

## Its All Happening



Just when you thought things were winding down for the year and there would be only holiday racing to concentrate on, a couple of recent important announcements have rather re-focussed the mind.

First of all, and definitely most importantly, a successor to Edward Rennell has been

announced. As I've said earlier, Edward leaves a massive pair for shoes to fill, and I know that, for years to come, his legacy will be felt in many different ways. My main concern about his replacement was that it would be someone who didn't have the same passion and love for harness racing that he undoubtedly possessed. It was with relief then, that Peter Jensen was selected to take the reins, because he is yet another whose passion for our industry is without question.

Having known Peter on both a personal and business basis for many years, he will bring skills and experience to the role that will be sorely needed in the difficult times ahead. Having attended a number of meetings he has had with the Trainers & Drivers Greater Canterbury Branch since he took over at Addington, it is clear that he made a favourable impression on some folk in our game who are not easily impressed, with his considered approach and willingness to at least listen to concerns, at the same time making no promises.

The other announcement, this time from the Government, was the naming of those to be involved in the Ministerial Advisory Committee. Fearing that this body would be heavily slanted in favour of our sister code, it was pleasing to see that, with the obvious exception of Sir Peter Vela, that doesn't appear to be the case. Chair Dean McKenzie is a past CEO of Addington Raceway, along with other thoroughbred clubs, Bill Birnie and Liz Dawson are very experienced in sporting administration other than racing, and Kristy McDonald QC was responsible for the establishment and running of the JCA.

The Trainers & Drivers Assn. built a good relationship with Kristy during her time in that role and, she tells me that she is "looking forward to getting back to some racing issues". It was a sad day when she was ousted from her position due to political influence, and it is good to see her back in 'the fold'.

So, while we digest all of that news, there are plenty of horses to be prepared, plenty of travelling to be undertaken, and hopefully plenty of winners to be driven.

All the best for the holiday period (although it isn't much of a holiday for our members), and may all your luck be good.

Pete Cook

Grass Tracks



An interesting point was raised in a meeting the other day concerning grass tracks, which at this time of year (and for eh next few months) are flavour of the month with those competing in our code.

As we all have heard on a regular basis, those involved in our sister code who sit on top of, instead of behind the horse,

aka. Jockeys, are known to regularly 'walk the track' prior to a race meeting, to ascertain if there is a part of the grass surface that might offer better going and/or traction for their mounts. The question was asked, do drivers do the same? The answer was....a blank look.

It's not something I've ever witnessed and it was suggested that due to standard-breds doing longer preliminaries, drivers do get the opportunity to suss this out. Whether they do or not on a regular basis, I have no idea. However, I can recall one race I competed in where the driver of the winner had obviously been observant enough to find that better going on a damp track, and headed for it as soon as he reached the home straight. I was smart enough to jump on his back when I realised what he was up to, but sadly my steed had an aversion to grass tracks anyway, and wasn't fast enough to stay with him!

When you think about it, there is really little difference to a harness horse gaining an advantage by running on a firmer part of the track from a galloper, it must help with both traction and speed. In recent weeks Canterbury has been plagued with off, or downright boggy tracks, and in some cases there seem to have been both 'lanes' and longer grass lengths which could well have affected results.

Just another thing for drivers to think about!

Pete Cook

## Cadets



When I received the invitation to attend my first Canterbury Cadet prize giving function, I must admit that I expected it to be a rather tedious night involving the doling out of somewhat meaningless accolades for attendance.

Happily, I couldn't have been more wrong. In the current climate of declining horse numbers, flat turnovers and legal proceedings, it was quite surprising and gratifying to see that there was a larger than I imagined number (31) of cadets on the 2018 Roll Call. Equally impressive was the quality that went with the quantity. Getting up and speaking in front of a crowd is not easy, yet almost all of the prize-winners handled the task with relative skill and confidence, some even overcome with emotion at being selected.

As we all know, working with horses is not an easy career to stay with, and if only half of those on display the other night can stick with it, we are in excellent shape for the future. While there is much talk about declining horse numbers, without young people skilled enough to get them to the races, we are in deep trouble. Don't forget that, given the right incentives, horses breeders can quickly increase their numbers produced and turn that problem around, theoretically within one season. To maintain and hopefully increase the number of young people coming through the system is not only harder but involves a much longer time frame.

Another pleasing and somewhat surprising aspect of the evening was to hear that a large percentage of the cadets weren't born with the 'silver rein' in their hands. In other words they are dedicated and passionate enough to make their way in a difficult career due to hard work and a genuine passion for what they are doing.

Obviously there are a lot of people who are making this situation happen, and those behind the Cadet Scheme and, prior to that, Kids Karts, are to be complimented on the results they are producing. It should be remembered they are dealing with a wide range of personalities and skill levels, both practical and intellectual, and it is not easy to mould these youngsters into the sort of people that harness racing can be proud of.

Pete Cook

Small Fry



Tucked away in a remote corner of the World, we New Zealanders know we aren't major players as far as finances go, but an article I was reading the other day, brought that concept home in a very big way.

Last season, our beloved TAB returned a profit of \$148m which, on the face of it wasn't a bad result, given the current wave of anti-gambling (sorry anti- responsible gambling) sentiments being espoused by certain elements. The online piece concerned

an English lady who, in 2000, identified the potential of on-line gambling and was responsible, along with her brother and family members, for co-founding an on-line gambling firm called Bet365.

Things went pretty well, in fact so well, that in 2012 she was awarded a CBE for 'services to the community and business'. Good on her, you might say, but here comes the bit that caught my eye. Her annual salary has just increased by \$48m including dividends. That brings it up to a staggering.....wait for it.....\$265m, or a mere \$220 if you exclude dividends, and yes, the 'm' does stand for million. Apparently it makes her the highest paid boss in the United Kingdom by some margin.

So that means her annual income, and that's only her payout, is getting on for twice the profit made by the whole of the New Zealand TAB last year.

Like many, I have serious concerns about the Messara suggestion that our lil' ol' TAB should be sold to an overseas operator, and seeing that sort of report suggests two things to me. One, would an outfit as successful as Bet365 be interested in buying our establishment and, if they did buy it, how easily would it be swallowed up by such an enormous enterprise and lose any form of its' local identity and preferential treatment?

On a brighter note, congratulations to young Sheree Tomlinson on her great win over her Aussie rivals on their home patch, a great achievement by one of a great bunch of Junior Drivers we currently have, and the future of our Industry.

Pete Cook

#### Cup Week – The Wash-Up



For decades now, it seems it has been virtually compulsory for at least Cup Day itself to enjoy tolerable weather, with little or no rain. However this year, things got a little ridiculous. The Tuesday and Friday of the week prior to the big go, saw almost torrential rain and very cold

temperatures, (causing the abandonment of the Rangiora meeting), the likes of which would have reduced our big day of the year to a disaster. If that wasn't enough, the Tuesday of the following week it poured with rain and a high of about 8 Celsius was recorded! Yet for the entire length of Cup Week it was warm and dry. Unbelievable, but great.

Interesting that a crowd of 23,000 odd turned up, despite the current cloud hanging over the Industry, obviously not too concerned about race fixing or anything else, but having a great day. I understand a mainstream television crew was despatched to Addington, apparently to record a mood of doom and gloom, but were bitterly disappointed to find thousands of people having a ball!

Speaking of the media, we managed to make the front page of the local paper with the amazing photo taken by AJ from Race Images of poor Terry Chmiel scoring 9.5 for degree of difficulty from the Russian Judge. I guess any publicity is good publicity, and it will be something for Terry to show his grandkids in the future, as he reflects on how much worse it could have been. Oddly, about an hour after the event, I was approached for comment on the smash by a reporter from the paper who I didn't know from a 'bar of soap'. I politely declined. What the hell was I supposed to say??

I'm not going to bore you with discussion on the standing start debate.....it's been done to death at every meeting the Association has had with the RIU, along with two starters meetings, and very little has changed.

As far as the whip use is concerned, the position of the Association is clear, the Rules are working well for the vast majority of drivers, and if you exceed the permitted number of strikes, you cop the penalties. There is a strong feeling that repeat offenders, and we know who they are, should face harsher penalties. What the Cup winning driver was given amounted to a relative slap on the wrist with a bus ticket, a small fraction of her earnings for the week and a 3 day suspension covering meetings she was unlikely to drive at – it would have been interesting to see the reaction had she been suspended for the Show Day meeting. Yes, I know it would have been penalising the connections of the horses, but maybe that's what is needed for the message to get through, and prevent a virtual nose thumbing at the Rules.

Anyway, the racing was stunning, despite the doomsayers, the turnover held up well, and all in all, the meeting was a raging success. Of course now there is the slight come down to earth period, but fear not, there are 23 grass track races, along with an Invited Drivers series to re-ignite the interest this weekend.

Pete Cook

The Better Part of Valour?



These days, at every meeting I go to, or when I'm approached by someone and handicapping is on the agenda, which admittedly is less frequently than a couple of years ago, there is one word that is almost always in the forefront of people's minds – discretion.

Someone usually has at least one example of how that practice has been applied to their, or someone else's horse, either beneficially or

otherwise. Recently I was tipped off about a perfect example of why, as the majority of industry participants think, the word discretion should be thrown unceremoniously on the HRNZ scrap heap.

First of all, I should make it clear, before being accused of only self-interest, I have no connection to the horse in question, other than knowing the connections, and it wasn't them that alerted me to the situation. A few weeks ago the horse won a race against which the HRNZ Handicapper deemed to be a rather weak field and, in his wisdom only penalised the horse 7 points instead of the standard 8. Okay, while it really shouldn't happen, it's vaguely acceptable. However, a few days later, when the same horse lined up against a number of the favourites for the Sires Stakes Final, drew the second row and was beaten 14 lengths, it was dropped 2 points instead of the normal 1.

When questioned on the reason for this generosity, the explanation was that the horse was 'outclassed'. Really, when it was rated R54 and it was an R54 to R64 race including some of the best 3 year olds in the Country, was that such a surprise? Apparently it was deemed unfair that some of the horses that finished around the horse in that race had dropped 2 points and it wasn't awarded the same generosity.

Also taken into account were the horse's previous 3 starts where it had finished out of the money (and dropped 1 point each time), however one of those races was a R40 to R63 race and the other was an R40 to R80! Prior to that the horse had recently recorded two second placing's in its' own grade.

So, to summarise, a horse that had won \$10k in stake-money in the last two months was basically given 5 points for a win. In explanation I was told that 'It's complex and all we try to do is be as fair as we can to any many as we can.' Judging by that and to be fair, any horse that earns less than \$10k in the previous two months can expect to lose at least two points if it finishes further back than fifth. That will be a very big list!

Yes of course the original system needed tweaking and still does, but as long as that word 'discretion' remains we have a problem. When I queried the action initially I was told to check the horse's Rating History, and that would explain it. Problem was, when I did check the Rating History and found the horse had won that \$10k in the past two months, it showed me that the decision was more flawed than I initially thought!

When it was instigated, the whole idea of the points Handicapping System was to make it so that everyone knew exactly how their horse would be rated, the moment after it crossed the finish line. No arguments, no confusion, in other words, anything but 'complex'. And we wouldn't need to employ two Handicappers instead of just the one we had a couple of years ago.

Pete Cook

Highs & Lows



Well, actually the title should be just 'lows' given the events of the past week. If anyone needs to understand the immense pressure that's involved in training a top horse, just have a look through the harness media accounts of the recent demise (thankfully not terminal in all cases) of Chicago Bull, Lazarus and Monbet.

I've always been a bit sceptical of the old saying that only the good horses get hurt, and while I still retain that scepticism based on the fact that we only hear about the problems associated with the well-known equines, maybe there is some truth in the theory that the best put so much into their racing that the pressure they put on their bodies can cause more damage than those who, well, aren't as good.

All of the aforementioned horses are trained by people recognised as some of the best in the business, and yet even their expertise can't prevent these living creatures that we all admire and love, succumbing to the quirks and whims of Mother Nature. How do we retain any form of sanity?

On a totally different matter, when the likes of Mr.X and Mr.Y were excluded from entering a racecourse back in September following the Operation Inca raids, the RIU issued a media release and posted that information on their website. Interesting to note that, following that decision being overturned by the JCA, there has been a deafening silence apart from a "we accept the JCA ruling". Maybe it should be noted that drivers get credit for admitting they have made a mistake.

Pete Cook

National Council October 2018



The Trainers & Drivers National Council met recently in Christchurch, and, as usual, a large range of issues were discussed.

Progress on a new system of sulky insurance, and the employment and training of Clerks of the Course was still on-going, if rather slowly, while the methods of paying trial driving fees in the two Islands were compared. The Northern scheme of monthly accounts was considered far preferable to the almost primitive paying of cash still prevalent in the South. It was hoped that the imminent establishment of a Racing Bureau in Canterbury would improve this. The number of trainers using on-line nominations was growing nationwide, and it was planned that withdrawals, driver notifications and stable returns would soon be built into the system.

Chair Rob Lawson outlined the proposed restructuring of the HRNZ Board and, while he argued against the Association losing its' representation, he acknowledged that it was vitally important to have the best people on the Board, as opposed to those who were simply there by right. When the final make-up had been settled on, a Special General Meeting would be held in March with a view to having the new Board in place after next year's Annual Conference. Other matters surrounding HRNZ to be discussed included the retirement of Edward Rennell, with those present agreeing that he would be difficult to replace, disappointment at the scrapping of the 'Race Fields' legislation, and other aspects of the Messara Report. It was felt that the latter document would be the subject of much political influence and many of the statements and proposals, particularly around track closures, were based on incorrect or lack of information.

As usual, the subject of handicapping had an airing, with general satisfaction with the current situation. Ken Barron outlined a couple of items that were being presented to the Handicapping Committee by Jason Broad, concerning two year old racing and Junior Driver concessions. Both were supported by the meeting. There was a call for the reasons behind discretionary handicapping to be published, to allow better understanding of some of those decisions.

New Council member Geoff Knight reported on matters pertaining to the Otago/Southland Branch, including high cobalt level charges, the high standard of Cadets and Juniors in the area, and a competition to encourage better adherence to the whip use Rules. Following discussion with the local starter, it had been decided that the mobile arms would be left extended in the event of a false start, so that any keen horses could be better controlled. Geoff also outlined aspects of the Craig Ferguson case and suggested that, due to the unusual circumstances, it was unlikely that charges would be laid, which has subsequently proved to be correct.

Ken Barron once again expressed concern at the lack of support for Greater Canterbury Branch meetings, possibly due to the proximity and easy access to HRNZ. It was planned to experiment with requesting submissions from licence-holders prior to calling a meeting, and then inviting those behind them to speak. Obviously Operation Inca was in the minds of the local Industry, with various rumours and scenarios circulating. The meeting discussed this, but little further could be done until the full details were revealed by the police and courts.

Todd MacFarlane advised that the Auckland TC had a policy of referring queries to the Branch, and he and Derek Balle were maintaining a good relationship with the Club through the Programming Committee. He felt that both programming and track maintenance had improved markedly in recent times as a result. The driving mentor scheme was working well, and driving days to enhance skills had been staged, with assistance from both older and younger drivers.

Those present expressed disappointment at the continuing regularity of charges under the whip rule, and that blaming the rule was no excuse. It was suggested that there should be harsher penalties for the small number of repeat offenders, should they be charged 3, 4, or 5 times. A suggestion that the RIU were considering the introduction of a rule banning speaking between drivers on track was met with strong opposition, and a certain amount of ridicule.

Rob Lawson called for an improvement in the conduct and behaviour of licence-holders stating that what used to be acceptable, was no longer, and saying that a more professional attitude was required from licence-holders. While the meeting agreed with these sentiments, there was also a call for a similar improvement from some RIU officials, for example the notification to trainers of steadily rising cobalt levels, instead of allowing them to go over the allowed threshold, then laying charges.

Issues surrounding the Cadet Scheme were discussed, with Todd MacFarlane reporting a good relationship with the Northern scheme personnel, and help from younger license-holders. Jamie Gameson outlined the need for cadets to qualify under the ITO scheme, and felt that it was up to trainers to teach their staff the basic hands-on skills, similar to an apprenticeship. The meeting agreed that it was necessary for the cadets to show an eagerness to learn, and to recognise that the majority of these young people were not academically strong.

Pete Cook

Greater Canterbury AGM 2018



Once again, a disappointing crowd assembled recently for the Greater Canterbury Branch Annual General meeting.

Chair Ken Barron felt that the current handicapping system was now generally accepted, with most of the changes from the original simple plan having been altered or removed. He voiced concern at the influence that

the HRNZ Handicappers had on decisions made by the Sub-Committee Jason Broad was to present amendments to the next Sub-Committee meeting involving two year olds, to offset the recent drop off of numbers in that age group. Colin DeFilippi felt that there should be a limit to how low a highly rated horse should be allowed to drop back, so that horses with limited ability were not having to race against those who had won a large number of races e.g. Highland Reign. It was agreed that there were still issues surrounding programming and the discretionary influence of the Handicappers. Mark Jones questioned whether consideration was being given to allowing Junior Concessions for all races.

Various aspects of the Messara Report were discussed, including proposed track closures and the selling of the TAB. Those present felt that much of what was outlined in the report had been done without the necessary background investigation, and it would be interesting to see how much of it came to fruition.

Concern was once again voiced at the lack of horsemanship skills being shown by Cadet Scheme graduates. Ken Barron felt that this may be due to the influence of the government ITO policies, which took preference over hands on and practical experience. It was reported that senior horsemen had offered their services to help in this regard but these offers seem to have been rejected. This matter would be referred to the National Council.

Various aspects of Operation Inca were discussed, including the involvement of the RIU in police interviews, the part that the Minister of Racing played in instigating the inquiry, the costs involved, and the accuracy and flaws in a number of the allegations.

Concern was expressed at the recent cases of excessive cobalt levels, which seemed to be due to no fault of the trainers. Once again, the publication, or access to, levels was requested, so that situations that amounted to entrapment could be avoided in the future. This matter will be referred to the National Council.

Various incidents concerning starting procedures were discussed.

Pete Cook

#### Truck Lengths



The Association has been made aware of a possible issue with the length of horse floats. Apparently new regulations have been introduced which affect the carrying of carts on the back of floats and, due to this, it may be necessary for them to be transported in a separate vehicle to race meetings.

I know this sounds rather vague and almost strange, but it might become an issue with floats being checked, in particular those travelling through Amberley on the way to Kaikoura in a couple of

weeks. I understand that transport operators are investigating and attempting to clarify the new regulations, but in the meantime all we can do is be cautious.

Pete Cook

## Annual General Meeting



# MEETING NOTICE!

Pete Cook

The Greater Canterbury Branch is holding its' Annual General Meeting next Tuesday 9 October in the restaurant at the Yaldhurst Hotel commencing at 2pm. Finger food will be provided, so don't have a big (if any) lunch!

All license-holders are welcome to attend.

## End of an Era



At a time when harness racing is in a state of flux, another grenade was tossed into the mix with the announcement from Edward Rennell that he was standing down from his position as CEO of HRNZ in December.

Having been in the position for as long as most can remember, it will seem rather odd to not see his face and words, or hear his voice commenting on various happenings, but there is one thing for sure, Edward has given his all to the role while he's been there. Unlike many CEO's, the organisation he heads does not employ the people it governs and represents, the likes of trainers, owners and breeders. Not only that, but with HRNZ being made up of Clubs, trying

to please, placate or satisfy everyone involved is simply an impossibility.

Despite that, Edward has always presented a reasoned, positive and, when needed, unflappable (at least on the surface) persona, through some pretty difficult and sometimes rocky, times in the Industry. Of course he's been criticised, what CEO hasn't, but through it all he has quietly and efficiently gone about his job with an unquestionable passion, and genuine caring that will be a lasting legacy. Sometimes he has drawn comment that he spends too much time listening to those who ring or approach him personally to air their opinions, something that many CEO's would not put up with. Like I said, he was never going to please everybody.

Never one to seek publicity, I know, just through my dealings with him, that there have been literally countless times that he has helped industry participants in difficulty or with problems. These actions have never been made public, giving the impression to some that he has been inactive, which could not be further from the truth. You only need to read the press release put out by Harness Racing Australia following the announcement that Edward was stepping down ([http://www.harness.org.au/media-room/news-article/?news\\_id=38341](http://www.harness.org.au/media-room/news-article/?news_id=38341)) to understand the extremely high regard that he was held in by his fellow administrators, both here and overseas.

In my opinion, Harness Racing in this Country has been unbelievably well served by Edward Rennell, and it will be interesting to see how his successor approaches the job, and whether he or she can garner the same respect in the job from our often fickle industry. It won't be easy.

Pete Cook

## Combined Canterbury Awards



Despite the obvious ‘elephant in the room’, the recent Canterbury Combined Harness Awards night seemed to be a resounding success, the positivity of the gathering surprising even the organising committee, of which I am a part.

While the feedback received at the Methven races the following day was complimentary, it seems that there are some who think the

function should have been postponed. Some of these people are no doubt those of the opinion that those currently under a cloud are innocent until proven guilty. I can say categorically that there was no consideration given whatsoever to cancelling the event, why should the rest of the Industry be deprived of a good night out? What would such action achieve?

The other point of discussion by some who failed to attend, but are quick to criticise, apparently focuses on some of the winners of the awards. From the inaugural event, it was made clear that our awards would be made not necessarily to the premiership winners but to those who had achieved some results above expectations during the previous season. Unlike other regions, as the best human participants in the game are almost always based in Canterbury, it would be totally pointless handing them an award that would simply be an add-on to the one they receive at the National Awards ceremony.

As for not awarding a Driver award this year, we were somewhat blindsided by events just prior to the night, and after some deliberation, it was decided that, sooner than cause embarrassment to various parties, no award would be given out. I won’t go into any further detail, other than to advise that the decision was not made lightly and, even with the gift of hindsight, I am certain the right call was made.

Those who take pleasure in sniping from without, maybe you might come along next year and find out for yourself what you’re missing out on.

Pete Cook

Anthony MacDonald National Seminars - September 2018

**Harness Racing New Zealand Proudly Presents**  
**ANTHONY MACDONALD**  
FREE NATIONAL SEMINARS, SEPTEMBER 2018

**INTRODUCTION**

Harness Racing New Zealand is thrilled to announce that Canadian harness racing trainer and showman Anthony MacDonald will visit New Zealand next month.

Best known as the founder of the national ownership operation The Stable, MacDonald has been a pioneer in the industry for many years, and his seminars are a must-attend event for anyone involved in the industry.

Each seminar is a day-long event, with a focus on the business of harness racing. MacDonald will share his expertise on a wide range of topics, including breeding, training, and ownership. He will also discuss the latest trends in the industry and offer his insights on the future of the sport.

The seminars are a fantastic opportunity for anyone involved in the industry to learn from one of the most successful trainers in the world. They are also a great chance to network with other industry professionals and to build your own business.

Don't miss out on this incredible opportunity. Book your spot today!

**WIDE NOW**

Anthony MacDonald is a multi-talented professional. He is a successful trainer, showman, and businessman. He has won numerous awards and has been inducted into the Hall of Fame. He is also a passionate advocate for the industry and has worked tirelessly to promote the sport.

His seminars are a testament to his expertise and his dedication to the industry. They are a must-attend event for anyone involved in the industry.

Book your spot today!

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A free counselling service  
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Should any of our members require counselling or simply someone to speak to, you can contact Andrew McKerrow locally on 029 7712398, or refer to the link on this site. We understand that several people have already availed themselves of this opportunity, so don't hesitate to seek help if required.

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## Dark Days

The happenings of the last couple of weeks have been difficult to comprehend for any follower of harness racing, and things aren't going to get better for a long time, if ever.

As for the allegations of the last few days surrounding Industry participants, having refused requests for media interviews, the Association is not going to comment on a matter being dealt with by police. Having said that, if these people are found guilty, they have ruined their own lives, that of their families, and affected every single person in the close knit harness community.....all for the sake of their selfish greed and a few dollars. You sort of want it to be a dream, but sadly it isn't.

Anyway, I had planned to write about the Messara Report this week, even though it all but ignored the existence of harness racing in its' pages. Not surprising I suppose when it was revealed that our Minister of Thoroughbreds....oops I mean Racing had, despite claims to the contrary, given a clear mandate that the gallopers were to be the main thrust of the report's findings. I suppose we shouldn't be surprised, given the very public financial backing Mr. Peters received from the monied brigade in the Waikato to get into Parliament, let alone Deputy prime Minister, despite no-one actually voting for him. But don't get me started on the farcical MMP voting system!

Of course in his speeches, including the second thought one at Cambridge when he was informed by myself and probably others, that there was a race meeting on at the same time and in the same city as his big show, the Minister of T's reassured everyone that the other two codes would be better off, although details of how that would eventuate were sketchy to say the least.

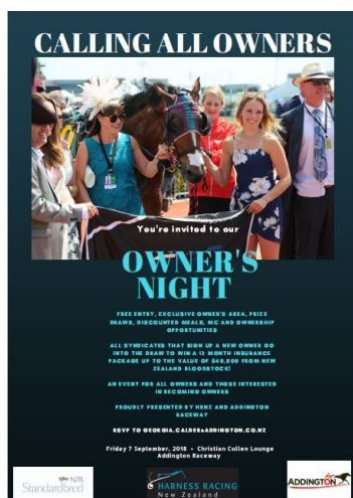
From subsequent reports it appears that Mr.Messara was pretty sketchy in his research into Club situations and tracks closures of anywhere South of Palmerston North. What a surprise. The whole thing smacks of Third World politics.

There is obviously a lot of water still to flow under the bridge before anything concrete happens, all harness racing can realistically do is sit back and watch developments. In both situations.

Like I said, dark days.

Pete Cook

## Addington Owners Night



Click on image to open the full poster

## Not A Good Sign



I'm presuming that most of you will have received an official invitation from our Racing Minister like this:

Minister of Racing, Rt Hon Winston Peters, invites all interested members of the New Zealand racing industry to a public meeting at 6pm on Thursday 30 August at Claudelands Conference Centre in Hamilton, where John Messara's report on the New Zealand racing industry will be publically released.

Mr Peters will deliver a speech followed by a question and answer session from the floor.

Sounds good, we've all been waiting for this, all except the Minister's financial supporters and thorough-bred mates who, I'll wager, would have been given time to digest it, and make their submissions on what he should do about it.

But wait, there is a slight problem with the timing, a Thursday evening – isn't there a harness race meeting on? Well, yes there is, and not only that, it's happening just down the road from Claudelands, at the Cambridge Raceway!

An error by his office, or a sign of how much interest he has in the future of harness racing? I guess we'll find out next week.

Pete Cook

## Daffodil Racedays 2018



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(<https://www.cancersocietyhbonlineshop.com>) to donate and purchase a daffodil to the Cancer Society direct.

## Greater Canterbury Branch Meeting July 2018



Ken Barron presided over a recent Greater Canterbury Branch Committee meeting, which was also attended by Peter Jensen, Peter Larkin, Andrew Morris and Brian Rabbitt.

The 1980m start point at Addington had been trialled for 3 meetings and there had been no negative responses. There had also been a good distribution of winners from all sorts of draws. Peter Jensen advised that, unless any problems surfaced on the final night of the trials, that he would settle on the 1980m as being the future distance, including next year's Harness Jewels. Andrew Morris

advised that, should it become the norm, HRNZ would adjust track records accordingly.

Peter Jensen advised that progress is being made in establishing a racing bureau in Canterbury. Some concern has been expressed over independence should Addington run the Bureau, and he understood those concerns, however he felt these could be resolved to the benefit of the Industry as a whole and its future sustainability. Ken Barron described the current situation as a 'hotch-potch' with horses being nominated for multiple meetings, and fields for the Friday meetings being decimated when trainers pulled out in favour of racing on the Sunday. He called for acceptances for the Friday meeting to be finalised before the nominations for the Sunday meeting are put online, so that connections had to make a choice of whether to race or not. This received some support, however Michael Heenan expressed concern that it could disadvantage the Sunday clubs who could lose races. Peter Jensen agreed to discuss the nomination and acceptance times with B. Rabbitt. Andrew Morris stated that the aim of HRNZ was to run as many races as possible regardless of the venue, and questioned whether the current situation was such a big problem. Ken Barron and Brian Rabbitt questioned why trainers would enter 50 more horses for a meeting at Rangiora where the stakes were \$30k less than Addington. Peter Jensen expressed disappointment that local trainers would travel to Oamaru and, particularly Forbury, for lower stakes instead

of supporting the local clubs.

The change to readmitting Amateur Drivers races into the Met Multiplier scheme, albeit with conditions, was welcomed and this should see more horses qualify in the coming season. Mark Jones offered congratulations to the NZMTC on this initiative, and for only reducing the bonus by \$500 to \$7000 despite facing financial pressure for a larger reduction. He feels that more and more of his owners were expressing interest in chasing the bonus.

Kevin Townley led a call for more 2600m mobiles to be programmed at Addington, instead of the 1980's, so that trainers had choices. Mark Jones suggested that the common argument for sprint races made it easier on the horses to back up, is more in the minds of trainers, than based on facts.

There was lengthy discussion over various aspects of the points handicapping system. These included a proposal that points be awarded to placed maidens, (not supported), and the current use of discretionary handicaps (not supported).

Peter Larkin distributed copies of a proposed preferential barrier draw grid for the Ashburton track. Ken Barron was supported in suggesting that the best horse should be given number one on the second row, theoretically behind the lowest rated horse. Statistics showed that by far the least successful draws on smaller tracks were 13 and 14. The following set up was suggested in ranking order, highest to lowest: 10/14/13-11/9-1. Mark Jones called for the introduction of a standard grid for the whole Country.

The meeting agreed that the number of horses of two year olds racing this season had reduced significantly. Various reasons for this were put forward, and possible solutions were discussed.

Pete Cook

Financial Freedom - What it really is and how to attain it...

"A few spaces left for next Monday - Book now

Pete Cook"



# Financial Freedom

What it really is and how to attain it



Most of us are on a path of financial stress and frustration despite our best efforts. This seminar is packed with highly specialised information on financial freedom, and is a life changing experience for those desiring to better their financial life. It will dispel many of the myths around creating financial freedom, and you will leave with a specific understanding of what financial freedom is for you, as well as a detailed step by step strategy to for attaining it.

Topics covered include what is financial freedom, what is the difference between the road to financial frustration and the road to financial freedom, why you keep falling short of your financial goals and what can you do to change your direction, how to improve your business results, as well as a number hidden keys to financial success.

Run in conjunction with the Canterbury Branch of the Trainer & Drivers Association

**Date:** Monday 6<sup>th</sup> August

**Time:** 5.30pm

**Venue:** Harness Racing NZ building, First Level, 17 Birmingham Drive, Middleton

**Cost:** \$75 (Actual cost is \$150 per person but HRNZ are happy to cover half of this cost)

**RSVP:** Monday 30<sup>th</sup> July to Peter Cook e: [peteceec@gmail.com](mailto:peteceec@gmail.com) Ph: 03-343-3713 or

Natalie Gameson e: [natalie@hrnz.co.nz](mailto:natalie@hrnz.co.nz) m: 021-936-155

Limited to the first 30 people.

Drinks and finger food will be provided.

## Another Beat Up



Hopefully most of you don't bother reading anything that Martin Van Beynen writes about harness racing in the Christchurch Press, and hopefully most other people don't either. Just to refresh the memory, this is the guy who, eighteen months ago, claimed to have information from a 'reliable source' that there was race-fixing happening in our Industry. Sadly the editor felt that such drivel was worth a place on the front page – despite investigations by the police

and the RIU, which found not a shred of evidence that it was true.

Obviously a man who knows diddly-squat about harness racing and merely enjoys chucking dirt wherever he thinks it might stick, this week he spouted forth with his second ever article about the game, this time suggesting that it was riddled with sexism, following one isolated incident.

It was therefore most pleasing to read a rather more balanced article in the Otago Daily Times, written by Jonny Turner, that is based on facts and informed opinions, rather than sensationalism. It's well worth a read. [/www.odt.co.nz/sport/racing/top-females-say-sexism-not-problem-harness-racing](http://www.odt.co.nz/sport/racing/top-females-say-sexism-not-problem-harness-racing).

Harness racing, and indeed horse racing in general, is somewhat unique, in that these days males and females compete at the same level, and in the same contests, as opposed to other sports where they are usually separated. When an All Black slags off at a Springbok in the bottom of a scrum, is that racism, or is it just the adrenalin charged comment in the heat of the moment? I'm not suggesting for a moment that using foul language against a member of the opposite sex is acceptable, but to suggest that it is rife and the poor defenceless ladies don't sometimes give as good as they get, is simply naïve. Race driving is a high pressure situation and no place for shrinking violets who can't handle a bit of verbal cut and thrust. Those ladies out there, many of whom are leaders in their field, expect no special treatment and give none back.

Pete Cook

## Financial Freedom



The Greater Canterbury Branch has recently been approached by HRNZ to promote what is a valuable guide on how to run the financial side of both your life and/or your business. While you might think this is another of those seminars that waffle on and teach you nothing, the guy running it comes highly recommended by leading trainer Mark Jones, who described it as life changing. For the sake of the admission cost of \$75, that sounds like a pretty good deal, so don't miss out and register now, numbers are limited.

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HRNZ Board



It's only human nature to question and disagree with decisions made by people who decide the direction and future of the Industry that you are involved in, and it's no different with the HRNZ Board.

As has been illustrated numerous times in harness racing, what some think are brilliant ideas, others question the sanity and/or parentage of those who made them. An article I read the other day brought matters into perspective slightly, and I thought it relevant to share with those of you who aren't either informed or interested in such matters, much like me.

It was about directors fees that are apparently sky-rocketing in most walks of life. The Institute of Directors Chief Executive was quoted as saying that directors fees varied, with bigger listed companies attracting highly skilled and experienced directors. She advised that the upper level of fees for non-executive directors of the highest values companies was \$120k.

Apparently the median director's fee in this Country is \$44k, which took into account the lowest fees for non-profit organisations at \$25k.

Okay, you're asking, that's very interesting, but what the hell's it got to with harness racing. Just this, the guys who spend many, many hours trawling through agendas of HRNZ Board matters and attend countless meetings, are paid the princely sum of \$10k per annum.

Maybe we are pretty lucky to have passionate people who are willing to do the job for relative peanuts.

Pete Cook

Canterbury Combined Awards Dinner

Click on the image if you want a PDF copy



## Canterbury Combined Awards Dinner

**Saturday 15 September 2018.**

**6.30pm** pre-dinner drinks

**7.15pm** dinner and awards.

Silks Lounge – Addington Raceway  
Master of Ceremonies will be Mark McNamara – race caller extraordinaire!

**Tickets \$55 each  
Table of ten \$550**

Includes a superb buffet dinner, introductory drink and  
platters, interspersed with the presentation of Awards.

Numbers limited to 300

**To purchase tickets or for more information, contact**

**Noel Kennard 021 969 969, 347 9699,**

**email: [noel@goharness.co.nz](mailto:noel@goharness.co.nz)**

Awards Dinner bank account details 021266-0034800-00  
(please include your full name as a reference)

## Junior Drivers Opportunities



It's a bit difficult to fathom the thinking of some people in this game sometimes. This week saw the opportunity to line your horse up in an \$10k penalty-free race for Junior drivers at Addington, and the race attracted 6 nominations (one of which accepted for Forbury the night before). Not surprisingly the Club didn't run it.

There's a few things to take in here. There are more junior drivers in

Canterbury than any other part of the Country, yet the month of June has seen one, yes one, race programmed for them in their home area, (yet another reason why the Nelson and Marlborough Clubs should race in Canterbury). And it attracted six entries! There were four Canterbury horses accepted for the Forbury race, which, if they had gone for Addington, the race would have been run. The Otago area, including Oamaru, has seen seven, yes seven, races for junior drivers in the month of June, and all have attracted reasonable fields.

Next time I get someone bleating to me about the lack of opportunities for our young industry participants, guess how I'll be answering them.

Pete Cook

## It's All Happening



They reckon a week is a long time in politics, and it seems the same can be said about standard-bred yearling sales. Yes, there have been rumours doing the rounds about a shake-up in the way they are run in this Country, and obviously there have been a few dealings going on in the background, but to see the 'default' sales company PGG Wrightson be usurped virtually overnight by NZ Bloodstock, was a bit out of the blue.

I think it's fair to say that next year's round of sales will be run by NZB and them only, given that I believe all the PGG standard-bred staff have done an Elvis Presley and 'left the building', and the Karaka sales complex will no longer be available to them.

So what does this mean for our Industry? Obviously there is a lot more to come out yet, but the 'whispers' I'm hearing are, without exception, positive from all those involved in sales and breeding. How it will affect buyers and trainers, and how future Sales Series races will shape up, we will find out next year.

One thing is for sure, it seems beneficial that we can call on all the expertise and world-wide reputation that the new company has built up over the years, and given the direction that our 'beloved' Racing Minister is apparently trying to steer Mr Messara in, having an ally in NZ Bloodstock might be very handy.

Pete Cook

#### Sires Stakes Board Update May 2018



Due to a number of issues facing the Board which needed attention before the next regular meeting in November, we met again in May on the day of the Series Finals at Addington.

Included in discussions was a review of all the Boards' race series where different concepts were considered and, as a consequence, staff members were asked to work with HRNZ on small adjustments to some of the conditions of the new races.

From next season, the popular Harness 5000 for horses sired by stallions standing at below a fee of \$5000, will become the Harness 7000, so that the progeny of a number of new sires that are standing at an advertised fee of up to \$7000 can be eligible.

Also from next season, the Garrard's 3YO Sophomore event will carry conditions that exclude horses that have finished 1st, 2nd, or 3rd in Group One Races, or races that carry a stake of \$100,000 or more.

The Board is in continued discussions with Clubs regarding their funding models and contributions to Sires Stakes races.

In August, once all foal nominations for this year have been processed, the Sires Stakes Board will be conducting a survey of its' participants to gather opinions and feedback on the current racing programmes, as it looks towards the future landscape of Sires Stakes racing.

Pete Cook

But Wait...There's More



Missed out on selection for the Jewels or had no luck in the Sires Stakes, Nevele R Fillies Series, or the Yearling Sales Series? Well, good news, all is not lost for the season.

The Uncut Gems will be held at Alexandra Park on Friday 15 June and present further earning opportunities to

those horses nominated for Sires Stakes, Nevele R Fillies Series or NZ Yearling Sales Series. A full list of series and conditions can be found on the NZ Sires Stakes Board website.

The Sires Stakes Board wishes to remind Owners & Trainers that nominations for the Uncut Gems at Alexandra Park close on Monday, June 11th, 2018 @ 11:00 a.m.

1. Four Year Old & Older Entires & Geldings Classic 2200 mobile
2. Four Year Old & Older Trotters Classic 2700 special handicap
3. Four Year Old & Older Mares Classic 2200 mobile

This year \$15,000 worth of bonuses will be available with the first eligible Yearling Sales horse to finish in each race receiving \$5,000. This does not form part of the Stake & will be paid by the Sires Stakes Board to the owner(s).

Horses that have won a Group One race, or a race worth \$55,000 or more, are ineligible.

Horses that ran first, second or third in the 2018 Harness Jewels are also ineligible

The full conditions are available at [www.nzsiresstakes.co.nz](http://www.nzsiresstakes.co.nz) or ring Martin (03 964 1186) or Doreen (03) 544 8820 to confirm your horses eligibility.

Pete Cook

Passings



May 2018 has been a sad month for Harness Racing in this Country with the passing of a number of industry participants, personalities and icons. While there is an obvious inevitability about such things, it still brings it home how many people who we have watched and been involved with over the years, are now no longer with us.

Last week we lost one of, and possibly the last, of the great 'old school' trainers in Jack Carmichael who, while I didn't know him well,

inadvertently had a part to play in my introduction to harness racing. Having come from England in the mid-sixties, I knew nothing about the game until a school mate took me along to what (I think) was an equalisator meeting at Addington one Saturday. I have no idea what the occasion was, but I do remember seeing a horse called Chequer Board, driven by Jack, win the feature race, and he became my first favourite. I've even got a black and white photo of him returning to the birdcage after winning the Easter Cup not long after that. Wow, those were the days when young fellows would bother taking photos of the racehorses they idolised! Hooked for life!

What few would know was that Jack Carmichael was instrumental, along with good mate Derek Jones, in establishing the Trainers & Drivers Association, and was in fact the Patron of the organisation, when those sort of titles were in vogue.

Like many of the other icons of harness racing (or trotting as they knew it), he has left us with amazing memories, and will live on in the history of our wonderful sport.

Pete Cook

## Greater Canterbury Branch Report May 2018



The Greater Canterbury Branch Committee met recently, with Addington CEO Peter Jensen in attendance, to discuss matter pertaining to Addington and other industry matters

Peter advised that the new 1980m start point was to be trialled during the July race meetings at the raceway and if supported by drivers, would become standard. The preferential draw grid was discussed and was considered to be out-dated, with the best horses simply leading from wide draws and winning. An update of the barrier draw statistics would be carried out, a suggestion being that the highest rated horse should be drawn one on the second row.

Various issues surrounding starts and starters were discussed, and Ken Barron confirmed that the RIU planned to hold a meeting of all starters shortly, with horsemen present. Apparently the Canterbury region had the worst record for starting races late, although this could be a reflection of large fields. Matters that would be raised at the starters meeting included a need for consistency across the Country, a requirement for horses to trial from a stand prior to racing, a standard policy of whether horses were required to stand or walk in, so trainers could teach them to do one or the other, and a call for better communication between starters and drivers. Those present acknowledged that some drivers can cause issues for starters, and agreed they should be dealt with by the RIU.

The committee suggested to Addington that all maiden races be run for a \$10K (plus the \$1,500 bonus), and that they direct the extra money towards other races.

Peter Jensen advised that, due to a lack of numbers, it was the intention of Addington to run only one trial meeting next season, that being the Cup Trials in November. Trainers will continue to be able to use the track and facilities for private workouts, provided they arrange this ahead of time with John Denton. Ken Barron repeated a call for the abolition of trials, with qualifiers to be held prior to workouts.

Ken was supported when he expressed disappointment at the lack of handicaps allocated to any runners in this year's Easter Cup, with all horses starting off the front. This was in contrast to other races staged in the region. Those present agreed this was detrimental to lower graded horses, would deter some from entering, and encourage overseas sales.

The meeting strongly supported the establishment of a Canterbury Racing Bureau, adamant that it should be in place by 1 August. Peter Jensen confirmed that Addington supported the concept and that he would be working with HRNZ and the other clubs in Canterbury to facilitate this arrangement.

The meeting felt that the winning percentage for any race should be 55%. This could be achieved by basing the stake on field size of 12 instead of 14. Peter Jensen agreed to review but advised that there would be no change for the 18-19 season as budgets are in place.

Discussion took place on various matters surrounding owners at Addington, including difficulty for owners in gaining stable passes, what should be given to winning owners, the success of the stables BBQ, the price of drinks in Spectators, and the use of the Spectators card, and whether this card should be sent to all owners. Peter agreed to investigate the various options and report back.

Ken raised the subject of Amateur driver's races being ineligible for the Met Multiplier bonus. Various options were discussed, including a reduction of stakes for these races to \$8k and eligibility for the bonus, providing 10 of the 15 races were in professional events. Peter Jensen advised the Met Multiplier bonus pay-outs were well above budget last season and, although numbers could be less this season, they would still be above budget. A reduction in the size of the bonus was suggested by Ken Barron if this would allow the amateurs to be included.

Peter advised that Addington stake levels would remain unchanged for next season. A suggestion was made by the committee that if, as in the current season, some lead up races for the NZ Cup failed to attract sufficient numbers to make them viable (7 or less), the stake could be lowered.

Another suggestion was to pay higher winning stake levels to higher rated horses when they won races, to encourage connections of these horses to retain and race them.

Mark Jones suggested that, to boost numbers at Addington, both nominations and acceptances for Friday meetings should close on Mondays, and nominations for Sunday meetings close on Tuesday, so that connections were unable to compare options prior to accepting. A proposal that a rating limit of, say R55, should be placed on races staged by country clubs was supported by the meeting. All agreed that the establishment of a Canterbury Bureau would go a long way to alleviating many of the current problems. A call was made for more maiden and one win only trotter's races to be programmed for Addington.

Mark also called for the abolition of early nomination fees for major races, considering that it could conceivably eliminate horses who don't nominate, but improve sufficiently in the meantime. An option for the time frame of these payments to be reduced was suggested. Peter Jensen advised that the board had recently committed to continuing with nomination fees for the NZ Cup, Dominion, NZ Derby and NZ Oaks next season. After considering feedback, the board has agreed to refunding first and second withdrawal payments (not nomination fees) for any horses on the ballot for these races, as long as they start on the same race day/night in a race for which they are eligible and selected for.

The Branch would like to thank Peter Jensen for attending another frank and mutually beneficial meeting, and we are confident an excellent relationship will be on-going.

Pete Cook

#### Northern Branch Initiatives



As previously reported, the Northern Branch of the Trainers & Drivers Association has recently appointed a Youth Development Officer, Scott Phelan. Reports and feedback have so far been very positive, with Scott providing assistance to Junior Drivers on and off the track, to enhance their skill levels and demeanour.

A number of race situations that had the potential to attract fines or suspensions have been, thanks to experienced representation and assistance, resulted in only recommendations or warnings. At the same time, valuable lessons have been learnt, along with guidelines on how to handle the stress of being involved in a judicial hearing.

Apart from carrying out duties on race and trial days, Scott has attended and helped in running Cadet and Junior Field Days, reviewed the drives of Juniors on a weekly basis and passed on advice, assisted with workshops on various aspects of the Industry, and is in the process of engaging with all Juniors to discuss their goals on a one to one basis.

The establishment of the role would not have been possible without the financial support and sponsorship of the NI Owners Association, the NI Amateur Drivers Association, and HRNZ. It is the intention of the Branch to grow and evolve this position.

Other recent moves by the Branch include Chair Todd Macfarlane and Committee member Derek Balle being recruited onto the Auckland Trotting Club Racing Committee, and the staging of a Junior Drivers series at the Waikato – Bay of Plenty meetings over the Christmas period. These consisted of 6 races on grass and all – weather tracks, at a cost of \$2300. The Branch provided \$550 worth of Rebel Sports vouchers for the overall winner and place-getters in the Series.

Pete Cook

#### National Council Meeting Report April 2018 Pt.2



Chairman Rob Lawson presided over the recent meeting of the National Council, and began by reporting on recent happenings from the HRNZ Board point of view. These included various political issues, matters of governance, and consideration being given to the size of the Board. A good deal had been reached surrounding the new HRNZ building in Birmingham Drive (we won't be able to refer to happenings in Lincoln

Road anymore), involving a competitive rental agreement, and an option to buy the building currently occupied by a long term tenant.

There was concern that despite claims to the contrary by the RIU, trainers with Cobalt levels that were unusually high but under the threshold, were not being advised of their situation, as was the case with the recent Dalgety and Brosnan cases. The meeting agreed that this was bordering on entrapment, as trainers had no way of being aware of high levels and taking remedial action. Other matters touched on included the Harness Jewels, and the far too long awaited establishment of a Canterbury Racing Bureau.

Employment issues surrounding Clerks of the Course were still on-going, along with a revision of the structure of sulky insurance.

On the subject of venue rationalisation, Rob Lawson outlined a joint venture proposal currently being investigated, which would see a purpose built harness track established between Auckland and Hamilton, with a race track and training facilities. This would be financed by the sale of the Cambridge and Pukekohe complexes, and had the approval of the Racing Board.

Ken Barron was supported when he questioned the wisdom of racing in the Autumn and Winter on the West Coast, Nelson and Blenheim, when the holiday crowds that these Clubs enjoyed during

December and January were absent. A promised substantial rise in TAB and Trackside costs may well result in the viability of those meetings coming under scrutiny.

Other matters discussed following on from the last meeting, included agreement that the new Whip Use Rules were working well, confirmation that driving standards of Juniors in the North had improved recently (see the appointment of a Youth Development Officer detailed in next weeks' update), and the difficulty of selling a horse to Australia that had won a race carrying a stake of \$15k or more, making it an M1 there.

Following discussion on various fees for drivers, the meeting decided that an application for an increase in the race driving fee of \$5 would be submitted to HRNZ, the first increase for two years.

Various issues surrounding the Sires Stakes series were discussed, and a number of possible changes to the Handicapping system were aired. The latter would be considered at an upcoming meeting of the HRNZ handicapping Sub-Committee.

Reports were tabled from the three Branches, with Gordon Lee confirming that racing in the Otago/Southland region was progressing well, although he had received some negative reaction to the dropping of handicapping points for second and third place-getters. The meeting agreed that, as shown on the recent Box Seat question time programme, there would always be varying opinions on any handicapping system.

Ken Barron reported on good liaison with the new Addington CEO Peter Jensen, and again stressed the urgent need for the establishment of a Canterbury Racing Bureau, failing to understand why this had been delayed for so long.

Todd MacFarlane described a number of initiatives being undertaken by the Northern Branch and these will be covered in detail in next week's update. He wished to acknowledge the contribution made to the industry by the soon to be departing Richard Brosnan, both on and off the track.

Rob Lawson was unanimously re-appointed to the position of the Association's representative on the HRNZ Board.

Pete Cook

#### National Council Meeting Report April 2018 Pt.1



During the recent meeting of the Trainers & Drivers Assn. National Council, there were two 'guest appearances'.

The first was HRNZ Veterinary Advisor Andrew Grierson who discussed various matters involving drug use and withholding times. He advised that most of our Rules are based on those used in most other Countries, including the One Clear day Rule, the introduction of which he supported, and felt was important for the credibility of our Industry. This involves the prohibition of any substance being administered more than one day prior to racing, eg. nothing after midnight on Wednesday, if racing on Friday night. Various cases and conditions were discussed including two day meetings, where permission could be sought from

the RIU to administer the day between races if deemed necessary. While the meeting had reservations, it was acknowledged that at least there was consultation prior to such rules being

introduced, unlike Australia. Other issues covered included Cobalt, Kava (a sedative for highly strung horses), the electronic recording of medication, and Lasix, the introduction of which Andrew did not support, and advised there was increasing pressure for its' ban for racing on in the US and Canada. The control of supplements and vitamins being sold by any other than vets was governed by the MPI, the publication of withholding times was refused by the Veterinary Assn. despite requests from Andrew, however he suggested that when using substances on the list it would be wise to add another 24 hours on the recommended time on the label.



The second of the guests was the Chief Harness Racing Steward, Nick Ydgren who joined the meeting for a general discussion. On the subject of whip use, he advised that the use of the word excessive should cease to be included in reports, and gave an assurance that would happen. He advised of a proposal by NZTR and the RIU that the JCA panel members not be required to be present on race-day, as a cost saving measure for the Industry. This idea was not supported by those present, who felt that the current system was working well, and doing

away with the JCA would revert to the old (and Australian) system, which created numerous credibility and perception issues. Other discussion on this topic included the use of witnesses, and the pressure this put on individuals, the large number of appeals in Australia, and the difficulty of explaining to owners who have become accustomed to the two tier judicial hearing structure. It was planned to introduce a remit to the Annual Conference clarifying the difference between easing down and shifting ground (pushing out). This was questioned by Gordon Lee, given the character of our 'contact racing', and he suggested that it was time for a complete overhaul of the current driving rules. In answer to a question regarding the need for the 'driving in a manner likely to cause interference' rule, Nick maintained that it was rarely used, but provided a tool to cover unusual incidents not covered by the current rules. He asked whether unruly horses should be allowed to go up to the gate when it was possible, but this was not supported, the feeling being that they were put on the unruly to stay out of everyone else's way, and the onus was on the drivers of these horses to position them correctly. On the matter of Starters, all present called for a consistent method of starting across the Country, suggesting that there were faults with drivers and starters. The practice of one of the starters 'mixing it up' was heavily criticised, along with special treatment being afforded to unruly horses. There was also a call for more communication from some starters to drivers. Nick agreed to arrange a meeting of all starters, and horsemen would be invited to attend. Other issues discussed included scratching penalties, some driver's disrespectful conduct in hearings, which was denounced by all present, and the ten year age limit on helmets, the validity of which was questioned by Gordon. A system of recording the time of when helmets were purchased was to be investigated by the RIU.

Part two next week.

Pete Cook

A True Legend of the Sport



With the National Council meeting on this week, there isn't much to write about yet, (report next week), however I thought it was appropriate to acknowledge one of the true legends and gentlemen

of harness racing in this Country as he announces his 'semi-retirement' and move across the ditch.

For many decades Richard Brosnan has been part of the fabric of the game, from the time of his hey-day when his Kerrytown stable was capturing many of our major races, and his name was synonymous with some horse flesh that were, and still are, household names. Who can forget Bonnies Chance and No Response, and they were just the top of a large heap. Always a gentleman, and never scared to voice an opinion on Industry issues, Richard has given countless hours in administration, in an effort to better the lot of his fellow trainers and owners.

The Trainers & Drivers Assn. wishes to thank him and his family for all their efforts and thrills they have given us over the decades, and all the best for the future.

Pete Cook

#### Differing Views



Well done to the 'Box Seat' crew for putting together a very interesting group of question answering sessions by Industry luminaries. There were good ideas, interesting ideas, radical ideas, and the odd idea from the past.

What the programme vividly illustrated was, how on earth can those on the HRNZ Board, love them or hate them, make decisions that are going to please everyone. The various conflicting opinions voiced in the programme, some completely opposite and often regionally based, prove that whatever happens in the harness racing industry, some people are going to moan, and as we know, it's usually the moaners who get the most publicity. However, we live in a Country

where many things are governed by a democratic process, and this game is one of them. Perhaps it isn't the ideal way, and there are arguments to say that we would be better off with a 'Benevolent Dictator'. However at present, accepting this concept will go a long way to pulling everyone together for the sake the survival of harness racing in this Country.

Speaking of democracy, the Trainers & Drivers National Council is scheduled to meet next Friday, including attendances by HRNZ Vet advisor Andrew Grierson, and the RIU's Nick Ydgren. If anyone has any issue that they would like to be brought up at the meeting, don't hesitate to e-mail them to the website, and they will be treated in a democratic fashion.

Pete Cook

#### Racing Industry Review

At last, something concrete and beneficial coming out of the Minister of Racing, a review of our 'industry structures'.



While it's easy to throw stones at our current administrators, especially when they don't tend to see things the way you do, I have always had some sympathy for them, being hamstrung by an out-dated and rather poorly drafted Racing Act. How many other multi-million dollar industries

have to operate under strict guidelines that were conceived in the first couple of years of the century? If they did, how many would survive.

Yes there have been a succession of very average administrators in the top Racing Board positions in that time, (for the record, the Association does not include the current incumbent in that list) but the underlying problem is that, in all codes, the people who are tasked with running the Racing Industry in this Country, cannot make any major decisions without checking with the grass roots, many of whom have no experience in large business whatsoever. I'm sorry, but the old adage of a 'Conference of Clubs' should have gone out the window decades ago.

While I'm a bit wary of a Thoroughbred breeder conducting the review, hopefully he can take an independent look at the entire game and make some hard recommendations, and maybe we can make some serious progress into the future for the benefit of all concerned.

Pete Cook

### Change of Tactics



For those of you who don't have much of a life and like a good chuckle, I suggest you have a read of a few Stewards Reports on the Harness Racing Australia website. The best ones are those

surrounding the 'Change of Tactics' rule that they try to enforce over there.

Here's a couple of examples, believe it or not, from the same race:

Matthew Craven, driver of Vapar Jack, was questioned in relation to the tactics adopted during the early stages where Vapar Jack was driven forward to lead before surrendering that position racing around the first turn to Night Ninja. Mr Craven explained that he was aware that connections had advised an intention of a change of tactics for the gelding to be driven less aggressive, however added that once Flaming Lucky was a late scratching following that change being advised he felt that there was a lack of early gate speed from runners drawn to his inside. Mr Craven added that after assessing the gate speed shortly after the start he elected to drive Vapar Jack forward and was able to lead. Mr Craven further explained he was able to gain cover relatively quickly racing into the first turn when challenged by Night Ninja. Stewards recorded that comments of Mr Craven and in doing so were mindful that following the change of tactics being advised there was a late scratching and after viewing the replays with Mr Craven, it did appear that only one runner drawn to his inside had sufficient gate speed, that being They Wantano (barrier 1). The panel was also mindful that at the first available option Vapar Jack was able to gain cover when leading immediately after the start.

Ellen Tormey, driver of Night Ninja (barrier 5), was questioned in relation to the tactics adopted on this gelding during the early stages when Night Ninja was driven forward, when of recent times when drawn wide on the track Night Ninja had been restrained. Ms Tormey explained after allowing Night Ninja to come out it was the intentions to find a position in the running line, however shortly

after the start it appeared that Night Ninja would be unable to gain a position mid field. Ms Tormey explained that after it appeared that Night Ninja would be caught racing wide on the track in an endeavor to gain a position she elected to progress forward and was able to gain the lead racing around the first turn. Ms Tormey further added that following the scratching of runners to her inside this resulted in Night Ninja drawing barrier 5. In assessing the explanation of Ms Tormey and viewing the replays it was evident that Ms Tormey does not show vigour on her drive shortly after the start and allows Night Ninja to come across from barrier 5, it was further evident that Ms Tormey does look to her inside in an attempt to find a position mid field, however no positions eventuate. In assessing all these factors the comments of Ms Tormey were recorded as the panel were satisfied that there was no breach of the change of tactics rule.

Pretty much sums up in nutshell how daft the Rule is! Thankfully the Association has been assured that there is no appetite for the introduction of a similar statute on this side of the Tasman.

Pete Cook

Sires Stakes



Having been somewhat reluctant to take on the position of representing the Trainers & Drivers Assn. on the Sires Stakes Board, I left the first meeting I attended recently, with a far more positive attitude towards the organisation.

Particularly pleasing was the realisation that merely putting all resources into races for young horses was no longer acceptable, and, in my opinion, recent new incentives such as the 'Uncut Diamonds' series and more races for trotters, mark a significant step forward in the role of the Sires Stakes entity.

The following is a summary of some of the issues discussed at the recent meeting, put together by new Secretary, Martin Pierson.

#### Bonus System Attached to Uncut Gem Races for Sales Horses

- That a \$5,000 Bonus, on each of the 3 Uncut Gem Races, be paid to the first eligible Sales horse who has been paid both the Vendor and Purchaser payments (Level S & T), to finish with this bonus to be paid directly to the owner.

#### Sires Stakes Series for Trotting Fillies

- That a Sires Stakes 3YO Trotting Fillies race is to tentatively be programmed for the 2018/19 season for \$20,000 subject to Sponsorship, date placement & eligibility.

#### Office relocation

- The NZ Sires Stakes office will relocate to the new HRNZ premises on Birmingham Drive in mid May 2018 with contact numbers etc. remaining the same.

#### HRNZ I.T. Online

- Work is continuing with HRNZ to introduce an online NZ Sires Stakes payment system through My HRNZ but this could still be 12 months away.

#### Sires Stakes 3YO Rossland Races

- In conjunction with the Auckland Trotting Club and the HRNZ Handicapper, the NZ Sires Stakes Board is looking at enhancing these two races re dates and the ratings system.

Pete Cook

We need your input!



Massey University equine would like to improve its contribution to the equine industry. As key industry participants, Massey University is interested in your views on their past performance and to help them shape their future.

Members are invited to take part in this important consultation via the link below to an online survey. The survey will take

approximately 5 minutes to complete and will be open until 5pm Friday 13th April 2018.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MasseyEquineSurvey>

All comments made will be treated in strict confidence and a summary of results can be made available to you if you are interested.

If you have any questions, please contact Kylie Gibbard on 06 951 9189 or [k.gibbard@massey.ac.nz](mailto:k.gibbard@massey.ac.nz)

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#### Circuit Racing



Two or even three day circuit racing has been around for decades and is a traditional, and often integral, part of the season's calendar. The Christmas West Coast meetings are wonderfully patronised, although in recent years the horse numbers have dropped, and Nelson/Marlborough in January is similarly well supported.

Running these meetings when the majority of people are on holiday makes perfect sense, but can the same be said of holding a similar circuit in March or June?

Let's take a look at things from an Industry point of view. The recent Westport meeting had 113 horses accepted for the first day. Of those, a total of 6 are trained on the West Coast. That means the connections of 107 had to pay to transport their horses a sizeable distance, and cover the cost of accommodation for trainers for the two days (actually, in most cases 3 nights). An estimate of the

total would be about \$70 – 80,000, possibly more. That's apart from any extra expenses and workload to have their horses they leave at home worked and fed.

Then there's the Racing Board/TAB. From memory, (not infallible) the cost of getting their mobile Trackside unit and staff there and accommodating them runs to about \$30,000 for the two days. Oh yes, and don't forget the tote staff and RIU/JCA expenses.

Talking strictly from the head and not the heart, wouldn't it be better for the Industry if these meetings were held at Addington with its' permanent facilities, or if you wanted to retain a 'country' feel, Rangiora? A 'guesstimate' would be a reduction in costs of maybe two thirds.

I know there will be those screaming about the locals losing interest in harness racing if their meetings are taken away from the area, however there is absolutely no suggestion of moving the flagship events at Christmas, which is where they are apparently financially viable.

Here's an idea. How about the Racing Board paying for as many buses as it takes to transport the local enthusiasts to the Canterbury venue, and even chip in for accommodation. Whatever it cost, it would be a fraction of the current situation, and everyone would be catered for.

Pete Cook

Youth Development Officer



The North Island Branch has appointed Scott Phelan as Youth Development Officer for the region. The role has been created to assist the youth of the industry with their development and knowledge and act as a support role for any young person who may require assistance or advice.

Todd Macfarlane of the Branch explained that Phelan will be available for all youth in the industry on an open door approach. "There is a lot of talent out there and we want to help nurture them and help them be the best they can be," said Macfarlane. "Scott will be available in a support role at race meetings and trials and can be contacted at any time."

"He can also assist in enquires and view race videos, and if a rule has been breached he can also help explain what could have been done to help drivers learn from mistakes. The stipendiary stewards are also very supportive of Scott and we feel that this is a positive support base for cadets and young drivers and trainers."

"The Trainers and Drivers Association also would like to thank the North Island Amateur and North Island Owners Associations for their support financially in creating this role."

Anyone wishing to seek advice or support from Phelan is encouraged to contact him directly on 022-329-9455.

The Northern Harness Racing Cadets in conjunction with the North Island Branch of NZ Trainers & Drivers Association will also hold an Industry Field Day at Franklin Park Training Centre. This will be on Monday 26 March starting with lunch at 12 noon and the activities beginning at 12.30pm.

Both groups are encouraging the North Island harness trainers to send along their stable hands, cadets and junior drivers so they have the opportunity to gain knowledge from our industry leaders.

Speakers on the day will be Graeme Henley on pedigrees, Tony Grayling on stud duties from getting mares in foal until they are ready for the next step which is Yearling preparation. This topic will be covered by Logan Hollis and Shane Robertson. Brent Mangos and Steven Reid will part with their knowledge and opinions for selecting Yearlings to purchase and then following on Derek Balle and Owen Gillies will demonstrate how the breaking and gaiting process works. Syndication with ATC Syndicate Manager Andrew Jamieson will be the last topic on the day.

The day will have its share of fun along the way with quizzes, prizes and giveaways for those in attendance. Scott Phelan in his role as the Youth Development Officer along with a delegation of the North Island Trainers & Drivers will be there to co-ordinate and over-see the afternoon.

The North Island Trainers & Drivers have organised for an MVP Award for the 2017/18 season with a trip to leading trainer Gary Hall in Perth. This will be points based with all cadets and junior drivers eligible.

For any further information on the day contact Sally Waters the North Island Education & Training Co-ordinator on 027 494 2850.

Even the Best



If there was ever an example of the uncertainty of horse training, it has to be the recent run of ill-fortune experienced by the All Stars team.

Undisputedly the leading training set up in Australasia, sorting out the plans for their many superstar horses is almost as difficult as getting them ready for the respective races. However, as any owner or trainer knows, making long (or even

sometimes short) term plans for horses can be a task fraught with danger and disappointment.

At the end of last year, the big money races in Australia looked to be almost totally at the mercy of the All Stars horses, it was just a question of which one would be set for, and probably win, which event. Two months later, after a succession of injuries and a pesky and obviously virulent Aussie bug, those plans lay in tatters on the planning room floor, with hardly a single victory from the entire team.

With all the top grade knowledge, facilities and care involved in that stable, it brings home to us all that the creatures that we are all devoted to, and that make up the fabric of the sport/industry we love, are just that – creatures. Just like us mere mortal humans, they are susceptible to ills and setbacks, no matter how much effort is made to try and avoid them.

It's always been said that luck is essential on the track, but lack of it can make a huge difference even before we get as far as the races. If one or more of the All Stars horses hadn't caught the bug, you wouldn't need to be brave to say there could easily have been some very different results in major races since January 1.

Pete Cook

## Addington Meeting



Representatives from the Greater Canterbury Branch of the Association, along with other industry participants, met recently with the new Addington CEO, Peter Jensen for an exchange of views and information gathering.

Peter emphasised that he was there to listen to opinions of those present and that, while he would take them all into account, he could understandably give no guarantee that he would share those opinions and act on them.

A wide range of topics was covered, including race starters, programming and involvement in such by horsemen, and stake levels. Those present agreed that the Addington facility was underused, and in particular, the 'close down' for a month over Christmas and January was considered ridiculous by all. The idea of racing on Thursday nights for lower stakes was supported. There was a call for programming to cater for every horse every two weeks similar to the Southland model, and there was mixed feelings around the pros and cons of racing over 1950m and 2600m on a regular basis. There was also a call for some races catering for one win horses only within the rating system, so that these were not forced to race against horses that had multiple wins during their career. Also suggested, was horses only dropping back to a certain rating, which was apparently being investigated, and the need to cater for mares to prevent them from going overseas.

Other matters covered included the dire need for a Racing Bureau in Canterbury, the lack of post-race coverage of harness racing by Trackside compared to the thoroughbred code, and whether the promised big stakes being offered in Auckland would be attractive to local trainers.

Regarding the Addington complex, there was praise for the track surface, but criticism of the current driver's room, citing a lack of size and facilities.

Various aspects of the Met Multiplier were discussed, along with preferences for either a 1950m or 2000m start, the latter being preferred by most.

The forthright and frank meeting gave Peter a good indication of the feelings of local horsemen on various issues, some of which will be built into future decisions surrounding Addington raceway.

Pete Cook

## HORSE AMBULANCE TRUST



Every now and then, an idea or proposal emerges from the shadowy halls of the Racing Industry administration that makes you sit up and take notice, then think, what a great idea. The following is a great example of one of those:

Later this year the equine industry will be presented with a new evolution in horse care technology.

Thanks to the generosity of the equine industry, and also the efforts of

the New Zealand Horse Ambulance Trust (NZHAT), five custom built horse ambulances are on target to be rolled out by December.

The New Zealand Horse Ambulance Trust was established after meetings between vets, equine codes and the Racing Integrity Unit established that welfare outcomes for horses would be improved with the provision of appropriate custom built horse ambulances.

The Trust itself was formed by members of the New Zealand Equine Vet Association, New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, Harness Racing New Zealand and the Racing Integrity Unit.

NZHAT Trust Chair Martin Burns is also General Manager of Racing and Equine Welfare for NZTR and is extremely grateful for the support the Trust has received.

“When established in mid-2016 the initial goal was to have the first five equine ambulances delivered by July 2018. Thanks to the generosity of donors, sponsors and grant providers, we have raised sufficient funds though manufacturing lead-times mean we now expect to meet this goal by December 2018. But we are happy that this is not a big miss in terms of our intended timing.”

Burns noted that the evidence has been present in recent news and media around the importance of the equine ambulance.

“The first aid provided by an equine ambulance to Gingernuts when injured last year at Flemington, and his subsequent progress to recovery, indicates the improvement to welfare outcomes that may be provided by having this technology available.”

“It’s most important to ensure the best chances of recovery for horses, whether racing injuries or when necessary to transport for surgeries or treatments,” said Burns. “Beyond that, it’s also important to help demonstrate the deserved levels of care our horses should be provided.”

The inclusion of the equine codes along with the RIU and Vets association has been crucial in ensuring all bases are covered.

“None of us really has the knowledge or resources to make this a success alone. The combination among trustees of Vets and racing authorities has been essential in building the necessary momentum and in considering the planning and logistics. The Trust is also open to the future direct involvement of other equine sports,” explained Burns.

Fellow NZHAT Trustee Dr Peter Gillespie who with Dr Bill Bishop represents the New Zealand Equine Vet Association says the fact that the ambulances are made in Dunedin is also a huge benefit.

“It’s wonderful that we can have these ambulances made locally, not only for the local economy but also the fact that they are costing close to half the price to be made here, rather than having them built offshore,” Gillespie said. “We can be involved in the process each step of the way and speak to the engineer about what will work best. It also means that they will be designed specifically for New Zealand conditions.”

“The engineer building the ambulances was involved in making the new starting gates at Wingatui and has been instrumental in designing a full suspension system for the ambulances, which means they can be dropped right to the ground and then raised again. This is really important as it means when a horse is injured on the track it will put far less stress on the animal than having to walk up or down a ramp,” explained Gillespie.

Gillespie also said the New Zealand Vets Association have investigated and sourced the very latest technology in supporting injured horses, and have sourced full limb supports that will work in conjunction with a support stall in the ambulance. This will take pressure off the injured area and support the horse as it is transported for further care or surgery.

“That’s the main purpose of the equine ambulance. To make the process as less stressful as possible for the animal, and ensure that it is supported and safe during the process of transportation off the track,” said Gillespie. “With the first five ambulances due to be delivered this year, the Trust will now aim to attract funding for a further three which will enable more comprehensive deployment to equestrian sports events up and down the country.”

The New Zealand Horse Ambulance Trust thanks the following sponsors for their generous support: Racing Ministers Safety Development Fund, Bendigo Valley Sports Trust, Salient Trust, Charlie Roberts, NZRB Animal Welfare Fund, Rodmor Trust, Kevin & Jo Hickman/Valachi Downs, NZ Bloodstock and Cambridge Equine Hospital.

See, told you.

Pete Cook

#### Clerks of the Course – A Positive Spin



Over the years, there has been a fair bit of criticism (including from this source) of the performance of some Clerks of the Course, and much of it has been justified. So I figured, to be fair and balance the ledger a touch, I would relate a recent experience at the Geraldine TC meeting last week.

First of all, credit must go to the Geraldine Club for providing two of these officials instead of the normal one for many meetings. I know it’s an extra expense, but that extra person and horse can be very valuable on occasions.

To say it was a rather forgettable day personally would be an understatement, with one horse failing to score up and the other retired due to injury! However, in the next boxes to us were two gentlemen who were there to perform the duties of Clerks of the Course, and during the preparations and aftermath, we got to know them a little. The two guys, Messrs. Phiskie and Wiggins, were professional, courteous, and friendly, and provided much needed assistance to their ‘neighbours’ when it was required, both on and off the track.

It is to be hoped that my experience with these gentlemen is a sign that Clerks are becoming more professional and efficient nationwide, so that they instill confidence in the participants they are there to help and protect.

Pete Cook

## Double Standard?



An interesting and most unusual scenario unfolded at the recent Cambridge meeting when, during the course of a Junior Drivers event, the 'lap to run' signal was given one lap too soon.

The Stewards on the night looked into the possibility of declaring the race null and void, but common sense prevailed and the result was declared as they passed the post. Discretion was apparently given to the drivers who may have made moves at the wrong time due to their inexperience, however "Drivers were reminded that ultimately it is their obligation to be aware of the distance of any race that they participate in."

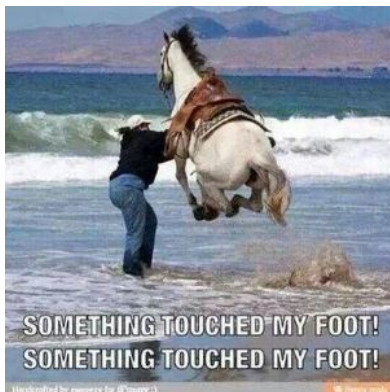
This raises two points to me, what would have happened if the same set of circumstances had occurred in a race involving senior professionals? Would they have treated in a similar fashion? It would take Hercule Poirot to successfully investigate whether each driver had either heard the signal and/or reacted to it, and it would be very easy to fabricate answers to any relevant questions. Even if such investigations were successfully carried out, what would they be charged with? Incompetency would be pretty difficult to prove, given the circumstances.

If however, charges were brought against drivers concerned and they were fined or suspended, surely some action should be taken against the official who caused the confusion. Apparently he was severely reprimanded, which while obviously not a pleasant experience, carries no financial penalty whatsoever.

Double standard...you decide.

Pete Cook

## Handicapping Changes



As those of you who take any interest in the murky world of handicapping will know, it is often pointed out that it is a living beast, which should always be subject to alteration and (hopefully) improvement, when necessary.

At the Association's last National Council meeting, delegates came up with three proposals that they considered were necessary to streamline the recently established points system. These suggestions were placed before the HRNZ Handicapping Committee and have subsequently been approved, albeit with slight alterations.

The changes, which come into force on 1 February, are as follows:

- Horses placing second, third, fourth or fifth in an Official Race will have no change made to their Rating.
- - Horses placing sixth to last will lose at least one point.
- - Only race winners and horses placing sixth to last may be subject to Handicapper's Discretion.

Pete Cook

## Racing Board Chat



I've been to more meetings, seminars or addresses in my time that I care to think about and one of the common theme's is questions that are asked and unable to be answered on the spot tend to be forgotten in the mists of time.

It was therefore refreshing to see a public follow-up from the recent meetings organised and hosted by Racing Board CEO John Allen, addressing those issues that he didn't cover on the day. For those who weren't there or who haven't caught up with the announcement, the following are the details that have been released. Q. Has NZRB costed the financial benefit that the 'racefields' legislation will provide?

A. Yes, we estimate the new legislation will bring an additional \$4.9 million in annualised net profit in 2017/18, rising to \$8.9 million in 2018/19, and to \$11.9 million for 2019/20.

Q. Has NZRB met with the new Racing Minister as yet?

A. Yes, the Minister recently met with the NZRB Board in Auckland. There was a positive and wide-ranging discussion and the NZRB reiterated their support to help implement the Minister's policy agenda as soon as possible. NZRB believes those policies will significantly enhance both the competitiveness and sustainability of the New Zealand racing industry.

Q. Will NZRB consider returning TAB Trackside to Freeview?

A. We know this has not been a popular change, and while the decision was made for sound commercial reasons back in 2013, with the world and technology changing rapidly, as are people's viewing habits, we are actively looking into what possibilities new technology now provides and how that could shape how we offer Trackside content in the future.

While there may be further consideration of returning to Freeview, it is not simply a binary choice between Sky and Freeview anymore due to the proliferation of digital delivery services (Amazon, Netflix, Apple TV etc). NZRB has initiated a piece of work to determine its future content distribution strategy which will look at the benefits of making its content more widely accessible, to give customers more choice about how they interact with the content, and to allow the industry to have greater control over its own content on its own platforms (e.g. TAB and code websites and social media platforms). TAB Trackside 1 and 2 can be viewed via the TAB App or tab.co.nz with a positive account balance.

Q. Are we able to commingle Saturday night Harness racing?

A. NZRB maximises the opportunity to commingle whenever possible, however we are reliant on Tabcorp's schedules and what NZ product they show to their Australian customers as to when we commingle - if they are not showing the product then we don't commingle, and unfortunately Saturday night Harness is one of our products that usually falls into this category.

Q. Why does NZRB still produce Best Bets when the Informant Form Guide is available?

A. We have a loyal customer base of around 1,500 purchasing Best Bets each week, so the requirement to produce this publication is largely customer driven. We have recently changed to a new third party supplier for print and distribution which we anticipate will generate greater savings and efficiencies, and we are continuing to develop and improve the book to meet our customers' betting information needs.

Pete Cook