



MEDIA RELEASE

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NZTR DEPUTY CHAIR LEADS DISCUSSION ON DIVERSITY IN RACING

The second half of the third plenary session of the 37th Asian Racing Conference in Seoul this week was led by Ms Victoria Carter, Deputy Chair of New Zealand Thoroughbred Racing, who opened with a frank discussion on how racing can respond to a rapidly changing world, with the emphasis on staying relevant and driving diversity.

“If racing wants to expand its participant base and get more fans – the fastest way is through diversity,” Ms Carter said.

“More women in racing at all levels, not just on-course, will mean that we have a greater chance of innovation, collaboration and transformation. If you can’t see it, how can you be it or believe that it is possible?” she challenged the audience.

“Having more women in racing shows all women that it is possible. It means you do not need to be unique, exceptional or chosen and it becomes more of the norm. Remember half the world is women.

“For racing to gallop ahead we need women in leadership roles. If you want good decisions, good strategies and good outcomes, you need people who are different from you. Hence diversity, or gender-balance, matters.

“Change will make our industry stronger. There isn’t an industry today that doesn’t need innovation and new ideas; racing is not alone here,” Ms Carter said.

“So if we want more women to participate in racing we need to find a way to get the other 50% involved.”

Ms Susannah Gill, Director of External Affairs for Arena Racing Company provided an insight into British racing’s commitment to diversity and inclusion. British racing, with its rich heritage, excellent growth and leading position in the production of top quality horses, identified a need to realign with modern society, Ms Gill said.

This resulted in the formation of the Diversity in Racing Steering Group led by the British Horseracing Authority and included representation from all stakeholder groups. The Group will shortly publish its Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.

“Society still perceives racing to be a ‘white rich man’s sport,’ yet it relies mostly on people who are not white, rich or men.

“With racing’s administration populated with white middle-aged men, a current staffing shortage, which will only get worse with Brexit and a gender pay gap, British racing was in trouble.

“So, in short, not only do we need to attract the brightest and the best, but we also need to retain them. Hence, we have got to be seen to be open for business,” said Ms Gill.

Ms Anna Seitz Ciannello, Client Development and Public Relations Manager of Fasig Tipton, briefed delegates on the creation and expansion of female racing syndicates, both in the United States and abroad.

“In my job I realised how exciting it was for people to be involved in owning a racehorse. Hence, I put together my first syndicate and bought a filly named I’m Already Sexy. We were not millionaires, we were just a bunch of young people having fun.

“From there grew the idea of having syndicates for women, where the aim is simply to have fun.”

Ms Seitz Ciannello proceeded to expand her syndicates internationally, with runners in Australia, Ireland and the USA.

Her Australian syndicate It’s All About the Girls, formed in 2013, has subsequently brought several hundred new female owners to the sport. Global Glamour, the syndicate’s Group I winning filly, was offered as a prime example of the international reach of such syndicates, boasting 40 owners from eight countries.

Ms Megumi Ichiyama, the Chief of Staff of the Japan Racing Association Publicity Department, shared with delegates the strategy of the UMAJO project which commenced in 2012 and is aimed at attracting women to the racecourse.

“The project was launched when the JRA realised that less than 14% of all racegoers in Japan were women. Research showed that women not only wanted to race in comfort, but also wanted to be provided with information and to be guided on racing when attending as a newcomer,” Ms Ichiyama said.

This led to the creation of the UMAJO SPOT, an area set up exclusively for women at each of the JRA’s Racecourses. Here women are offered concierge services, introductory brochures, refreshments and even educational tours.

“The JRA also realised that the horse is a key attraction factor for women and have used this successfully in their poster campaigns. To date the project has already shown to be beneficial with female attendance growing to 17% in 2017.