

PERTH RACING — BELMONT PARK

1264. Mr M.P. Murray to the Minister for Racing and Gaming:

I refer to Perth Racing's 2013 Belmont Park Winter schedule, and ask:

- (a) to date, how many race meetings have been cancelled or rescheduled and of these cancelled or rescheduled race meetings, what was the primary reason for the cancellation;
- (b) what are the estimated financial losses incurred due to the cancelled race meetings; and
- (c) given that Belmont Park is promoted through Perth Racing's website as one of the best wet weather tracks in Australia, if not the world, thanks to its excellent drainage which has ensured race meetings are consistently held, rain, hail or shine, can you advise what measures have been put in place by track management at Belmont Park to avoid any further cancellations or rescheduling of race meetings?

Mr T.K. Waldron replied:

- (a) There have been three race meetings affected (Wednesday 7 August; Saturday 14 September and Sunday 22 September). Two were abandoned with the latest race meeting (21/9) postponed to Wednesday 25 September.

The 7 August meeting was abandoned following an inspection by officials and jockeys, with some re-blocked sections of the track before and just past the winning post deemed not safe for riders and horses.

Over 70 mls of rain were received during the two days leading up to the meeting on 14 September, leaving surface water which caused the decision to abandon, with the inclement weather forecast to continue throughout the Saturday. Visibility for jockeys is a paramount safety issue.

The 22 September meeting was postponed after soft spots were identified at the 600m, 1000m and 1300m sections of the track following continuous rain during the week. The full 9 race card meeting went ahead on Wednesday 25/9.

- (b) The anticipated WA TAB turnover forfeited as a result of the abandoned race meetings would have been approximately \$3.9M. This would equate to a net margin of approximately \$273,000. The 9 race programmed meeting that was postponed from Sunday was conducted on Wednesday 25/9 and realised pari-mutuel turnover of \$1.09m and \$ 76,000 in margin. An additional meeting was also added to this week's racing at Northam, generating a margin of \$49,000.
- (c) As a result of the unusual circumstances this winter, RWWA and Perth Racing are working together to minimise disruption to racing, notwithstanding record levels of rainfall in Perth during August and September in 2013 over the past 10 years. The following protocols and actions have been implemented;
 - (i) Inspection protocols have been introduced for the remainder of the winter racing season at Belmont Park with PR officials and RWWA Stewards inspecting the track at 6.30am each race day morning. Should there be concerns identified WAJA and WARTA representatives are to be immediately contacted and requested to attend an inspection to determine the outcome for the day.
 - (ii) The PR policy of having horses gallop over the course on the morning of the race meeting will continue as will inspections the day prior to race meetings should inclement weather prevail.
 - (iii) RWWA and PR will, within the next fortnight have an independent scientific audit carried out on the Belmont Park track surface to ascertain track soil profiles for the entire circumference including drainage, compaction, material composition etc. This analysis will provide indicators as to the longevity of the life of the existing Belmont track.
 - (iv) Perth Racing has already flagged a further independent review of the maintenance procedures it currently applies to its two metropolitan tracks and will engage consultants in coming weeks to complete this exercise.
 - (v) RWWA is also reviewing opportunities at other venues to provide winter racing contingencies as the thoroughbred participants in the inner Perth region are only serviced by two main venues during winter, at Belmont and Northam. RWWA extended the Pinjarra season two years ago to provide racing through to early August, following a complete rebuild of the Pinjarra track in 2006, funded through Government grants. RWWA is now costing Stages 4 & 5 of the Pinjarra Master Plan completed at that time, which will provide a second turn at the Pinjarra venue together with enhancements to the straight 1000m chute, which could extend

racing throughout the year at that venue with a renovation recess incorporated during the height of the summer season, enabling racing 10 months of the year.

Perth Racing and RWWA are also completing a feasibility on more flexible use of Ascot and Belmont, rather than their distinct Spring/Summer and Autumn/Winter seasons respectively. Costings are being completed on cap-ex requirements to achieve this outcome which will give respite throughout the year, with less frequency of continuous use, as each venue hosts 45 race meetings each.