

NEW ZEALAND  
THOROUGHBRED **RACING**



Report of the  
**2017/18 Season New Zealand  
Pattern Review Committee**

APRIL 2018

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# Introduction

## **Purpose**

The New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing Board (the NZTR Board) established the 2017/18 season New Zealand Pattern Review Committee (PRC) to review the current pattern of black type racing, with a particular emphasis on Group 1 and Group 2 races, and recommend any changes to the pattern that will improve the quality and performance of New Zealand racing. A review of the pattern had previously been conducted in 2013. Subsequent to that review, proposals for changes to the timing and conditions of various races in the pattern had been received from a number of clubs. The PRC was established in part to consider those proposals in the context of the pattern as a whole.

## **Two key considerations of the 2017/18 season PRC were to:**

1. Ensure the pattern of black type racing maximises the participation of the best horses in the best races, across the different categories including:
  - two year olds only (including sex based 2YO events);
  - three year olds only (including sex based 3YO events);
  - Fillies and mares races; and
  - WFA, set weight and penalty, and handicaps.
2. Consider the possible enhancement of the pattern of black type racing to provide for greater opportunities to promote New Zealand Thoroughbred racing both domestically and into Australia.

A copy of the full terms of reference for the PRC was circulated to clubs and other industry organisations on 14 November 2017.

The PRC was made up of: Mark Freeman (Chairman); Bruce Sherwin; Andrew Carston; and Jason Fleming, with assistance being provided by Campbell Moncur and George Strickland from NZTR.

# Summary of Findings and Key Recommendations

The approach the PRC took when considering the Terms of Reference and the various submissions it received was to focus on what is the best pattern of black type racing in New Zealand from both a national and regional perspective.

After taking into account the various submissions received by it, the PRC concluded that the current pattern of black type racing is mostly working well in the context of maximising the participation of the best horses in the best races across the different categories. This view is supported by the fact that, since the 2013 review recommendations were implemented, there has been a reduction in the number of races on warnings from 31 to 15, with the change in the status of races under warnings being due in the vast majority of cases to an improved ratings performance of the relevant race.

## **Recommended Black Type Pattern**

The recommended black type pattern for the period 10 November 2018 through 4 May 2019, including the recommended changes and associated race meetings, is set out in the associated spreadsheet.

The PRC is not recommending any changes to the pattern of black type racing outside this period other than to support a possible three week movement, in the future, in the timing of the Hawke's Bay Spring Carnival.

If implemented, this movement of the Hawke's Bay Spring Carnival would see:

- The first day of the carnival being run on the current second day
- The second day being run on the current third day
- The third day being scheduled two weeks later.

Hawke's Bay R.I. has a substantial amount of work to do around this proposal and any change will not be reflected in the 2018/19 racing calendar. The PRC supports the proposal in concept as a three week change in the timing of the carnival should, in the view of the PRC, improve the quality of the pattern.

## **Major Racing Carnivals**

Subject to the PRC's comments regarding the Hawke's Bay Spring Carnival, the PRC endorses the timing and placement of the current major racing carnivals being:

- Hawke's Bay Spring Carnival – September/October
- New Zealand Cup Week – November
- Auckland Christmas/New Year Carnival – Boxing Day/New Year's Day
- Wellington Cup Carnival – January
- Auckland Cup Carnival – March.

The PRC recommends that NZTR and the clubs involved continue to focus collectively on building and strengthening the quality of races and the black type pattern leading into and on these high profile race days.

### ***Northern Region Programming Committee (NRPC) Submission***

In their submission to the PRC, the Northern Region Programming Committee (NRPC) proposed a number of significant changes to the pattern of black type racing during Summer and Autumn, including a slight change in the timing of the Auckland Cup Carnival. If implemented, these changes to the pattern would, in the PRC's view, have had a significant negative flow-on effect for the black type pattern from both a regional and national perspective. The proposed changes would have also directly impacted on a number of other clubs and established carnivals outside the NRPC region. While supportive of the rationale underpinning the changes proposed by the NRPC (i.e. to build a strong pattern of racing over Summer and Autumn), the PRC cannot support many of the changes proposed by the NRPC given the impact those changes would have on the pattern, other clubs and carnivals, and the racing calendar generally. In addition, the PRC does not support the proposal from the NRPC that the Auckland Cup Carnival move a week earlier in the racing calendar. In the PRC's view, such a move would cause too much disruption to the pattern (and the racing calendar more generally) in January, February and March without there being any clear and counter-balancing benefit.

### ***Opportunity to Promote New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing Domestically and into Australia***

It is the view of the PRC that the current pattern and sequence of race meetings provides a good opportunity to promote New Zealand thoroughbred racing domestically and into Australia, particularly over the Summer racing period when racing in Australia is not so strong, without any significant changes needing to be made to the New Zealand pattern.

The Auckland R.C's Christmas/New Year Carnival, the Wellington Cup Carnival, the Karaka Millions race meeting and the Waikato Premier race meeting in early February provide a strong sequence of black type race meetings that could be the main focus of a promotional campaign in New Zealand and Australia.

The PRC recommends therefore that NZTR develop a strategy to promote New Zealand thoroughbred racing both domestically and into Australia during the Summer racing period.

## Recommendations of the Pattern Review Committee

1. That the pattern of black type racing for the period from 10 November 2018 through 4 May 2019, as set out in the attached spreadsheet, be adopted and the pattern of black type racing outside this period remain as currently programmed, subject to a potential future change, by three weeks, in the timing of the Hawke's Bay Spring Carnival.
2. Effective from 1 August 2018, the Operating Procedures of the New Zealand Pattern Committee (PC) be amended so that any proposed change by a club to the timing, distance, venue or conditions (e.g. a change from handicap to set weight and penalty conditions) of any black type race must be referred to a standing Pattern Review Committee (PRC) for its consideration and approval and must include supporting analysis of the impacts/benefits of the proposed change, the likely make up of the race, field size, wagering impact and any affect the change may have on other black type races or other major racing carnivals. This would leave the PC to focus on the performance of the races in the pattern.
3. Individual black type race changes:
  - The PRC has serious concerns over the number of black type middle distance/staying races scheduled during January in the current season and strongly recommends that the Karaka Cup 2200m (Auckland R.C) be moved to Saturday 26 January 2019 as part of the Karaka Millions programme and that the City of Auckland Cup be moved back to 1 January 2019. The Avondale Cup would then revert back to Saturday 16 February 2019 as the principal lead-in race to the Auckland Cup.
  - The Waikato Guineas G2 2000m be held at Te Rapa on Saturday 9 February 2019 as part of a proposed Waikato R.C 'Super Saturday' race meeting.
4. That the existing major carnivals are retained substantially in their current form and timing in the racing calendar, with the PRC supporting a possible three week change in the timing of the Hawke's Bay R.I Spring Carnival.
5. That NZTR develop a strategy to promote New Zealand thoroughbred racing, both domestically and into Australia during the Summer racing period.
6. That NZTR develop races and race series for 4 year olds and intermediate and progressive staying horses in an endeavour to build up (over time) a better depth of older horses.

## Further Commentary

### **Two Year Old Pattern**

The PRC believe the current two year old pattern is working well and should remain as is.

### **Three Year Old Pattern**

In the PRC's view, the current three year old pattern (in particular, the Derby and the Oaks for our top three year olds) is working well domestically. In addition, it is enabling our top three year olds to be competitive at the Sydney Autumn carnival. The performance of our top three year olds in Sydney in the Autumn is important to the integrity of the New Zealand rating system and pattern. Accordingly, the PRC is not recommending any substantive changes to the three year old pattern.

The PRC is recommending that the Waikato Guineas be held at Te Rapa on Saturday 9 February 2019, one week before the Avondale Guineas at Ellerslie on Saturday 16 February 2019. This recommendation reflects a strong desire on the part of the Waikato Racing Club (supported by the NRPC) to hold a "Super Saturday" race meeting at Te Rapa.

As part of the "Super Saturday" proposal, Auckland Cup week (and, therefore the Derby) would be brought forward one week in the calendar, the Avondale Guineas would move to January and the Waikato Guineas would replace the Avondale Guineas as the final Derby trial.

The Avondale Guineas at Ellerslie has worked very well as the final Derby trial over recent years, with horses tending to run in both the Waikato Guineas and the Avondale Guineas before running in the Derby. Trainers spoken to by members of the PRC were all but unanimous in their view that the Avondale Guineas at Ellerslie should remain as the final Derby trial.

From a pattern perspective, the PRC does not see any benefit in significantly changing an Autumn three year old pattern that has worked very well over recent years and has led to our staying three year olds performing very well in Australia in the Autumn. Accordingly, the PRC is not recommending any change in the timing of either the Avondale Guineas or Auckland Cup week.

The PRC acknowledges that its recommended change in the timing of the Waikato Guineas will mean that horses will be unlikely to run in both the Waikato and Avondale Guineas before running in the Derby. Instead, there will be two alternative pathways to the Derby in the same way as the Sunline Vase and Lowland Stakes provide two alternative pathways to the Oaks. Importantly, it will mean that trainers will still be able to run Derby three year olds at Ellerslie over ground as their final Derby trial.

The PRC also recommends that NZTR and the clubs ensure there is a regular pattern of three year old only races throughout the racing calendar to optimise the opportunities for three years olds to race against their own age group.

The PRC did consider moving the three year old Salver Listed 2100m currently scheduled on Sunday 16 December 2018 but decided to leave this race as currently scheduled as it provides an early distance test for three year olds from which trainers can map a programme into the Derby or the Oaks.

The PRC also considered moving the Royal Stakes to Saturday 26 January 2019 to be run as part of the Karaka Millions programme but, after discussing the move with trainers, decided to leave the Royal Stakes on New Year's Day, as it provides an early distance test for three old fillies from which trainers can map a programme to the Oaks. A factor in deciding to leave the Royal Stakes on New Year's Day was that it performed strongly this year from a ratings perspective and has generally been won by our better fillies.

## **Stayers**

There were concerns expressed in a number of the submissions over the current status of our black type staying races and the real potential for future down grades. The PRC noted that all black type staying races (2400m plus for three year old races and 2600m plus for four year old and older races) are currently living with the benefit of a three year re-grading moratorium (due to expire in 2019) as per the decision in 2017 of the Asian Pattern Review Committee. The PRC notes in this context that the Auckland Cup G1 3200m would have been downgraded to G2 but for this moratorium.

It is the view of the PRC that the pattern of staying races in New Zealand should be built around:

- November – New Zealand Cup G3 – Canterbury J.C
- New Years Day – City of Auckland Cup G3 – Auckland R.C
- January – Wellington Cup G3 – Wellington R.C
- March – Auckland Cup G1 – Auckland R.C,

with other middle distance races being programmed as lead-in races to these four iconic staying races.

As indicated above, the PRC has serious concerns over the number of black type middle distance/staying races being held in January in the current season. The PRC strongly recommends that the:

- Karaka Cup be moved to Saturday 26 January 2019 to be run as part of the Karaka Millions programme (on the proviso that it is run over 2200m);
- Avondale Cup be moved from New Year's Day to Saturday 16 February 2019;
- City of Auckland Cup be moved back to New Year's Day.

In the PRC's view, these changes would improve the pattern for stayers.

It was proposed that the Waikato Cup be run on Saturday 16 February 2019 as part of the Waikato R.C "Super Saturday" proposal referred to above, with the Avondale Cup being run on New Year's Day and the City of Auckland being run on the Karaka Millions programme. The PRC does not support this change as it would have resulted in too many races targeting the same pool of horses over a short period of time in the racing calendar.

The PRC shares concerns raised in a number of the submissions over the depth of the staying ranks in New Zealand and the future of our black type staying races. We have therefore requested that NZTR investigate options to build up a second tier of staying races in New Zealand (2200m plus) to provide opportunities to improve the quality and number of our stayers and potentially improve, over time, the rating of our black type staying races.



## **WFA Pattern**

The PRC believe the current WFA pattern is working well and should remain as is.

## **Sprinters**

It is the view of the PRC that the pattern of the sprinting races during December, January and early February should be built around:

The Railway – Ellerslie – New Year’s Day

The Telegraph – Trentham – Wellington Cup Day – Saturday 19 January 2019

Waikato Sprint – Te Rapa – 9 February 2019

The PRC initially considered recommending that the Concorde Handicap Group Three 1200m be moved back to Saturday 8 December 2018 to be the main lead-in race in the Northern region for the Railway Handicap, but has decided to leave the race on Saturday 26 January 2019.

The PRC does, however, have concerns over the medium/long term rating of the Concorde Handicap G3 1200m in its new place as part of the Karaka Millions programme, given it is now only one week after the Telegraph G1 1200m. That said, the PRC is aware of the desire of the Auckland R.C to have a strong black type programme as part of the Karaka Millions programme and wishes to accommodate that desire provided that doing so does not impact negatively on the pattern. Accordingly, the PRC supports the Concorde G3 1200m being run as part of the Karaka Millions programme.

The PRC notes that the race run in place of the Concorde Handicap in December 2018 was very strong from a ratings perspective with Volpe Veloce, Heroic Valour and Melody Belle being the placegetters. The PRC believes that this new race is likely to become a black type race (overtime) as it will be the main Northern region lead-in race to the Railway Handicap.

### ***Fillies and Mares***

The PRC believes the Fillies and Mares pattern is working well in the main.

The PRC does, however, have concerns over the medium/long term rating of the Westbury Classic G2 1400m in its new place as part of the Karaka Millions programme, given that the race is now only one week after the Telegraph G1 1200m and the Thorndon G1 1600m. However, as with the Concorde Handicap, the PRC is willing to support the Westbury Classic G2 being run as part of the Karaka Millions programme to accommodate the desire of the ARC to have a strong black type programme that evening.

In coming to its view on the placement of the Westbury Classic, the PRC understands that the Auckland R.C is to programme new fillies and mares race to replace the Westbury Classic. The PRC strongly recommends that this race be run over 1400m, being the distance of the Westbury Classic which worked very well as a lead-in to the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes G1 1600m.

Any impact on the rating of the Westbury Classic due to its proximity to the Telegraph and Thorndon is likely, in the view of the PRC, to be offset by the performance of the new fillies and mares race given its role as a lead-in to the New Zealand Thoroughbred Breeders Stakes G1 1600m, provided the race is run over 1400m.

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