



**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - MR JOHN BAGSHAW**  
**AHRC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 21 OCTOBER 2005**

The past year has been a very eventful one for Harness Racing. Whilst Betting Exchanges and the TVN/Sky Channel dispute have attracted most of the media attention, a huge amount of work has been accomplished by the various Chairmen, Committees and Working Parties culminating in the issues for discussion and resolution at today's meeting. Council is a recommendatory Body and can only play an effective role if issues of importance are considered, debated and recommended by our various Committees and Working Parties. We owe all those who participated a deep gratitude.

This year, a very satisfactory continuing Agreement has been reached with Liberty International Underwriting for Public Liability Insurance for drivers, trainers and clubs which, together with a new National Personal Accident Scheme with ACE Insurance Ltd for drivers, trainers and stable hands in which all States have participated to the extent possible, has resulted in substantial cost savings. I must commend Rod Pollock and Jardine Lloyd Thompson, our Brokers, for this incredible achievement which has a significant financial saving for our industry nationally and provides considerable benefits to our licensed participants and registered clubs.

During the year the AHRC and its Members have actively opposed the granting of any betting exchange licence in Australia and has made representations initially at the Racing Ministers' Conference in Auckland, to the World Trotting Conference in Rome and more recently to the Premier of Tasmania and our Tasmanian Members. Our opposition has primarily been based on Integrity Issues. It is the view of the Executive that no financial reporting system in the world can detect which bets to lose have been made with 'inside information' before a race is run. Even if you find out after a race, it does nothing for the betting public other than further undermine integrity.

In June, Australia played a leading role at the World Trotting Conference [now re-named International Trotting Conference {ITC}] in Rome, chairing four of the five working committees. At the Conference, it was unanimously agreed that all member countries would respect the jurisdictional integrity of every other signatory in the provision of wagering and would take whatever steps were possible to protect their intellectual property. This has united the World Harness Racing and Thoroughbred Racing Industries on this issue and is the greatest weapon we have in opposing unlawful betting on our racing product. Steps were also taken to achieve greater participation by CEO's of member organizations in debating issues of common concern and preparing recommendations for consideration and decision at the following ITC meeting.

The resolution of the ownership of RISE continues to hold back the expansion of our computer systems into areas of common benefit, such as Registration. The current RISE Partnership expires in 2008 so when the ownership is resolved, a new agreement will need to be reached between the co-owners to ensure that future funding is available to meet the needs of our members. Importantly Members are also customers of RISE and the system must canvass their needs and meet their expectations.

The constant change and differing financial circumstances of individual Council Members continues to cause concern. An open and free exchange of ideas and information between members is desirable in the national interest. In this regard, Council is available to assist as a catalyst, if required. The gaming and wagering environment in which Members operate poses considerable opportunity and threat unless concerted unified action is undertaken.

During our national representation with the Racing Ministers at their Conference in Auckland an undertaking was given to come up with an acceptable solution to when betting cease on Mobile start Harness Races. It seems that this problem is peculiar to Tabcorp Betting only. After a number of well intentioned but ineffectual attempts at resolving the issue, it has been now accepted that Tabcorp betting will cease 10 seconds before release. A working party is currently investigating the best method of communicating to punters when that point is reached.

We are moving towards a national approach to the Unpaid Forfeits List with all industry participants being required to meet their financial responsibility. A working Party is using elements from the New Zealand System as a model and I would expect you will see the result of their deliberations for your consideration at our mid-year conference in Hobart.

My thanks again go to all those who have sacrificed their time to work on our many committees and working parties. It is very encouraging to see all sections of our industry, through our Members and supported by their Chief Executives and staff resources, working together for the common good.

John Bagshaw  
Chairman