



New Zealand Thoroughbred Racehorse Owners Federation President's Annual Report 2024

It is a pleasure to offer this as my Annual Report in a year that has seen minor change at the top of the Racing Industry to be thrilled about. Racing has been plagued by abandonments yet again when one would have thought that maintaining a track would be a simple matter with all the expert knowledge and machinery at our disposal. But not so, and it is increasingly becoming a matter of what tracks will be available to race on in the future.

I said last year the Federation will work closely with the other Sector Members – being Breeders, Trainers, and Jockeys – to get support for NZTR to recognise these bodies as a full member of NZTR. This has yet to happen and is with NZTR Legal in determining what the future governance structure and mandate of NZTR will be and developing a Constitution to suit. Your Federation will continue to advocate to be a full member to give owners a stronger voice and be able to partake with Clubs at Annual General Meeting time.

The future of our Federation will be when we advocate on behalf of all registered owners and not just our current paid up membership! Why should owners have to fork out more for a membership subscription when one of NZTR's main outputs and objectives should be to support and increase racehorse ownership as one of its main purposes? I pointed out that **“GIVING BACK TO OWNERS”** and **“OWNERS INTRODUCE OWNERS,”** along with **“OWNER RACE-DAYS,”** are initiatives of focus to promote and support racehorse ownership. The aim would be to not just increase ownership but also to promote attendance at thoroughbred racing meetings as appealing community events that will in turn support local Clubs. A change of leadership at NZTR will see this benefit and get ENTAIN support for “Owner Race Days” outside the premier race days that NZTR are banking upon to increase turnover.

Increasing ownership and getting owners on course will raise attendance numbers and wagering and, in turn, support Clubs and the activities of our Regional Associations. Getting owners back on course through a better race day ownership experience is something that Clubs need to work on. There have been occasions brought to my attention where Clubs offer more to groups and others when attending a race day and this is not acceptable when owners have invested hugely into the industry. Clubs seem to be hell bent on attracting teenagers to a concert or party atmosphere rather than looking after the owners, trainers and support staff which is the main purpose of race days. Do not get me wrong, group packages are good so long as the main purpose is to support the race meeting in general, along with increasing wagering. Providing good facilities and food is paramount in supporting attendance at meetings.

Your Federation has been quiet administratively wise, and this has been while awaiting a change in NZTR's support of our Federation and the initiatives and strategies we would like

to work on with 'Love Racing.' Hopefully, I can bring better news to the AGM but I do hold my breath as, to date, NZTR have not been good at making wise and prudent decisions based upon good, sound reasoning. Are all our eggs in one basket around the 'Kiwi' and moving group and listed races north of Tokoroa? If NZTR's current strategies and plans do not come about then our industry has work to do to turn around an out-of-control freight train. ENTAIN have invested a lot into the industry since coming on board and it is time the thoroughbred industry gave back through three simple objectives, namely (a) Increasing Ownership (b) Developing a racing calendar that supports pattern races, clubs and wagering and (c) Investing in Infrastructure and Club support.

Financially, your Federation has worked towards a small surplus and our funds will be needed going forth to support some of the initiatives we have planned in support of giving back to the industry, including promoting "Owner Race Days" within our Regional Association areas in 2025.

To my executive and team, I thank you for your support during the last year and may we continue to be the voice and advocate for all owners in the industry.

Lastly, I want to thank Bruce Sharrock for his time and effort put in as CEO for NZTR. I must say that such a role is all-encompassing and stressful to say the least and we wish you all the best in your future endeavours. Also, I want to acknowledge the sad passing of Johnathan Parkes from our jockey ranks. Johnathan was a true professional on race day and our condolences go out to his family and friends. Let us remember to support those in need around us and not be afraid to come forward and ask for help or assistance. NZTR has invested heavily in supporting all our racing industry participants, so do avail yourself of these services through the LOVERACING website.

To my Executive, all owners and racing industry staff nationwide who have worked tirelessly this year, may I wish you a joyful Merry Christmas and a safe New Year. If you are racing over the festive period, Good Luck!

Bernard Hickey
NZTROF President