

Public want to see jumps racing banned

Thoroughbred SA chair completely out-of-touch with community

A huge drop in crowd numbers attending the Monday race meeting at the Oakbank Easter Racing Carnival points to a huge lack of public support for jumps races.

Following the devastating death of Wheeler Fortune on Saturday at Oakbank, a crowd of just 10,000 turned out for the Monday race meeting. Just five years ago in 2012, nearly 48,000 people attended the Monday races.

Paul Stevenson, RSPCA South Australia Chief Executive Officer, said this dramatic drop in crowd numbers demonstrate that Racing Minister Leon Bignell's comments on Sunday that jumps racing is 'barbaric' and has no place in the 21st century are reflective of community sentiment on this issue.

"Racing Minister Bignell has shown much-needed moral leadership on this serious animal welfare issue and has clearly communicated his lack of support for this cruel and outdated 'sport'," said Mr Stevenson.

"Comments from Thoroughbred Racing SA chair Frances Nelson that removing jumps races from Oakbank would 'destroy' the carnival, demonstrate how out of touch Ms Nelson is with community sentiment on the issue.

"The results of a poll in today's *Advertiser* show that nearly three quarters of the 5,224 respondents support a ban on jumps racing.

"The high risk of injury and death to a horse competing in a jumps race makes jumps racing unacceptable to RSPCA on animal welfare grounds, and clearly, unacceptable to much of the general public.

"The Oakbank Carnival is a cultural icon and no doubt South Australians want to support it. However, out-dated, out-of-touch attitudes like those of Ms Nelson, clinging to relics of the past, is clearly killing the Oakbank Easter Carnival.

"To witness horses falling, suffering catastrophic injuries like Wheeler Fortune's, and

being euthanised on the track is not what parents want to take their children to see at picnic races.

“If Thoroughbred Racing SA simply accepted that community attitudes had moved on, and acted to replace jumps races, then the families and the crowds would return,” Mr Stevenson said.

A 2006 University of Melbourne study found that a horse competing in a jumps race is 19 times more likely to die compared to a horse competing in a flats race. South Australia has long campaigned against jumps racing due to the high risk of injury and death to horses who are required to clear obstacles in a pack at full speed, over long distances.

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