



# STABLE *talk*

NARS Newsletter - July 2019



**Pg2**  
George's Column



**Pg4**  
Leading In



**Pg6**  
Awards

NARS Head Office: The Racing Centre, Fred Archer Way, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 8NT  
T: 01638 663411 E: admin@naors.co.uk W: www.naors.co.uk

# GEORGE'S COLUMN

## AUSTRALIA AND THE RACE THAT STOPS A NATION.



Ever since I was a 17 year old starting my first job in racing I have heard stories about how much better it is in Australia. I had heard (and still do) that you can earn a \$800 a week with ease and you only work mornings and the weather is great. So, following several requests from current staff in Australia to come and visit with a view to giving advice and setting up an organization similar to NARS, I went to Flemington, home of the Melbourne Cup to see first-hand what sort of a deal the staff get in Australia and to see if I could take any ideas back to the UK. The following report makes for some interesting reading if you are thinking about heading out to Australia in the hope of a better way of life and a higher wage in the Australian racing industry.

These are my initial thoughts on my visit to Victoria, Australia. Currently all decisions relating to the workforce are taken without any communication with the staff, the wage is set at the minimum wage and due to the fact that there is no representative body for the staff there is no enforcement of the "Fair Work" agreement.

Without any balances or checks it does not take a genius to conclude that there is widespread abuse in terms of pay and conditions for staff working for licensed trainers and no recourse for the staff to complain. This was substantiated by staff we spoke to at all the different venues and wasn't negated by the formal meetings we had. In total I had 20 meetings from Greg Carpenter the Executive General manager to Racing Victoria to the track workers at Flemington, Cranbourne and Caulfield and this is a condensed version of the report.

- No work/life balance, general starting time is 3.30am with no unsocial hours paid.
- No share of the prize money. Every other first world racing nation provides a % for the staff responsible for the success of the yard they are working for. The jockeys get a share as do the trainers but not the staff. To rub salt into the wound, there is a 1% deduction against prize money for equine welfare, but nothing for staff welfare or any % paid to them for the prize money won for the yard they are working in. In a nutshell, the horses are thought more highly of than the people working with them!
- While there is a set payment for staff who take the horses racing (called strappers) the staff seem to be paid at different rates depending on who they are working for. Some get a set fee, others whatever the trainer pays on the day and some get paid on a sliding scale, so if they do more than one horse they get a reduced rate for the second and third, yet the same work is done for each horse!
- There are no breaks when at the races, the horse is tethered and the strapper must always stay with the horse. So, no water break (its 35/40 degrees out there on a regular basis), no toilet breaks, no opportunity to purchase anything to eat.
- The payment for strapping a horse is the same for a night meeting as it is for a mid-morning or afternoon meeting, when it's paid at all. While that may be the same as the UK the difference is in Australia the riders tend to start work around 4am.

- There are no canteens at the racecourses, they used to have one at Caulfield, but it closed ten years ago. From an impossibly bad position the racing staff of Australia seem to have managed to take a step backwards!
- There is no insurance specific to racing (we have RIABS). If you are injured at work, you are dependent on the state who pay you 85% of your last wage. Put another way, for having the misfortune to be injured at work you will have to get by on a reduced wage (usually takes 3 months for it to come through). Obviously, the bills are not reduced by 15%. Most are dismissed once injured.
- There is zero training for any staff, there are certain qualifications that staff must have called a cert 4 but none of this relates to any management training, of which there is none, not even for the managers in the barns, called foremen, regardless of whether they are male or female. There is training for horse welfare, but nothing for staff!!
- Racing Victoria have launched something called Stable Line, quite brilliantly, they have not asked the staff what the content should be, they even looked confused/horrified when I suggested they really ought to speak to the staff the line is aimed at to ensure its relevance. Bear in mind that the offices of Racing Victoria are based on the track where the staff ride out, it's a 400-yard walk from the RV office to the track, a walk that nobody in RV has ever made. The last meeting with Mellissa (Athlete and Careers Development Manager) and

Keira (Participant Wellbeing Manager) was with two track riders, neither of whom had ever set foot inside the RV offices before, despite having worked at Flemington for 5 years! Stable Line is aimed at the jockeys and trainers. Once again the staff are not so much as an afterthought.

- There are no water coolers in the barns where the horses are stabled, nor any at the races for the strappers.
- Racing staff are licenced each year and for the privilege of working for a trainer that may or may not pay them the minimum wage they have to pay a \$50 registration fee.
- The staff must also pay for the cert 4 qualification.
- The cost of all protective clothing, such as body protectors (they call them vests) hats and boots, is the employee's responsibility, and boy is it expensive out there!

There is widespread abuse of the 457 visa requirements that all non-Australian staff need to work out there, which appears to be a form of blackmail used against employees. I am informed this is an everyday regular occurrence (this applies to foreign workers).

It is not my intention to put anyone off travelling to Australia or anywhere else; travel is often the best form of education. However, don't go thinking the grass is greener on the other side, it isn't. And if you do go, for your own sake and that of your families, please take out insurance.



# IF YOU LEAD UP SHOULDN'T YOU LEAD IN?

BY GEORGE McGRATH

Once again at Royal Ascot we saw the best of British racing, great horses, great jockeys and brilliant racing staff toiling away, the driving force behind the winners.

However, as with Cheltenham, we also saw some of the less acceptable scenes and I am not talking about the odd drunk making a fool of themselves. No, I am talking about the owners who grab the horse of the groom as it approaches the winner's enclosure. Not only does it look awful to the viewing public, but it is totally disrespectful to the groom who has had so much more input to the horse winning than the owner will likely ever understand.

Following Royal Ascot NARS polled our members on this ugly aspect of owners leading in horses they would hardly recognise in a line up. The poll was only open for 3 days. Not surprisingly, 87.5% of those that took part in the poll said they didn't think an owner should have the right to take a horse off the groom. Out of about 6,500 members 902 took part in the online poll, that's just about one seventh of the entire work force (and many of the 6,500 don't actually lead horses up at the races). Clearly staff feel strongly that owners shouldn't take a winning horse off the winning groom! To put that figure into context when the same staff were asked about the facilities at racecourses, we had 330 responses. Public perspectives asked racing staff about all aspects of their working lives and received responses from 17% of the workforce and that poll was both postal, online and open for 3 months.

So it's fair to say the staff have a very strong view on this whether an owner can take the horse off the groom and the answer is absolutely not.

The poll was a straight forward question asking if the racing staff thought an owner can or should have the right to lead the horse in. We also received a lot of feedback on our website that said the owner can lead the horse in but



Best case scenario,  
owner and groom

on the right hand side allowing both owner and groom to enjoy the moment. Others said let the owner lead the horse in, and wash it down, walk it off and travel it home to get the complete experience. Some staff rightly pointed out that there is also a safety aspect to this, the horse is highly charged and only the groom will know its characteristics, some are ok, others need a professional to manage the horse.

So, perhaps it is fair to allow an owner their day in the spotlight, but not to the detriment of the staff who know the horse best and have done all the hard work.

The results of the poll have been sent to the Racehorse Owners Association and the Racecourse Association.

# NARS ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

**Our AGM will be held in Lambourn on the 14th of August.  
The venue is the sports hall. We will start at 7pm.**

We pick a different location every year to give racing staff around the Country the opportunity to attend our AGM without having to travel too far. Previous AGMs have been held in Middleham, Malton, Epsom and Newmarket. Following the successful organising of a Lambourn regional committee, thanks to Jemma Marshall, we decided to hold the AGM in Lambourn for the first time in our history.

The AGM is your chance to see what we are doing for you, what our aims and objectives are as well as having a chance to directly address me personally with any questions or thoughts. Currently there is a notice on our website asking anyone with a question they would like to table to send it in by email. This is really for those who can't attend the AGM in person but it also applies to the racing staff in Lambourn. There will only be a limited time for a Q and A on the evening, but

I will try to take every question both tabled and live. Please send any questions to [admin@naors.co.uk](mailto:admin@naors.co.uk)

I understand an AGM is not likely to appeal to most racing staff which is why we offer a free bar in the George after the AGM. This only applies to the racing staff that attend our AGM.

As well as a free bar at the George we also have a guest speaker on the evening. Nick Rust, the Chief Executive of the BHA, will give an address to the staff about the what the BHA is doing for racing staff, your importance to British racing and what the BHA is doing to recognise your vital role.

I hope to meet as many staff as possible on the 14th. You have the opportunity to air your concerns to both the head of NARS and the BHA.

That doesn't happen every day.



Open to everyone who works in a licenced racing yard



## nars

National Association of Racing Staff

Trainers are not eligible

## NARS AGM LAMBOURN 14/8/19 7pm At The Sports Club

Guest speaker Nick Rust, CEO of the BHA

Please come and have your say. This is your opportunity to voice your opinion, see how NARS has performed and what you would like to see improved. Food and soft drinks available at the AGM followed by a free bar at The George for those that attend the AGM.

PHONE 01638 663411 EMAIL [admin@naors.co.uk](mailto:admin@naors.co.uk) FOR MORE INFO

# GODOLPHIN STUD AND STABLE STAFF AWARDS 2019

**This year's awards were once again another great night recognising staff across the industry.**

Oli Bell was this year's host with Sir Anthony McCoy presenting the award winners their prizes. In his introductory address, he said, "The wheel in each yard would not turn without the staff in the industry."

Each category sees the winner receive £5,000 for themselves and £5,000 for their yard to share. The runner ups in each category also receive £2,000 for themselves and £2,000 for their yard. For the community award, the money goes to a charity of their choice. However, the Newcomer award winner receives £2,000 for themselves and £2,000 for their yard, the runner ups receive £1,000 each for themselves and £1,000 to their yard.

Each individual's video played over the night is excellent, reminding us all why we love this industry, the great people and hard work that goes on behind the scenes, some even have you welling up with pride at how good this industry is, despite the various issues that are always being reported.

The first award of the night is the David Nicholson Newcomer award, each nominee must have spent no longer than three years in the industry, this prize also includes a five-day educational trip to Dubai.

Sophy Scott from the Mark Johnston yard took the honours. Having left the BRS only two years ago Sophy has worked her way up through the ranks and when her nomination was written she was an assistant yard manager and well thought of in the yard. During the time between nominations and finals night she was promoted to yard manager.

The next award of the night was for Leadership. This is for anyone managing or leading a team in the industry. A tough category, but there could only be one winner on the night and that award went to Catriona Bissett, Assistant Trainer at Nick Alexander's Kinneston yard in Scotland.

The third award of the night was for the Rider/Groom award and that went to Stewart Gosnell of Richard Hughes yard. An experienced rider who has been a key part in looking after and riding many top horses in his career in the industry and is now plays a key role in the yard at Weathercock Stables.

Next was the Stud Staff Award and the winner was Andrew Snell from Cheveley Park Stud, where he has worked for nearly thirty years.

He has been Stud Manager there since 2004 and is a huge part of the Stud's success, using his experience to motivate, develop and mentor younger staff when they join. His dedication was highlighted when on receiving his award he said "this is the first time I have left Newmarket in February in 29 years."

The Dedication to Racing Award was next, and the three people shortlisted had 130 years experience in the industry combined. The winner was John Bottomley from Ollie Pears yard.

John, 75, has spent 60 years in the industry, been a model of dedication, loyal and committed. He has been with Ollie Pears since 2009 and is in no rush to hang his boots up just yet.

The penultimate award of the night was the Rory MacDonald Community Award and a great opportunity to reward someone for their great work within the racing community, not just within a yard. This year's winner was Andrea O'Keeffe, wife of Jedd O'Keeffe and key in various industry development and training programmes, working with Racing Welfare and the NTF as well as developing and training the young team under her guidance at the yard.

The final and largest award of night was for Overall Employee of the Year and this can only be won by the winners of the Leadership, Rider/Groom, Stud Staff and Dedication to Racing Awards.

The winner receives £15,000 for themselves on top of what they have already won plus another £15,000 to their yard. But as well as that they will also become a judge for next year's awards.

The 2019 Employee of the Year went to 'Catch' Bissett from Nick Alexander's yard in Kinneston.

A very worthy winner and someone who when asked about her role at Kinneston said, "I love

working with horses, as well as other people that like working with horses, We have a young team and seeing them join the industry, progress and evolve is the best kick in the whole game."

Later, Catch added, "The team you work with is integral to how you progress. We work for a fantastic boss and all pull together; it's fantastic to hold this trophy for all of them."

## **HERE IS THE FULL LIST OF WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP:**

### **Employee of the Year:**

Catriona Bissett - Nick Alexander, Kinneston, Leslie, Fife

### **David Nicholson Newcomer Award:**

Sophy Scott - Mark Johnston, Middleham, North Yorkshire

### **Runners up:**

April Clarke - Jedd O'Keefe, Max McLoughlin - Cheveley Park Stud

### **Leadership Award:**

Catriona Bissett - Nick Alexander

### **Runners up:**

Dan Horsford - Alan King, Barry O'Dowd - John Gosden

### **Rider/Groom Award:**

Stewart Gossnell - Richard Hughes, Lambourn Berkshire

### **Runners up:**

Ian Clarkson - Micky Hammond, Sean Graham - Philip Hobbs

### **Stud Staff Award:**

Andrew Snell - Cheveley Park Stud, Newmarket, Suffolk

### **Runners up:**

Christine Chapman - Theakston Stud, Kevin Tobin - New England Stud

### **Dedication to Racing Award:**

John Bottomley - Ollie Pears, Malton, North Yorkshire

### **Runners up:**

Jaimie Duff - Lucinda Russell, David Macleod - James Ewart

### **Rory Macdonald Community Award:**

Andrea O'Keefe - Jedd O'Keefe, Leyburn, North Yorkshire

### **Runners up:**

Deborah Hay - Lingfield Park Racecourse, Sarah Montgomery - Musselburgh Racecourse



Andrea and Jedd O'Keefe



Andrew Snell



Catch Bissett



John Bottomley



Sophy Scott



Catch Bissett



Stewart Gosnell

# LYCETTS TEAM CHAMPION 2019

Lycetts  
Insurance Brokers



## BY KEVIN PARSONS (LYCETTS TEAM CHAMPION JUDGE)

The second year of the award run by the NTF and sponsored by Lycetts has once again seen excellent results and the promotion of good practice across the industry.

Many trainers and yards across the country have now been given a star rating on their good practice carried out in the following areas

- Effective Recruitment and Induction Systems
- Ensuring a Safe Environment
- Creating a Positive Working Environment
- Development and Training
- Reward and Recognition

The Star Ratings work along the lines of

- 3 Stars - Excellent
- 2 Stars - Very Good
- 1 Star - Good

And whilst we get many staff speak to us daily about jobs and good people to work for when looking for a possible change or employment in the industry, we now promote firstly any yards with a 3 Star rating. Then 2 Stars and 1 Star. That is because we know what the award covers and the good practice going on in those yards.

The award has two categories for yards with under or over 40 horses.

This year's shortlists of the top four in each category were

Under 40 Horses, Nick Alexander, Richard Phillips, Jedd O'Keefe and Dan Kubler

Over 40 Horses, Andrew Balding, Tom Dascombe, Richard Hughes, Warren Greatrex

Having personally visited seven of the eight shortlisted myself, I was once again very impressed with the practices going on and how much the industry has moved forward since I first joined in 1996.

The over 40 horse yard winner was Tom Dascombe's yard.

The under 40 horse yard winner was Jedd O'Keefe's yard.



Team O'Keefe



Team Dascombe

# RACECOURSE INSPECTORS

**The racecourse inspectors and their work have been a huge success and have made a positive impact on the facilities that all racing staff benefit from. Both the NARS head office and all of us that go racing owe them our thanks.**

For as long as I can remember staff, quite rightly, have grumbled about the quality of food on offer and the standard of accommodation. While NARS did bring these issues to the attention of the racecourses, all too often we were reacting to circumstances and not able to be pro-active. If somebody complained about the facilities at a racecourse, they often did it days later or when they happened to see me. The implementation of the RCIs and the publication of their report has changed all that.

The racecourses were suddenly confronted with their shortcomings and in public. Our office was inundated with calls from clerks of the courses and directors and board members of those racecourses. Most acknowledged that they needed to improve, some argued they felt they were doing enough for staff and some were keen to understand how they could improve. All of them said they were strapped for cash!!

But the one thing we really learned was just how competitive racecourses are amongst themselves!

We look forward to publishing our findings for 2019 and we hope that you will see some significant improvements at the racecourses you attend. Please continue to work with the RCIs when you see them, they will have NARS issued clothing and a lanyard saying they are acting as an RCI. You can also contact the office by email, our Facebook page, twitter, phone or contact me directly.

The full report can be sent to anyone who would like a copy. A shorter version was printed in our last newsletter and is also available on our website.

The RCIs are, Pete McCulloch, Greg Davis, Hannah Gregory, Nicky Rigby, Cathy Beaumont, Carri Dyson and Mark Ellwood.



# MBA

**WRITTEN BY DEBBIE GREY**

**I have been doing the MBA in Thoroughbred Racing Horse Industries through the University of Liverpool for the past 2 years and am currently slogging away on heavy ground up the home straight!**

My work-based project is on the topic of leadership and its influence on staff retention in racing yards.

To get this information and understand your perspective I will be conducting primary research with staff currently working in racing.

I want to chat to you to see how you feel about the types of leadership you experience in your yards, what works well and if there are any changes you feel would benefit the industry.

I would like to speak to a variety of staff across all roles including yard staff, work riders, barn leaders, travelling staff, trainers, head lads etc.

Once I have completed all the research, I will be making recommendations on what the industry could initiate that would make staff feel valued.

I really hope this will result in demonstrable initiatives that make the workplace a happy and secure environment for our racing staff.

If you are happy to speak to me about this, please contact me for more information. All information will be anonymous, and no names will be used during the focus groups, interviews or project.

I will be holding focus groups on the following dates. If you can help me, I would really appreciate it

**Lambourn, 18th July**

**Newmarket - anytime contact me**

**Middleham, 23rd July**

## UPDATE ON THE DIVERSITY IN RACING STEERING GROUP:

**BY DEBBIE GREY**

**As I write, this group has been in existence for just over a year. After a slow start - which is always necessary to get the strategy, action plan and people in place and agreed, there have been many tangible differences made and much attention has been focused on this important area of our sport.**

Firstly, it has drawn attention to this issue, and we have been inordinately proud of the way in which it has been received within the racing family. We've had quotes from John Gosden to Vicky Smith saying how important they feel diversity and inclusion is. There has been much more research and information gathered around female jockeys and the issues they face from substandard changing rooms to the fabulous successes at Cheltenham and Royal Ascot and the value for money female jockeys offer to the betting public.

Racing Staff week coincided with the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots and is was an

excellent opportunity to launch our new #Racing-WithPride hashtag which went mad on social media. On the back of this there will be a bigger launch and a new campaign in November to keep awareness high so watch our socials for details on this.

The most important thing is that everyone feels valued and welcomed in racing and we understand that a diverse workforce ensures we can adapt to a fast-changing environment, brings fresh perspectives and experiences and it has been proven that companies with more diverse workforces have more engaged staff and perform better financially.



IF YOU DRIVE OVER YOUR HOURS AND  
ARE PULLED OVER YOU ARE HELD  
RESPONSIBLE. YOU CAN GET FINED  
REGARDLESS OF WHETHER YOU HAVE  
A TACHOGRAPH OR NOT.  
**DRIVE RESPONSIBLY.**

**Choose to think.**

MAKE SURE YOU KNOW THE RULES THEY ARE ON  
OUR WEBSITE

# UNION LEARN - MENTORING, LEADERSHIP AND TEAM SKILLS

unionlearn  
with the TUC

**WRITTEN BY DOMINIQUE TORTICE**

**Staff retention has been at the forefront of news in the industry for some time. While various reasons for problems retaining staff have been considered, it is hard to pinpoint just one. NARS's standing within the industry gives them a unique insight into where some of the problems may arise. A general view from the staff is that poor training of senior roles within the industry is an issue.**

NARS felt it was important to be able to provide the industry with some training for staff on how to be effective mentors and manage the team positively.

The idea was to educate the staff and for them to gain a qualification in the process, as many of the staff who took part were already doing this within their role but without the recognition.

Upon completion staff would be awarded two Level 2 certificates, one in Mentoring and one in Leadership and Team Skills.

Jenningsbet kindly offered to fund this project and in September 2018 and February 2019 the first two courses began. Both were filled with a variety of staff, all with different roles within yards and all with a range of industry experience. The uptake for the course was excellent and the results even better!

The feedback from both courses has been outstanding, not only for NARS but also for West Suffolk College who delivered the course. We are incredibly pleased that not only are the completed learners now qualified and recognized mentors in the workplace, but that they also feel a lot more confident to deal with situations when they arise within the organization.

The end of course survey showed that 83% of the learners felt it was a worthwhile course, and all would recommend the course to others. When asking the learners how they felt this course would benefit

them moving forwards, the points made were;

- A more structured approach to management
- Dealing positively with situations in the workplace
- Help to delegate more successfully
- Recognition in current role
- Easily transferable to different roles in the industry
- More able to help staff if they need coaching or mentoring
- Better placed to advise on procedures in the workplace

From the cohort of learners on the first course, two participants were employees of William Haggas's yard, Tina Jacobs and Claire Knight. Both already had roles which saw them working closely with staff and new members of the team, both essentially mentoring staff within the workplace but without the recognition or qualification.

Their work throughout the course was outstanding and because of that the Tutor nominated them both for The Employer Training Leadership Award at West Suffolk Colleges Celebration of Achievement Awards 2019. The evening was held at The Theatre Royal in Bury St Edmunds, where Tina and Claire were joined by their families to receive their awards. It was understandably a very proud moment for both of them and really showcased all of the hard work they had put into the course.

During the introduction for their award the two words used to describe their work on the course by the Tutor were ownership and respect, both very fitting. NARS were thrilled for Tina and Claire that not only had they passed the course with flying colours but that their hard work and enthusiasm were noticed and rewarded by the Tutor.

NARS are delighted with how successful the first two courses have proven to be and will be delivering the next Mentoring, Leadership and Team Skills course in Lambourn in 2020.

We can't thank Jenningsbet enough for providing the funding for this project.



