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## What's been happening at Waikato recently?

The Aussies are back...



What a week it's been! It was great to have some of our Australian friends over to see our 2023 Karaka draft and to enjoy lovely food and great yarns. Thank you to the WS yearling and hospitality team for an awesome effort.

## Winner of the week



WS-bred Savabeel mare, **Calm Down** (ex **Chilled Out**) relished the step up in trip to break her maiden for Ron Quinton at Hawkesbury on Wednesday. We look forward to seeing what this filly will achieve. A sister to stakes winner **Savacool**, her half-sister by **Ocean Park** will be offered as Lot 98 Karaka next month.

## Andrew Bensley visits the farm



It was awesome to have Andrew Bensley on the farm with RSN this week.

From our upcoming Karaka sales draft to our first-season sire **Super Seth** and farm favourite **I Wish I Win**, catch up on all that we discussed on the Racing Pulse podcast in the link below.

[Mark & Andrew chat](#)

## Curtain falls for one of our top graduates



Time has been called on the racing career of WS-bred and sold dual-G1 winner **Tiptronic** (ex **Tiptoes**). The 9YO son of **O'Reilly** retires healthy and sound and will enjoy the rest of his days with Graham Richardson.

[Read more](#)

Introducing...



READ THE WHISPERS  
AROUND WAIKATO

WS BRED: TIVACI PRINCESS

**THIS WEEK...**

There are plenty of 'tipping experts' amongst the Waikato team. It's time they show us what they're made of...

**Tivaci Princess** (2019 Tivaci x Exactly Like You filly)

Jockey: Sam Weatherley

Trainer: Royden Bergerson

Comment: Winner on last start

Upcoming Race: Saturday 17th December, Te Rapa, Lawnmaster Eulogy Stakes (Group 3), 1600m - Race 7



Last week's Corner was penned prior to the encouraging news our primary source of income has managed to minimise the reduction in the payout to the codes to only \$15m.

What an achievement. Now I know we have been through difficult times, our government has increased the money supply by \$60b. We NZ'ers had nowhere to go, I know we had a period without our sport but we were encouraged to push on, continue to invest in the racing product from wherever and yet we are unable to secure our share of the confetti in circulation.

To be fair, the combination of Covid and disappointing raceday cancellations must frustrate the Board and executive, but the track management issues are

unacceptable. Easy to say, I know, but this game has been played for a long time and it may be that horses were required to cope with a more diverse range of surface conditions in the past. The welfare of the horse requires the average track reading four on the penetrometer. No doubt laudable, but it leaves track management on a knife edge with any weather changes. Fortunately, we can at short notice cater for off-course demand but difficult to maintain turnover at required levels.

The \$15m reduction is no doubt a reflection of the last six months of the 21/22 racing year. The first six months was a struggle with a 7% reduction on the equivalent the previous season. The following six months I don't have but obviously is following a similar trend.

Our end of the business is difficult to determine. Are we as breeders the start or the end? This is the old chicken or the egg. We believe to encourage people to breed there has to be an end result, not just being a winner, but a financial reason to keep breeding. Then of course who puts on the show, are the owners the reason we have a wagering enterprise?

My point, I am labouring to make sense of: Who should be the focus of our concern? No owners - no need to breed. No breeders - no horses to race. No punters - no money. When Chairman of the Racing Board I attended my first meeting of Combined Racing Industry Group (CRIG). A four-hour meeting discussed the most inane concerns you could make up. I wasn't Chairman but informed the meeting I would attend no more unless we addressed the matter of no money in the bin. This focussed the attendees, and it was agreed by the three codes in attendance however possible we had to maintain the interest of the owners or there was no point in our existence.

Now you seven may disagree but dwell on it for a minute. The punter is important and can wager on a variety of sports, but our TAB was designed to provide the wherewithal to maintain our industry.

The founding codes were Thoroughbred and Harness, Greyhounds a later addition.

There is the grey area as to ownership but there is no doubt as to the intent. My issue is I doubt there is under our current leadership a recognition of the importance of the need to focus on the original purpose of our wagering agency. Our TAB really depends on Board members understanding and advocating the above. They may, how do we know? But, the composition of the Board, regardless of their ability, does not engender confidence within the industry.

I was encouraged a few years ago to meet with a couple of the executives of the TAB, it was an interesting afternoon, but I can tell you we were poles apart. They saw themselves as a wagering agency who, regardless of the wellbeing of our regional race clubs, were focussed on turnover. Their ideal model for NZ racing was six venues, Wednesday and Saturday racing, the remaining five days to utilise offshore products to be purchased at favourable rates allowing for the margin to fund the Wednesday and Saturday events. There was no acceptance of the need to retain the spread of events, their belief was higher stakes would drive the breeding,

ownership model. Aha, you say. Isn't that just what you have been saying? But it isn't. The recognised administrator of Australasia, Peter V'landys, on top of his feature events is pushing funds into provincial racing. He knows there are big breeding operations, but they don't sustain Australian racing. Of the 15,000 mares mated in Australia, small breeders collectively are the majority. His model is not replicated anywhere else in the world, we don't have the scale or funding but his principals we should aspire to.

Now, rumour has it our TAB is about to embark on another of those inspiring rebranding exercises, rumour suggests a mere \$12m is the budgeted target. If so, I will put up a bottle of my 2010 Coleraine that this fruitless exercise will of course not stop at the \$12m. More importantly where is the focus of this bold new direction?

Now I don't know, but my point is we in our industry should know. They may not believe it, but it is our money. Let's assume as a wagering agency they believe the future is in growing sports betting. I have raised this before, but sports wagering is in direct competition to our product. Yes, we get a margin, it looks like 14% of the margin we receive on our product. Money for jam, maybe, but in a low population such as NZ without the gambling nature of our Aussie cousins, every dollar sports attracts will be at our expense.

So, keep an eye on our provider, remember it's about us or there won't be us.

Cheers

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