

Harness Racing SA dancing around national whips ban

Harness Racing SA seems intent on keeping our State in the dark ages

RSPCA is concerned that Harness Racing South Australia has indicated an intention to sidestep a commitment to cease using whips in harness racing from 1st September 2017.

In a bold and progressive unanimous decision applauded by the public and animal welfare groups, Harness Racing Australia announced in December that Australia will become the first country in the world to voluntarily ban the use of whips in harness racing, taking affect from this September.

However, in an industry notice issued earlier this month, Harness Racing SA (HRSA) has indicated it may back away from the ban and instead, is trialling novel ways to continue hitting horses with whips, including using ‘pads’ on the horse’s rump and restricting drivers ‘wrist action’.

Dr Rebekah Evers, RSPCA South Australia Animal Welfare Advocate, says that finding ways to undermine the national decision and keep hitting horses suggests that South Australian harness racing owners, drivers and trainers really don’t care about horse welfare.

“HRSA’s announcement flies in the face of the consistent message from the community, which is that people don’t want to see horses being whipped,” Dr Evers said.

“We’re urging the public to keep the pressure on HRSA and take action - [tell HRSA](#) you want the whipping ban fully implemented from September 1 like the rest of Australia.

“HRSA is the only state harness-racing body to launch these actions to undermine the ban. Decisions like this are keeping South Australia in the dark ages - it’s embarrassing, especially as we are one of only two States that is also refusing to end jumps racing, even after a death during the Oakbank Easter Racing Carnival that horrified the public.”

Recent research shows that of those people that do watch and/or bet on racing in South Australia, an overwhelming 89% will continue to do so if whipping is not permitted. This is the strongest

majority (along with WA) of all major states.

“We understand the change will be a difficult adjustment for some drivers and trainers, but banning whips in harness racing is in the best interests of horse welfare and the vast majority of the public support it,” said Dr Evers.

“We urge HRSA to direct its energies toward guiding the harness racing industry and making important decisions that will not only improve horse welfare, but the image of their industry.”

RSPCA is opposed to the use of all whips in racing due to the unnecessary and unjustified pain and distress they inflict on horses.

Breakthrough findings of independent research commissioned by RSPCA Australia released this month found that three out of four Australians are opposed to whips in racing, and of those who watch or bet on horse racing, 87 per cent say they will continue to do so if rules do not allow horses to be whipped.

Visit www.rspca.org.au/campaign/harness-racing-south-australia for more information.

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