forward any initiatives that we believe will assist our breeders and the industry going forward. For our most recently completed membership year:

- **Westbred Bonus:** WASBA was instrumental in the improvements to the benefits implemented in January 2023 that sees 3 tiers of Bonuses depending on the race level – although our preferred option was for the retention of the two-level system. Providing bonuses for local horses is a cheap way of providing stakes increases while at the same time supporting “WA first”. Bonus payments for 23/24 were \$3.8 million, about a 9% increase on the previous year. The First Start bonus payments, requested by WASBA, increased by over 30% to \$129,500. Translated, that means 259 WA bred horses had their first lifetime start in that period.

**Epona Bonus** The increased bonus, (to \$10,000) that commenced in January 2023, is in its infancy, with the greatest benefit to come in future years as mares work towards their cap. With the range of stallion fees from \$2,000 upwards, with most quality sires available for up to \$6,000, the increased value of Epona is allowing breeders to make more comfortable choices with their breeding arrangements. We are continuing to work on what we believe are very cost-effective incentives for the broodmare pool, that will provide continuing value to successful broodmares.

**We believe the our Bonus system, including Epona, First Win and First Start, is one of the best systems in Australia, rewarding breeders and owners who support the WA product. We believe that RWWA could do more to promote it.**

- **Off The Track/ rehoming sponsorship:** I am very proud of WASBA's efforts in the Off The Track (OTT) rehoming sphere, where we provide event sponsorship for standardbreds. Working in partnership with the Standardbred Pleasure and Performance Horse Association of WA (SPPHAWA), WASBA also provides entry subsidies for Westbreds and mares for the Royal Show and events run by SPPHAWA. WASBA has a great working relationship with this organisation, one of the only organisations in WA that actively supports standardbreds in their after careers. Providing opportunities for our horses in their second careers is going to be fundamental to the community support for racing.

WASBA is continuing to advocate for change to the OTT conditions to better support our retired horses. This is an ongoing effort.

We would like to see other organisations and clubs do more in this area as efforts to date appear to be lacking.

- **Monthly News.** Our monthly newsletter is getting bigger, as are the costs of postage. We will continue to provide newsy items that we think our members will appreciate while at the same time keeping everyone informed about changes or opportunities that

we can identify. The loss of hardcopy publications, or even other pdf publications, continues to be disappointing.

- **Awards:** Our 2024 Annual Awards Yearling Sale function (for the 2023 racing year) was another success and helps to promote the weekend sale while at the same time recognising our successful breeders. Our industry relies on our breeders. We want to ensure that they are recognised. While WASBA provides all the awards, WASBA and APG jointly fund the catering and other costs associated with the event, so it is a significant contribution by WASBA.
- **Recognition:** We continue to support our WA product and mares in general, and those owners who invest in them, by providing additional stakes and other incentives to further encourage breeding and racing of that group. We provided:
  - rug, garland and trophy for the \$30,000 WASBA Country Oaks (Bunbury) and our 3 established \$14,000 races, the WASBA Bob Humphries Memorial (Bunbury), WASBA King-Lethbridge (Pinjarra) and WASBA Virgil Queen Celebration (Northam).
  - \$2,000 stakes subsidy to lift the stakes to \$14,000 for two of the races.
  - rug, garland and trophy for the \$50,000 Kerry Clarke, in recognition of our former President, the late Kerry Clarke.
  - Winning sashes and rosettes for the Westsired Finals.
  - trophies for the WASBA initiated \$30,000 races – 4YO/5YO Harry Capararo Westbred Mares, Race For Roses and WASBA 4YO/5YO Mares.
  - \$1,500 in incentives for the Busselton Sweetheart Series.
  - Provided ten random draw \$500 service fee vouchers to members who had either purchased tickets in the WASBA Raffle or participated in the WASBA Stallion Tender.

We worked collaboratively with the Narrogin Club to create two feature \$14,000 races, the WASBA Tribute to Color Glo Westbred Mares and the Narrogin Salute to Red Vicar Westsired Pace for 4YO and over. WASBA provided the rug, garland and trophy for both races and a stakes subsidy for the mares race. Both races attracted a good response and WASBA will add the Color Glo to our sponsored races, while Narrogin will continue with the Westsired race, along with providing the stakes supplement.

We appreciate the support we have received from Gloucester Park, Bunbury, Northam, Busselton, Pinjarra and Narrogin for the running of our events in support of the industry.

All in all, WASBA is providing over \$30,000 per year in support to the industry.

**We would like to see at least one \$14,000 race every month, restricted to WA bred horses, and will work with RWWA to achieve this over time.**

### ***National position***

Nationally, breeding has suffered from factors created both internally and externally, with the hardest hit state being the biggest breeding state. This is likely to impact many future years.

It is imperative to improve the prospects of breeders right across the country to ensure we can build a viable industry. Clubs and administrators exist for the purpose of promoting and growing the industry, and while we all have a part to play, there have been decisions made that are not in the best interests of the long term future of our industry.

Particularly, we see the need to grow the return for owners of fillies and mares. This is achievable with some foresight, appropriate strategies and planning.

While WA has been less impacted by events on the east coast, it is likely that we will be affected by national decisions going forward. We need to ensure that decisions made nationally are in the best interests of our industry, and especially the island state of WA.

- 🕒 Stallion Book limits and free returns – In a change to the rules in April 2024, HRA amended the rules relating to free returns following significant lobbying from WASBA and other breeding bodies, with free returns now additional to the stallion cap. However, the impediment to free returns remains in that it can only relate to the same mare and must be approved by HRA. This remains unacceptable and inappropriate from a welfare and breeding standpoint. We will continue to advocate for change;
- 🕒 the application of the stallion book limits has produced the expected result of the preferred stallions being booked out well in advance. This is difficult to resolve, as obviously breeders with large numbers of mares are likely to be preferred over small breeders. Many breeders are waiting a year, or not breeding at all, and the financial climate over the last 12 months has exacerbated the problem. Competition on the track is intense and breeders need to have confidence in the stallion they choose.
- 🕒 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. This remains a positive, but a review of placement of juvenile races, both feature and other, needs to occur to maximise the racing numbers over designated periods, as well as provide owners and trainers with a better view of upcoming racing opportunities in general and lead up races.
- 🕒 The standalone WA handicapping system is effectively gone. The new racing program commences on 1 January 2025. The eastern states version of the national handicapping system has not worked and is constantly being updated. We look forward to our version of the national rating system, through much better programming, being much smarter and more suitable for both racing owners and those choosing to bet on the product.

We hope that the gains made in starters, winners etc continues to follow the increasing trend evident over the last few years. We are particularly looking for a better product for mares to encourage them to remain in the racing system.

We are also looking for innovation in programming for the mid-level horses to create better outcomes. We do not want to see 2yos and 3yos racing together because breeding has been discouraged from the lack of financial return from their racing stock, resulting in a decline in breeding numbers. Even 3yos against 4yos can be unbalanced if the program isn't right.

- 🕒 Stallion Levy . We remain committed to the removal of the stallion levy unless any monies so collected are specifically targeted for breeding. We would support a national breeding incentive scheme where we could see benefit to breeders and where it was the result of a transparent and genuinely collaborative approach.
- 🕒 Slot Races. We have no objection to those wanting to participate in the Slot races, if the funding is obtained from external sponsorship, slot holders, or is very widely spread. These races have minimal engagement with the community beyond a week or fortnight.
- 🕒 The Inter Dominion We absolutely want this series to return to its former splendour and be rotated across states and New Zealand. Results taken from our survey, done at the time of the impending stallion levy, genuinely supported the series in this form. It's a people's race and we all want to be involved. We have proposed mechanisms that would fund a substantial portion of the stakes, with just a little bit of work required from administrators and sponsors.

### **WA position**

WA is isolated by distance from most other jurisdictions, which means we do need to operate in a model that best fits WA, while not looking like a black sheep. WASBA has appreciated the opportunity to work with Cameron Brown who was appointed in September 2023 to Head of Harness Racing and Special Projects. We certainly want to continue working together towards better outcomes for our focus group.

We see huge positives with the collaboration that is occurring in New Zealand between the new CEO and the industry and the supportive structure in place. Likewise, we believe we need to be genuinely involved in decisions, not just consulted afterwards for a comment.

- 🕒 Microchipping RWWA is continuing to undertake microchipping and the lower fees for those who forward their foaling registrations early means a good saving for breeders. With the new online system the office licensing and registration workload has been reduced. We believe fees should also be reduced. At this time, this has not been agreed.
- 🕒 The Trots WA Facebook disappeared and was replaced with Racing WA – Harness. We do not agree with this change to fit the Racing WA model. Neither do we agree that there is only a Twitter/X page for thoroughbred steward notices, not harness, when they are the same staff. The word “racing” to the community does not include our harness racing, harness racing is never referred to colloquially as that, it is referred to as “the Trots”. Marketing and promotion of harness does not give the right impression to the community, they simply don't understand what harness racing is, and there is insufficient marketing of our product.
- 🕒 The Ladies of Racing/Pacing and Chasing events. I referred to this in my last report. The recent death of a wonderful lady - Julie Doble from the Bunbury Trotting Club - who was a recipient of one of these awards, highlights the fact that removing these awards after just 3 years was disrespectful to the ladies who received an award and made winning the award irrelevant. You cannot find any reference to these winners or the awards or the background of the winners, anywhere on the Racing WA site and the awards have been trivialised.
- 🕒 RWWA's commitment to Off The Track Is noteworthy. However, the input the industry has to the processes is inadequate and many participants are finding it doesn't work for them, or are frustrated that they cannot take advantage of what is being offered under current conditions. WASBA would like to see an appropriately selected working party, including industry nominations, in developing the necessary processes.
- 🕒 Statistics – the year in review (September to August)

The results show an increase in stakes paid, in bonuses and in starters and winners. We are likely to hit headwinds in the future due to smaller foal crops evident from 2019. For year ended 31 August:

	2023/24	2022/23	2021/22	2020/21
<u>WA bred horses:</u>				
Stakes earned	17.14M (57.3%)	↑ \$15.98M (55.1%)	↑ \$13.68M (55.0%)	↑ \$12.84M (54%)
Total Bonuses -	\$3.81M	↑ \$3.49M	↑ \$3.65M	\$3.58M
Starters –	1088 (69.1%)	↑ 1061 (67.8%)	↑ 1059 (67.7%)	1021 (65.2%)
Wins –	1354 (61.2%)	↑ 1287 (60.1%)	↑ 1306 (60.4%)	1198 (56.4%)
<u>All Fillies and Mares:</u>				
Stakes earned	\$8.98 (30.0%)	↑ \$8.57M (29.6%)	↑ \$7.57M (30.5%)	↑ \$7.03M (29.6%)
Starters –	572 (36.3%)	↑ 564 (36.1%)	↑ 558 (35.7%)	537 (34.3%)
Wins –	675 (30.5%)	↑ 659 (30.8%)	↑ 670 (31.0%)	650 (30.6%)
Races	362 (16.4%)	↑ 308 (14.4%)	↑ 306 (14.2%)	288 (13.6)
<u>Westbred Fillies and Mares:</u>				
Stakes earned	\$6.61M (22.1%)	↑ \$6.14M (21.2%)	↑ \$4.91M (19.7%)	↑ \$4.40M (18.5%)
Total Bonuses -	\$1.71M	↑ \$1.55M	↑ \$1.56M	\$1,61M
Starters –	457 (29.0%)	↑ 438 (28.0%)	↑ 426 (27.2%)	396 (25.3%)
Wins	504 (22.8%)	↑ 471 (22.0%)	↑ 463 (21.4%)	414 (19.5%)

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

Analysing results over the last three years, we see improvement in starters and returns.

- 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 the general pool of males and females in both ability and length of racing career needs to be addressed. While those special mares can earn good money, they are not what most people race and breed from. The racing calendar should be able to provide for even fields across all tiers of horses if the racing numbers resulting from breeding can be kept at a suitable level.
- ❶ Epona Credits 310 mares earned a total of \$403,000 in breeding credits and 72 owners made claims. With the Epona cap being increased we believe owners may delay sending the mare to stud if they believe she can earn both stakes and breeding credits. This is a good outcome and should result in better opportunity for the mare when she retires from racing.
- WA Harness Racing: Issues Paper - Timeslots and Venues. Unfortunately timing is everything. The request for feedback on the paper, on the back of the lack of information on the proposed handicapping system workshops, created great uncertainty in the industry and adversely impacted the breeding intentions of many of our breeders. We would hope that more consideration can be given to appropriate timing of such important documents to help alleviate the uncertainty and loss of confidence that this creates.

### **Fundraising**

It has been an interesting year in terms of fundraising. As expected, raising funds has become more difficult and we will need to consider how best to deliver our benefits to the industry if that situation continues.

When we fail to raise sufficient funds, we are unable to continue with all of our support activities.

Our 2024 raffle result was not as successful as the 2023 Raffle. However, in the current economic climate, and with the uncertainty created by the timing of some events, we were pleasantly surprised. Our raffle prize, Sweet Lou USA, was one of only 3 stallions who even now are fully booked for the season. The economic climate and the diminished confidence of the industry made for a difficult period. We expect the 2025 foal crop to be lower than previous years. We greatly appreciate the support from Mark Hughes at Woodlands Stud in assisting us with the provision of the service to Sweet Lou at a discounted rate.

Our regular sponsors supported us on Breeders Stakes night and enabled us to raise valuable funds. Allwood Stud Farm, APG, Budget Stockfeeds, Grange Bloodstock Insurance, Larkhill Vets, Milne Feeds and Ramsays Horse Transport all provided support on the night.

Our stallion Tender was later this year due to timing difficulties with obtaining stallions. We did raise valuable funds but despite the quality of the stallions it was a more difficult this year. We greatly appreciate the support provided by sponsors Alabar, Allwood Stud, Westbred Pacing, Llowalong Farms, Tourello Standardbreds and Woodlands Stud.

I would especially like to thank Mark Hughes (Woodlands Stud), Brett Coffey (Alabar Farms), and Bob Fowler (Allwood Stud) for their support during the 2023/2024 breeding season.

### **Issues and Opportunities**

We want to see results in a number of areas.

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ 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 support to the industry where it is needed. Apart from yearling sale vendors, most breeders race their horses while they have confidence in the industry. We want to ensure that breeders have that confidence and the industry can prosper. We do need more participants to step up and assist us with this process.

### **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. I would like to thank all the Committee members who have contributed during the year and thank them for their support of myself and Vice President and Treasurer Howard King in our endeavours to carry out our roles.

Two particularly huge efforts are involved with the annual raffle and the success we have had could not have been accomplished without the fantastic efforts of Treasurer Howard King and WASBA member and Facebook coordinator Denise Trobe.

Committee member Peter McAllister resigned his position late in the year. Peter was instrumental in developing the new WASBA Constitution and his business acumen will be missed. We thank Peter for his valuable contribution.

I would also like to thank our representative on the RWWA Board, Bob Fowler, who has the thankless task of working for an industry with competing interests. His efforts are usually behind the scenes, and we aren't often aware of how difficult the task is.

Our increasing workload is taking a toll on our Committee and we do need support from our members – responding to requests for feedback, providing ideas on solutions to issues and other general support that would assist us to carry out our role on their behalf.

Being involved in the industry, particularly breeding where you can watch a small foal grow into a champion, or just a lovely animal, is one of the most rewarding pursuits you can have. It is an entertainment industry and entertainment does cost money. We just need to work together to spread the word and make it even more enjoyable for more people, whether they be new or old friends or family.

### **In Closing**

The AGM is a legal obligation, but it's also for members to see and hear what their organisation is doing for them, and an opportunity to participate in determining how the industry will progress.

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. Thank you to everyone who attended this AGM.

No breeding = No Horses = No Industry.

Is a very fundamental and true statement. Mare owners need the right encouragement to produce the animals of the future. When you diminish the breeding for one year, you diminish

the racing for every year that those horses would have raced. The reverse is also true.

The industry does not belong to administrators, it belongs to us, the participants. Real transparency and collaboration is fundamental to the industry progressing.

*“A positive outlook is critical to a strong breeding sector and attracting new owners to the industry, which in turn encourages a stronger breeding sector to supply owners with the horses they need. Increasing future foal crops enables the provision of more even fields, which creates a more attractive product for investors of all types – breeders, owners and bettors.”*

*Everybody benefits from a strong local breeding industry*

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN STANDARDBRED BREEDERS ASSOCIATION INC  
PO BOX 3237 EAST PERTH WA, 6892

PH 0447 053 040 ; EMAIL [info@wasba.com.au](mailto:info@wasba.com.au)

FACEBOOK <https://www.facebook.com/WesternAustralianStandardbredBreedersAssociation>

[www.wasba.com.au](http://www.wasba.com.au)

## WASBA SPONSORS

<b>ALABAR BLOODSTOCK</b> Koyuga, VIC	Brett Coffey (03) 5859 2201 liz@alabar.com.au www.alabar.com.au	<b>LARKHILL VETS</b> Baldivis, WA	Dr Heather Stewart-Rowe 9524 3838 equinestaff@larkhillvets.com.au www.larkhillvets.com.au
<b>ALLWOOD STUD FARM</b> Bullsbrook, WA	Michael Holtham 0421 331 586 bookings@allwoodstud.com.au www.allwoodstud.com.au	<b>LLOWALONG FARMS</b> Kyabram Vic	Kath McIntosh 0427 497 429 (03) 5852 2845 llovalongfarms@nrequine.com.au www.llovalongfarms.com.au
<b>AUSTRALIAN PACING GOLD</b> Kallangur, QLD	Anthony Essex 0429 955 031 anthony@apgold.com.au www.apgold.com.au	<b>MILNE FEEDS</b> Welshpool, WA	Michelle Meylan 0429 107 790 info@milne.com.au www.milne.com.au
<b>BELLS PACING</b> Baskerville, WA	Tiffany & Ryan 0423 381 916 bellspacingstable@hotmail.com Facebook @BellsPacingStable	<b>RAMSAYS HORSE TRANSPORT</b> Ascot, WA	Paul Ramsay 9277 5779 info@ramsayshorsetransport.com.au www.ramsayshorsetransport.com.au
<b>BUDGET STOCKFEEDS</b> Oakford, WA	Ashley McPhail 9397 1659 sales@budgetstockfeeds.com.au Facebook @budget.stockfeeds	<b>TOURELLO STANDARDBREDS</b> Sheffield, Tas	Kerrie Hymers 0412 287 024 info@tourellostandardbreds.com.au Facebook @TourelloStandardbreds
<b>GRANGE BLOODSTOCK SERVICES</b> South Perth, WA	Duran Carter 0413 056 364 duran@grangeinsurance.com.au www.grangeinsurance.com.au	<b>WESTBRED PACING</b> West Coolup, WA	Kellie Simmonds 0435 059 777 admin@westbredpacing.com www.westbredpacing.com
<b>KTC BLOODSTOCK</b> Hopeland, WA	Kody Charles 0413 669 474kody@ktcbloodstock.com.au www.ktcbloodstock.com.au	<b>WOODLANDS STUD</b> Papakura New Zealand	Mark Hughes 0451 650 707 0011 64 292 8250 mark@woodlandsstud.co.nz www.woodlandsstud.co.nz