

Media Release

New Whip Rules to commence 1 December 2015

Letter from the Racing Australia Chairman sent to all Jockeys today

The AJA has informed Racing Australia of the resolutions from meetings that took place at race meetings last Saturday on the issue of the new whip rules. Essentially, the resolutions relate to two issues; first, an alleged lack of consultation and, secondly, the decision itself to abolish the distinction between forehand and backhand with 5 strikes only before the 100 metres.

Let me address each issue in turn:

1. Consultation

Racing Australia is a national regulatory body of all 8 State and Territory Principal Racing Authorities, and now incorporates the Australian Racing Board (ARB), the Australian Stud Book and RISA.

Racing Australia's principal activity is as a national rule maker where, amongst other things, it acts as a guardian on behalf of the Australian horse racing industry on matters such as integrity, participant safety and animal welfare.

Please note the timeline relating to consideration of changes to the whip rules:

- 2 February 2015 – Racing Victoria (RV) submitted a Whip Reform Discussion Paper to Racing Australia.
- 27 February 2015 – Submission received from AJA proposing a trial whereby the use of the whip in a backhand manner be conducted.
- 10 April 2015 – the RV Discussion Paper was considered by the Board for the first time together with the AJA submission. No decisions were made. Instead, the Board decided to refer the paper to all Principal Racing Authorities asking them to bring their viewpoints to the July meeting of the Board.

- 12 July 2015 – a submission was received from the AJA opposing any changes to the whip rules and proposing a new effort be made by stewards to properly enforce the current rule.
- 23 July 2015 – The Board considered the RV Discussion Paper in depth. The AJA attended the Board meeting in person. Upon the AJA delegation leaving the meeting, the issues were discussed at length. The Board had a disposition to a position, but decided that Directors should take their time before making a final position. Directors would consider the matter over the weekend and decide the issue by circular resolution on Tuesday 28 July.
- 28 July 2015 – Racing Australia issued a press release announcing it had resolved to make changes to the whip rules effective the 1st December, 2015.
- 10 September 2015 – the whip rules were again discussed at the Racing Australia Board meeting. The opposition by the AJA to the new rules was noted. The stewards provided guidelines to be applied at their discretion to ensure a consistent approach to the enforcement of the new rules.
- 6 October 2015 – A submission from the AJA was received seeking deferment of the new whip rules for 12 months beyond the announced commencement date of the 1st December, 2015.
- 16 October 2015 – A specially convened meeting of the Board of Racing Australia was held to consider the AJA's new submission. However, the Board reaffirmed its 23rd July, 2015 resolution.
- 17 November 2015 – A submission (Fact Sheet) was received from the AJA with resolutions calling for a deferment of the 1 December commencement date and a working party be established to review the rule.
- 18 November 2015 – Racing Australia Directors considered the latest AJA submission and reaffirmed their original decision.

Under the circumstances, I believe that Racing Australia has consulted adequately and fairly considered the submissions from the AJA. I believe that the AJA mistakenly believes that we have not been consultative when, in fact, it is just that we have not been persuaded to the AJA's view on the matter.

I do not believe that Racing Australia is being 'heavy-handed' on this or any other matter. It is simply exerting leadership in protecting the racing industry from external attack and modernising the rules to reflect society's expectations. We want racing to retain its independence and its position as a mainstream sport, in what is now a very competitive environment.

As you might expect, with the input of the various racing authorities across the nation, Racing Australia has something of a helicopter view of the risks and threats to our sport and we are working assiduously on the industry's behalf to create the circumstances where the racing industry can grow for the benefit of all participants.

Often participant groups such as jockeys, trainers, breeders and owners look simply at their own short term interests. This is understandable and they are entitled to put the interests of their membership first on most issues, but it doesn't mean that Racing Australia has to follow suit. As a national regulatory body our remit is far wider than that. Racing Australia cannot and does not act in the interests of any one sector or favour one group of stakeholders over another. It consults widely but eventually must make decisions in the best interests of the industry as a whole.

2. The need for the whip rule change

Since the introduction of the 2009 reforms, riders have become increasingly proficient at whipping in the backhand manner. Many backhand strikes can be equated in force with forehand strikes.

Australia's current whip rules are not best international practice when benchmarked against other major racing jurisdictions.

Racing is accountable for the highest standards of animal welfare in line with community standards. Community standards require a new regime of whip usage which is tailored towards principles of horsemanship rather than punishment. Australia has an international reputation for leading the world on animal welfare issues and we want to maintain it.



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In summary, every aspect of the AJA's position has been considered over several months. We respect the right of the AJA to disagree with Racing Australia's final decision, but we do not accept that there has been a lack of consultation. More importantly, we believe that the changes to the whip rules will serve the best interests of the industry now and into the future.

Regards,

John Messara AM
Chairman
Racing Australia Limited

19 November 2015

End.

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