



Annual Report 2008/09

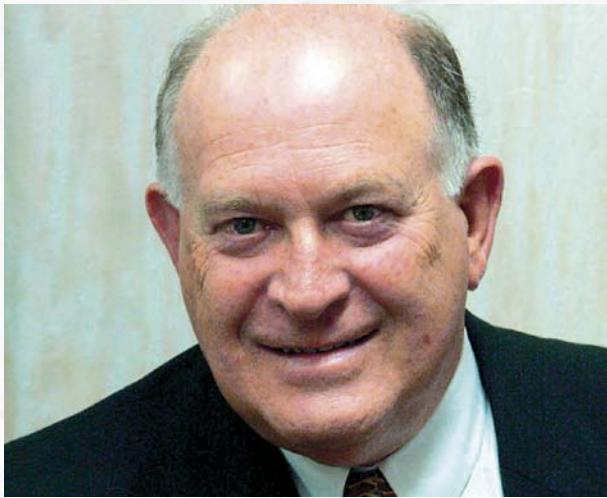
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HRA Chairman's report



It has been a positive year for harness racing in Australia and also for HRA.

There are some issues of great concern, especially the threat to our industry's traditional funding model, but it is important that we do not allow negatives such as this to colour our thinking to the point that we forget about celebrating the positives.

At the top of the list of things to celebrate is another season of outstanding racing, with our exciting sport showcased at some wonderful venues.

It remains a challenge for all administrators to get more fans enjoying the spectacle of harness racing, but we have a fabulous product with which to work.

There has been much to admire and applaud on the track in the past season, including:

- some outstanding racing on the Barastoc Grand Circuit and many other events;
- the deeds of brilliant pacers such as Mr Feelgood, Blacks A Faké, Melpark Major, Auckland Reactor and some highly promising juveniles;
- Sundons Gift dominating in trotting events and taking on the world in The Elitloppet in Sweden;
- some admirable training feats and brilliant drives; and
- the continued development of talented young male and female drivers, headed by the record-breaking Kiwi Dexter Dunn.

Venue Developments

The opening of the Melton complex, less than a year after the commencement of racing at Menangle, gave our industry another world-class facility. Tabcorp Park Melton is a stunning multi-purpose venue and is a credit to the vision and perseverance of Neil Busse and the Board and management of Harness Racing Victoria.

The New South Wales Harness Racing Club is also deserving of plaudits for the continued development of the excellent Menangle facility, which is now also sponsored by Tabcorp.

Other developments are planned or underway at several harness racing venues to provide better racing and improved facilities for fans and participants. One such venue is Albion Park in Brisbane, where problems with the grandstand forced the transfer of the Inter Dominion Pacing Championships to the Parklands complex on the Gold Coast in March.

Inter Dominion

ID09 was a great success with exciting racing and good crowds, and attracted considerable media coverage. Research commissioned by the Inter Dominion Event Committee showed ID09 delivered more than \$10 million in economic benefit to the Gold Coast. IDEC will be putting forward recommendations for the future conduct of the Inter Dominion Championships after the end of the current roster (in Perth in 2012) following ID10 in New South Wales in March 2010.

Other Achievements

From a HRA perspective, other notable achievements for the past year have included:

- the first review of our handicapping system in more than a decade;
- the first national market research exercise conducted for harness racing;
- implementation of a much-improved national database;
- progress on animal welfare issues, including new whip rules and the development of an injury and incident database;
- monitoring several matters in the aftermath of the equine influenza outbreak;

- maintaining a strong focus on integrity; and
- preparation of a Strategic Plan.

The changes to the Australian Handicapping Rules which took effect on September 1, 2009 were the result of exhaustive industry consultation and discussion. There are those who believe the changes do not go far enough, particularly in relation to three-year-olds. It is important the industry embraces the positive aspects and revisits other issues, if appropriate, when the rules are next reviewed in 2010.

The proposed changes to the whip rules, from January 1, 2010, have been the subject of robust debate in the industry. The changes represent a common-sense approach to an issue on which many people have strongly divergent views. Apart from industry consultation, HRA also discussed the proposed changes with the RSPCA, which is opposed to the use of whips in racing. Nonetheless, the RSPCA recognised the new rules as a "significant improvement" and welcomed "the progressive attitude taken by HRA to implement the changes".

Completion of the Multi-Jurisdictional State Harness Racing Database Project in May was a significant boost to the industry. It was achieved through considerable hard work and a great deal of co-operation between the team from RISE, HRA and all State controlling bodies. Congratulations to all involved with the project, which will bring long-lasting benefits to our industry.

Equine influenza wreaked havoc on our industry two years ago and there are still grave concerns about a number of matters. Australia's equine industries have been unable to sign the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement as the Horse Disease Response Levy Bills were defeated in the Senate in February. HRA and all major equine bodies supported the Levy Bills, recognising the need for certainty and comfort should there be another equine disease outbreak.

It is of grave concern that standardbred owners could face crippling financial exposure should there be another equine disease outbreak without harness racing being a signatory to EADRA. Hopefully, the Federal Minister For Agriculture, Tony Burke, will continue to review this situation and the matter can be satisfactorily resolved in the months ahead.

HRA has also written to Minister Burke recently seeking an undertaking that the Australian Government will continue to provide, control and operate post-arrival quarantine stations for imported horses. This was prompted

by concern that the closure of Spotswood in Victoria and uncertainty over the Eastern Creek facility in New South Wales could lead to the establishment of privatised quarantine stations.

We are also keenly awaiting the recommendations of the Primary Industry Ministerial Committee on the vaccination issue. HRA remains opposed to vaccination against equine influenza, even on a voluntary basis, due to the cost to participants, the lack of compelling scientific evidence and the effect it would have on the free movement of horses between Australia and New Zealand.

The market research exercise has resulted in a strategic road map for future growth of our industry. Few would have been surprised by many of the findings of the research, but it was an extremely valuable exercise. Every Australian administrator must now ensure we work together, as a national industry, to develop and implement policies which will foster growth of our fan base and wagering turnover.

There is little our industry can do about the global economic crisis which has impacted on discretionary spending and resulted in many companies taking a more frugal approach to sponsorship spending. We can, however, and must work together to develop policies for the long-term benefit of our industry.

Funding Threat

Everyone is acutely aware of the critical issues facing harness racing – indeed, the three Australian racing codes – headed by the threat to our traditional funding model.

The leakage of wagering turnover from the licensed pari-mutuel operators in each State to corporate bookmakers and betting exchanges is a malignant cancer which regulators and administrators seem powerless to treat.

Growing the fan base is also a challenge, along with the related issues of fostering new participants and addressing the breeding downturn.

The deregulation of the Australian wagering market accelerated in the past year, but with scant regard being paid to the well-being of the clubs putting on the race meetings, or their licensed wagering retailers. In no other field of endeavour are producers treated so poorly. If someone pirates a song or copies a "brand" T-shirt, they are prosecuted. Anyone suggesting that a producer must sell their goods to a competitor of Coles or Woolworths at a fraction of the true cost would be ridiculed. How is racing different?

The leakage of wagering turnover has become a flood as corporate bookmaker and betting exchange services

"We can, however, and must work together to develop policies for the long-term benefit of our industry."

have become more accessible. And this accessibility, mainly through the internet, has been aided by the lifting of advertising bans on them in Australia. Some thoroughbred clubs even allow the corporates to advertise on their racecourses, which is astonishing.

Why anyone would give a competitor direct access to their supporters is beyond me! It is inconceivable that Woolworths would allow Coles to display advertising in their supermarkets.

The only weapon used in the battle to date has been the Race Fields Legislation, with most administrators closely watching the outcome of a legal challenge in New South Wales. The NSW legislation provides for a fee of 1.5 percent of turnover to be applied to the corporates, although some codes and States (especially the thoroughbred code in Victoria) favour the bookmaker preference for 10 percent of gross profit. This equates to about half a percent of turnover.

Regardless of which scheme is adopted, the returns to racing are considerably less than the industry receives from the TABs – and despite claims from some misguided souls that the corporates and betting exchanges are bringing in new revenue, most of their turnover is moved from the TABs. It is estimated that the turnover with corporate bookmakers and betting exchanges in the past year was \$4.5 billion, up from \$2 billion in 2006/07. In 2007/08, turnover on Australian harness racing fell by \$218 million, or about 12.5 percent.

Some of the downturn was attributed to the outbreak of equine influenza, but there was evidence much of it was diverted to corporate bookmakers and betting exchanges. There was evidence of some improvement in 2008/09, with turnover returning to the pre-EI levels. Total national turnover on harness racing was almost \$2 billion (\$1,997,501,561), which was a heartening recovery. Nonetheless, it was only 1.7 percent growth over a two-year period – or negative growth if taking account of CPI movements.

It is interesting that British racing has been used as an example of how Australia can benefit from a deregulated wagering market. British thoroughbred racing's primary source of income is a levy scheme, whereby bookmakers pay 10 percent of gross profits. The two biggest bookmaking firms, Ladbrokes and William Hill, have announced plans to move their operations offshore by the end of this year to avoid paying the levy. It is estimated this will cause a reduction in levy funds of at least 30 percent.

This is not just a problem for Australia and Britain.

In New Zealand the racing industry has lost an estimated \$50 million in the past year because of wagering revenue leakage and administrators are now coming to terms with funding cuts.

At the International Trotting Association Conference in Norway in May this year, the threats to racing's traditional funding model – licensed pari-mutuel operators in each European country – dominated the agenda.

A select committee of the European Parliament has been examining the issue and each member State has been attempting to find a solution. In France, it is estimated that 75 percent of bets made on the internet are processed by illegal sites. France has responded by enacting legislation that stipulates any company wagering on French racing from the beginning of 2010 must be licensed and pay a product fee of 8 percent of turnover to the racing industry and taxation of 7.5 percent. It was not clear how the French authorities proposed to enforce the legislation.

HRA's concerns regarding wagering turnover leakage were conveyed to the State Governments at the Australasian Racing Ministers' Conference in Melbourne in December 2008. The Australian Racing Board and Greyhounds Australasia expressed similar concerns.

In a communiqué issued after the meeting it was reported the Ministers had agreed to work with their respective Heads Of Treasury to examine "the financial arrangements underpinning Australian racing and wagering". We can only wait and see if anything constructive, from a harness racing industry perspective, comes from these deliberations. To date, there has been nothing and there is little cause for optimism.

HRA also lodged a submission with the Australian Government Productivity Commission "Public Inquiry Into Gambling". HRA was one of many organisations to seek Federal control of the racing industry, noting that technology such as the internet and mobile telephony challenged the effectiveness of State-based regulations.

The Productivity Commission is not likely to report until early 2010, but it is unlikely to give the racing industry any joy. It is expected that the Commission's recommendations will cover problem gambling and social ills, rather than the problems afflicting the Australian wagering landscape.

Meeting The Challenge

Regardless of the action taken in the past year, or the possible future form of the Race Fields Legislation, it is imperative racing administrators come to terms with the changing wagering environment. There also needs to be recognition that the industry and its wagering retailers, the various State TABs, have failed to adjust to change or to adequately service our customers.

There is no need for a witch hunt, but critical evaluation of what has occurred is long overdue. We must also develop our Strategic Plan to include how we tackle funding issues

in the immediate future and how we develop a National Marketing Plan for harness racing.

Harness racing administrators should determine the best funding model for the future and present a proposal to regulators, instead of relying on Governments to legislate us out of a problem. We need to take control of our own destiny. Once we have determined what is best for our industry, we should start a campaign to get Government action to ensure we get the funding we rightfully deserve.

We need to present our case at all levels of State and Federal Government in Australia and to ensure our voice is heard – and that bureaucrats and politicians clearly understand the issues. HRA has appointed lobbyists in Canberra to assist in this process.

Most importantly, we must challenge in public the rhetoric of the organisations which are unjustly profiting from our industry.

For a major industry, we don't make much noise. We are going to have to start making plenty of noise if we don't want to start concerning ourselves more with the problems of diminishing funding, such as prize money cuts, postponed or cancelled capital works programs, and job losses. We are a major industry and we should use all our resources to ensure we are heard, from grass roots politics to the most senior Federal Ministers.

National Disasters

Australia has endured another year of disasters and the drought still plagues wide tracts of the nation.

Few people at Moonee Valley for the Hunter Cup meeting in February realised that one of the worst disasters in Australian history was taking place in close proximity to Melbourne. The loss of 173 lives, hundreds of people injured, thousands of animals killed and wounded and many tens of millions of dollars damage to property caused by the Victorian bushfires was distressing.

We are grateful to the many harness racing participants and fans in Australia and New Zealand who gave generously to the relief appeal and provided offers of support.

World Trotting Conference

Australia was represented at the ITA World Conference in Oslo in May by Executive Member Ross Cooper and myself.

As stated earlier, the threat to the traditional funding of harness racing dominated the agenda. Australian harness racing stalwart and former AHRC Chairman Mick Lombardo (attending the conference as an observer) was honoured with Life Membership of the ITA.

HRNZ Conference

Andrew Kelly and I attended the Harness Racing New Zealand Annual Conference in Christchurch in August.

Pressure on funding due to the twin evils – the economic downturn and the leakage of wagering turnover – was the major topic, although the industry in New Zealand is still in a healthy state. The relationship between HRNZ and HRA has strengthened in recent years with considerable dialogue between the two entities, and this brings benefits for harness racing in both countries.

Acknowledgements

HRA is an effective organisation due largely to the efforts of the many people who serve on the national body's various committees. You are all deserving of the highest praise.

The Executive has functioned extremely well since it was expanded in March to have a representative of each State.

My thanks to the members of the Executive for their efforts, especially to Ray Sharman who is stepping down after three years as Treasurer. I have valued Ray's wise counsel and professional guidance – and also his dry sense of humour!

It has also been announced that Neil Busse will be stepping down as Harness Racing Victoria Chairman at the end of the year, after almost a decade in the role. I have known Neil throughout his tenure and have done business with him as both a business partner and a harness racing colleague. We have not always agreed but I have great admiration for the way he has taken HRV forward. He is a man of vision, tenacity and integrity who, hopefully, will not be totally lost to harness racing. Our industry can ill afford to lose people of Neil Busse's calibre.

Thanks also to the HRA staff for their dedication and achievements over the past year and especially to Chief Executive Andrew Kelly. Andrew's diligence and enthusiasm have been warmly welcomed by everyone he has encountered in his first year in the role.

There are plenty of positives to celebrate and some critical issues to address, but I'm confident harness racing will rise to the challenge.



Geoff Want
HRA Chairman

About Harness Racing Australia



The need for a national harness racing body was discussed for several decades prior to the development of an “in principle” agreement at Adelaide’s Globe Derby Park in May, 1973.

Many more meetings were held over the next year to draft a constitution and resolve statutory and legal issues relating to the various State entities. Ultimately, the Australian Trotting Council was officially formed at a three-day meeting in Sydney in June 1974. Founding President Sir Frank Ledger, of the West Australian Trotting Association, said at the time:

“The establishment of a national council of trotting is one of great historical significance to the trotting industry in Australia and it is to be hoped that the progressive spirit of the founders will continue to grow through the years to build the Council into a national body of the highest administrative standard.

“Its long overdue formation will enable Australian trotting controlling authorities to achieve greater unity of purpose.”

The Australian Trotting Council assumed many functions which were formerly the responsibility of the

Inter Dominion Trotting Council, including the naming of horses and central recording of breeding information and racing results. The Council was a forum at which a national handicapping system, the rules of trotting and other measures would be formulated and recommended to its members. While the functions of the Council have been reviewed in the 35 years since it was formed, apart from two name changes (Australian Harness Racing Council in 1985 and Harness Racing Australia in 2008), they remain fundamentally the same. More recently, an Incorporation Working Party headed by Ross Cooper of Racing and Wagering Western Australia – coupled with interviews and submissions from members – reflected a desire for HRA to become a more relevant and pro-active national body. In March 2009, HRA members adopted a Strategic Priorities Plan aimed at re-positioning the Australian harness racing industry to ensure its long-term well being and sustainability.

Governance

Harness Racing Australia Inc. is registered as an incorporated body in the Australian Capital Territory (Canberra) under the Associations Incorporation Ordinance Act 1991 and earlier Ordinances (Association Number A00324). Originally established as the Australian Trotting Council Inc on December 23, 1974, the current change of name was approved by the Registrar-General’s Office on January 14, 2008.

HRA Executive

From March 26, 2009, the HRA executive was expanded from four to seven officers. Independently chaired, the executive must include representatives from each of the six States of Australia.

Chairman Mr Geoff Want

Deputy Chairman Mr Robert Lette (Qld)

Treasurer Mr Ray Sharman (NSW)

Executive Members Messrs Neil Busse (Vic), Ross Cooper (WA) (appointed March 26, 2009), Grant Goodall (SA) (appointed March 26, 2009) and Noel Salter (TAS) (appointed March 26, 2009)



Chief Executive Officer Mr Andrew Kelly
Hon. Legal Advisor Mr Dean Cooper, LL.B (Hons)
 (University of Tasmania)
Public Officer Guyren Frame

HRA Members

 Harness Racing New South Wales being the controlling body for harness racing in New South Wales

 Harness Racing Victoria being the controlling body for harness racing in Victoria

 Harness Racing Queensland being the controlling body for harness racing in Queensland

 Harness Racing South Australia being the controlling body for harness racing in South Australia

 Racing and Wagering Western Australia being the controlling body for harness racing in Western Australia

 Tasracing Pty Ltd – jointly with Racing Services Tasmania – being the controlling body for harness racing in Tasmania

 New South Wales Harness Racing Club

 HRV Management Ltd

 Albion Park Harness Racing Club

 South Australian Harness Racing Club

 Western Australian Trotting Association

 Tasmanian Pacing Club

HRA Staff

Mr Andrew Kelly	Chief Executive
Mr Richard Smith	Business Development Manager (dep. June 17, 2009)
Ms Julie Davies	Central Registrar
Ms Kathy Gebert	Website & Database Administrator
Ms Laraine Rischitelli	Naming & Publications
Mr Feng Li	Business Research Analyst (dep. June 17, 2009)

Mission Statement

The mission of HRA is to:

- 1. Peak Body** – be the peak body for the Australian harness racing industry;
- 2. Governance** – encourage the highest standards of professionalism and corporate citizenship in the management and conduct of our industry;
- 3. Membership** – provide outstanding representation, advice and service to our members as cost effectively as possible;
- 4. Influence** – present a strong, united and influential voice on behalf of our industry;
- 5. Integrity & Rules** – defend the reputation of the industry with strong integrity regulation and strict rule enforcement;
- 6. Brand** – promote the value of harness racing; and
- 7. Industry** – foster our industry's well-being.

Values

The special nature of the Australian harness racing industry sees identifiable natural values of honesty, passion, commitment and resilience, among others, displayed daily. Our objectives, combined with the dynamic nature of the racing industry, necessarily involve the making of value judgments from time to time. To ensure we mobilise and make high quality, efficient and consistent decisions, the industry values have been combined and adopted with the following:

- 1. Leadership** – we have an important leadership role to play in repositioning the industry and helping secure a sustainable future for the Australian harness racing industry
- 2. Diversity** – we recognise the diversity and interdependence of our membership as a strength
- 3. Accessibility** – we want all Australians to enjoy and experience harness racing
- 4. Partnership** – we believe in building strategic and commercial partnerships
- 5. National View** – we recognise members have State-based Constitutional obligations, but take a national industry position on matters of governance, integrity and policy
- 6. Long-term Thinking** – we take a long-term view of our industry's wellbeing and sustainability
- 7. Knowledge** – we take a knowledge-based approach
- 8. Participation** – we are a democratic organisation that encourages the involvement and participation of our members



HRA CEO's report



Harness Racing Australia's executive and members have a strong desire for the organisation to become a more relevant and pro-active national body.

This commitment has driven a period of planning and benchmarking, in preparation for a repositioning of the harness racing industry to meet both current and future challenges. The racing industry as a whole has entered unchartered waters.

Led by the uncertainty of future funding models due to the erosion of long-established pari-mutuel links, additional challenges are presented in the form of shifting consumer wagering patterns, contracting participation numbers, legislative amendments, a thirst for more broadcast product (Australian and international) and community expectations regarding animal welfare.

Reflecting on HRA's past 12 months (for nine of which I was Chief Executive), the year was extremely positive, with progress made to address not only these wider issues, but to meet concerns unique to a harness racing industry level as well. HRA celebrated and noted a year of many "firsts" including:

- the adoption of HRA's first strategic priorities document, with progress made towards a number of strategic goals;
 - completion of harness racing's first national research project;
 - launch of the first Australian Trotting Stud Book in CD format;
 - implementation of the first Australian handicapping rule reforms in over a decade;
 - establishment of harness racing's first National Wagering Committee;
 - introduction of HRA's first sulky wheel approval policy;
 - approval of a new-look HRA executive inclusive of the industry's first independent chairman and representation from each member State;
 - Australian racing's first State shared database; and
 - an Economic Impact Study of the Inter Dominion event. These topics, along with HRA's attention to pro-actively addressing the changing community attitudes towards animal welfare and dealing with continued reverberations from equine influenza, are explored in greater detail elsewhere in this report.
- It is, however, worth noting again that despite statutory levy legislation being defeated in the Senate in early 2009, HRA remains committed to signing the Emergency Animal Disease Response Agreement in order to provide certainty to the harness racing industry on the response preparedness and cost sharing arrangements in the event of an outbreak of not only EI, but any number of other diseases – in the same way so many other livestock industries are protected.
- Uncertainty at various Government levels also surrounds the future tenure and management of quarantine stations, as well as voluntary EI vaccination programs. On behalf of all members and participants, HRA continues to engage with Government and consultative groups to vigorously oppose EI vaccination on scientific, economic and trade grounds. Any impact on Australia's EI status will render racing between Australia and New Zealand all but extinct given the five-week combined pre-departure and post-arrival quarantine requirements when transporting horses from Australia to New Zealand.
- On the wagering front, HRA continues to lobby Racing Ministers, Treasuries and the Productivity Commission for:
- strong and enforceable Race Fields Legislation that receives recognition and enforcement across State and Territory borders;
 - an appropriate licensing regime to promote integrity and probity of the wagering operator and to enable the Controlling Bodies of racing to access wagering data to fulfill industry integrity functions;
 - approval, as a matter of urgency, of the merging of all totalisator wagering pools throughout Australia;

- amendment of the Interactive Gambling Act 2001, so that totalisator odds betting is only able to be conducted online or by phone by a totalisator licensed in one of the six Australian States, the ACT or the NT.

It has been a challenging year financially, not just for HRA, but the industry generally, with a modest surplus posted. The completion of the State Shared Database development has been a major expense item with over \$400,000 of member funds utilised from HRA reserves for this important project – but the flow-on efficiencies and opportunities will be priceless.

A modest surplus is again provided for in the 2009/10 budget, which will be subject to prudent financial management in order to support strategic priorities and rebuild a sound base in order to respond quickly to any emerging priorities on behalf of members.

HRA is also grateful to sponsors across all industry sectors, but I must commend the special support of Bill Fell, Justin Thompson and Joe Sewell from Ridley AgriProducts who, through the Barastoc brand, renewed a three-year commitment and naming rights sponsorship of the Barastoc Grand Circuit until 2011.

The success and relevance of HRA is also dependent on a large number of people who contribute so willingly to the national harness racing landscape.

I sincerely thank the numerous HRA committee members, led by their respective chairmen in John Schreck (Chairman of Stewards), Geoff Want (National Wagering), John Doherty (Integrity, Rules and Handicapping), Peter Bourke (Equine Breeding, Animal Welfare and

Registration) and Dean Cooper (National Rules) for their significant contribution and patience through a time of immense change.

I also thank the HRA members and their respective chief executives for their continued support, guidance and confidence for innovation given the immense challenges of their own organisations.

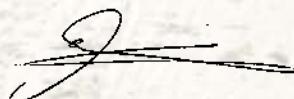
The business of harness racing rarely stops, making the dedication and continued commitment of the HRA executive even more remarkable.

My deepest thanks to you all, and in particular I acknowledge HRA Chairman, Geoff Want who is available day and night for discussion and wise counsel.

May I finally thank my staff at HRA for their enthusiasm and effort.

So many roles within our organisation require commitment over and above what is possible to include in a job description, and I certainly have a new appreciation for the breadth and depth of the harness racing industry having seen you all go about your business in this past year.

With many of the foundations set, the year ahead will be an exciting one for harness racing in Australia, as we continue our collective effort to rejuvenate and protect the long-term well-being and sustainability of the industry.



Andrew Kelly
HRA CEO



Meeting the future head-on

Handicapping Rules

September 1, 2009 marked the completion of an exhaustive handicapping review and consultation period spanning more than 12 months.

It also heralded the introduction of Australia's first handicapping reforms in over a decade, to enhance the wagering appeal of the harness racing product. Within that generic reform objective, HRA anticipates other strategic outcomes to benefit the industry will include:

- better utilisation of the racehorse populations;
- improved racetrack longevity;
- an easing of the travel burden;
- a boost to stake-earnings capacities; and
- higher retention of mares and fillies on the racetrack.

Designed to deliver a streamlined system with the flexibility to accommodate the wide range of economic circumstances and prize money levels that exist among States, the reforms are also user-friendly for participants and punters. In summary, the main handicapping reforms are:

1. The introduction of an all-inclusive provision for automatic reductions in class after 10 consecutive non-winning performances.
2. Removal of multiple penalties for wins when racing "out of class".
3. Country Class replaced by a "Career Class" under a "one win, one penalty" principle.

4. The discontinuation of fixed links between country and metropolitan classes, with the metropolitan handicapping scale standing alone.
5. Formal handicapping scales for two-year-olds abolished, with all 2YO races programmed using customised eligibility conditions.
6. The abolition of metropolitan age penalties for three-year-olds.

State HaRVey Database

The successful implementation of a ground-breaking national operating database known officially as the Multi-Jurisdictional State Harness Racing Database project in May 2009 is delivering widespread benefits to the Australian harness racing industry and saving thousands of work hours. Two years in the making, the project was managed by Harness Racing Australia on behalf of its members and undertaken by Harness Racing Victoria's information technology company, Racing Information Services Enterprise.



The new database is believed to be the first of its kind in any Australian racing code and was principally designed to provide a platform for the sport's operations into the future. It breaks down State boundaries and a multiplication of tasks and data storage which had existed since the first cut of HaRVey commenced operation a decade ago. Major project benefits include:

- eliminating the need to clear horses and clients between States which will save up to 4500 work hours and \$345,000 in national labour costs annually;
- providing one version of up-to-date client, horse and race data across the nation rather than variations between States;
- improved racing integrity through consolidated licensing and offence information leading to easy referencing of interstate licensees, namely trainers and drivers;
- eliminating the need for owners, trainers and drivers to provide client information (i.e. address, banking and GST details) to multiple authorities when racing outside their home State;
- the consolidation of State-based HarnessWeb services, allowing licensees to nominate and conduct their racing affairs via a single, on-line national system;
- simplifying and improving data accuracy when processing interstate foal notifications; and
- a significant reduction in the overheads associated with maintaining multiple databases.

"The new database is believed to be the first of its kind in any Australian racing code..."

National Research Program

During the year Harness Racing Australia members dedicated resources to conduct the first research at a national level to diagnose the present and future "health" of harness racing. The project aimed to understand the current and future trends, issues and attitudes likely to affect the industry regarding participation at all levels (attendance, ownership, breeding, training and wagering). There had historically been precious little data available at a national level regarding these topics and in order to address declining participation levels, solid qualitative and quantitative research was required to bridge the information gap and develop a strategy for future growth of the industry.



Meeting the future head-on



In October 2008, Colmar Brunton undertook an independent national review of the harness racing industry in Australia, in order to develop a strategic industry road map to build on existing participation, drive future growth and grow the fan base. The research program included six different phases:

1. 1040 on-line surveys with general (national) population;
2. 479 surveys of on-course visitors;
3. 70 on-line club surveys;
4. on-line forum with general population;
5. publication and feedback from top line findings; and
6. evaluation.

At the culmination of this extensive national research and a subsequent industry workshop, five key priorities for harness racing industry growth have been identified:

1. capitalise on existing participants;
2. innovate the product;
3. actively promote harness racing;
4. improve distribution; and
5. deliver a strong brand.

Over 50 strategies were identified within these priority groups – far too many to tackle at one time. Many of these concentrated on addressing central feedback themes relating to the industry being “old and dated” and “difficult and niche”. Attention is now focused on identifying and prioritising a reduced number of relevant strategies which can be both supported and implemented nationally – inclusive of business plans, time lines budget, and resource requirements.

ID09 Economic Impact

Since its inception in 1935, the Inter Dominion has delivered important social, cultural and economic benefits to the host region. Up until 2009, however, these benefits had been largely anecdotal.

In keeping with Harness Racing Australia’s stated priority of promoting the industry’s value to Governments, business and the wider community, an independent report was commissioned by the Inter Dominion Event Committee and prepared by Melbourne firm IER Pty Ltd to detail the economic contribution of the event.

The first study in a four-year research program, the report revealed that ID09 generated direct spending of \$10.4 million in the Queensland economy – a timely boost given the global financial crisis and strong evidence of its importance to the host region. The report found that just over 10,600 individuals attended at least one of the event’s three race meetings. No less than 66 percent of these were from outside the Gold Coast region and more than 3600 tourists travelled from interstate or international locations in order to attend Watpac ID09. The tourism impact for the Gold Coast was significant, with the research showing ID09 delivered the following benefits:

- non-locals travelling to the Gold Coast added \$8.8 million to the bottom line of the Gold Coast economy;
- visitors spent in excess of \$1.4 million in retail outlets;
- more than \$220,000 was spent at tourist attractions;
- in excess of \$1.89 million was spent on accommodation;
- more than 11,900 bed nights were generated for accommodation providers; and
- a total of 75 percent of all international visitors who attended ID09 identified the event as the primary reason for their trip to Queensland, rising to 86 percent among interstate visitors.

The research also revealed that international visitors to ID09 stayed an average of 6.7 nights on the Gold Coast, while interstate visitors stayed an average of 3.2 nights. This high level of involvement of interstate and





international visitors undoubtedly provides important economic stimulus to host venue economies. The report clearly illustrates the strength of the Inter Dominion brand and provides conclusive evidence of the economic value to the local economy that comes from hosting such a world-renowned event.

Whip Rules

The use of whips in harness racing has been the subject of healthy debate since first raised formally at a national CEO Conference in early 2009. Submissions were subsequently invited from HRA members and the majority expressed difficulty in policing the existing rules relating to excessive whip use. Feedback also discussed the industry's image and participation by the wider community, including punters, which are potentially impacted upon by a perception of cruelty due to highly visible whip use by drivers in races.

It was noted that balancing industry culture, public perception, community standards and animal welfare concerns is difficult, and when left unmanaged in other countries had not ended well. Around the globe, some forms of animal racing have been outlawed – such as greyhounds in some parts of the USA – while the use of whips, particularly in European jurisdictions has either been closely regulated or banned altogether.

Closer to home, jumps racing has been front page news in Australia thanks to animal welfare groups while the fallout from newly introduced thoroughbred whip rules has been played out in the media.

Harness racing is not immune, with websites such as racingkills.com graphically highlighting animal welfare issues. Animal welfare groups such as the RSPCA also have stated policies to ban the use of whips in racing. With \$83 million in public donations last year, the RSPCA has a strong community voice, as well as media and political credibility.

The submissions were reviewed by the HRA Equine Breeding, Animal Welfare and Registration Committee before discussions on the proposals were conducted with Chief Executive Officers, HRA members, the RSPCA and Chairmen of Stewards.

“...ID09 generated direct spending of \$10.4 million in the Queensland economy...”

Mature debate among all groups agreed that a new approach was required to remove the subjectivity of whip use regulation, providing certainty and uniformity for industry participants, as well as addressing community concerns. The following recommendations were adopted unanimously:

- the issue of whip use in harness racing requires urgent attention and a pro-active approach;
- whips are necessary in harness racing;
- reins are not to be crossed during a race (other than for adjusting approved gear);
- the whip must only be used in a flicking action/motion during a race;
- the approval of a new, longer and lighter whip should be investigated;
- the whip rule is uniform across all States; and
- a uniform penalty system be developed by Chairmen of Stewards.

It was also agreed that an educational DVD including the following points, should be produced prior to the introduction of the new rules in relation to the use of whips in harness racing:

- explanation of the new uniform rule.
- video examples of the right and wrong way to use the whip.
- explanation of the uniform penalty system.
- explanation of approved whips.
- media training in so far as language concerning the use of whips.

The DVD is to be widely available and distributed, including to participant bodies in consultation meetings prior to implementation. New harness racing whip rules are scheduled for approval at the HRA Annual General Meeting in October, 2009, with implementation from January 1, 2010.



Animal welfare and integrity

Animal Welfare

The harness racing industry, and indeed racing as a whole, has never been under closer scrutiny from an animal welfare perspective.

Harness Racing Australia continues to be pro-active in its approach to the diverse welfare issues surrounding the breeding, care, training and racing of standardbred horses in this country. HRA considers itself a leader in the field and is proud of the advances which have been made over the past year, particularly with regard to the emotive whip use debate. The industry's widespread abhorrence and zero tolerance of drug use is another strong example of HRA's commitment to its racing animals. Both issues are discussed in further depth elsewhere in this publication.

The design of Australia's harness racing tracks has evolved dramatically in recent years and two new tracks have opened recently, at Menangle in NSW and Melton, Victoria. State-of-the-art technology was utilised in the planning and development of both tracks which are recognised as world class facilities and provide the best possible conditions under which horses compete. Precision cambering, angles and surfaces have been introduced to allow horses to race to their optimum ability. This is achieved by minimising limb and joint stress which also reduces the potential for racing-related injury.

HRA's newly developed injury and incident database has been complementary to track design advances. The concept has been borrowed with permission from the thoroughbred racing industry in Queensland which created the innovative program. Every veterinarian who examines a horse either pre- or post-race at an Australian harness racing meeting is required to complete a written report. The information is then entered into a database, which allows HRA to build a statistical profile piecing together factors such as horse age and track size and design against the type and severity of racing injuries.

The injury and incident database will be valuable in guiding future track design and maintenance practices and help to shape policies and procedures which protect the health and well-being of the harness industry's racehorse population.

HRA's open-minded approach to breeding advances, particularly with regard to artificial insemination and embryo transfers, has brought significant benefits. Valuable mares with reproductive problems can now be retained for breeding purposes without health risk due to the introduction of recipient surrogates. Likewise, artificial insemination protects the welfare of stallions, reducing the physical demands and subsequent stress placed on them during the stud season.

To aid in the progression of these exciting developments, the harness racing industry is fortunate to boast some of the nation's foremost equine veterinary and breeding experts who are forward thinking, and dedicated to their chosen field.

HRA has also been pleased to note the blossoming of a nationwide standardbred pleasure horse movement over the past 12 months. Most States now have at least one dedicated group or association – and many have multiple – promoting our horses in a life outside racing. These groups cater for horses who lack the ability to be viable racing propositions as well as those who have reached the end of their career. Their ongoing efforts are helping to break down prejudices which have traditionally plagued standardbreds in the show ring and other pleasure pursuits. Consequently, the breed is gaining growing acceptance within the horse world and the broader community. And the once frowned upon freeze brand is being overshadowed by the standardbred's trainability, willingness to learn and unflappable temperament.

HRA has worked co-operatively alongside organisations such as the RSPCA to find a middle ground which allows

the industry to function practically within reasonable animal welfare boundaries. The industry will continue to acknowledge and respect community perceptions, and address issues of concern in a timely, rational and appropriate manner.

Integrity

Protection of the harness racing industry's reputation demands that race meetings are conducted, licensing programs are managed, rules are provided, and information is published with the highest standards of integrity. Harness Racing Australia's integrity commitment is evidenced by increased investment and resourcing in the areas of stewarding, integrity services and drug control initiatives.

These factors combine to both enhance the industry's reputation, and boost the level of confidence among participants and the wider community. In order to improve stewards' training and maintain optimum integrity standards, HRA developed a comprehensive Stipendiary Stewards' Manual with the assistance of the Hong Kong Jockey Club, John Schreck, John Anstey and internal resources. The manual covers the many and varied roles of stewards including: decision making; participant safety; procedural standards; media contact; and conflict of interest and ethical principles. Many States have found the manual to be an excellent resource and training tool.

HRA's strictest possible control and absolute intolerance of prohibited substance use is another strong example of integrity commitment. Drugs testing – of horses both in and out of competition – has never been more extensive, with screening procedures being refined and improved daily. The penalties for those who break the rules are severe and send the clearest possible message.

In order to reliably determine excretion times for equine medications – and provide credible information to veterinarians and trainers – HRA has provided research funding for Equine Therapeutics Research Australia (a consortium of three universities and four Australian racing laboratories). Current uncertainty regarding excretion and detection times for many important equine medications can adversely affect horse welfare, the reputation of the owner or trainer, and the integrity of the sport. Eighteen medications will be evaluated in 12 horses over the three-year research program. HRA also continues to monitor prohibited substance rules in context with emerging developments, research and continued animal husbandry advancements.

"The penalties for those who break the rules are severe..."

National statistics



Wagering Summary: 2002/2003 – 2008/2009

National Wagering Turnover	2002/2003	2003/2004	2004/2005	2005/2006	2006/2007	2007/2008	2008/2009
	\$1,677,503,014	\$1,813,372,040	\$1,855,917,017	\$1,847,795,444	\$1,963,601,713	\$1,747,292,165	\$1,997,501,561

Registration Racing Statistics: 2004/2005 – 2008/2009

Season	Total Stakemoney	Individual Starters	Starts	Average Starts Per Horse	Individual Winners	Total Races	Drivers	Trainers	Total Sires	Total Foals	Horses Named
2008/2009	\$98,811,701	12,562	142,429	11	6161	15,423	2961	4315	315	5001	4106
2007/2008*	\$84,545,337	12,022	126,295	10.5	5665	13,513	3174	4535	8839	5038	4959
2006/2007**	\$90,252,843	12,813	145,599	11	6243	15,588	3179	4493	9422	6010	5237
2005/2006	\$90,091,195	12,949	145,878	11	6364	15,666	3486	4770	9850	5946	5519
2004/2005	\$82,593,377	12,852	148,552	11	6321	15,967	3410	4767	9731	6079	5637

Top Performances for Season by Age/Sex (inc Time Trials): 2008/2009

	Horse	Sex	Rate	Distance	Date	Driver	Track
Overall	Changeover NZ	Colt	1:53.4ms	Mile	26.04.2009	DJ Butcher	Albion Park (QLD)
	Quicksilver Candy	Filly	1:54.7ms	Mile	09.04.2009	RJ Alchin	Albion Park (QLD)
	Vegas Bound	Gelding	1.53.1ms	Mile	17.02.2009	DR Hancock	Menangle (NSW)
4YO+	Changeover NZ	Colt	1:53.4ms	Mile	26.04.2009	DJ Butcher	Albion Park (QLD)
	Quicksilver Candy	Filly	1:54.7ms	Mile	09.04.2009	RJ Alchin	Albion Park (QLD)
	Vegas Bound	Gelding	1.53.1ms	Mile	17.02.2009	DR Hancock	Menangle (NSW)
3YO	Glenbawn Free	Colt	1:55.3ms	Mile	28.06.2009	GJ Fitzpatrick	Menangle (NSW)
	Acenkase	Filly	1:55.8ms	Mile	13.01.2009	Cynthia Rixon	Menangle (NSW)
	Captain Joy	Gelding	1:54.0ms	Mile	13.01.2009	RB Byrnes	Menangle (NSW)
2YO	Renaissance Man	Colt	1:55.4ms	Mile	22.06.2009	Kate M Gath	Menangle (NSW)
	Lady Euthenia	Filly	1:55.3ms	Mile	14.06.2009	MJ Reese	Menangle (NSW)
	Chariot King	Gelding	1:55.0ms	Mile	02.05.2009	GW McElhinney	Albion Park (QLD)



Leading Stakes Winners: 2008/2009 Season

PACERS							TROTTERS								
		Horse Name		Starts	Wins	Stakes	Season BWMR			Horse Name		Starts	Wins	Stakes	Season BWMR
Overall	Colt	Mr Feelgood USA	7	3	\$829,825	1:56.6ms	Overall	Colt	Skyvalley NZ	23	14	\$135,014	1:59.3ms		
	Filly	Lady Euthenia (2YO)	13	11	\$284,475	1:55.3ms		Filly	Arizona Blue (3YO)	14	10	\$111,275	1:59.4ms		
	Gelding	Blacks A Fake	14	8	\$562,530	1:54.1ms		Gelding	Sundons Gift NZ	11	6	\$290,626	1:59.7ms		
4YO+	Colt	Mr Feelgood USA	7	3	\$829,825	1:56.6ms	4YO+	Colt	Skyvalley NZ	23	14	\$135,014	1:59.3ms		
	Filly	Deanna Troy	12	5	\$148,575	1:56.6ms		Filly	Sundons Tiavon	13	3	\$75,376	2:01.5ms		
	Gelding	Blacks A Fake	14	8	\$562,530	1:54.1ms		Gelding	Sundons Gift NZ	11	6	\$290,626	1:59.7ms		
3YO	Colt	In The Force NZ	12	7	\$169,797	1:58.1ms	3YO	Colt	Down Under Muscles	9	5	\$41,775	2:01.1ms		
	Filly	Broadways Best	15	7	\$205,844	1:58.5ms		Filly	Arizona Blue	14	10	\$111,275	1:59.4ms		
	Gelding	Captain Joy	13	12	\$382,576	1:54.0ms		Gelding	Let Me Thru	11	6	\$125,140	2:01.8ms		
2YO	Colt	Smiling Shard NZ	3	2	\$207,015	1:57.8ms	2YO	Colt	Louey Louey Louey	12	3	\$29,275	2:09.1ms		
	Filly	Lady Euthenia	13	11	\$284,475	1:55.3ms		Filly	Elusive Charm	11	4	\$46,100	2:05.8ms		
	Gelding	Cutheatattitude	14	10	\$301,286	1:55.2ms		Gelding	Tuhimata Glass NZ	3	1	\$100,995	2:05.4ms		

Number of 2:00 Horses & Number of Times Broken: 2004/2005 – 2008/2009 Season

Season	One Mile		Distance		Total	
	2.00.0 Performances	2.00.0 Horses	2.00.0 Performances	2.00.0 Horses	Performances	Horses
2008/2009	985	752	2576	1498	3561	2250
2007/2008**	547	469	2016	1248	2485	1795
2006/2007*	595	488	2376	1408	2003	1896
2005/2006	495	408	2176	1337	2671	1745
2004/2005	532	449	2021	1253	2553	1702

*Season dates: 3/09/2007-31/08/2008. Harness Racing was restricted in New South Wales and Queensland for the first part of the 2007/2008 season owing to the equine influenza outbreak. Full-time racing resumed in those States December 2007/January 2008. Travel restrictions were lifted NSW – March 2008, QLD – 30 June 2008.

**Season dates: 1/09/2006-2/09/2007. Harness racing was suspended in all States from 25/08/07 to 30/08/07 owing to equine influenza outbreak. Racing resumed on 31/08/07 in Victoria, SA, WA and Tasmania.

National top 10s

National Top 10 Sires 2008/2009 – Sires by \$

Sire	Strs	Wnrs	Wins	Aust Prizemoney	2YO Strs	2YO Wnrs	2YO Wins	2YO Prizemoney	3YO Strs	3YO Wnrs	3YO Wins	3YO Prizemoney
Village Jasper USA	396	229	635	\$4,126,858	39	11	14	\$115,077	91	53	146	\$1,027,595
Armbro Operative USA	477	259	694	\$4,019,131	35	10	19	\$231,478	69	31	77	\$526,751
Live Or Die USA	263	171	470	\$3,917,962	9	3	3	\$31,210	49	28	75	\$489,579
Christian Cullen NZ	205	137	462	\$3,180,543	10	6	10	\$87,476	50	35	99	\$836,063
Safely Kept USA	339	172	428	\$2,427,022	23	3	5	\$36,803	62	27	70	\$432,216
Panorama USA	297	158	382	\$2,362,778	10	6	15	\$109,754	24	8	18	\$77,976
Mach Three CA	96	68	219	\$2,216,193	22	15	28	\$337,744	40	26	87	\$809,251
Fake Left USA	147	62	196	\$1,953,168				\$0	2	2	7	\$77,048
Courage Under Fire NZ	130	92	275	\$1,857,070	33	19	42	\$450,809	41	29	75	\$421,587
Grinfromeartoeart USA	61	38	77	\$1,813,626	54	32	63	\$839,931				\$0

National Top 10 Broodmare Sires 2008/2009 – Broodmare Sires by \$

Broodmare Sire	Strs	Wnrs	Wins	Aust Prizemoney	2YO Strs	2YO Wnrs	2YO Wins	2YO Prizemoney	3YO Strs	3YO Wnrs	3YO Wins	3YO Prizemoney
Holmes Hanover USA	356	210	573	\$3,927,904	29	9	19	\$158,829	55	30	68	\$331,733
What's Next USA	346	183	451	\$2,737,745	45	13	24	\$308,686	69	28	94	\$608,430
Classic Garry	360	183	399	\$2,488,941	59	21	44	\$496,335	78	35	76	\$447,277
Sokys Atom USA	216	128	340	\$2,433,458	21	8	14	\$90,563	32	21	49	\$240,955
Safely Kept USA	213	115	305	\$2,219,391	49	26	52	\$644,065	60	29	86	\$565,665
Fake Left USA	209	121	343	\$2,209,015	45	22	45	\$421,013	66	36	108	\$684,494
Vanston Hanover USA	205	105	321	\$2,132,766	29	8	15	\$96,937	46	26	98	\$494,757
New York Motoring USA	193	113	325	\$2,060,084	12	3	10	\$138,377	31	22	60	\$461,976
Falcon Seelster USA	126	85	252	\$2,048,956	15	8	15	\$314,005	37	24	58	\$420,729
Troublemaker USA	190	97	270	\$2,039,314	34	14	37	\$568,437	40	19	60	\$384,914



National Top 10 Starters 2008/2009 – Starters by \$

Name	Sex	Starts	Wins	Aust Prizemoney	Best Mile Rate
Mr Feelgood USA	Colt	7	3	\$829,825	1:56.6ms
Blacks A Fake	Gelding	14	8	\$562,530	1:54.1ms
Mysta Magical Mach NZ	Gelding	31	15	\$539,900	1:57.2ms
Divisive	Gelding	9	3	\$433,498	1:56.0ms
Melpark Major	Gelding	8	6	\$429,375	1:54.9ms
Captain Joy (3YO)	Gelding	13	12	\$382,576	1:54.0ms
Karlo Mick	Gelding	21	7	\$315,645	1:54.8ms
Cuttheattitude (2YO)	Gelding	14	10	\$301,288	1:55.1ms
Sundons Gift NZ	Gelding	11	6	\$290,626	TR1:59.7ms
Lady Euthenia (2YO)	Filly	13	11	\$284,475	1:55.3ms

National Top 10 Drivers 2008/2009

Driver (State)	Metro Wins	Metro Points	Country Wins	Country Points	Total Points	Total Deadheats	Total Wins
DK Douglas (VIC)	40	40.0	318	317.0	357	2	358
CA Alford (VIC)	31	31.0	216	215.5	246.5	1	247
AC Lewis (WA)	73	72.5	169	169.0	241.5	1	242
DK Harding (SA)	64	64.0	172	172.0	236	0	236
GW Dixon (QLD)	25	25.0	185	184.0	209	2	210
G Lang (VIC)	41	41.0	151	151.0	192	0	192
JE Hall (Jnr) (WA)	89	88.5	85	85.0	173.5	1	174
SR Graham (QLD)	26	26.0	141	141.0	167	0	167
LJ Weidemann (QLD)	10	10.0	140	140.0	150	0	150
CD Brown (WA)	33	33.0	112	112.0	145	0	145



If there is one title in harness racing circles that rivals the Inter Dominion for prestige and honour, it's Grand Circuit Pacing Champion.

Proudly sponsored by leading performance horse feed company Barastoc, the Grand Circuit has been conducted annually since 1977.

In the 2008/09 season, the points-score competition comprised 16 Group One races in Australia and New Zealand worth \$5.9 million in prize money and strived

alongside legends such as Pure Steel, Gammalite, Village Kid, Westburn Grant and Our Sir Vancelot.

However, it was just the second time in the competition's rich history that the title had been shared – Double Identity and Young Rufus could not be separated in the 2002/03 racing season.

The 2008/09 Barastoc Grand Circuit commenced at Brisbane's Albion Park complex on October 18, 2008 with the \$125,000 Garrards Queensland Pacing Championship.



to determine the most outstanding open class pacer either side of the Tasman. Ultimately, national pride was shared between champion Queenslander Blacks A Fake and the US-bred, Australasian-owned and New Zealand-trained Mr Feelgood who finished tied at the top of the tally board with 12 points.

The result delivered back-to-back Barastoc Grand Circuit crowns to the gelding known to a legion of fans as "Blackie" who had been named best of the best 12 months earlier. Blacks A Fake subsequently joined an elite band of multiple Grand Circuit winners, etching his name

Backing up from a Gold Coast Cup triumph eight days earlier, Blacks A Fake defeated the best the locals had to offer and set the scene for another fabulous season when he produced a brilliant finishing burst to down top mare Fleur De Lil and Iron Hudge in a 1:56 mile rate.

He continued on his winning way at the same venue on October 25, overcoming a barrier nine draw to claim the \$125,000 Harness Racing Queensland Trans-Tasman with trainer Natalie Rasmussen once again in the sulky.

The Grand Circuit attention then moved to the Shaky Isles, with Addington Paceway hosting the \$1.2

million (NZ) Christchurch Casino New Zealand Cup on November 11. The 3200-metre standing start feature carries similar status in its homeland to the Melbourne Cup and saw Changeover hailed a national hero following his 1:58.8 triumph. The famous New Zealand Cup Carnival concluded with a bang three days later when Auckland Reactor – the horse hailed the hottest property in harness racing – clocked 1:54 winning the \$300,000 (NZ) Woodlands Stud New Zealand Free-For-All for popular Kiwi horseman Mark Purdon.

Neither star contested the \$125,000 M.H. Treuer Memorial at Bankstown on December 6, paving the way for Divisive to start an odds-on favourite. But a burst tyre one lap into the 2540-metre journey ended his winning chances. Instead, talented but injury-plagued Victorian Robin Hood secured top honours for trainer Peter Tonkin – who had declared publicly he was supremely confident going into the race – and driver Josh Willick. Karloo Mick and Misty Miller filled the minor placings.



The \$500,000 SEW-Eurodrive Miracle Mile is the ultimate test of speed and strength. The 2008 running, at Sydney's Harold Park on November 28, delivered a vintage finish with home State champ Divisive nabbing emerging Victorian star Melpark Major in the shadows of the post. Sentimentally, trainer/driver Peter Rixon carried the same colours worn to victory in Australia's premier sprint race by Hondo Grattan in 1974.

The major talking point of the event, however, was the respective performances of Blacks A Fake and Changeover who had appeared poised to dominate the Grand Circuit prior to shock failures.

Father and daughter team Alan and Amy Tubbs elevated harness racing's proud family tradition into the spotlight and celebrated their first Grand Circuit success with Melpark Major in the \$375,000 SEW-Eurodrive Victoria Cup at Moonee Valley on December 20.

His 1:55.8 mile rate for the 2575-metre journey smashed the track record and confirmed the son of Iraklis' arrival as a serious competitor at harness racing's highest level.

Twenty-four hours later, under-rated pacer Bold Cruiser delivered a maiden Group One training and

“...it was just the second time in the competition’s rich history that the title had been shared...”



driving success to premier Victorian horseman Glenn Douglas when he claimed the \$150,000 Wrest Point Tasmanian Cup. The standing start specialist proved his Kilmore Cup success earlier in the season was no fluke when he saluted at TAB odds of \$19, downing Kiwi visitor Report For Duty and Penny Veejay.

Divisive was the only Eastern raider to tackle the \$250,000 Stallion Station Fremantle Pacing Cup on January 9 and almost rewarded connections for their ambition with a first prize cheque. He started favourite and was brave in defeat off a challenging 20-metre back mark, finishing second behind in-form local Power Of Tara who clocked a track-record 2:00.4 mile rate for the 2902-metre standing start feature. Power Of Tara was trained by Greg Harper and partnered by young reinsman Ryan Bell who drove the six-year-old to perfection.

Divisive was once again relegated to second placing, this time at the hands of Mysta Magical Mach, in the \$400,000 Find Thirty Every Day WA Pacing Cup at Gloucester Park on January 16. The four-year-old was a virtual unknown just a month prior to Perth's biggest and most prestigious harness racing event and delivered a memorable win for veteran trainer Tony Svilicich and young reinsman Morgan Woodley.

In between times, the \$100,000 Sky Channel SA Pacing Cup on January 10 proved a triumphant homecoming for ex-pat Adelaide horseman Geoff Webster who won with Mister Swinger. The striking son of Village Jasper finished powerfully to defeat New Zealand visitor Gotta Go Cullen and fellow Victorian Cincinnati Kid at Globe Derby Park.

It was no surprise to see dominant WA father and son team Gary Hall senior and junior victorious at Grand Circuit level when Washakie took out the \$125,000 Find Thirty Every Day Australian Pacing Championship on January 23 this year. The success continued a stable domination of the event, having won five of the past seven stagings. They had weight of numbers on their side in the 2009 running, providing three of the nine final acceptors.

Mister Swinger was back in the winner's circle and claimed the Grand Circuit lead on January 31, taking out the \$125,000 Petstock Ballarat Pacing Cup at Bray Raceway in country Victoria. A text book Geoff Webster drive was the catalyst for the last stride victory which had seemed unlikely as close as 50 metres prior to the winning post. American import Mr Feelgood led until the dying stages of the event and although beaten into second, his effort indicated the signs for the future were promising. Promising indeed.

Eight days later, the Grinfromeartoear entire did what many had considered impossible when he belied his sprint racing history to take out the nation's most prized standing start handicap, the \$400,000 Big6 Hunter Cup at Moonee Valley. Living up to the superstar reputation which accompanied him when purchased by a syndicate headed by powerful Queensland businessman Kevin Seymour, the former Little Brown Jug winner proved himself a superior stayer, out-toughing I Am Sam and stable mate Report For Duty in Victoria's premier event.

Auckland Reactor made it 20 wins from 21 starts when he triumphed in the \$600,000 (NZ) Trillian Trust Auckland Cup on March 6 for trainer/driver Mark Purdon. A crowd favourite, he was greeted upon his return to the winner's circle by NZ Prime Minister John Key and a selection of the syndicate which had recently paid \$4 million for the Mach Three entire.

Connections immediately turned their sights towards the 16th and final Grand Circuit leg, the \$1 million Watpac Inter Dominion Pacers' Championship Grand





Final at the Gold Coast on March 28, paying a \$20,000 late entrance fee to participate. The race was touted as a much-anticipated showdown between defending title-holder Blacks A Fake (who was shooting for an unprecedented fourth consecutive victory in harness racing's Holy Grail), Mr Feelgood and Auckland Reactor. Sadly, it provided a season lowlight for the connections of the Kiwi star who finished last after over-racing as a result of striking the sulky footrests in the run. On the flipside, it delivered a much-deserved Inter Dominion crown to the syndicate behind the Mr Feelgood experiment which achieved results few Australians considered possible with a North American import. Blacks A Fake lost few admirers with a brave second placing and it seemed fitting that the placing ensured equal billing alongside his Inter Dominion conqueror on the Grand Circuit dais.

Trotting Features

One of the real success stories of Australian harness racing in recent years has been the resurgence of the trotter.

In a world where everything old inevitably becomes new again, standardbred enthusiasts have gone back to the industry's grass roots by re-establishing a love affair with the square-gaiter.

It wasn't too many years ago that trotting had disappeared from all but Victoria, South Australia and New South Wales. Now square-gaiting races are regularly programmed in Western Australia and Queensland, which has only served to strengthen the ranks in the remaining three "trotting" States.

Victoria is the undisputed stronghold, however, thanks to the unique Redwood All Trotting Carnival, held each July in the Central Victorian township of Maryborough.

Harness Racing Victoria has also played its part in supporting the renaissance, hosting the Inter Dominion Trotting Championship for the past two years and putting its hand up to stage a third consecutive series in 2010.

The \$250,000 Group One Technyflex Inter Dominion Trotting Championship Grand Final was run at Moonee

Valley on February 7 and saw a dominant hometown victory by Sundons Gift. The talented but then enigmatic gelding triumphed in a much-anticipated showdown with champion Kiwi mare One Over Kenny, delivering back-to-back Inter Dominion trotting crowns to trainer/driver Chris Lang.

Twelve months earlier, Lang won at the same track with adopted Aussie, Galleons Sunset, and he celebrated the 2009 success in style, returning to scale standing "Ben Hur style" in the sulky. The winner's 1:59.7 mile rate slashed 1.3 seconds off his own track record for the 2575-metre journey. The race was also a milestone for superstar New Zealand trotting stallion Sundon who sired the first four horses past the post – Sundons Gift, One Over Kenny, Whatsundermykilt and Sundons Tiavon.

The Inter Dominion Grand Final was one of two Grand Circuit successes for Sundons Gift in the 2008/09 season – he also won the \$100,000 Group One SEW-Eurodrive Australian Trotting Grand Prix at Moonee Valley on December 13 last year.

Overall Grand Circuit honours, however, went to One Over Kenny whose brilliant form in her homeland was rewarded with three Group One successes – in the \$100,000(NZ) National Trot, \$100,000(NZ) Trotting Championship and the \$300,000(NZ) Rowe Cup.

The former outstanding three-year-old recaptured her best form under the guidance of trainer/driver Tony Herlihy to finish the Grand Circuit season on 18 points, seven clear of Sundons Gift in second position. Fellow Kiwi trotter Stig, a dual Grand Circuit winner in 2008/09, was third with 10 points.





2009 AUSTRALIAN HARNESS RACING AWARDS

J.D. WATTS AWARDS

2008/2009 Leading Trainer of the Year
BILL DIXON – 242 Wins

2008/2009 Leading Driver of the Year
DARYL DOUGLAS – 358 Wins

2009 AUSTRALIAN HARNESS HORSE OF THE YEAR

MR FEELGOOD USA

LAWN DERBY AWARDS - PACERS

AGED PACER OF THE YEAR – MR FEELGOOD USA
Performances 7 Starts 3 Wins \$829,825

AGED MARE PACER OF THE YEAR – DEANNA TROY
Performances 12 Starts 5 Wins \$148,575

AGED HORSE/GELDING PACER OF THE YEAR – MR FEELGOOD USA
Performances 7 Starts 3 Wins \$829,825

3YO PACER OF THE YEAR – CAPTAIN JOY
Performances 13 Starts 12 Wins \$382,576

3YO FILLY PACER OF THE YEAR – BROADWAYS BEST
Performances 15 Starts 7 Wins \$205,844

3YO COLT/GELDING PACER OF THE YEAR – CAPTAIN JOY
Performances 13 Starts 12 Wins \$382,576

2YO PACER OF THE YEAR – CUTTHEATTITUDE
Performances 14 Starts 10 Wins \$301,288

2YO FILLY PACER OF THE YEAR – LADY EUTHENIA
Performances 13 Starts 11 Wins \$284,475

2YO COLT/GELDING PACER OF THE YEAR – CUTTHEATTITUDE
Performances 14 Starts 10 Wins \$301,288



2009 AUSTRALIAN HARNESS RACING AWARDS CONT'D

VANCLEVE AWARDS - TROTTERS

TROTTER OF THE YEAR – SUNDONS GIFT NZ

Performances 11 Starts 6 Wins \$290,626

AGED TROTTING MARE OF THE YEAR – SUNDONS TIAVON

Performances 13 Starts 3 Wins \$75,376

3YO TROTTER OF THE YEAR – ARIZONA BLUE

Performances 14 Starts 10 Wins \$111,275

2YO TROTTER OF THE YEAR – ROSTEVARREN

Performances 8 Starts 3 Wins \$68,000

2008/2009 GLOBE DERBY AWARDS - SIRES

VILLAGE JASPER USA

Leading Sire by Stakemoney & Winners

396 Starters 229 Winners 635 Wins \$4,126,858

ART MAJOR USA

Leading Juvenile Sire by Stakemoney

69 Starters 34 Winners 80 Wins \$1,169,464

SUNDON USA

Leading Sire of Trotters by Stakemoney

118 Starters 74 Winners 188 Wins \$1,701,122

WINONA AWARD

2009 Australian Broodmare of the Year

LADY JOY

LADY JOY (F1996) by Talk About Class USA from Nyx by Vance Hanover USA from L'Esprit (NZ) by Lordship.

Overall Record: Dam of 3 of Racing Age – 3 Winners 3 in 2:00

2008/2009 Record: 3 winners 17 wins 5 placings \$439,549

ANOTHER JOY (P:1:55.9MS) 3 wins 1 placing \$13,018

CAPTAIN JOY (P:1:54.0MS) 12 wins 0 placings \$382,576

– 2009 Victoria Derby \$150,000 – G1 (Gavin A Lang) Moonee Valley, VIC

– 2009 New South Wales Derby \$102,500 – G1 (Gavin A Lang) Menangle, NSW

– 2009 Queensland Derby \$100,000 – G1 (Gavin A Lang) Gold Coast, QLD

– 2009 NSW 3YO Breeders Challenge \$125,000 - G1 (Gavin A Lang) Menangle, NSW

MASTER JOY (P:1:58.3MS) 2 wins 4 placings \$43,955



State reports

Victoria



The 2008/09 season will be remembered as the year that the Victorian harness racing industry finally developed its own home – Tabcorp Park in Melton.

After a number of years in the planning, the acquisition of land and obtaining the necessary permits and licenses, construction finally commenced on the site in mid-2007. In less than two years, the \$45 million construction of the complex was completed on schedule and opened for business on March 5, 2009. Racing followed soon after, with the official opening meeting staged on Sunday, July 5.

Tabcorp Park is the completion of a lifelong dream for the industry, and the commencement of a new era for harness racing in Victoria.

The venue has been developed as the result of a strong partnership between HRV, the Shire of Melton and Tabcorp. The Shire of Melton has been very positive and supportive of the development.

The industry also acknowledges the financial and corporate support of Tabcorp, including a \$7 million naming rights package which enabled HRV to complete the project to a high standard. Tabcorp Park was a co-operative effort between the Board, senior management, staff and a team of contractors and consultants. It will deliver strong economic and social benefits to the area, generating the equivalent of 70 full-time jobs.

The complex is the most significant development in HRV's history and provides the foundation for the future growth of harness racing in Victoria. It is a venue that the industry should be proud of.

While the Tabcorp Park development dominated the 2008/09 year, the funding of additional capital projects continued the Board's commitment to improving and upgrading tracks and facilities around Victoria.

In October 2008 the Minister For Racing officially opened a new \$1.9 million grandstand at the Shepparton track. The facility has proven to be an enormous bonus for the club, providing an enhanced race day experience for patrons and the local community.

A Cobram track upgrade also took place in the second half of 2008. Camber on the bends was increased from 4 percent to 12.5 percent on the revamped 1008-metre circuit, at a cost of \$500,000.

Similarly, the Cranbourne track underwent a \$500,000 upgrade and was ready for racing in February 2009 after the camber on its turns was increased to 12.5 percent.

Industry feedback in respect to the Cobram and Cranbourne track upgrades has been very positive.

The Board also announced that the Hamilton track would be upgraded to a 1000-metre surface, with racing set to resume at the venue in 2010.

As a result of the successful completion of the Tabcorp Park venue (and the quality of the track and facilities) HRV entered into negotiations with Moonee Valley regarding the future of that venue. The talks commenced despite a long-term contract committing the industry to 52 harness meetings at the venue annually.

A mutually acceptable termination of the agreement between HRV and the Moonee Valley Racing Club was reached in May this year, with harness racing at Moonee Valley to cease in February 2010. The historic final meeting will be staged on February 27, preceded by the 2010 Hunter Cup meeting on February 6.

HRV once again conducted three premier carnivals during the 2008/09 season:

1. The Australasian Breeders' Crown was hosted by the Bendigo Club in August 2008.

In total the Breeders' Crown Carnival paid out over \$2 million in stakes including a record \$1.3 million on Super Sunday. Soon after, the Board announced that the 2009 Crown would be held at the industry's new home at Tabcorp Park, Melton on August 23, featuring a record nine Group One races, and unprecedented \$1.55 million in prize money on Finals Day. A major sponsorship deal was also unveiled, proclaiming Tabcorp as naming rights sponsor of the Breeders' Crown.

2. The 2008 SEW-Eurodrive Victoria Cup was a triumph for Victorian pacer Melpark Major who rose to Grand Circuit prominence with his win.

Unfortunately, Victoria's new pin-up pacer was subsequently injured in a paddock accident, ruling him out of the 2009 Inter Dominion on the Gold Coast.

3. The Big6 Hunter Cup was won by the eventual Inter Dominion Champion Mr Feelgood.

The 2009 Inter Dominion Trotters' Grand Final was won by Sundons Gift who went on to compete in The Elitloppet in Sweden in May.

The Gordon Rothacker Medal was once again the industry's biggest night of the year. History was created when Bruce and Elizabeth Clarke were announced as joint Gordon Rothacker Medallists. Both have been outstanding contributors to harness racing as participants and administrators.

The major club award went to Maryborough which has been an outstanding contributor over a long period of time, having grown the successful Redwood Carnival to become one of the premier events on the harness racing calendar.

Another of the industry's favourite events – the Pearl Kelly Awards Night hosted by the Angelique Club – saw D'Arne Bellman take out the premier prize.

Several industry participants were affected by the bushfires which ravaged parts of the State in early February. Victoria was fortunate to avoid tragedy within the industry itself. However, many were not so fortunate and harness racing participants around Australia rallied together to support the HRV Bushfire Appeal. HRV was proud to contribute \$115,000 on behalf of the industry to the Red Cross Bushfire Appeal and our thanks go to all those around the nation who donated.

The Board has participated in the formation of a proposed Partnership Agreement between the three codes of racing and the Victorian Government to be submitted to potential wagering operators.

The State's current pari-mutuel wagering licence (held by Tabcorp) expires in 2012 and we believe the bidding process for the new licence will commence in the latter part of 2009, with a view to appointing a new licensee in 2010 for a 10-year term from August 2012. This is one of the most important decisions for the future of the racing industry in Victoria.

The Government has chosen to separate the gaming component of industry funding and replace it with a higher rate of return from wagering. The growth in gaming has served the industry well during the current Partnership Agreement with Tabcorp, therefore there is significant risk to industry funding post-2012 by removing our share in gaming. The Government has stated it is committed to a funding model which leaves the racing industry no worse off after 2012. However, the Board is concerned that the current wagering environment represents a severe threat to the prospect of the Government receiving bids that will satisfy the "no worse off" criteria.

"The complex is the most significant development in HRV's history..."



Victoria continued

In addition to the uncertainty to industry funding resulting from the 2012 bidding process, there are several other key issues which harness racing needs to address in respect to industry funding.

Harness racing revenue has grown substantially over the past 15 years as a direct result of the benefits derived from the pari-mutuel wagering model. This model is now being challenged by the influx of interstate licensed operators, such as corporate bookmakers and betting exchanges. While HRV understands and accepts the changing nature of wagering, the industry must be aware that any transfer of wagering from the pari-mutuel operator (currently Tabcorp) to any of these wagering operators represents a significant decrease in returns to the industry. It is imperative that these operators are required to pay a fair product fee for the use of harness racing product and the Federal and State Governments have a responsibility to ensure this happens otherwise the funding of racing will be diminished.

There are many challenges facing the industry in the coming years. It is hoped that the opening of the Tabcorp Park complex for racing will be a boost for the industry. There are 55 race meetings planned for Melton in 2009/10 and, as many of these meetings are transferred from Moonee Valley, they will prove financially beneficial for the industry. As a result HRV has made several stake money announcements for the coming year, including:

- a \$25,000 increase for the SEW-Eurodrive Victoria Cup to \$400,000; and

- a \$50,000 increase for the Alabar Victoria Derby to \$200,000.

In addition, HRV will again host the Inter Dominion Trotting Championship during the Big6 Hunter Cup Carnival, with a Grand Final stake of \$250,000. And increases in HRV funding for Pacing and Trotting Country Cups mean that the Board's contribution to these events will exceed \$1 million for the first time.

New South Wales



Airs of hope and celebration replaced despair in the 2008/09 racing season in New South Wales, where many successes contrasted with the devastation created by the previous year's equine influenza outbreak.

The fastest track in the southern hemisphere became fully operational at Menangle, and Tabcorp joined the NSW Harness Racing Club team by securing naming rights for the world-class venue, the home of many sensational clashes and record times throughout the season.

The introduction of legislation allowing the racing codes to charge corporate bookmakers a product fee for fielding on NSW events created an opportunity to build new revenue sources and protect traditional income streams. The re-merging of the GHRRA and HRNSW into one body governing the commercial and regulatory functions of the industry was widely heralded.

Likewise, the announcement that respected media personality and racing administrator Sami Nati would lead the organisation generated widespread optimism.

While equine influenza's negative impact on the previous year's performance makes financial comparisons difficult, the industry overall appeared to defy the global financial crisis.

Turnover was up 2 percent on TAB forecasts to \$210 million and many clubs reported record levels





of sponsorship. TAB fees received by the NSW racing industry (thoroughbreds, harness and greyhounds) increased by \$19.2 million to a total of \$226.1 million for the year to June 30, 2009. Of the \$226.1 million figure, HRNSW received a distribution of \$32.989 million, an increase of \$3.012 million. HRNSW is responsible for the disbursement of funds received under the Totalizator Act 1997 to the industry including:

- payments to clubs for prize money and administration;
- funding of general industry activities (Industry Fund) and capital works (Racecourse Development Fund); and
- funding of the controlling bodies.

TAB distribution for 2008/09 amounted to \$34.3 million (an increase of \$4.3 million on 2007/08) and included \$1.7 million in funding carried forward from the previous year. A total of \$3 million was provided for annual increases in the Industry Fund (\$2.4 million) and Racecourse Development Fund (\$0.6 million). A total of \$2.5 million was provided to the controlling bodies, with the balance allocated to clubs. Prize money totalling in excess of \$23.5 million was distributed by NSW clubs in the 2008/09 racing year.

The State's 2009 feature race card was eagerly anticipated following the abandonment of many of the previous year's classics due to the equine influenza outbreak. However, for the most part champion local pacer Lombo Pocket Watch was absent, who farewelled fans with a courageous second to Ebony Gem in the 2008 Chariots Of Fire on August 29. In what was expected to be his last race, the grey bullet was beaten narrowly. He subsequently made a surprise return to racing after stud duties in June, 2009 to claim a hat-trick of wins, headed by the Joe Ilsley Cup in a blistering 1:53.6 mile rate.

The \$60,000 Newcastle Mile saw a brave Special Albert defy a smart field of open class horses which included Inter Dominion hopefuls Iron Hudge and Karloo Mick.

The beaten brigade also featured outstanding New South Wales pacer Divisive who took out the nation's premier sprint, the Miracle Mile, just 13 days later.

Proving that a week is a long time in any sport, the champ was below his best eight days later in the Treuer Memorial but did carry a flat tyre throughout the gruelling event won by Robin Hood.

A huge amount of excitement surrounded a quality 2008/09 crop of NSW- bred two-year-olds, in particular the progeny of boom sire Art Major. Not to be outshone, however, was a rather fancy Grenfell-trained gelding named Two Eye See. Minus an eye as the result of a paddock accident as a foal, the youngster belied his disability to win seven of his nine juvenile starts including the rich Linden Huntly and Kevin Seymour Finals. He ran second at his only two defeats, including the \$100,000 Group One Vicbred Super Series Final for two-year-old colts and geldings.

The new season brings much anticipation of the local three-year-old features, when Two Eye See will take on the likes of Cutheattitude, Chariot King and Renaissance Man who between them won the Alabar Breeders' Challenge, NSW Sires' Stakes Final, Australian Pacing Gold Final and Bathurst Gold Crown at two.

Arguably the star of the New South Wales two-year-old crop, though, was a filly. With 11 wins from 13 starts, Lady Euthenia amassed nearly \$300,000 in stake earnings and proved her dominance by capturing four Group One classics by an average of 10 metres. She was just one of the top juveniles at the Bathurst Gold Crown Carnival which again captivated large western districts audiences and attracted contenders from across all borders.



"...the industry overall appeared to defy the global financial crisis."



New South Wales continued

With three Derby crowns to his credit, Captain Joy emerged as the State's premier three-year-old. Carrying on from a stellar two-year-old campaign, he captured the Victorian, NSW and Queensland Derbies and went on to add the Alabar Breeders' Challenge Final to his feature credits.

For Dear Life, winner of the Breeders' Challenge fillies' division, looked set for an equally successful three-year-old career after winning the NSW Oaks and APG Fillies' Final before succumbing to a leg injury while local filly Arizona Blue set the standard within the trotting ranks, winning 10 of her 14 starts for the season including the prized Victoria Trotters' Derby.

Five trainers and drivers topped the magical ton, recording in excess of 100 wins for the season. Greg Bennett and Paul Fitzpatrick added the State Driving and Training Premierships to their ever-growing tally. Fitzpatrick's son Cameron captured his first Junior Driver Championship while elder brother Blake and the ultra-consistent Steve Turnbull also joined the centurions list.

In 2008/09, HRNSW set out to strengthen the brand of established Carnivals under its banner. The Carnival Of Cups Series enjoyed another successful season, further building the profile of the 14 participating events on the regional community calendar. The implementation of a fuel card promotion, designed to provide a link across all events and appeal to family hip pockets, was warmly welcomed by clubs. Turnover increased by \$10,000 per race and prize money distribution grew by \$350,000 across the Carnival.

The second annual running of the Breeders' Challenge Race Series was enhanced by Alabar Bloodstock's naming rights sponsorship. The high profile stud's support of the event created optimism in both the future of the local standardbred breeding industry and the success of the race series itself.

The Alabar Breeders' Challenge Finals Day at Menangle celebrated the commitment of NSW breeders and the creation of outstanding home-bred talent. The Alabar partnership also facilitated the establishment of an industry day, providing an opportunity for harness racing participants, businesses and associations to network, showcase their services and support an event held in their honour. The NSW Rising Star Series Final was also conducted on the day. It followed on from an educational/activity week, which continued a commitment by HRNSW, its member clubs and affiliated associations to the development of drivers in the State.

While the drought situation has eased substantially, in many parts of New South Wales it continues to impact on the willingness and ability of participants to breed, own and train horses.

The loss of TAB income through betting with corporate bookmakers remains one of the largest threats to the future viability of the entire racing industry. In addition, competition for the entertainment dollar continues to erode support for harness racing at a local and statewide level, yet confidence in the future of the sport is high.

As part of the Harness Racing Act 2009, HRNSW is currently creating a five-year Strategic Plan (due for completion in early 2010) which will clearly define the State's priorities in detail. In short, we aim to deliver a highly professional, transparent, cost-saving administration which creates and maintains a sustainable environment for harness racing participants.





HRNSW's most immediate priorities include the creation of new, major racing facilities in the Riverina, Bathurst and Tamworth alongside the development of infrastructure at Tabcorp Park Menangle, principally on-course stabling and accommodation. Other key goals will be to:

- strengthen the breeding sector and increase foal numbers;
- increase TAB turnover through the provision of innovative, complementary racing product; and
- ensure a prosperous livelihood for participants by increasing the financial viability of harness racing clubs.

South Australia



It was another year of challenges for Harness Racing SA but one where the rebuilding strategies and change agenda continued.

However, new State Government tax concessions and responsible management strategies by the board enabled Harness Racing SA Limited to maintain prize money at acceptable levels, and give the local industry time to recover market share.

The HRSA Board finished the 2008/09 year with a series of rebuilding strategy announcements, valued at nearly \$2 million. The initiatives have delivered:

- HRSA's highest ever prize money levels;
- new marketing funds;
- infrastructure grants for all clubs;
- driver fee increases; and
- a series of new programming ideas, designed to rebuild the SA harness racing industry in the months and years ahead.

HRSA retired an historical debt held over from the industry's deregulation a decade earlier, and returned an approximate operating profit of \$1.2 million. This strong financial position will allow HRSA to fund the planned rebuilding initiatives and other projects still in the development phase.

The HRSA Board and management have presented a proposal for a new joint management model, designed to create more efficiencies and profitability for member clubs. It is based on a proven management model introduced in recent years by the Queensland harness racing industry. This year, the Board and its management have been proactive in presenting new business ideas to member clubs which it considers will lead to a stronger, more sustainable industry. These are exciting times for the sport in South Australia as it now has funds and strategies to inject new life back into the industry.

Globe Derby Park is working towards an exciting redevelopment phase which could potentially see the enviable racing complex receive a much needed face lift and upgraded to a world-class track within a few years.

Challenges for the industry still remain, one of these being to provide additional TAB product on Sky's new racing network, scheduled for launch in 2010. New revenue streams continue to challenge racing codes around the world and internet gambling and other users must continue to pay for our product to shore up our future. However, the above challenges are not unique to South Australia.

HRSA is making bold strides forward in industry management. It is also advancing integrity management and stewarding controls, racing industry management and corporate relationships, each presenting new opportunities and direction for the industry.

It's important to recognise the HRSA Board's positive recent results – particularly during the past financial year –



"...the highest prize money levels in the State's history..."



South Australia continued

and advancements by the directors and management team with regard to operational reforms within our industry. In February 2009, the Board appointed experienced racing executive David Aldred to head harness racing in SA as General Manager. The lead role had been vacant for some 18 months prior to Aldred's appointment. He had spent the previous three years as the Executive Director for the harness racing industry in British Columbia, Western Canada and came to the SA helm with almost three decades of racing industry executive management and racing media experience.

One of the General Manager's first priorities was finding a new Chairman Of Stewards. Former Victorian senior steward Stephen Mulcay was appointed to take over the position held by Gerrard Lalor, defeating an extensive field of applicants from around Australia and New Zealand.

Mulcay has been a steward for more than two decades, including 18 years with Harness Racing New Zealand and five years with Harness Racing Victoria where he officiated at over 700 meetings.

In 2009, HRSA formed a close alliance with HRV, outsourcing some of its handicapping, registration and racing services functions to the Melbourne office. The two States have subsequently developed a tremendous sense of teamwork and partnership which has delivered benefits for both parties, but in particular the SA harness racing industry.

In coming months, management will finalise a Strategic Marketing Plan for the Board's approval. The plan will be designed to attract new interest in our product and stimulate industry growth. It will identify target markets and a number of goals including showcasing major SA race carnivals and events.

On the racing front, five-year-old entire Mister Swinger made headlines in January this year, flashing home to defeat Gotta Go Cullen in the \$100,000 Sky Channel SA Pacing Cup at Globe Derby Park. It was one of the best fields Adelaide's major race of the season had brought together for some years, and the club was well rewarded with a large on-course attendance.

The SATAB sponsored Southern Cross Series was run at Globe Derby Park in July and August. Weigell Oval trainer George Smith and his reinsman son Michael combined to win two Southern Cross Finals with Carlisle Queen (two-year-old fillies' division) and Tiger O'reilly (three-year-old colts and geldings).

The Alix Khouiss-trained Lucy's Pride put champion New South Wales reinsman Blake Fitzpatrick back into the SA spotlight when she took out the three-year-old fillies' final, and the State's most improved juvenile, the Jon Kingston-Mayne-trained Jonnyndry won the two-year-old colts and geldings' division with Mark Billinger in the sulky.

Sundons Pride was the star of the SA Trotters' Carnival in June and July at Globe Derby Park, winning all three legs of the famous Gammel Series.

Two of South Australia's driving stars, David Harding and Danielle Hill, achieved career milestones in 2008/09. Hill realised a burning ambition when she was crowned Australasian Young Drivers' Champion at Parklands on the Gold Coast during the Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Championship. To cap a magic season, she also became the first South Australian reinswoman to drive 100 winners in a single racing year in July. In the same month, the all-conquering Harding brought up his 200th victory of the season.





Queensland



The 2008/09 season was a watershed year for harness racing in Queensland.

Following on from a year dominated by equine influenza and the closure of the Russ Hinze Stand at Albion Park, the highlights included:

- the ground-breaking Watpac ID09, held on the Gold Coast;
- the introduction of a new corporate governance structure; and
- the restructuring of club operations.

The season also saw a change in CEO, with Andrew Kelly moving on to take over the reins at Harness Racing Australia. He was replaced by Mike Godber, former CEO at Addington Raceway in New Zealand.

2008/09 Statistics

Meeting Type	Number of Races	Number of Starters	Average Starters per Race
Non TAB	346	2649	7.7
TAB	2257	20,654	9.2

Prize money paid \$13,883,142

Wagering on QLD Harness (UNiTAB) \$58,097,268

Average prize money per TAB race \$6110

Harness Racing in Queensland faces a number of challenges with regard to venues.

The demolition of the Russ Hinze Stand and discussions with our venue partners (QLD Greyhounds Limited) regarding future developments have been a slow and at times frustrating process. The demolition of the stand has now been agreed, and the Board is pursuing the provision of a quality temporary facility as soon as the work is completed to enable Albion Park to once again take its place as the headquarters of harness racing in Queensland.

HRQ was also advised 12 months ago that Parklands would not be available from the end of 2012. However,

the Board is arguing strongly that harness racing and the Gold Coast Show should remain at the site.

A case has been made to the Government for its retention and the Minister (who is also the Local Member Of Parliament for the area) strongly supports the retention of the venue. Should this submission be unsuccessful, HRQ is already actively seeking alternative sites.

The Race Fields Legislation, enacted in December 2008, is a matter of significant importance for the future of harness racing. It is totally unreasonable that gambling operators should be able to use racing information and benefit from the racing event that we put on without making any contribution to the cost of running the industry. There is no doubt, however, that given the experience in other States there will be legal challenges which the Queensland industry will have to meet to ensure that its rights are protected.

The restructuring of club activities has significantly enhanced club finances with Albion Park, Gold Coast and Redcliffe all achieving positive improvements in their balance sheet positions over the past 18 months. The restructuring has also produced a number of efficiencies and operational improvements which are clearly illustrated by the bottom line achieved by both our clubs and HRQ.

The Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Championships were the highlight of the 2008/09 racing season. On July 1, 2008 the event was under a cloud when the Russ Hinze Stand at Albion Park was condemned. With tremendous co-operation from all parties concerned the event was, at short notice, transferred to the Gold Coast track at Parklands and one of the great Inter Dominions was held in March, 2009.



"The two States have subsequently developed a tremendous sense of teamwork and partnership..."



Queensland continued

The end result, while not quite the fairy tale fourth consecutive victory for local hero Blacks A Fake, was still a Queensland triumph thanks to the deeds of the locally owned Mr Feelgood. The event itself was an outstanding success, receiving plaudits throughout Australasia and a call for the Inter Dominion to be permanently based at the Gold Coast.

In addition, a review of the event calculated over \$10 million in direct economic impact and the sale of almost 12,000 commercial bed nights which reinforces the importance of major events to the economy in all States.

Other racing highlights included:

- Blacks A Fake winning both Queensland Grand Circuit events in October, and the Winter Cup in July 2009; and
- Captain Joy's domination of the Sky Channel Queensland Derby, held during Watpac ID09.

As part of the Board's long-term plan, it has put in place a number of strategies to improve the return to stakeholders, increase the industry's market share and provide the foundations for future growth.

The agreement with Sky Channel to run a full TAB meeting on Mondays will be a significant long-term benefit for harness racing in Queensland. It will provide additional stakes and position us to improve our market share leading into the re-negotiation of the Product Co-Agreement in 2014.

The resurgence of country racing at Toowoomba and Maryborough, and an increase in Marburg meetings in

2009/10, is a positive sign for harness racing. The Board sees the south-western Marburg area, where the number of horses and trainers is growing, as a site for a Centre For Training Excellence in the long-term.

The Business Plan adopted by the Board for 2009/10 provides for the freezing of charges to the industry. It also increases the number of racing opportunities through Monday meetings and Saturdays at Marburg, and provides for a six percent boost to general prize money, equating to a \$600,000 injection of funds. In addition, an Integrated Marketing Plan will ensure a more effective result for our marketing spend by developing a single brand and utilising a combined buying power which was often lost when clubs purchased advertising individually.

Western Australia



Richard Burt
CEO

Racing and Wagering Western Australia provided harness racing clubs with payment for stakes (including Sires' Series funding) and Owners' Incentive Payments of \$22 million in the 2008/09 season.

RWWA also paid out \$986,000 in WestBred bonuses. Harness clubs conducted 298 race meetings and 2393 races, providing 24,598 racing opportunities for 2176 individual horses. The total stakes paid by WA harness racing clubs during the period in review amounted to \$21 million. TAB wagering on WA harness product was \$75.6 million and interstate wagering on the WA product reached \$143.6 million.

In association with the 2009 Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Championship on the Gold Coast, WA provided two representatives for the Australasian Young Drivers' Championship – defending titleholder Stephen Reed and 2009 RWWA Rising Stars winner Morgan Woodley. Reed showed his innate ability against the best young drivers from Australia and New Zealand, finishing runner-up in the time-honoured series.





Following the establishment of a Harness Handicapping Sub-Committee in 2007/08, a review of RWWA racing policies was completed. The recommendations were subsequently approved by the Racing Operations Committee. A review of the National Handicapping Rules was also finalised in 2008/9 for implementation in September this year.

Race programming meetings were re-established, involving representatives from metropolitan and country race clubs and, for the first time, delegates from the WA Breeders', Owners', Trainers' and Reinspersons' Association (representing trainers and owners) and the Harness Racehorse Owners' Association.

Continued improvement was achieved in Sky Channel coverage of WA harness racing. The addition of country Friday night and metropolitan and country Saturday night meetings resulted in a 2.53 percent increase in the number of races telecast on SKY.

A \$970,482 refurbishment at Bunbury's Donaldson Park complex, comprising an upgrade of the horse stalls, stewards' towers and other public amenities, was completed in January 2009. The million dollar stalls complex at Northam's Burwood Park complex was opened by Western Australia's Minister for Sport and Recreation, and Racing and Gaming Terry Waldron MLA on May 9 before the largest crowd ever seen at the track. The barn-style layout is the first of its type in the State and earned widespread praise from officials and trainers alike who acknowledged the innovative design and comfort afforded to horses and their attendants.

In a difficult financial time, stake money levels were maintained at the 2007/08 levels – in fact Perth continues to maintain the highest base stake level of any Australian capital city. With the introduction of product fees nationally, and pressure from corporate bookmakers and betting exchanges impacting on the State TABs, it will be a challenge going forward to maintain both turnover and return to industry stake holders.

"Continued improvement was achieved in Sky Channel coverage..."

Longer-term concerns regarding the availability of horses to service the scheduled number of races in the State may be eased following a substantial increase in the number of WA broodmares served in the 2008/09 breeding season – even though the resulting foals will not race until post-2011.

In light of these external pressures, Racing and Wagering Western Australia has commenced a strategic review of all aspects of harness racing in the State. The review is expected to be finalised late this year with a view to making the necessary decisions to continue the growth and prosperity of WA harness racing from the commencement of the 2010/11 racing season.

The inaugural RWWA Country Cups' Series was held in 2008/09, comprising two divisions for \$30,000 and \$10,000 Cup races conducted by country harness racing clubs. Has The Answers took out the \$30,000 Cups' Series for Perth-based trainer Gary Hall Snr while Collie trainer Peter Hemsley travelled the length and breadth of the State to secure the \$10,000 Cups' Series with Pandemic.

Gary Hall Snr took out the RWWA State Trainers' Award for 2008/09 with 140 WA wins (141 nationally). Of that total, 118 winners were driven by Hall's son, Gary Jnr. Hall claimed his fourth consecutive State Trainers' Award in dominant fashion, holding a decisive final margin over runner-up Amanda Suvaljko (83) and Andrew De Campo (79) who was third.

His best wins came courtesy of Im Themightyquinn who won the Group One McInerney Ford 4YO Classic, the Group Three WA Winter Cup and a division of the Paleface Adios Classic at Sydney's Harold Park.





Western Australia continued

Washakie delivered the stable's second Group One success for the season, leading throughout to win the final West Australian leg of the Barastoc Grand Circuit – the Find Thirty Every Day Australian Pacing Championship. The talented five-year-old was then sent to Queensland for the 2009 Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Championship where he qualified for the Grand Final.

Ace reinsman Chris Lewis enjoyed a similar runaway victory in the 2008/09 State Drivers' Premiership, setting a new WA record with 242 wins. He finished 68 winners clear of Gary Hall Jnr (174). Colin Brown (145) and Morgan Woodley (144) finished 3rd and 4th respectively. It was Lewis's 13th State title, equalling the feats of Fred R. Kersley who won 13 WA premierships between 1973 and 1988.

Since Harness Racing Australia began keeping records in 1966, Lewis and Kersley share the national driving record for the most number of State Premierships with NSW legend Tony Turnbull and Ross Sugars who won the South Australian title on 13 occasions before relocating to Victoria.

The first of WA's three Barastoc Grand Circuit events – the Stallion Station Fremantle Pacing Cup – was won by Power Of Tara who produced an outstanding performance for his New Zealand-based owners, The Power Syndicate. The depth of WA's 2008/09 4YO crop was quite outstanding with Mysta Magical Mach, Im Themightyquinn and Schinzig Buller all winning at Group One level during the season.

Mysta Magical Mach was the success story of the racing year, however, coming to Western Australia in mid-November and making an immediate impact, finishing second in a Gold Nugget Championship Prelude and the prestigious Group One Final. By season's end, Mysta Magical Mach had achieved 15 wins, 10 seconds and a third from 31 starts for season's earnings of \$539,900. The record placed him third nationally in terms of stake money won during 2008/09, bettered only by US import Mr Feelgood and Blacks A Fake. The gelding's season highlight was a brilliant win in the State's second Grand Circuit event, the Find Thirty Every Day WA Pacing Cup. He also took out the WA Christmas Gift, Bunbury Cup and WA Lord Mayors' Cup in addition to finishing runner-up in the Group One Golden Nugget, WA Winter Cup and Governors' Cup.

Tasmania



Growth and change were the two major highlights of the 2008/09 harness racing season in Tasmania.

In summary:

- Tasmanian horses continued to perform well in some of the nation's best races;
- the yearling sales produced record results;
- the V75 Carnival evolved into a nationally recognised event;
- the quality of Tasmanian breeding was strengthened;
- leading local reinsman Gareth Rattray represented Australia at the World Driving Championships;
- the number of novice drivers increased; and
- Harness Racing Tasmania was replaced by the Tasmanian Racing Board.

Tasmanian horses continued a trend established during the 2007/08 season by once again producing top-class performances in Group races. Three-year-old filly Shez





Ryleymak enhanced her imposing juvenile record with victory in the Tasmanian Oaks, complemented by placings in the New South Wales Oaks and Vicbred Super Series Final. Deanna Troy was magnificent early in the season and was rewarded with the 2008/09 title of Australia's best female pacer. She won Australia's premier mares' event, the \$100,000 Ladyship Mile at Harold Park in Sydney, and three Group races in Tasmania and Victoria.

Tasracing, in conjunction with sales company Davidson Cameron Board & Simmons, planned and managed the annual Tasmanian Premier Harness Yearling Sale. The 2009 sale was the fourth since the event's inception in 2006. Fifty-three lots were auctioned and the total sale gross of \$459,000 represented a 35.7 percent increase on the previous year. The sale average of \$8650 was up 22.8 percent on the 2008 figure. Visiting buyers were the key to the success of the sale, with seven yearlings sold to interstate stables for a total of \$101,500. Comparisons with interstate sales were favourable – the average price for the Australian Pacing Gold section of the Tasmanian sale ranked fourth out of eight similar sales conducted nationally. The average for the Davidson Cameron Board & Simmons component of the Tasmanian sale average ranked third of six. Importantly, leading Tasmanian breeders are now recognising they have a local outlet to sell quality yearlings, where they will receive prices that enable them to breed commercially.

The third V75 Tasmanian Harness Racing Carnival was the best to date. The 2008/09 celebration, which kicked off at Launceston on December 7, moved to Devonport on December 14 and concluded at Hobart on December 21, produced record turnover and attendance figures, and exciting racing. A highlight was the performance of Tasmanian-owned or trained horses who won six of the 10 feature races (carrying prize money of \$20,000 or more), underlining the fact that the local product is now competitive against interstate opposition.

"Deanna Troy was magnificent early in the season and was rewarded with the 2008/09 title of Australia's best female pacer."

Tasmanian breeding was given further prominence in October 2008 when Ark Maree was named Australian Broodmare Of The Year. Bred and now domiciled in Tasmania, the Torado Hanover mare's offspring enjoyed a stellar 2007/08 season. Boutique Beaconsfield breeders Fred and Pauline Barker have built on their considerable reputation after two outstanding racing years. From only six broodmares, they produced the standout performers Karalta Crown and Cody Maverick in 2007/08. They followed up in 2008/09 with Villagem, who won the \$100,000 Group One Vicbred Super Series Final for three-year-old colts and geldings.

Gareth Rattray represented Australia in the 2009 World Driving Championship in Norway from May 14 to 20. Rattray recorded one win during the 20-race series and was placed in two others. Ten drivers representing European countries, USA, Canada, New Zealand and Australia competed in the biennial championship. At just 23 years of age, Rattray was the youngest Australian ever to compete in the series and together with his father Barrie, became part of the only father/son combination to represent the country.

Tasmania's 2008/09 premierships were again dominated by the Rattray family. Gareth added to his amazing record with a fourth consecutive Leading Driver Award. Barrie continued his stranglehold on the Training Award, securing the honour for the 14th time. And Todd continued a family domination of the Junior Driver Premiership, recording his maiden win. His older twin brothers Gareth and James had won the previous seven Tasmanian Junior Driver Titles between them.



ID09 review



Mr Feelgood's Watpac ID09 success demonstrated that with the appropriate knowledge, manpower and passion, harness racing dreams can become reality.

Owner Kevin Seymour and trainer Tim Butt dared to believe they could purchase a North American horse and win Australasia's biggest pacing event. It was a formidable challenge, made all the more unlikely by the fact that they planned to do it within a 12-month timeframe. Butt and his brother Anthony spent months researching potential purchases before settling on the one-time winner of the prized US juvenile classic, the Little Brown Jug. Seymour put up the majority of the capital through one of his many successful business ventures, in partnership with fellow owners Peter O'Shea and Clinton Payne. The famous New Zealand siblings were charged with the responsibility of acclimatising the stallion in a different hemisphere while preparing him for a tilt at the nation's ultimate test of pacing talent.

Watpac ID09 – ironically sponsored by one of the Seymour group's companies – should have been beyond Mr Feelgood's capabilities. His stunning success brought to fruition the most ambitious of plans, and confirmed that the enormous faith shown by all associated with the son of Grinfromeartoear was well founded. Mr Feelgood headed into the series on the back of a promising Victorian campaign which had produced shock standing start wins in both the Shepparton and Hunter Cups. He ran creditably without

starring in the preliminary heats but clearly saved the best for last, upstaging a star-studded field – including former three-time Inter Dominion champion and local hero Blacks A Fake – to claim the lion's share of the \$1 million stake on offer.

The victory not only recouped a sizable percentage of his exorbitant purchase price, but also enhanced his already impressive credentials looking towards a future stud career. More importantly, it served to break down some of the perceived barriers between the US and Australian harness racing industries.

Northern Hemisphere horses have raced locally before, but none have achieved Mr Feelgood's level of success. Watpac ID09 always promised to be a memorable series for the Butt stable and the Grand Final win corrected a rare anomaly on the dominant team's resume. The brothers had twice claimed Inter Dominion Trotting Grand Finals – with champion square gaiters Lyell Creek and Take A Moment – but they had never held a Pacing Championship trophy aloft. The win added





another intriguing chapter to the Inter Dominion Pacing Championship's unique and colourful history.

Aside from the aptly named Mr Feelgood's fairytale triumph, Watpac ID09 also confirmed a long-held belief by delivering a timely and very real economic boost to the host State.

An independent report commissioned by Harness Racing Australia and prepared by Melbourne firm IER Pty Ltd, revealed that ID09 – conducted over three consecutive Saturday nights in March – generated direct spending of \$10.4 million and attracted more than 18,000 attendees to the Queensland tourism mecca.

2009 Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Championship Results

Preliminary Heats

Night One (March 14):

Heat 1 – Diamonds N Furs NZ (Kate Gath) 1,
Changeover NZ 2, Mister Swinger NZ 3.

Heat 2 – I Am Sam (Natalie Rasmussen) 1,
Smoken Up NZ 2, Mr Feelgood USA 3.

Heat 3 – Blacks A Fake (Natalie Rasmussen) 1,
In Monaco NZ 2, Washakie NZ 3.

Heat 4 – Karloo Mick (Greg Bennett) 1,
Auckland Reactor NZ 2, Lively Highlander NZ 3.

Night Two (March 21):

Heat 5 – Karloo Mick (Greg Bennett) 1, Our Awesome
Armbro NZ 2, Our Brahman Boy NZ 3.

Heat 6 – Auckland Reactor NZ (Tony Herlihy) 1,
Washakie NZ 2, I Am Sam 3.

Heat 7 – Changeover NZ (David Butcher) 1,
Blacks A Fake 2, Gotta Go Cullen NZ 3.

Grand Final (March 28)

First: Mr Feelgood USA (Anthony Butt)

Second: Blacks A Fake (Natalie Rasmussen)

Third: Karloo Mick (Greg Bennett)

Others: Changeover NZ, Gotta Go Cullen NZ,
Washakie NZ, Our Brahman Boy NZ, Smoken Up NZ,
In Monaco NZ, I Am Sam, Diamonds N Furs NZ,
Auckland Reactor NZ. Mile Rate 1:56.6.



“...it served to break down some of the perceived barriers between the US and Australian harness racing industries.”



International performers

When a New Zealand-bred trotter who is trained and driven by a Victorian lined up in a heat of the world's most famous square gaiting race, the Australian harness racing industry stood tall.

Sundons Gift did not qualify for the final of The 2009 Elitloppet in Sweden, but it hardly mattered. His mere European presence, under the guidance of trainer/driver Chris Lang and his wife Sharon who served as travelling foreman, was achievement enough. Swedish trotting officials guard Elitloppet invitations with their life, so it was a huge compliment for an Australian horse to command sufficient respect to be offered an opportunity to compete. Sweden fell in love with the Sundons Gift team, and Australian harness racing will be all the richer for the affair.

The staff from Lang's Aldebaran Park operation gained enormous knowledge from the trip and plan to put their observations into practice on home soil. They are already working on a redevelopment of the training facilities at their Nagambie base in the Goulburn Valley to align themselves more closely to the European model. A return to Sweden for a second Elitloppet campaign has also been mooted, in the wake of exciting young trotter Skyvalley's emergence as a serious open class performer.



Sundons Gift may have been our highest profile export during the 2008/09 season, but he was not the only Australian ambassador to fly the boxing kangaroo proudly.

In recent seasons, a growing number of Australian pacers and trotters have found their way to North America, where the strength and durability of our breed has been well received. In the past 12 months, however, it was the nation's horsemen who shone brightest on the highly competitive North American stage – specifically Queensland siblings Andrew and Luke McCarthy.

Looking for new challenges after dominating the harness racing scene in their home State, their overseas achievements demonstrated beyond doubt that their skills and talent are world class. Luke's six-month working holiday reached a dream crescendo when he partnered champion three-year-old Muscle Hall to victory in the \$540,000 World Trotting Derby. It was his 13th win from

140 US drives and took his North American stake earnings to \$411,750.

The 26-year-old was following in the footsteps of younger brother Andrew (23) who returned to the US in April to work alongside ex-pat Australian trainer Noel Daley. He is well established and respected, having enjoyed considerable success after relocating in 2007 and was accompanied on his latest adventure by stable stars Fleur De Lil and Slipnslide.

Mr Feelgood, 2009 Watpac Inter Dominion Pacing Champion, served to further lessen the gap between the North American and Australian harness racing industries when he triumphed in our biggest race. He became the first US import to taste Inter Dominion glory, adding Australasian pacing's Holy Grail to the prestigious Little Brown Jug title he had previously won on home soil.

Not to mention billionaire businessman Clive Palmer's huge investment in the Queensland standardbred industry through the establishment of Cold Mountain Stud. Also comprising a racing arm, the high-profile breeding operation is committed to optimising the quality of Australian bloodlines by providing access to the world's best stallions.

Another exciting development was the international telecast of Australian harness racing product in the 2008/09 season. In co-operation with Sky Channel, Australian races were beamed around the globe, to locations including France, South Africa, India, Sri Lanka and the United Kingdom. Our strong affiliation with harness racing heartland New Zealand also continued, with local race vision exported and key events from across the Tasman shown live on the Sky network to Australian punters. The vision exchange was complementary to the significant number of Kiwi pacers and trotters who came to Australia in search of feature success last racing season, and a quietly increasing number of local horses who made the reverse trip, daring to take on New Zealand's best on their home turf.

There can be no denying that in 2008/09, Australian harness racing burst onto the world stage and enjoyed a higher international profile than ever before.

"...Australian races were beamed around the globe..."



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