

Executive Summary

Upper South Island Regional Forum

Date: 27 February 2025 | **Format:** Zoom Meeting

Purpose of Meeting

To address operational, strategic, and compliance challenges facing regional harness racing clubs, and to receive key updates from HRNZ leadership.

Key Matters Discussed

- **Racing Codes:**
Discussion centred on the changes that are in motion, the GEO Net legislation and future infrastructure investment.
- **Government Relations and Entain Discussions:**
Positive dialogue ongoing with MPs. No significant concerns flagged over Entain personnel changes impacting the industry.
- **Calendar and Programming Changes:**
Changes aimed to fill "potholes" in wagering performance, not to target harness turnover. Kaikoura raised concerns about thoroughbred meeting clashes on Sundays.
- **Race Day Staffing:**
Lack of clarity exists regarding employment responsibilities for key raceday roles (e.g., starters, clerks, tote operators). Clubs were encouraged to hold separate meetings (not at AGMs) to address this and standardise practices.
- **Last Start Driver Rule:**
The rule change allows earlier nomination of drivers to enhance early fixed odds markets and improve betting transparency.
- **HRNZ Board Strategy Update:**
 - Strategy refresh underway, with feedback sought across the sector.
 - Health, safety, and animal welfare will be core strategic pillars.
 - Transition to the new TAB App technology is imminent; concerns noted about course infrastructure readiness.
 - No visibility yet on Entain's 35% wagering growth achievement.
 - HRNZ Board members are open to attending race meetings to engage directly with clubs.
- **Health & Safety Risk:**
Serious concerns raised regarding current H&S guidelines, particularly around horse and people traffic management. Clubs and PCBU officers face significant

liability risks if incidents occur. Urged: separate H&S meetings to drive industry consistency.

- **Insurance Challenges:**

Varied insurance practices across clubs were discussed. HRNZ to explore solutions for greater consistency.

- **Access to HRNZ Legal Counsel:**

Clubs previously accessed Chris Lange directly. Now, prior HRNZ senior management approval is required, limiting immediate support.

Discussion also covered BYO alcohol rules, noting clubs with fewer than four meetings are governed by the Racing Act.

- **Stake Money Concern:**

Nigel Armstrong raised dissatisfaction about some Canterbury clubs deducting \$1,000 from R35 pacer stakes at their discretion.

- **Breeding Numbers:**

Final breeding numbers are pending, but a single-digit percentage decline in broodmares is expected.

- **HRNZ Website Update:**

Charter documents, communication charts, forum contacts, and meeting reports are to be uploaded soon.

Summary

The Forum identified a strong need for clearer governance around race day staffing, health and safety, insurance, and legal support. Clubs are urged to independently review and update their compliance frameworks ahead of significant upcoming industry changes. HRNZ's strategic refresh offers a key opportunity for regional input.

References

- [HRNZ Website](#)