



## HRA Chairperson's Report

Welcome to the Harness Racing Australia Annual General Meeting – a quick turnaround from Sydney in December due to the change in HRA's financial reporting dates.

We meet in Brisbane during what has already been an entertaining and successful Inter Dominion Carnival, and acknowledge the hard work of the hosts, Albion Park Harness Racing Club Chair, Greg Mitchell, Racing Queensland Harness Code Director and HRA Treasurer, Jodie Jones, and their respective teams.

The promotion has been excellent; the race conditions and points innovation have sparked commentary; while the recent hospitality renovations are welcome additions for patrons.

I understand there is even talk about locking the gates at Albion Park tomorrow night, such is the buzz and interest in the Grand Finals. So, on behalf of everyone here, thank you also to Greg and Jodie in advance for your generous hospitality and stewardship of the 2025 Championships.

We also meet at a challenging time for some HRA Members. With revenues and other industry metrics under pressure, difficult, but necessary decisions are being taken to resize and sustain local industries.

Times like this can seem overwhelming, which is why coordinating meetings like this to coincide with events like the Inter Dominion bring like-minded people together in a range of surroundings over the next couple of days to network, chat and share.

An important function mandated to HRA within the Rules of Association is the recommending to all members the adoption of common practices, Rules and Regulations in relation to harness racing... that once approved they shall be adopted in each State, with the exception of local legislative impediments.

In other words, our vision is to be collaborative, uniform and reciprocal.

This approach has served the HRA Membership and industry well. Indeed, many view HRA as the most functional of the racing code peak bodies.

Sure, decisions may sometimes take a little longer to arrive at, but this is also a strength of our governance structures that collaborative, fact-based consensus underpins the outcomes.

This has been true since we last met. The reservations and concerns of some members regarding proposed changes to the National Ratings System were heard, with robust consultation subsequently undertaken at grass roots industry level to explain the current challenges, illustrate and workshop solutions to address them.

As the Meeting Papers set out, it has been labor intensive, yet rewarding, with some great insights and feedback directly from the industry which can now be considered alongside the views of the State racing managers who make up the Ratings Review Team (RRT).

After review, there was also a commitment at the last AGM, reinforced at a meeting of HRA Member Chief Executives in January, to establish a new Committee which will include Club and Industry representation. This Committee will sit between the RRT and the HRA Executive. When convened, this group will consider all of the available feedback and present any recommendations or amendments to the current Regulations in time for the 2026 Racing Season.

This collaborative and nationally focused approach to such an important issue can only serve the industry well in the longer term and I sincerely hope that this is a position we can arrive at later today.

As this is his last meeting as a Member of the HRA Executive, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge the contributions of Bob Fowler, who has represented Racing & Wagering Western Australia at the national level for nine years. Bob's contributions have been at almost every level of the industry, but his passion for breeding and owning horses has

underpinned much of his advocacy over the years. Bob, thank you. You will be missed, and we wish you and Marilyn all the very best in your travels and business endeavors.

In closing I would like to acknowledge the strength and contributions that the committee structure provides HRA. Special thanks to the many people who serve and contribute to our industry in this capacity, as well as the well-functioning HRA Executive, Membership, Honorary Members and Staff.

And thank you - one and all here today.

Could I now please have a mover and seconder to accept my Report for the purpose of the Minutes.