



# CHAIR'S UPDATE

## MARCH 2024

**Kia ora everyone, I trust this note finds you well.**

I had my regular meeting and briefing session with the newly formed National Forum on Monday. It was another good session and the engagement between us all is strong and positive. I value the interaction and I think the National Forum members find it valuable also. I enjoy the fact that the key members within the harness eco system are all interacting together in the one place/session. It's a positive move forward for the sport. I wanted to share some of the discussions from that meeting with you all.

### **Board Appointment Process**

Following last year's AGM, a process was outlined and agreed that will result in the recruitment and appointment of a new Board for HRNZ.

The Directors' Nomination Panel to be established to drive this process will consist of:

- Three people appointed by the National Forum.
- An appointee of the Board who does not have to be a member of the Board but can be.
- An independent chairperson nominated by the President of NZ Institute of Directors.

Very good progress has been made to date and John Hartnell (Chair, National Fourm) and I are pleased to advise that Alan Isaac, a very experienced director, (former Chair of the International Cricket Council and former President of the Institute of Directors - amongst others) has confirmed that he is able to take on the role of Chair of the Directors Nomination Panel. Confirming the membership of the rest of the panel members is the next step for both the National Forum and the HRNZ Board. The recruitment company to work with the panel has been appointed after consultation with John Hartnell and Alan Isaac on two proposals received. Work now moves to bringing and engaging them into the overall directors' recruitment process.

A timeline of activity is being produced working back from the AGM date to map out the key timing needs in order for the panel to complete its work in a timely manner. Things are moving forward both positively and appropriately.

### **Chief Executive Recruitment**

Advertising started March 11. It has been advertised on Seek (here and in Australia), HarnessLink, LinkedIn, Global Elite Sports website, plus Harness Racing Australia shared through their state organisations. So far we have received 32 applications, and they close on Monday 1st April. This is a good response. Once the application window has closed the appointment panel will quickly move into scoping and conducting the initial round of interviews.

The CEO appointment panel that will conduct the interviews and make a recommendation to the Board of HRNZ consists of myself, John Hartnell as chair of the National Forum, Alan Isaac from the Board Appointment Panel and Richard Stenhouse who is driving the recruitment process for us.



### Dates/ New Racing Calendar

An initial first draft calendar was presented by HRNZ to the TAB Dates Committee last week. This is very much the start of the calendar development journey and process for us as there will be more meetings between the codes, the TAB, Entain and ourselves before a final calendar is produced.

The Board has engaged John Mooney as an independent contractor to work within the harness eco system, with Entain and internally within HRNZ to help shape up the final version. The Board is taking a very ambitious approach in relation to the new calendar development. We seek to match and align our response to the challenge and boldness put before us by Entain. The Board is approaching things with that mindset and is committed to ensuring the vision Entain have presented is matched by our desire to deliver on it.

John has also been doing good work on a number of racing initiatives focused on improving the utilisation of our horse population and intertwining this work into the racing calendar. John will continue in this role for a discrete period of time probably up to four months

until we recruit and appoint the key racing position. The intention is that once we have identified a preferred candidate for the Chief Executive position, advertising and recruitment will then start on the racing role to ensure the new Chief Executive is across and engaged in this important recruitment process.

It is worth noting that the most significant aspect of the initial dates submission is that the calendar projects a 10% growth in race meetings which is the first time in a decade that harness racing in New Zealand has forecasted to do so.

### Code Funding

Every three years, we enter negotiations with the other racing codes on how the funds we all collectively earn are distributed amongst ourselves. This is known as the code funding negotiations. This year, the three codes are looking at a new agreement. Negotiations amongst the three codes on the allocation or mechanics of distribution of funds from the TAB/Racing New Zealand have been in progress over the last 6-8 weeks.

We are holding a strong line and negotiating in good faith. We have ensured that we have worked from

a solid evidence base, that we have come prepared to engage with material to support our position and our thinking, and demonstrated a willingness to respond to issues put to us.

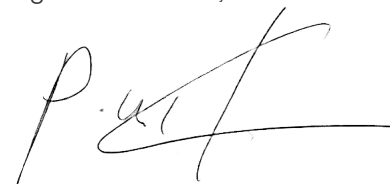
We will continue to hold our line and position, but we imagine that the process will take some time to complete.

### Forbury Park

At the last Board meeting, we had a positive and good meeting with members from the Forbury Park Trotting Club. As you know the venue has been sold and the funds are now held in our solicitor's Trust account. Both parties have legal obligations under the settlement agreement that we need to meet. This will require us both to work through together in this regard and the recent meeting was the first step in that journey and process.

Thank you for taking the time to read this brief update which I hope you found informative and useful.

Ngā mihi mahana,



**Phil Holden -**

Chair; Harness Racing New Zealand Board

## OUR MISSION IS:

TO CHAMPION THE SPORT, CELEBRATE THE PARTICIPANTS, AND HAVE THE HORSE AT THE HEART OF EVERYTHING WE DO