

# 2025 Chairman's report for the 28<sup>th</sup> May 2026 AGM

Dear Board Members,

I am pleased to present my report as Chair of the New Zealand Sires' Stakes Board. The NZSSB has a proud history, and I remain strongly focused on protecting that legacy while the organisation continues to evolve, innovate, and stay relevant in an ever-changing harness racing landscape.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my fellow Board members for their leadership and commitment. Their collective effort continues to strengthen the NZSSB's standing as one of the most respected and recognisable brands in New Zealand harness racing.

## Achievements and Highlights

Despite the broader challenges currently affecting the racing industry, the 2025 season proved to be another successful year for the NZSSB. Our partnership with HRNZ through *The Future Starts Now* initiative, combined with a continued emphasis on excellence in breeding and racing, enabled us to deliver a high-quality programme of feature events that highlighted the depth and calibre of New Zealand-bred standardbreds.

Key winners throughout the 2025 season included:

- **Garrard's Horse & Hound 3YO Colts & Geldings Final** – *Marketplace*
- **Magness Benrow 3YO Fillies Championship** – *Captains Mistress*
- **Nevele R Fillies Final** – *Celestial Sea*
- **Woodlands Stud 2YO Colts & Geldings Final** – *Freeze Frame*
- **Dunstan Horsefeeds 2YO Fillies Final** – *All Of Me*
- **IRT 2YO Trotters Championship** – *Kyvalley Ray*
- **IRT 3YO Trotters Championship** – *Meant To Be*
- **Macca Lodge 2YO Trotting Fillies Classique** – *Becky's Girl*
- **Macca Lodge 3YO Trotting Fillies Classique** – *Ya Rite Darl*

These performances demonstrate the strength of our breeding programme and reinforce the prestige and competitiveness of NZSSB-branded events.

## Sponsorship and Industry Growth

The achievements of the NZSSB are underpinned by the loyalty and support of our sponsors. I sincerely thank BetaVet, Caduceus Club, Dunstan Horsefeeds, Future Wealth, Garrard's Horse & Hound, IRT, Lisa Fabri, Baden McArdle, Macca Lodge, Magness Benrow, Nevele R Stud, NZB Standardbred, Rico Lodge, SBSR, and Woodlands Stud for their investment in the sport's future.

In particular, I acknowledge NZB Standardbred for their continued confidence in the NZSSB, demonstrated through our management of the Harness Million races. The ongoing development of the Caduceus Club Fillies Series—administered by the NZSSB since Series 25—remains a strong example of the value of long-term stewardship. I also thank Jamie MacKinnon for his partnership and shared commitment to the growth of this important series.

Looking ahead, the stake increases introduced in 2025 mark a meaningful milestone for New Zealand harness racing. Our Aged Conditioned races have also generated strong interest, with horses such as *Sideshow Bruce*, *Beach Day*, *Eurostyle*, *Nellie Doyle*, *Berrettini*, *Greased Lightnin*, *Esmerlda*, *Tosana*, and *The Lazarus Effect* delivering performances that captured the attention of owners, supporters, and punters alike.

### **Challenges and Future Opportunities**

While the season had many positives, the Board remains mindful of the pressures facing the breeding sector. Broodmare numbers and the impending retirement of several influential sires remain key considerations. In response, the NZSSB continues to focus on providing aspirational and meaningful opportunities for elite 2YO and 3YO horses, while also supporting NZSS-eligible horses aged four years and older.

Engagement with HRNZ throughout the year has identified potential areas for closer collaboration. These discussions offer genuine opportunities to further strengthen the NZSSB and to support innovation across the wider industry.

### **Acknowledgements**

I would like to acknowledge HRNZ for its continued support and collaboration, particularly through the joint venture *The Future Starts Now*, which continues to deliver positive outcomes for harness racing.

Dawn Belcher, your careful stewardship of the Board's finances ensures the NZSSB remains financially stable and well positioned for the future. Your professionalism and support for our CEO are greatly appreciated.

Finally, I wish to recognise our CEO, Martin Pierson, for his outstanding contribution. Martin's leadership, strategic insight, and tireless commitment remain central to the NZSSB's success. This has never been more evident, given the health issues he is facing. I sincerely thank him for his continued dedication.

As we move forward, I am confident that with the continued support of our Board, partners, and stakeholders, the NZSSB will build on its momentum and further enhance the standing of New Zealand harness racing.

Yours sincerely,



Chairman,

New Zealand Sires' Stakes Board