

Executive Summary

Upper South Island Regional Forum

Date: Tuesday, 8 April 2025 | **Time:** 7:15 PM | **Location:** Christchurch

Purpose of Meeting

The Forum was held to discuss key issues affecting regional clubs, raise concerns to HRNZ leadership, receive updates on financial and operational priorities, and contribute to national strategic planning processes.

Key Matters Discussed

- **Tote Staffing:** Clubs expressed concern over maintaining tote staff numbers. Entain confirmed that recruitment and training are the responsibility of clubs, not Entain.
- **Bureau Operations and Late Scratchings:** Clarification was needed. Initially, John Mooney advised scratchings should go to Clubs; post-meeting, Matt Peden confirmed they must be directed to the Bureau. Updated communications are expected.
- **HRNZ Financial Health:** Grant Jarrold acknowledged concerns over funding deficits but stated there is confidence numbers will align within 12–24 months.
- **Strategy Refresh:** Regional forums and senior HRNZ management will contribute to a strategy refresh. Pre-reading materials will be circulated with four weeks allocated for feedback collation.
- **Look North Strategy:** Still under evaluation with questions raised regarding its cost-benefit viability.
- **Efficiency KPI:** HRNZ's operational cost efficiency is tracking at just over 10%, measured against total income.
- **Race Calendar Consultation:** Timaru raised concern over insufficient consultation during the drafting process.
- **Handicapping Changes:** New handicapping rules will take effect from 27 May 2025 to support increased race day commitments.
- **Syndication Review:** A critical project underway to standardise practices, safeguard integrity, and enhance opportunities across both horse codes.
- **Group Insurance Scheme:** HRNZ is progressing a group insurance scheme for club infrastructure.
- **Health & Safety Standards:** Standards are being developed to ensure appropriate levels of safety and care at all clubs.
- **Club Communications:** HRNZ acknowledged the need to improve communication processes with clubs and regional forums.
- **Harness Jewels:** Discussion supported efforts to successfully resurrect this premier racing event.

Concerns and Challenges

- Financial risk for young trainers who have borrowed to syndicate horses under the current Entain funding model.
 - Lack of balanced pre-race media coverage, with concerns about Auckland being favoured over Addington.
 - Skepticism around the Northern Breeding Proposal, noting France as the only country using the model.
 - Clubs emphasised the need for race meetings to breakeven against stakes and club investments due to ENTAIN's gross turnover KPI model.
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Decisions and Outcomes

- **Chair Endorsement:** John Hartnell was unanimously endorsed to continue as Chair of the Upper South Island Forum.
 - **Late Scratchings:** Confirmed that late scratchings must be managed via the Bureau.
 - **Tote Staff Responsibility:** Confirmed that clubs are responsible for tote operator recruitment and training costs.
 - **Appreciation:** Timaru thanked John Denton, Matt Peden, and Nigel McIntyre for their support in delivering a successful grass track meeting, with turnover up \$200k year-on-year.
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Next Steps

- Circulation of HRNZ strategy materials for regional review and input.
 - Updated Bureau communications to be issued, clarifying processes for late scratchings.
 - Continued work on syndication rules, health and safety standards, and insurance scheme development.
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References

- [HRNZ Official Website](#)
- [Race Day Performance Updates](#)