

## A review of the Dates process for 2020-21

I am happy to cut the HRNZ Board some slack given the uncertainty created by covid-19 in respect to where and when racing and training activities would be able to recommence, the uncertainty over funding levels due to the financial position of the TAB and the pressure exerted by the Minister to bring forward some of the recommendations of the Messara report.

By the time the draft date structure for 2020-21 was due to be released, however, the country's progress in fighting covid-19 was evident and the return to racing, albeit without on-course patrons, imminent. The return to normality evident should have prompted the board to reconsider the programme they had rushed into under the pressures present in the preceding 2 months. Putting restructuring on hold until proper consultation was extended to all participating clubs, and a full analysis of their worth and position in the industry ascertained, would have been the appropriate course of action.

Instead the HRNZ board saw fit to push forward with its poorly considered agenda only to be embarrassed by RITA's overturning of a significant portion of it. This in combination with the revelation that their proposed restructuring would in fact be counterproductive to its stated aim of "improving wagering income by racing at the higher-performing venues" casts serious doubt on the competence of those involved in the programme.

Analysis of the affected club's performances in the last full season, 2018-19, clearly showed that dates were being removed from clubs that were more efficient at returning wagering income in relation to funding to lower-performing venues.

That the board does not seem to comprehend the true situation regarding the comparative contributions of clubs and has not released any analysis supporting its view is astounding. Even more so the statement in response to RITA's rejection of part of their submission "however we believe our initial thoughts .....were correct". The arrogance this statement projects in light of the overwhelming evidence against the board's logic does not inspire confidence in their ability to set constructive policy in the future.

This board needs to acknowledge their failure to have fully grasped the situation. It also needs to acknowledge the precarious position it has placed some clubs in either by removing their licences completely or in the case of Central Districts and Forbury Park creating a situation that has seen their involvement shrink to a level that will affect their viability in the future through no fault of their own. Then to have the gall to say these clubs will "come under close scrutiny throughout 2020-21 and their performances will influence the following year's programme" when the hand they

have been dealt will be the major factor in their ability to perform is incredulous.

The concept of fairness, which each club is entitled to in their treatment within our industry, has been 'missing in action' under this board. It is time to remedy this situation, conduct a full and comprehensive ongoing analysis of individual club's contributions to the industry and be involved in open consultation regarding it's structure in the future.

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