



NZTROF President's Annual Report 2021

The 2020-21 year could simply be described as a bag of liquorice allsorts! I don't know where to start as so much was expected with the introduction of the Racing Industry Act, the TAB recording good profits, the announcement of increased stakes; then followed increased costs and there's that swear word COVID that keeps hanging around like a bad smell. So, what positives can we take away from the last twelve months? Like you I'm finding it hard to find that one thing that stands out! I suppose we must be thankful the industry has not self-destructed and has kept its head above water.

We are living in anxious and frustrating times, with a persistent background presence of COVID-19 that is affecting our lives, our work and our interactions.

Auckland has been in a very long period of restrictions and the rest of NZ waits each day on tenterhooks to see if they may suffer the same consequence if COVID-19 cases breach the regional borders. Messages can seem confusing, priorities are divided between concerns about the health system, concerns about vulnerable populations, business and personal objectives, and the overwhelming desire to get back to some sense of 'normal'.

It is very important that racing industry personnel and our whānau have a clear shared understanding of what the future of COVID-19 may look like and why our work, social settings and personal behaviours are important. Being vaccinated and having a valid vaccine pass will be very important to gain access to future race meetings. I also include trainers, stable hands, and track staff here. I personally would not ask for anything less as the health and safety of all participants is paramount to our industry.

Looking back and forward I still believe it's a wait and see to determine whether the TAB and our Racing Codes have adopted the right strategies that will see the respective industry profit for its main investor, being the 'Owner'. We can no longer blame COVID as cause and our leaders of our betting and racing industry will be fully tested to ensure we don't go backwards. Stakeholders, and especially Owners, must have confidence in our industry leader NZTR that future strategies will bear the fruits through its actions and its initiatives.

Being the owner's voice through the Members Council I will always ask the hard questions and advocate as best I can to ensure owners' rights and privileges are not eroded. The cost of owning and racing a racehorse is not cheap as we all know. Stakes increases have got some way to go yet!

There are 14,000 thoroughbred owners registered with NZTR! I am unaware whether all are active, but only a minority of these owners are members of the Federation. This is a concern to me as the Federation is recognised in the Racing Industry Act as representing all owners. It is my aim to work with NZTR in the future to ensure all registered owners are a member of our Federation and ensure

the Federation is funded appropriately without penalising owners further. This will be a difficult conversation but one that need to be addressed.

For those who have had success in the last year, I congratulate you and may it continue. For those less fortunate, I hope that you turn the corner to success soon. When travel between regions is relaxed, I hope to be on-course to attend some of the Regional Association activities that have previously been postponed.

To my hard-working Executive, I thank you for your contribution and efforts over the last year. We all work voluntarily for our regions and the Federation. When we next meet in person we will relook at our purpose and plan accordingly. There is much still to achieve and work through and we will communicate this to all when finalised. Our current finances are sound for what income we receive, and we produce a recognised Bulletin that is read by all.

Happy Racing and it's a pleasure to offer this as my third Annual Report.

Regards,

Bernard Hickey
NZTROF President