

Congratulations GRA



Racing Minister

Robert Schwarten

THE Greyhound Racing Authority is to be congratulated for the achievements that have been made to improve greyhound racing in Queensland.

A record total in product revenue fees received by the greyhound racing industry was reached last year.

The future is also looking positive based on UNiTAB's mid-year result announcement last month, with another record product fee expected to be achieved this financial year.

These strong results were attained because the Board has not shied away from tackling difficult issues confronting the industry such as the decision to close the Beenleigh Club. By making these hard decisions the Greyhound Racing Authority has been able to increase prizemoney to owners and trainers by \$600,000 in 2003-04. This is no small achievement and the Authority should be recognised for this.

While the industry continues to perform well overall, the greyhound code still needs to work through some major strategic issues that the other racing codes are also facing.

The Greyhound Racing Authority, the Queensland Harness Racing Board and Queensland Racing have all delivered interim progress reports on the work already done to investigate corporate governance structures for managing their codes of racing.

I will be having further discussions with all Control Bodies on governance issues before reporting to Cabinet later this year on options for the establishment of corporations to be the control bodies for the three Codes of Racing.

The Reports have identified that in order to apply for a control body approval under the Racing Act 2002, the control bodies must first develop and implement all mandatory policies under the Act and have operational rules of racing authorised by those policies.

I can assure the Greyhound Racing industry that a decision in relation to establishment of any new corporate governance structures for the racing codes in Queensland will not be taken until I have fully considered the merits of any changes proposed by the control bodies.

I will need to be convinced that any proposed changes are in the best interests of the entire Queensland Racing Industry.

The Office of Racing Regulation is helping the control bodies to meet their requirements of the Act.

During the first half of this year, the Office of Racing Regulation will also be undertaking the first program for assessing the suitability of control bodies to manage the relevant codes of racing.

This program will provide detailed

information regarding the status and progress of implementation by the control bodies of their policies and rules.

In my view, the recent conviction of people in the Beenleigh Magistrates Court for offences of keeping animals as a kill or lure brings home how critical it is for control bodies to have appropriate policies.

Incidents such as these are immensely destructive to the reputation and prosperity of greyhound racing and are totally unacceptable. All participants in greyhound racing are adversely affected by the cruel and reckless behaviour of a small minority.

While there are provisions in the Racing Act 2002 to safeguard the welfare of all animals involved in racing, it also requires control bodies to have policies which make its officials, staff and licence holders aware of their duties under relevant laws such as the Animal Care and Protection Act.

Any person who mistreats a racing animal has no place in the Queensland Racing Industry and this is a matter I will be actively pursuing over my term.