

From the Chief Executives desk

June Newsletter



We have all been undeniably frustrated by the wet weather over the past few months. The persistent and untimely rain has resulted in our four most recently scheduled race meetings being either cancelled, transferred or re scheduled. This will undoubtedly have an impact on our financial results for the current financial year and has also had adverse consequences for other participants including owners and trainers.

Another impact on our operations caused by recent rains has been substantial damage to our sand training track. We had already resolved to carry out rehabilitation works to the sand track but due to the weather it has not been possible to do so. Recently further damage has occurred through large amounts of sand being washed off the track leading to potential for the sub grade to become exposed. Directors have approved a budget to rehabilitate the sand track and we are hopeful that with the onset of some fine weather we can commence these works as soon as possible.

While on the subject of training tracks some members may have noticed an article in the Sunday Telegraph on 7 June purporting to quote the Chairman on Racing NSW Country, Mr Gordon Lindley, inferring that the Club was ambivalent in its approach to obtaining an all weather training track. Nothing could be further from the truth and Mr Lindley has advised us that he was misquoted by the reporter. Racing NSW is well aware of our detailed submission and the correspondence between the parties and the Club is very much still in the mix to obtain assistance when funds are available from Racing NSW.

The Club continues to push its case for an all weather training track which is primarily based on a number of factors including:

- The high rainfall in Ballina.
- Ballina Jockey Club last year had the second highest number of 'away starters' in country NSW.
- Other training centres in northern NSW have already had assistance.
- With the possibility of redevelopment of Gold Coast racing facilities, the northern part of NSW needs improved facilities to maintain a competitive position.

Members can be assured that we will continue to press our case for assistance.

On a brighter note planning is well under way for the forthcoming Byron Bay and Ballina Cups on 30 August and 10 September respectively and the sub regional Cups that follow those two special days. This year the Byron Bay Cup will carry a record \$25,000 in prize money which should ensure a quality field and heighten interest in our Cup meeting.

The Byron Bay Cup will be the first race meeting to be held following proposed changes to the members/sponsors area. The sponsors for that race meeting will be entertained in a special marquee with other members of the Byron Bay community who will be paying \$100 per head as part of our 100 Club promotion which was successfully introduced last year. Our sponsors are of course very essential to our operations and it is important that they have a good experience at our Club and can commercially justify their sponsorship fees. Sponsors contribute around \$150,000 per annum to our income.

In our letter to members in April this year, reporting on the results of the member survey, we referred to changes we would like to make to the members/sponsors area.

We have stopped the long held practice of selling tickets for **member's** area entry and on 'big days' admittance will be restricted to members and visiting horse owners. We are going to experiment on Byron Bay and Ballina Cup days by allowing sponsor groups, 10 with each sponsor, to have the opportunity to visit the **member's** area to watch the mounting yard activities and running of the race that they are sponsoring. We would like members to show these sponsors, who will have wrist bands, every consideration should they avail themselves of the opportunity to view their race from the members area.

We have reviewed our options for changes to the sponsors/members area and have separated issues into short term and long term objectives. The long term objectives are likely to be capital intensive and outside prudent financial planning at this stage as to make the best use of the area. In the longer term we would need to consider substantial works such as relocating the **member's** bathrooms and a possible building extension to the south or west. It will be a future objective for the club to follow up the longer term plans.

In the interim we are proceeding with the following, removal of the wall between the members and sponsors areas, extending the bar in the **sponsor's** area, making the

existing members bar more service efficient, adding a food service area to the existing sponsor's area and installing a door at the entry of the members lounge.

In our April advice to members we also referred to problems with air conditioning throughout the building. The advice that we received from an independent engineer was that the equipment was suitably sized and generally in sound repair. However a number of defects were identified that resulted from less than perfect long term maintenance, inadequate operational controls and other matters such as the fact that there is no insulation over the members/sponsors areas leading to deterioration and failure of seals in the roof ducting. Many of these items are in the process of rectification and will be reported on more fully in the Clubs annual report.

More efficient use of the air conditioning equipment has the potential to save substantial amounts of electricity in the longer term. Our electricity account for the December quarter was nearly \$10,000 and power costs are set to increase further this year. The Club, with the support of Ballina Council, has been working to resolve a number of issues relating to the use of power, water and the treatment of storm water. A recent article in local media alluded to the fact that improvements had been identified that had a potential cost of \$160,000. While we believe these changes are warranted and will lead to long term cost savings they will not be actioned in totality without grant assistance.

The membership year is on us again and we have enclosed a member renewal form. If your membership expires this year could you please complete the form and return it to us at your convenience. Payment can be made by cheque or credit card with the renewal form, or by cash at the office during business hours. Please note that directors have not increased membership charges at this stage but will be reviewing charges later this year. With that in mind the two year member arrangements appear particularly attractive at this stage. We have also modified the renewal form and included provision for email communication.

We are in the process of redeveloping our website and also upgrading our function centre promotions. Please visit the website (ballinajockeyclub.com.au) and provide us with comment if you would like to.

Most members will be aware of the attractions of the Club's premises as a venue for functions. If you or anyone you know is planning a function then please do not hesitate to refer to the functions page on the website or telephone me personally. Apart from the aspect and amenity of the venue our premises have other attractions in that we have unlimited parking and functions are limited to one at a time. Truly 'an exclusive venue just for you'.



Our long standing licensee and bar manager Trevor Birchnoff has resigned his position and the Club extends sincere thanks for his dedicated service over past years.

Chairman Keith Morrow spoke to this at our race meeting on 16 June and made a presentation to Trevor on



behalf of the Club. The Club has appointed John Purcell to take over the position and we welcome John to the Ballina Jockey Club.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members and other participants for the welcome and support that I have received since taking on this position. If at any time you have any questions or suggestions for improvements in any of the Clubs activities then please do not hesitate to contact me personally.

Sarah Wills
Chief Executive Officer



RIGHT ON TRACK!