

Messara Highlights Australian Industry's 30-Year Progress at 49th IFHA Conference

In his keynote speech at the 49th IFHA Conference in Paris, Racing Australia Chairman John Messara AM described the 30-year rise of the Australian Thoroughbred industry.

Addressing delegates from 52 countries, Messara highlighted a number of defining events which have shaped the modern Australian industry to become a global player.

Initiatives included the Hawke Government's breeding stock fiscal concessions in the 1985 Federal Budget. Said Messara, "It was a single action that, in one fell swoop, enabled Australian breeders to deploy the necessary capital to acquire breeding stock from the best international pedigrees in Europe and America."

The second defining step was the 1989 arrival of the stallion Danehill in Australia and the shuttle trend he ignited which has brought a staggering 293 Northern Hemisphere shuttle stallions to Australia.

Messara explained that this development in the breeding sector was subsequently matched by progress in Australia's racing jurisdiction, when legislation was enacted to establish Principal Racing Authorities in each State of Australia to assume governance from race clubs. He stated, "The Principal Racing Authorities had as a first priority the enforcement of tough standards of integrity."

Messara conveyed to the Conference attendees that the repercussions of Australia's strict integrity policies were being felt by those who thought the rules did not apply to them, as evidenced by the outcomes of the recent cobalt inquiries. However, he noted that governance is not just about policing industry ethics.

"We took the view that we had copyright over our racing product, and the State Government of NSW changed the law to force wagering operators to pay a fee on bets on New South Wales races and compelled them to provide details of betting activity to our stewards which has turned out to be a valuable integrity tool.

"Of course, these matters are never simple and the government legislation was challenged by the corporate bookmakers in the High Court, in what has become known as the Race Fields Case. Racing NSW won the case and as a result, the racing industry's annual revenue in NSW was boosted by more than 30%."

A major milestone for the globalisation of Australian racing was the win of Irish horse Vintage Crop in 1993. Messara said, "His victory did for the Melbourne Cup what no marketing campaign ever could, and franked Australia's most famous race as a true international event."

In Sydney, the recent increase in revenue has provided the opportunity for a major racing carnival, The Championships, to be created in autumn. Established in 2014, The Championships is developing strong and growing awareness on the international calendar, and includes the world's richest 2000 meter turf race, the Group 1 Longines Queen Elizabeth Stakes.

Messara gave a comparison of key metrics in 2015 and 1985, to illustrate the transformation

of the Australian industry over the past three decades. These showed that prize money has risen at more than double the inflation rates and the number of international horses participating in Australia's racing carnivals has increased from zero to 53. Most notably, in 2014 there were 40 Australian horses rated above 115 in the Official Ratings compared with none in 1985, as Australian horses were not included until 2004.

Messara concluded his address by referring to the Australian industry's key values and strategies for the future, including a high integrity drug free racing environment that is tough on enforcement, sustainable racing for Australia's wide range of participants, the enhancement of Australia's major racing Carnivals, the ongoing promotion of racing to the next generation, the modernisation of racing business, and continuing to address society's expectations on matters such as animal welfare.

About IFHA

The International Federation of Horseracing Authorities (IFHA) is the world peak body for the international sport of Thoroughbred racing. Its members are the national racing authorities across the globe that stage Thoroughbred races.

Major areas of the IFHA's activities include:

- Making and amending the International Agreement on Breeding, Racing and Wagering (IABRW)
- Policy development relating to welfare and safety of horses and riders
- International Race Planning and Grading ("black type")
- World Rankings
- Equine Prohibited Substances and Practices
- Harmonization of Race Day Rules
- Fostering commercial development of the racing industry globally

The IFHA is a foundation member with Fédération Equestre Internationale (FEI) of the International Horse Sports Confederation and is affiliated to the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE).

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