

Monday, 3 June 2024

‘Save Rosehill’ launches to champion ATC Member rights

A newly formed Australian Turf Club (ATC) member group will spearhead a campaign to ensure that no decision is made on the future of the historic Rosehill racecourse without the consent of a majority of its members.

The Save Rosehill campaign is supported by many highly respected leaders in the racing industry who are also members of the ATC, including Julia Ritchie (former AJC Vice Chair), Debbie Kepitis, Matt McGrath (former ATC Chair), Frank Cook, Bob Charley (former AJC Chair), Greg Kenny (former STC Vice Chair), Neil Werrett, Jason Abrahams, and Annette English.

Leading trainers including Gai Waterhouse, Chris Waller, John O’Shea and Anthony Cummings are also supporters of the campaign.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Mr Jason Abrahams said:

“There has been a lack of transparency about how a proposal to sell off the Rosehill Racecourse has come about and legitimate fears persist that proponents of the sale will pursue options to sell-off the land without allowing ATC members to vote on a proposal. So, we very much welcome the Upper House inquiry into this matter,” Mr Abrahams said.

A raft of documents that the NSW government were forced to provide to parliament show that last year officials workshopped four different options to acquire the racecourse, including compulsory acquisition. Also, on 13 November 2023 the NSW Cabinet Office were given advice that only the ATC board would need to approve the submission of a proposal to sell off Rosehill and not also the ATC members.

It has also emerged that Racing NSW were lobbying the state government in support of selling Rosehill Racecourse in its entirety and to control all of the proceeds from the sale four days before the full board of the ATC were told of the potential sale and almost three weeks before members were notified. Racing NSW have been given the responsibility of managing the due diligence in relation to selling Rosehill.

“A recent letter to members by the ATC Chairman, saying members will be consulted on any sale, has not assuaged our mistrust in the ATC Board and the senior executives involved in negotiations. The revelations in the NSW parliament and the fact that the assessment of the Rosehill sale proposal has been handed over to Racing NSW to manage have also caused us great concern,” Mr Abrahams said.

Minutes from a confidential meeting on November 17 2023 show Racing NSW chief executive, Peter V’landys, and then chairman, Russell Balding, told officials from the NSW Cabinet Office they were “very supportive” of the sale. They also said that funds from any sale needed to “benefit racing as a whole” rather than remain with the ATC, while also urging the government to overhaul the governance structure of the club.



“It is also evident that the Board of the ATC has flip-flopped dramatically on the future of Rosehill. On October 25 2023, ATC informed NSW Planning Department that it had no interest in selling the historic racecourse and instead tabled proposals to develop land adjacent to Rosehill and Canterbury racetracks to create space for residential housing. Two options were put forward for Canterbury Racecourse; one to create 900 new homes by moving the existing car park and the second to create space for 4000 new homes. Clearly, there are many feasible options that can see land freed for much needed housing whilst preserving racing at Rosehill,” Mr Abrahams said.

However within a matter of weeks, following a meeting between the Premier and the ATC Head of Memberships and Corporate Affairs, Steve McMahon on October 30 2023, some members of the ATC’s board and executives of Racing NSW had coalesced around a proposal to redevelop the entire Rosehill Gardens Racecourse, establish a horse training facility at Horsley Park, and look at a variety of proposals to relocate first class racing, including the Golden Slipper, elsewhere.

“In our view, this whole process contemplates disenfranchising ATC members and threatens the future of premier racing in Greater Western Sydney, because there is no viable alternative to Rosehill Racecourse in the foreseeable future. All options presented so far are significantly flawed and highly unlikely to be implemented. Metropolitan Sydney racing cannot survive with only one Group One quality track, that being Randwick. We intend to vigorously pursue all avenues to hold the Board of the ATC accountable to the members. This is about preserving a racecourse that is vital to not only western Sydney but the wider racing community and equally about defending our right as members to decide Rosehill’s fate. As members of the ATC, we demand full voting rights on the future of Rosehill. This process should not be taken over by politicians or unelected racing officials,” Mr Abrahams said.

The group has a dedicated website and social media presence to disseminate information and engage with the public and media.

All interested parties, especially ATC members and local residents, are encouraged to visit the Save Rosehill website www.saverosehill.com to register support and stay updated on upcoming events and key developments. Community leaders and industry stakeholders are urged to get in touch regarding their thoughts on the future of Rosehill.

Note for editors:

ROSEHILL RACECOURSE SELL OFF KEY DATES

25 October 2023

ATC met NSW planning department. No discussion about a sale of Rosehill Racecourse. ATC tabled other options, a redevelopment of Rosehill to allow houses built around the track, a proposal to sell a car park at Canterbury or redevelop Canterbury.

30 October 2023



Premier Minns meets with Steve McMahon Head Membership and Corporate Affairs ATC to discuss sale options.

6 November 2023

The NSW Cabinet Office tables 4 transaction options for the sale of Rosehill, including compulsory purchase.

8 November 2023

According to media reports, ATC formally lodge a proposal to sell Rosehill.

13 November 2023

Department Enterprise, Investment and Trade advises NSW Cabinet Office that only the ATC Board need to approve a proposal to sell Rosehill.

17 November 2023

RNSW CEO and Chair meet Cabinet office officials, confirm their support for the sale and lobby to direct any funds from sale away from ATC control.

21 November 2023

Full ATC Board learns of sale proposal for the first time when presentation is made to them.

7 December 2023

ATC and Government hold joint press conference to announce sale.

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