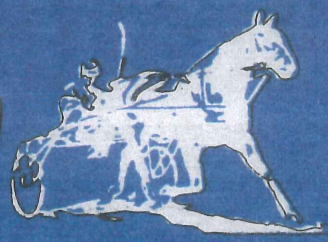


NATIONAL Trotguide



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When the Crown fits

Victorious reinsman Michael Formosa is lauded by an adoring crowd, and a grin from effervescent Racing Minister George Souris, following his Bathurst Gold Crown in triumph with Ultimate Art in the \$100,000 feature at the western districts' premier track on Saturday night. Full story Pages 4-5.



PICTURE courtesy: Joel Fowler (HRNSW).

VINDICATED

IT'S over, finally over and the equine racing industry has been vindicated for its stance to defend the Racefields Legislation through to the High Court of Australia.

There was great jubilation and a loud cheer was heard by those waiting for the subsequent press conference in an adjoining room at Racing NSW when the decision came through last Friday morning that Harness Racing NSW and Racing NSW had emphatically won the lengthy legal battle.

The jubilation was clear to see on the faces of Graeme Campbell (HRNSW Chairman) and Sam Nati (HRNSW Chief Executive) as they followed John Messara (Racing NSW Chairman) and Peter V'Landys (RNSW Chief Executive) into the press conference to address the throng of eagerly waiting media.

Campbell and Nati sat justifiably at the head table as harness racing were partners and supporters throughout the ordeal.

The questions came rapid fire but the responses were full of enthusiasm for what had occurred and how much brighter the racing industry could be as a result of the High Court ruling.

The court case had run for four years since Sportsbet and Betfair commenced proceedings against the Racefields Legislation introduced by the NSW state government in 2008.

The legislation was introduced after three years of formulation by the government as it attempted to strike a fair deal in protecting the income streams of the racing industry and the livelihoods of its participants and still allow for competition amongst all wagering operators.

Other jurisdictions had attempted similar legislative introductions of a fee on wagering on racing product but these had failed when challenged legally.

Racefields' decision goes harness racing's way

With the High Court handing down a 7-0 ruling in favour of the legislation the task for the racing industry administrators will now be where to spend the accumulated funds (four years collection) and how to distribute the new income stream.

"This decision provides longevity for our sport," said HRNSW chairman Graeme Campbell.

"It is truly great day for harness racing and its' participants as it will allow prizemoney increases and development across a number of areas.

"We will be able to market and showcase harness racing to the NSW community like never before.

"It was a gratifying result as the equine codes stayed aligned throughout the ordeal, unlike our counterparts in the greyhound code."

HRNSW chief executive Sam Nati said harness racing has collected \$20 million but would end up with net \$10 million after paying for supplemented prizemoney and vision costs.

Legal costs are yet to be determined and may take up to six months to finalise.

"So far the two announcements are the breeders' bonus - \$1 million per year and \$500 for all tier two races until the end of the financial year," Nati said.

"The current forecast is six million dollars per year.

"The allocation of Racefields' money is being reviewed by the board and will likely now also include a component for regulatory functions."

The High Court decision was more one of relief for principal club chief executive John Dumesny who had been involved prior to the introduction of the Legislation.

"The feeling is really one of relief after such a long battle"

"Morally we had to be successful but when the industry is surviving off borrowings it is a relief that those monies don't have to be repaid and it is all now over."

"Andrew Georgiou won an international media award for an article printed as lead in the National Trotguide in 2004 titled 'Pirates a threat to the sport - Dumesny'† which attacked the morality of taking the racing product and not paying a fee"

"The likes of some really diligent, supportive and intelligent government officers such as Ken Brown, Darrell Loewenthal, Frank Marzic and Paul De Veaux worked steadfastly on the preparation of the legislation when they worked for the Department and must be congratulated for their efforts which stood the legal test."

"The late Pater Baldwin was a true champion for the cause."

"We must thank however Peter V'Landys for his leadership and determination to succeed when others wanted to capitulate."

"I take great personal satisfaction from the result as originally harness racing was more than likely going to go with the dogs and just rollover for the wagering operators but I urged our leaders not to follow that course and to join Racing NSW in the litigation."

"After the first court case when the judge got it so wrong (overturned on appeal) and there was a cry from just about everyone to negotiate a deal with the bookmakers I take satisfaction from the fact I persuaded Graeme Campbell to stay the course."

"They (the bookmakers) were right in the engine room of harness racing doing their best."

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RENSHAW CUP SHAPES AS BEST EVER: TURN TO PAGE 2

Vindicated

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“Mind you he and others took a risk to listen to me.

“How about if the case was lost it would have been funny for some having a sad face on the outside but happy inside?”

From the Racefields Legislation HRNSW has already decided to distribute 60 per cent prizemoney, 25 per cent breeding and 15 per cent marketing.

Harness Racing NSW will deliver its direction for the industry at a specially-convened meeting of the Harness Racing Clubs Committee on April 17, which will then be followed a series of ‘road-shows’ around the state.

Harness Racing Clubs committee chairman Ross Gigg said winning the court case had been a tremendous result for harness racing in NSW.

“I hope everyone in the industry realises how disastrous it would have been if we lost,” Gigg said.

“All sectors of the industry are expecting to benefit as a result of the win.

“However this new money has to be allocated so as to achieve the best long-term results for our industry.

“The board of HRNSW has some difficult decisions to make as to where best they allocate the Racefields’ money.

“The breeding industry, prizemoney, a better standard of racetracks, integrity and marketing our sport are all very important but there is a finite amount of money to be used.

“Some of the money has to go back into the RDF as that is where we have taken funds to prop up prizemoney levels over the past few years.

“The result in the court gives the industry a new and rightful source of income and it gives us some certainty of funding for the future.

“The test now is for the entire industry to work together to ensure we get the best results for the industry with this money.”

It is understood that the controversial race dates proposal, which has been amended, will be delivered at the HRCC meeting.

The ‘road-shows’ are scheduled for Tabcorp Park Menangle on Friday afternoon/evening, April 27, Newcastle Monday evening April 30, Bathurst Tuesday evening May 1 and Wagga Wednesday evening May 2.

It is strongly suggested that all participants attend these gatherings.