



## **HRA CHAIRPERSON'S ANNUAL REPORT 2022**

Welcome to the 2022 Harness Racing Australia Annual General Meeting.

While a hybrid meeting, it is great to have the vast majority of members' representatives attend in person after a two-year hiatus due to Covid.

While we have the formal business of the AGM before us now, the opportunity for the HRA Members to make new acquaintances, network and chat with the various activities surrounding the meeting and the occasion of the Inter Dominion Championship Grand Finals tomorrow night returns us to a sense of unity and purpose which is a real strength of the organisation.

And it is this unity of purpose that I wanted to highlight in my Report today.

While acknowledging the industry will always face challenges, this year has been a good one, and in many ways, full of watershed moments in Australian harness racing history.

With the support of the HRA Members, 2022 marks the first time HRA has commercialised the Australian Trotting Stud Book.

With the support of the HRA Members, 2023 will mark the inaugural running of the world's richest harness race – The TAB Eureka.

With the support of the HRA Members, HRA entered into its largest ever single commercial agreement with Tabcorp.

With the support of the HRA Members, the National Ratings system continued to evolve, with the highest foal crop to race start utilisation ratio in our sports history.

With the support of the HRA Members, HRA has developed the functionality to provide real-time traceability of all Standardbreds from service to retirement.

With the support of the HRA Members, HRA's Welfare Strategy has been assisted with an additional increase of \$5.75 million dollars in welfare related spending across the 6 States combined, with the equivalent of 24 new staff employed in welfare related roles.

With the support of the HRA Members, HRA has participated and mounted robust responses to Government working groups and reviews at all levels to protect the industry from unnecessary outside intervention.

With the support of the HRA Members, the Grand Circuit, Trotting Masters and Group Racing Guidelines have been overhauled.

With the support of the HRA Members, HRA continues to evolve, providing central service options including naming, foal registration and Stallion Registration functions.

It is also worth reflecting on the wagering performance of the industry that broke all industry records, with All Sources Turnover reaching \$3.624B – a 6% rise and biggest increase since 2018, excluding the 2020 Covid spike.

The fixed odds phenomenon continues to drive this, increasing 16% for the year. There had been a query on the sustainability of the trend post a 52% jump in 2020, but on top of steady growth last year of 3%, to reach those heights must provide confidence to the industry that administrators are on the right path.

I would also like to use the occasion of the AGM to acknowledge the outstanding industry contribution the wonderful lady and powerhouse, Dr Patricia "Trish" Ellis, provided to our industry. She provided unbelievable support, guidance and representation literally until the time of her death when she was assisting our Japanese Encephalitis Virus response. I am proud to announce that Dr Ellis has today been awarded a thoroughly deserved HRA Distinguished Service Award, joining Mr John Dumesny (J.P Stratton), Mr Duncan McPherson (Distinguished Service) and Mr Denis Smith (Meritorious Service) on this year's Honours List.

As always, it has been an honour to serve as your Chair. This, my second year of a three-year term has been made all the more enjoyable by a well-functioning HRA Executive, Membership, Honorary Committee and Staff. The humble HRA office may be small in number, but it is big on care and ambition for our industry.

Thank you one and all.