



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - MR MICK LOMBARDO
AHRC MID-SEASON MEETING 7 APRIL 2003

I welcome you to our Meeting in Christchurch and it is my intention that we collectively work through the issues before us to move forward and implement future change for the advancement of our national industry. We are all grappling with various challenges to meet the needs of our stakeholders, particularly industry participants who rely on all Members for their income. Principally we direct our efforts to foster the Standardbred. Our paths to do this are different but importantly our objective must be to consult, co-operate and achieve together as a national cohesive group. Change is necessary and to recognise that is important so that we can consider and work together in establishing our way forward.

Our formal Agenda is now truly a range of National documents reflecting a future approach on issue areas facing our industry. This meeting sees the AHRC Review document before us. This key issue is foremost in the Agenda. It advocates change and provides a range of recommendations for our consideration.

This document is a proposed method in the view of the independent consultant of further enhancing the corporate governance and operation of our industry at the national level. It advocates that our current structure, which has served us in the past, be replaced by a Board of Directors who will operate with a collective industry stakeholder fiduciary responsibility for our industry. In doing so, it's focus will be towards us undertaking a more cohesive national approach then implementation on a unilateral action basis together in the best interests of our stakeholders. As I see it, the corporate entity of the Council is the first issue to consider then we discuss the size and composition of the Board. We consider whether we adopt a more corporate structure in keeping with our position as a key equine industry player.

Some of you are not in agreement with parts of the Review however the recommendations have been proposed to address the issues posed in adopting a new form of national governance. In doing so, we must consider the substance of the issues at hand in a flexible manner to fit our solutions appropriate to the AHRC's part in our industry's future, then we must fund and resource it adequately to our requirements. It is also by no means the only way, as you the Members have indicated in your responses, which are in the distributed papers. I have asked Keith Hamburger, a professional consultant himself in his "spare time" from the Queensland Harness Racing Board to take us through the recommendations and propositions advanced. He will facilitate the discussion but you will make the decisions. I encourage you to be flexible in your approach and assist him in this difficult task.

Many important matters have also been significantly progressed since our last Meeting. I want only to cover some at this stage. The upgrade of the AHRC HaRVEY Computer System of our national database is in place with the AHRC/RISE team and the results are evident to all at the State Controlling Body level. This has been professionally undertaken and is highlighted by AHRC On-Line as an accessible feature for our industry. The future means more development to integrate the system to real time capability and work on areas of joint Member priority. It is a major industry investment, which requires continual development and funding. Note that Governments are combining the regulatory areas for all racing codes. Unless we continue our infrastructure development the more significant resourced information systems from the thoroughbred code will pose a threat to this most valuable Member asset and our control of it. The Racing Code are consolidating and centralising their systems and intellectual property assets. We must do the same!

We have now progressed the DNA Genotyping Project for our industry's integrity in the breeding area. This difficult logistics project has been effectively implemented given its size and complexity. Importantly, it has improved the quality of data in our breeding identification information systems.

Lastly, the resolution of the use of whips must be finally determined at this meeting. As I see it, we are in general agreement on many of the areas. This will be discussed in the Rules Change area to resolution. A consensus of approach is necessary to move forward.

Importantly, it is your choice in determining the policy and choices before us. The "declared winner" must be the advancement of our national industry.

Mick Lombardo
Chairman