

Chairperson's Report Clare Valley Racing Club 2026 AGM

Tuesday, 29th September 2026 at 7 pm

First, thank you all for your attendance at the Clare Valley Racing Club AGM. Our club boasts a rich history that dates back to 1888, when its founders established it. Racing in the Clare Valley dates back to the New Year's Day race meetings held on local properties during the early 1880s. Racing has changed enormously since that time.

I would first acknowledge and thank our committee, who have worked tirelessly in the last twelve months. So thank you to Jeff and Gail Weckert, Annette Heron, Rose and Rodney Winnen, Henry Hilda, Geoff Groth, Leigh Eldridge, Ben Kerslake and Paul Weatherall.

A very special thankyou goes to our secretary Peter Darwin and his wife Michelle. They have been instrumental in our club's administration and success. Last week's Valley magazine documented some of Peter's impressive achievements. Our Melbourne Cup lottery is one example of Peter's innovative ideas.

The most critical part of any racing club is the effective maintenance of the track. Well done to Dave Meany, who has prepared four great surfaces for our race days, ensuring fair and safe racing for our trainers, jockeys, and horses.

The last year has been a very busy time for our Club. Our first meeting took place on Sunday, 26th of October. Port Lincoln Racing Club moved the October meeting to Clare because of problems with the Lincoln track. As usual, Dave Meany had our track in great condition and ready to host the meeting.

Our second meeting was the Jim Barry Cup, held on Sunday, the 23rd of November. The race has a history dating back to 1895, and so it was the 130th running of the Clare Cup. We enjoyed wonderful weather and great racing fields. It was a great family day with 820 guests in attendance, and included a visit from Father Christmas. The Calcutta held at the Middle Pub was again a great success. The Jim Barry Cup was won by Bolt By, ridden by Alana Livesey and trained by Judy Streets.

We held our third meeting on Friday, the 13th of February. Although the hot weather was a challenge, the track was again in great condition. As a club, we decided it would be a low-profile day with no hospitality packages, with the committee running our barbecue.

On Sunday, 4th April, we held our Easter meeting. There was a lot of work required before and after the meeting. The committee rose to the occasion; everyone chimed in, and it is true, many hands make light work. The day was a fantastic success, with around 3,500 people in attendance.

Our club has also been busy with other activities besides racing.

In 2025, we explored the establishment of an RV Park and Dump Point at the Clare Valley Racing Club. The idea was first promoted by Jeff Weckert. The committee discussed, explored, and then approved pursuing the ambitious project. We recognized that the income stream generated by an RV Park would help ensure the future existence of the Clare Valley Racing Club. In doing so, the committee committed to successfully completing the significant hurdles involved.

The first hurdle was to find funding for the project. In some ways, we were lucky our search for funding occurred prior to an election. We thank Tony Piccolo and his government's grant. We thank the Clare

Valley Council for its contribution. And we also thank the Clare Lions Club for its financial support. Once we secured the funding, we progressed to the other critical tasks, which were to:

Engage Mace Engineering to provide an Engineer's Report regarding the proposed Dump Point.

Write and present our written proposal and detailed maps for the RV Park to the Regional Assessment Panel. In response, the Regional Assessment Panel created a document of nearly two hundred pages. The document outlined critical aspects that needed to be addressed before our RV Park would gain approval.

In addition, we made written submissions and held meetings with the Clare and Gilbert Valley Council to obtain approval for the Dump Point.

Tonight, I am pleased to inform our members that all the regulatory bodies have given their approval, and we have been busy constructing the necessary infrastructure. We have installed the Dump Point, and although we still need to complete a few things, we hope to welcome visitors to the Clare Valley Racing Club RV Park within the next month or so.

Ensuring a Racing Club is successful has many and varied challenges. At the moment, we require significant improvement in our irrigation system, including the primary pump and motor. Fortunately, we have a hardworking committee and a very effective secretary to address this critical issue. We have also received significant help from Racing SA

One challenge we faced was that prior to our February meeting, our tractor broke down. We had to find a replacement. In response, our secretary, Peter Darwin, communicated with and obtained infrastructure funding from Racing SA. Jeff Weckert found a local tractor that suited the Club's requirements. We purchased the tractor, and Don Williams, our long-serving starting gate manager, used it at our Easter meeting.

In regard to the club's 2025-26 financial and operational health, it is important to note that the Club has increased attendance and ticket income. There has also been significant improved food and beverage sales. In general our financial position has improved significantly. The water fines incurred in 2019 have been paid in full. Meaning we have an extra \$6,000 cash flow. Payment for our solar system will conclude this year, which again will contribute positively to our cash flow.

There has been an increase in our membership numbers from 34 to 93. As a club, we need to ensure we have a healthy membership. Members are the backbone of any sporting body. We have increased our membership nearly threefold. Significant progress, but my aim is to achieve a membership of well over one hundred. At this point, I must thank my wife, Netty who has been a key factor in this membership growth.

We have many challenges ahead to ensure the ongoing success of our club. Compliance and regulatory requirements have changed dramatically in the past ten years. The changes impact not only hospitality and event management but also race day rules and regulations. One example of that change is that the cost for security at our 2026 Easter Races meeting was about \$35,000.

However, in spite of these significant challenges, I am sure that with our current secretary, track manager and committee, we can look forward to great thoroughbred racing at Clare in the years ahead. We hope the RV park will provide much-needed financial support for the Clare Valley Racing Club. In

order to run this park, we would welcome help from club members or from the community to become part of our roster of helpers. We will use a roster system to distribute the load evenly and avoid overworking anyone. We believe the RV park will become a valuable asset to both our club and to the Clare businesses and community. Contact me or anyone on the committee if you or someone you know would like to help.

In conclusion, I look forward to another exciting year ahead. To work again with a positive team of people. We will work hard and smart to bring fantastic race-day experiences to the Clare Valley.