CHAIR'S UPDATE
SEPTEMBER 2026

Kia ora

It is my privilege to provide you as our participants and stakeholders with an update on key matters being undertaken by the Board and HRNZ's Executive team.

Over the past couple of months a lot of the focus has been on a series of special projects led by the two racing codes and TAB NZ Limited.

HRNZ is providing significant input into these projects to ensure that our industry is in a better and more sustainable state to face future opportunities and challenges as we move through the remainder of the Entain guarantee period leading to the new funding model for our business beyond 2028.

TAB FUNDING

The 2026-27 TAB HRNZ funding agreement is now final. It resulted in a reduction in industry funding that has flowed through to our HRNZ budget for the current year.

A reduction in funding of around $4 million has seen the requirement for our Board to reduce stakes and our racing program. We have also amended club funding agreements in some cases and will continue to work with our clubs to try and find a sustainable funding model for the future.

Belt-tightening is a constant theme and HRNZ itself is going through internal restructuring on a regular basis in order to ensure we are as efficient as we can be through the next couple of years.

We hope we will be able to increase stakes and assist with further investment in our clubs' funding and infrastructure beyond the Entain minimum guarantee period, although we need to make our business viable with efficiencies and waste reductions where possible to achieve this.

BREEDING INITIATIVES

We have continued to honour our agreement to the industry to invest in breeding initiatives where possible.

As everyone is now aware, our foal crop reduced over several years before an improvement in 2025-26. It's imperative to keep last season's momentum going and we will continue to press TABNZ for further investment to enable us to pass this on to breeders to build further confidence in our future.

STATEMENT OF INTENT

Our HRNZ Statement of Intent for the next three years has been circulated to Clubs and Kindred Bodies. This document outlines a break even 2026-27 financial position with a forecast continuation of small losses in ensuing years. Gains we make in this current year will be planned to endure for the future.

It is the Board's intention to not lose any more industry equity or reserves and if losses are made it will be because of further investments in growth where we can, rather than it being spent on unnecessary operating costs.

Our strategic intent has not changed in the past 12 months. However we have prioritised a number of issues where we will focus our energy and investment over the coming year.

PROJECT STAMINA

The Project Stamina report has been finalised and released to the industry and the public in recent weeks. It is clear that a rationalisation and optimisation of racing venues across both codes is needed.

We have embarked on a series of meetings and consultations with clubs throughout the country who have been proposed as impacted from the proposed recommendations.

We will continue to work with those clubs and participants in those areas to identify the future strategy whether it be finalising the recommendations for venue rationalisation and ultimate closure or to find other ways to drive a more sustainable model for the venues.

NORTHERN VENUES

As outlined in the One Equine view of Project Stamina, the Board recognises that we need to optimise our racing venues in the northern region. Alexandra Park, Cambridge Raceway and the potential for a new Waikato Green Fields venue outside Cambridge are hugely significant considerations for us and our future.

However it has been highlighted that it is unlikely that we will have sufficient horse numbers and financial resources to maintain these race tracks for our code in the region.

We have determined that a robust business case will need to be prepared across the venues and the industry in the north for us to determine the future of these venues and prioritise our future investment.

WIDER CANTERBURY REGION

We have identified that we require a business case for racing and training venues, in particular in Canterbury. We have stated previously that investment in training centres is vital to attracting the next generation of young and aspiring horse trainers to our industry. The Board will consider this business case along with our clubs and venues in the region.

SOUTHERN REGION

We have held a series of meetings with affected clubs and venues from Oamaru through Gore and Wyndham and Ascot Park to assess what racing in the southern region can look like in the future.

This follows the recommendations and work done by Project Stamina and One Equine. We are processing a lot of feedback and that work is continuing.

TAB NZ ADVISORY BOARD

The TAB NZ Advisory Board completed a proposal in January 2026 for a restructure of the racing industry from governance to operations across both codes and within TAB and its operations. Essentially a major reform program in order to set a structure and pathway towards a more sustainable and viable industry for NZ.

The proposal was sent to industry for feedback and we thank our participants who provided feedback directly to the TAB Advisory Board.

Since then, the reform program proposed has been handed to an Establishment Board to review the proposal, consider alternatives and present a way forward for industry to consider and through a strict timeframe implement a new way forward. One task is looking at the merits of merging parts of the HRNZ and NZTR (Thoroughbred Racing) businesses, with another the suggestion of pooling our racing venues in a special purpose entity to improve returns to industry and investment in our future desired venue network.

The Establishment Board includes two members from HRNZ, myself and Hannah Doney, our Deputy Chair. The Board is chaired by well-known racing identity Dean McKenzie. There are eight members representing the two racing codes, TAB and two independent appointees, one being Dean.

It is the intention of the Establishment Board to present an update on progress and timeframes to our annual conference in October.

This is a major project with wide ramifications for our future. We are clear that the benefits of any proposed reform will need to be well presented and explained to our stakeholders before any decisions are made. Communications and consultation will be important in order to get the future right for us and all of racing in NZ.

The benefits will need to be shared across all parts of our industry from our customers through the Entain TAB partnership right through all key stakeholders to our grass roots community clubs and our participants through both racing codes to deliver a sustainable future.

HRNZ

Anna Flynn, our interim Commercial Director, and senior leadership team are continuing to streamline and make more efficient our internal operations inside HRNZ.

We are focused on improving all areas of the business by maximising resources to ensure there is less duplication and improved outputs especially in communicating with key stake holders.

That work continues as an internal priority.

2026 NEW ZEALAND WORLD TROTTING CONFERENCE

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HRNZ is hosting the 2026 World Trotting Conference in early November with delegates from all over the trotting globe based in Christchurch for workshop and conference sessions as well as us providing them the opportunity to take in racing at Kaikoura and Cup Day at Addington.

CUP WEEK

It's only a month or so to go until Go Media New Zealand Trotting Cup week. It is always a massive week with big meetings both before and after it.

The Board wishes all of our clubs, participants, trainers, drivers, owners and breeders all the very best as they prepare for what will be busy and exciting times.

Our fans and those who punt on our great sport are a priority to look after. I'm sure our hospitality standards on course all over the country during this summer season will be high calibre. We appreciate the efforts of all those who contribute.

We also look forward to seeing many of our delegates at our conference on October 9 and 10.

PUBLIC BEHAVIOUR

It has been brought to my attention during the past week that some participants have been overly forthright and aggressive toward some HRNZ leadership outside of our business and in public.

It's understandable that licence-holders and others hold strong views and issues such as programming and handicapping can be hot topics. Regardless, it is not appropriate to confront staff who are doing their job.

Any complaints should be dealt with by way of formal channels inside HRNZ to our leadership and/or the Board. We have an ability to sanction anybody who does not uphold the standards required. Please respect your fellow industry people.

Finally thank you for understanding our position as your governing body and allowing our Board to continue its work in furthering the interests of our sport.

There are a number of significant changes in many areas of our business that will occur over the coming year or two. The key to improving our industry is to think about the big picture.

Some changes may not necessarily benefit all individuals but they will benefit our industry for this generation and the ones that follow.

I sincerely thank our Board, team at HRNZ, members of the national forum and our clubs and kindred bodies for all efforts being made through this exciting time for our industry.

Best regards,

Grant Jarrold
HRNZ Chair