

**MINUTES OF THE 5th ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF  
YARRA VALLEY RACING INC.  
HELD ON  
WEDNESDAY, 26TH NOVEMBER 2008  
THE GRANDSTAND, FIRST FLOOR  
YARRA GLEN RACECOURSE  
VICTORIA**

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**PRESENT (Committee Members):**

**Mr. Barry Coulthard (Chairman)**  
**Mr Reg Hodgson – Treasurer**  
**Mr. David Long – Committee**  
**Mr. Brett Shambrook – CEO**

**In Attendance:**

Mr. R. G. Hodgson                      Mr. L Sedawie  
Mr. T. McKinnon                      Mr. G. Kenney  
Ms. G. Coulthard  
Mr H. Leaf  
Mr R. Wilson  
Mr. G Williamson  
Mr. K Wacey  
Mr. G. Latta

**Minutes:**

Mr. A. Kelly (Transcripts Plus) – [www.transcriptsplus.com.au](http://www.transcriptsplus.com.au)

**1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION**

The **Chairman (B. Coulthard)** declared the meeting open at 7.02 pm and welcomed all attendees.

**2. APOLOGIES**

Hugh Gilmour  
John Herbert  
Graeme Wood

**3. APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING HELD ON 22 NOVEMBER 2007**

**#1 MOTION**

That the minutes of the previous AGM, held on 22 November 2007 be received and accepted as a true and correct record.

**Moved: Mr Wacey**

**Seconded: Mr Williamson**

**CARRIED**

**4. TO RECEIVE THE BOARD REPORTS UPON THE TRANSACTIONS OF THE CLUB FOR THE 2007-2008 FINANCIAL YEAR**

**4.1 President's Report**

The **President** said:

"It is my privilege and pleasure, to present my second Report to you as Chairman of Yarra Valley Racing Inc. It certainly doesn't seem like a year has past since the last AGM.

Both the thoroughbred and harness sections of the Club have enjoyed successful seasons, and the hard work put in by the Board and staff over the last five years, has been rewarded.

The Club held eight thoroughbred meetings during the 2007/2008 season, with our last meeting being transferred to ensure the course proper drainage could be completed before our first 2008/2009 season meeting. All meetings were well attended, particularly our pre-Christmas meetings. Record attendances and revenue were achieved.

Our pre-Christmas meetings have been so successful, that there is increasing pressure from other clubs, to pinch these meeting dates. Yarra Valley was at the forefront in making these meetings successful, and as long as they remain so, we should be able to retain them.

Sixteen harness meetings were held, and the Melbourne Cup Day meeting, continues to attract huge crowds, and provides value and revenue to the Club. The harness section is to be congratulated on the continued improvement of the minor harness meetings. The Board has put in place measures such as free admission, in-house operation of catering and bars, reduction of race day cots and marketing directed to specific groups, which has resulted in good attendances, and creation of a better atmosphere on the first floor of the grandstand. All harness meetings were revenue positive, which is a great turnaround for the Club. I've attended a number of the harness meetings myself, and the number of people and atmosphere on the first floor, is certainly very different from a few years ago. Congratulations, guys.

The Board continues to identify and implement projects to enhance the race day experience for our members and patrons and increase the financial viability of the Club. The Board welcomes suggestions and ideas from the members, and please forward them to us, if you have any.

Projects started or completed during the season include:

- The thoroughbred track drainage and irrigation was completed. That gives us better control over the surface that we present for racing. We are still in a little bit of a learning curve. Obviously, the course now drains completely different to what it was previously, but it's certainly a great improvement on what we were able to produce before.
- The harness track has been re-surfaced.
- We've got a new harness winning post.
- There have been other improvements to the grounds. I think you've only got to look out the window to see the presentation of the lawns and the paths and so on.
- We've also purchased a horse float, for use on race day use. Once again, this saves us a cost, which we're continually looking to do.
- The Highview corporate suites have been upgraded.
- We've also installed permanent toilets to the corporate marquee area, once again reducing costs of hiring such facilities.
- Perhaps one of the most significant things we've done in the last season, was the purchase of equipment such as umbrellas, chairs, tables, and things to reduce our race day hiring costs. I think we were one of the first clubs to identify this as a potential saving for the club itself, and as the industry. You don't have to be Einstein to work out if you look out at the white fencing there, that we were paying something like \$18.50 a metre to hire it. It cost us something like \$42, so it only takes a few meetings before it's cost effective, and that's what we've done.
- I should say that we have been so successful in our earlier meetings, that we were able to pay back almost immediately a loan that we got from CRV to purchase that equipment. We had anticipated it would take four years, but in reality, it's going to take us about six months, so that's a great thing that the Club has achieved.

- We've also implemented an occupational health and safety plan, including encourage of staff to be directly involved. I think Brett and his staff are to be congratulated on their input into occupational health and safety. They're having meetings, and we're getting good feedback at Board level.
- We've also commissioned a new ladies, jockeys and drivers' room. It's fully operational and it's very successful.
- We also purchased a new harness mobile staff vehicle for use as a backup vehicle during harness meetings, and I think it's being used for trials as well.
- We also worked on improvement of relationships with the local community.
- We are also developing a strategy to increase more race day revenue, and that's proving to be very successful. I would encourage members to suggest to their friends that they use the race course facilities for their functions.

Country Racing Victoria, Racing Victoria Limited and Harness Racing Victoria, continue to assist in funding of many of our projects, and I thank them for their continued support and assistance.

I wish to thank all our sponsors for supporting the Club during the season. A special thank you to Minter Ellison, sponsors of Cox Plate Day; NMIT, sponsors of the Yarra Valley Cup; and SEW Eurodrive, sponsors of the Yarra Valley Pacing Cup.

The Club received the Regional Racecourse Revitalisation Program consultant's report in December, 2007. The Board has reviewed the report in responding to Racing Victoria Limited. The Board has some reservations about the report, and will watch developments with interest. I think it is fair to say that the Board is a little confused as to where this project is going. We received notification on Monday, that the consultants are going to meet with Council in the near future. A recent document released by RVL on the future of Racing Victoria, mentioned the revitalization of racecourses a number of times. To a certain degree, we appear to be minor players in the process, but I can assure members that we will always be presenting a strong case that we are, and must remain, a horse racing club, and that anything that happens on this course, must be for the benefit of the Club.

For the second year in a row, the Club was nominated for Thoroughbred Country Race Club of the Year. I was honoured to accept, on behalf of the Club, the trophy for Country Race Club of the Year at the function at Crown Casino in August of this year.

Congratulations to all our staff, sponsors, members, patrons and supporters for this wonderful achievement. I think it goes without saying that it's just a great accolade for how this Club has been turned around over the years.

To a certain extent, what I've spoken about is the past, and I'd just like to touch on what is happening in the present.

You may notice, as you go around the course, firstly, there has been the removal of the wall sheeting to the rear of the old grandstand, to allow people who are standing on the concrete at the rear of the grandstand, to get a view of the racing. It's elevated, so they're actually able to see over the marquees, and already it's proven to be quite popular.

We've also created a storage area under the grandstand, immediately under us, for the storage of all our new equipment, umbrellas, etc. We've also instigated the use of the old committee room for members. It is working okay. It probably requires a bit of fine-tuning. I guess we can regard it as a work-in-progress.

Meetings this season, have been very successful, to say the least. The 5<sup>th</sup> of October, which was meant to be our jumps day, was a crowd that met expectations. But, I must say as a club, we were very disappointed to lose the hurdle races. It seems to be the only certainty in racing is the uncertainty of racing, and we only had a week's notice that we would lose those jumps racing.

The Cox Plate Day on the 25<sup>th</sup> of October was very successful, with a crowd of 5,000 plus attended, and from all reports, everybody was very happy.

The 4<sup>th</sup> of November, our Melbourne Cup Day harness meeting, was a huge success, with a crowd of 9,365 people attending.

There are still some issues with crowd management, but Brett's ideas of the bus shuttle certainly helped, but it became a little bit undone, when the buses couldn't actually get back to the course, due to the public holiday traffic blocking the road. But, we are going to work on that, and I'm sure that eventually we will be able to handle it.

Just a little bit of a report on where we are with the remaining meetings:

The 29<sup>th</sup> of November, Saturday, we've got 3,090 paid bookings, plus we've got 104 mini marquees, with about ten people each, which will give us almost a guarantee of attendance of over 4,000 people.

Pacing is meeting on the 5<sup>th</sup> of December, and the Pacing Cup meeting on the 12<sup>th</sup> of December.

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of December, our Christmas meeting, we've got 3,162 paid bookings, plus 16 mini marquees, and already we're looking at well over 3,500.

To give you some idea of what our staff have achieved, we are not far away from having \$1 million of packaged sales for a season. To put this in perspective, the total – and I repeat - the total package sales for all – and I repeat – all Victorian country race clubs in Season 2007/2008 was about \$6.7 million. So, our million dollars stands up pretty well.

What about the future? The Board on Monday night, approved the purchase of portable flooring for use in the marquees, and as pathways in wet conditions. We also approved concreting of the new storage area under the grandstand. This will reduce the amount of dust, and the consequent maintenance and cleaning of the equipment.

We're also looking at the creation of an owners' and trainers' room below the grandstand. If we are able to do this, that will allow the Committee Room – or the old Committee Room – to become a members' only area.

Also, on the good news front, Council has agreed to do the drainage work at the north-end of the course, which will reduce the likelihood of flooding at the corporate area. They've also negotiated with Melbourne Water to allow us to raise the ground level of the marquee area by 300 millimetres.

We're also hoping to, very soon, perhaps when this finished has finished, or the thoroughbred season has finished, do some planting of lawns over the area here, the gravel area, where the old ladies jockeys room was demolished.

These are projects that we the Club, can control. However, there are many things out of our control. RVL is about to release its blueprint for the future of racing in Victoria. This is certain to have an impact on many country clubs. I am reluctant to predict what the Report will recommend, but I can assure you, that all members of the Board will continue to fight for this Club to remain a vibrant horse racing and training centre.

Harness Racing Victoria's new complex at Melton will open soon, and there is no doubt, that this may have an effect on harness racing at Yarra Valley. The Board is already addressing this issue.

Finally, thank you to our dedicated staff, who have worked so hard during the season. A special thank you to Brett Shambrook, our Chief Executive, for his excellent leadership and hard work for the Club. Thank you also to my fellow board members and sub-committee members for their continued hard work.

In conclusion, I would like to thank all members for their support, and encourage you to attend as many meetings as you can with your families and friends. I wish you all the complements of the season. Thank you. " [Acclamation]

## 4.2 Treasurer's Report

The **Treasurer (Mr Hodgson)** said:

"The highlights of the revenue, excluding capital grants for the financial year 2007/2008 was \$3,177,479. That's a 15.8% increase on the previous financial year, which is substantial.

The main sources of this revenue for growth of \$434,000 odd, was from:

- racing revenue, which increased by \$310,508;
- the CRV Industry Funding creased by nearly \$41,000;
- Other Revenue increased by \$60,483; and
- Memberships and Admission revenue increased by \$16,400 odd

The profit from operations for the financial year of \$640,922, does include capital grants that were received during the year. Those capital grants totalled nearly \$628,000. These grants now have to be treated as income, and they will be invested in capital works, and applied against the following projects:

- The money from CRV was put into the thoroughbred track irrigation and drainage project, which was nearly \$530,000
- Additional funding from CRV was in the corporate marquee area upgrade, which had \$48,000
- The female jockeys and drivers funding was \$50,000
- There was also \$25,000 towards the female jockeys and drivers room and from the Office of Gaming and Racing
- Harness Racing Victoria also kicked in \$25,000, so that's where the money went.

Now, during the last financial year, the assets of the previous Yarra Valley Racing Centre Committee of Management were incorporated into the books of the Yarra Valley Racing Inc. So, that whole structure, now no longer exists.

These assets, together with the last financial year's capital projects, however, led to an increase in depreciation expense. It's life these days. The expense has gone up from \$57,000 in the 2006/2007 year, to nearly \$106,000 in this budget for the year. So, that was substantial.

In the process of taking over the previous management committee, we waived the loan that was outstanding owing to the Yarra Valley Racing Inc. of nearly \$17,500. That cleans all that up.

The Yarraview Dining Room, this room, had its air-conditioning system upgraded during the financial year, at a cost of nearly \$179,000. Brett used some lateral thinking to get that finance. He funded this acquisition, by negotiating an increased rental for the mobile phone station in the tower that's down the back. The increased rental was then paid in advance in order to fund the project. The money was paid upfront. As far as the bookkeeping goes, the item will remain on the books as pre-paid income, and of course, will diminish over time, until 2019, when it expires. So, that was a great piece of finding sources of funding.

So, in summary, the last financial year has been an incredibly successful financial year, and the continued strong growth in revenue generation and support from both codes, has enabled the continued investment in our facilities, which attracts people, and attracts sponsors to Yarra Valley.

It would be remise of me, of course, not to compliment Brett and his staff for their outstanding achievements during the past year. I think it needs to be recognised that as the Board, we largely sit back and just make sure everything goes well. Brett and his team, are actually the primary drivers in the outcomes, the financial outcomes, that we all experienced for the last year. I think that really does need to be fully recognised. Thank you." [Received with acclamation.]

**#2 MOTION**

That the transaction reports to the Yarra Valley Racing Inc. be received.

**Moved: Mr McKinnon**

**Seconded: Mr Latta**

**CARRIED**

**#3 MOTION**

That the financial statements for the year ended 30 June 2008, and the Auditor's Report be received.

**Moved: Mr Latta**

**Seconded: Mr Leaf**

**CARRIED**

**5. ELECTION OF ONE THOROUGHBRED RACING MEMBER TO THE BOARD OF THE CLUB**

**Note:** at this stage, the Chairman stood down and passed the position of Chair to the Treasurer.

The **Treasurer** reported to the meeting that Barry Coulthard was the retiring member, and that he was the only candidate for the position. As such, he was duly re-elected to the Board, for the term of three years. [Received with acclamation.]

**6. ELECTION OF ONE HARNESS RACING MEMBER TO THE BOARD OF THE CLUB**

The **Treasurer** explained to the meeting that David Long was the retiring member, and that he was the only candidate for the position. As such, he was duly re-elected to the Board, for the term of three years. [Received with acclamation.]

**Note:** at this stage, Mr Coulthard resumed the position of Chairman.

**7. APPOINT AN AUDITOR FOR 2008-2009 SEASON**

The **Chairman** advised the meeting that the provision of external audit services is contained with the Club's service level agreement with Racing Victoria Limited for the delivery of financial services, and was subject to a three-year regional tender process.

**#4 MOTION**

That the appointment of an Auditor for the 2008/2009 financial year be subject to the RVL tender process for provision of these services to the Bay and Ranges group of clubs.

**Moved: Mr Williamson**

**Seconded: Ms Coulthard**

**CARRIED**

**8. NOTICE OF MEMBER BUSINESS**

Nil.

**9. GENERAL BUSINESS**

**9.1 Question and Answer Session/General Comments**

- **Mr Williamson** made the comment that it appeared the race dates were going to be the key to all major issues within the next year. He asked if a status report could be provided. The **Chief Executive** concurred with this remark and explained that the situation was applicable to both the harness and thoroughbred sides of the business, given the Melton complex is coming online shortly

and the number of dates it will take over. He added, that he had just received a press release which stated that Yarra Valley Racing would indeed lose dates as part of the Melton complex opening. He noted that negotiations are also occurring with Moonee Valley Racing Club to conduct race meetings there. He said he was hopeful that sufficient dates will be able to be re-negotiated with Moonee Valley to B3 clubs and clubs that want to give up their dates. He said that in speaking to a journalist recently he had indicated Yarra Valley wanted to hold on to all its race dates going forward, not only in relation to harness but the gallops meetings as well. As to the thoroughbred side, he said the race dates will probably change within the next perhaps two years, given the RVL putting in an all weather track at Cranbourne and then running at night, Geelong looking at lights and so on. He stressed it was his firm hope that Yarra Valley, being a successful event club, will continue to have the meetings it wishes. He also referred to there being many issues in racing at the moment, including the Jumps Racing Review, industry re-licensing in 2012, corporate bookmakers and so on, and that whatever moves Racing Victoria makes will impact on what Harness Racing Victoria can do in response.

- When asked by the Chairman for a comment on endeavouring to lift the profile of the club as a harness racing venue, and PR work, the **Chief Executive** responded by indicating that a number of those present attended the Gordon Rothaker night and that he had some disappointment that the harness side was not recognised to the same extent. He added, that discussions had ensued at the Harness Subcommittee last week and at the Board meeting in relation to the need to strive to lift the Club's harness profile within the industry, and that a number of initiatives are being investigated.
- **Mr Sedawie** congratulated the committee, Chief Executive, and his team, on the way the club had advanced since Racing Victoria took over, including the increased membership. He noted that perhaps the small attendance at the AGM was an indication that members were satisfied. He also expressed his thanks that a room had been set aside for members. One issue, though, with increased membership, he said, was the car parking problem on race days. The **Chairman** said that in some ways the club was a victim of its own success in that regard, and said that Mr Sedawie may remember the fence was moved out to create more area for people, and that issues like this are continually being investigated to juggle different competing demands. He also noted that the Club was also investigating a separate room underneath the grandstand for owners and trainers, which seemed to be receiving favourable feedback. He stressed the Club would take on board the car parking concerns.

<b>10. CLOSURE</b>
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The **Chairman** thanked attendees for their input, and invited them to a light supper and refreshments. He declared the meeting concluded at 7.31 pm.

**Minutes approved:**

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Signature of Chair

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Date