



**CHAIRMAN'S REPORT - MR MICK LOMBARDO**  
**AHRC ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 19 NOVEMBER 2004**

In opening my last report as Chairman, I can look back over two periods of involvement with Council. The Council of today and tomorrow will continue to change and adapt into the future.

It is now poised to work further with you to advance our Industry's national objectives against a backdrop of considerable achievement which I have been particularly pleased to be a part of with Council's Executive and Members.

The current emergence of a consolidation of commercial and regulatory environments will continue. This has occurred because of the manner in which our industry is now funded and how our State Governments wish to interact with the Racing Industry. Our dependence on the commercial funding agreements with TAB's has guaranteed this. This will mean that the Metropolitan Principal Clubs must cleverly rethink their future to develop additional alternate funding revenues to maintain and extend their future.

These Clubs, and their country counterparts, can no longer expect a guaranteed future if the TAB arrangements are changed at any future time. I know that the Western Australian Trotting Association, South Australian Harness Racing Club, Albion Park Harness Racing Club and New South Wales Harness Racing Club are preparing for this future with strategies to achieve their commercial objectives. They are "landlords" and own their properties. The presentation by the Auckland Trotting Club shows a business approach to accomplish this. However, it is important that all Clubs take serious note of strategies like this to ensure that our industry not only survives but prospers. There is "no free ride" guarantee.

Importantly, the State Controlling Bodies under the current financing arrangements must be their partners by working even more closely with the Clubs in their State to advance our industry as racing's first choice in the minds of punters, customers, industry participants and the general

public at large. I do not need to quote you the examples of success in our industry, you already know them. Copy them and implement them in a clear and uncomplicated fashion. Our industry has always been prepared to innovate and create so I urge you to do it consistently and nationally so that the financial resources available to our industry are maximised. You have to be prepared to talk and share in our endeavours to gain the best benefits in any arrangements and you must do more things together to reduce the co-ordination difficulties and costs when most of you have limited resources when compared to other forms of wagering, racing and entertainment.

The wagering market apart from the restructuring which is occurring in the TAB's has an unwelcome entrant that threatens the industry's integrity, perception and funding arrangements. Betting Exchanges operate in the off-course markets in which we are pursuing growth in turnover. The Australian Racing Board and our State Racing Ministers with our assistance have highlighted the undesirable features of this betting mechanism. Andrew Harding (Australian Racing Board) and Brian Paddock, your Deputy Chairman have been heavily involved in this. They will provide an important update of where we are. The Federal Government has to date been unprepared to support the Racing Industry so far. This must be changed. I call on you not to forget the spectacular excitement of harness racing at night under lights with excellent dining and entertainment facilities. We have the product to develop and meet the demands of on-course patrons not only at major Events but on a regular basis. This is the key from the past to unlock part of our future and we must research those who participate and give them what they want to build our future.

Importantly, the key need is the customer's perception of an industry's integrity and I commend your further efforts in promoting this and communicating it to the Racing Industry. The appointment of John Schreck to assist both Council and Harness Racing Victoria is an important step in this process. His work in chairing the Chairmen of Stewards Conference and the recommendations are excellent. You should adopt them as policies for implementation. As you know, I race horses in most States and the role of the Stewards is crucial to our future. Support them in doing their job.

Council has now established key future areas of involvement for its own future. We all have developed the functional Sub-Committees to evaluate and assist your planning about our operational and strategic future. They will focus on policies designed to co-operatively work with you into our shared future. You are on them, so consistency should not be a problem, only the

willpower and resources to follow through on what you decide. Occupational Health and Safety for our industry participants and standardbreds in a welfare sense are crucial elements to our future. I encourage you to carefully monitor Harness Racing Victoria's lead in this area and share in developing similar programs in all jurisdictions. Council has led the national co-ordination of public liability insurance arrangements with significant financial savings for you and our industry participants. If accidents occur then further pursue the reimbursement of medical expenses etc in compensating families through consolidating national personal accident insurance arrangements for our industry's mutual benefit.

In my term, we have commenced and achieved further national progression in the areas of Council's own programs. The concentrated focus on national Conference co-ordination and facilitation, risk management public liability insurance, DNA arrangements internationally, Council's own In-House Database and Systems, national educational competency standards with the Agri-Food Skills Council and the Racing Industry Committee with advances in National Emergency Animal Disease preparedness amongst other continuing projects like Feature Race Calendars and the National Rules etc. In addition, Council's own small staffing headed by Rod Pollock have also continued the printing of the Australian Trotting Stud Book and our own publicly available databases delivered over the internet whilst working on policy issues and their implementation with you. I thank them for their dedication and support of Council's Members and myself during my time as Chairman.

These are all current major achievements progressed with you. I believe now that Council has demonstrated its worth with this significant range of achievements and is poised to take on the further challenges that you, the Members, want.

Finally, thank you for your sharing of ideas, discussion and action helping Council complete its objectives and projects identified in our various Meetings. This forum works well in advancing our industry nationally with your important and valuable contributions. I wish you every success for the future of our industry.

Mick Lombardo  
Chairman