

## RPSBS LTD NATIONAL CHAIR REPORT 2018- 2019

It is my honour to present the Riding Pony Stud Book Society Ltd. Board of Directors' Chair Report for 2018 – 19.

**In Memoriam:** Let us pause for moment to remember Riding Pony members that passed away in 2018-2019: Past RPSBS Board Chair Sally George (Qld); Robyn Barry (Vic); Sue Billing and Graham Fricker (SA);

**The RPSBS Board** saw one resignation by a Director this past year. Renee Dorney, Director elected by NSW, resigned at the time of the New South Wales 2018 State Annual Meeting.

With RPSBS NSW committee having fewer than 3 elected members after their State Annual Meeting, the NSW committee put into Administration until a special meeting of NSW members could be called for the purpose of electing a new committee. On July 17, 2018 a special meeting of NSW members was held at the Richmond Golf Club at which a new committee was formed. At the election of office bearers meeting held after the special meeting, Mr Ashley Cooper was elected as the NSW Director.

Three Directors, Eileen Morris (WA), Alyson Emery (SA) and myself (QLD) were re-elected for another three year term at the relevant 2019 State Annual Meetings.

Mrs Deb Watson, a Bookkeeper and previous Company Treasurer for the Arabian Horse Society has taken over the role of Company Treasurer with Mrs Christine Gibbons retaining her role as Company Secretary.

The contract with the Arabian Horse Society to provide of our registry and secretariat services was renewed in October 2018. The RPSBS Board thanks Helen Dohan and her office staff for their exemplary services to our Society and we appreciate the ongoing support of the Arabian Horse Society Board.

A contract was also awarded to Show Pony Graphics, with principal Despina Mitrakis, for the provision of Publicity and Marketing Services to the Society. Despina has been providing the Production Services for our Riding Pony annual and has been responsible for the design and maintenance of the RPSBS national and state web sites. In her expanded role she has taken on the role of editor of the RPSBS annual, the Leader Board initiative, the monthly Information Bulletins and all aspects of the Society's publicity and marketing.

At the **2018 Annual General Meeting** in Adelaide the Board of Directors gave a commitment to:

1. Continued **sound governance** including a review all RPSBS Policies and Procedures. The Board has completed the review with the following outcomes:
  - The Judges' Policy has had some changes to processing procedures and a change of name to Judges' Policy and Procedures as it now includes a Judges' Contract templar, a Code of Conduct and a RPSBS Guidelines for Judges. National level judges are now only required to attend a RPSBS Judges' seminar once in a 5 year period.;
  - The State Committee Structures and Procedures document was modified in an attempt to make the Committee election process simpler for members with all nominations for election now being handled by the National Office and all deadlines standardised across all states;
  - The Working Hunter fence heights have had the minimum height of fences removed and now equates to those of the Welsh Pony and Cob Society;
  - Following extensive research into the policies of other breed societies and member feedback, a comprehensive RPSBS Policies and Procedures Manual has been produced combining our existing

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polices and new additions into the one manual. Topics include Responsibilities of members, officials, etc, Code of Conduct, Heat and Social Media Policies, Protection of Children, Videoing and Photographing of events, Animal Welfare, Drug Testing, Online security and Complaints. As with any new policies, a draft of the document was posted on the web site for members comment and advertised through the monthly Information Bulletin before being adopted;

- The Constitution of the Society was also on the agenda for review in 2018. The legal advice received was that the constitution was sound and appropriate to a Limited Liability Company such as ours. An audit of our policies was conducted and only one significant change had to be made to quorum required for State Annual Meetings in the State Governance and Procedures document to remove a conflict with the RPSBS Ltd. constitution.

### 2. The Board of Directors committed to providing effective, ongoing **communication with members**.

- The Policies and Procedures that have been reviewed have all included a period of consultation during which member feedback and suggestions were invited. The comments and suggestions were reviewed by the Board before final decisions were made.
- The member feedback sheet is there on the web site to be used by members at any time.
- Redacted minutes of all Board meetings are published on the RPSBS web site once they have had Board approval.
- The monthly Information Bulletins provide the Board and the State Publicity Officers the opportunity to keep all members fully informed of all National and State RPSBS initiatives and news and are available on the web site.
- Interested persons who are currently not financial members of the Society are able to register online as an interested party and receive copies of the monthly Newsletters.
- The web site also has a library of all past RPSBS newsletters and annuals. I strongly recommend this site to you all.

### 3. Addressing **declining membership**.

**New initiatives** this year include:

- As previously mentioned a monthly information bulletin is now circulated to all members made possible by the contract with Show Pony Graphics;
- A Youth Clinic Subsidy of \$500 per year is available, on application, to assist with the cost of conducting a Youth Clinic. Payment to be made upon application to the Board and payable after the event upon receipt of a report on the event.;
- Full page back cover advertisement in the SHCA Grand National catalogue;
- The Leader Board competition has been a massive undertaking by Despina Mitrakis. The technology that enables members to update their showing results by phone whilst still at the show has made it very easy for the competitors. Despina's ability to attract sponsors to this project has resulted in RPSBS being able to provide impressive Reality Bronze trophies to the winners in addition to the \$ 3,000 in prize money being gifted by the Society.  
A very special thank you to all the wonderful sponsors of this competition.

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### 4. Relevance of RPSBS Ltd. I will address this issue in my closing remarks.

**RPSBS Annual:** As mentioned earlier, Despina Mitrakis is the editor of the 2019 Riding Pony Annual and one of her initiatives was to undertake a survey of members as to what they wanted in their annual. As expected some members wanted all photos and results, some a mixture of photos and articles, and others wanted the annual be a source of reference material. Hopefully the annual will provide something for all our members.

Members are now able to lodge their own photos and information on their animal's successes via the web site as they receive them. State Publicity Officers are in regular communication with Despina providing photos and results of shows as they happen. It is hoped that this will have saved the large amount of time that has been spent chasing photos and results as the annual deadline approached.

**State Committees:** A very special thank you must go to all the State Riding Pony committee members. I cannot over estimate the importance of RPSBS maintaining a presence in every state. In many cases it's just a couple of members' determination ensuring their committees survival. The Board is acutely aware that, as the number of breeders and enthusiasts decline, it has become increasingly difficult for our committees in the smaller states. The Board is providing support in many ways. By co-ordinating BAS and audits nationally we now provide increased support for state treasurers with no cost to the states in relation to Business Activity Statements and have significantly reduced the audit costs of \$100 or \$150 depending on the size of the state. States no longer have to design, support and pay for their web sites. Smaller states receive higher rates of member rebates, and the Board is committed to maintaining the current funding level. States have had funds made available for shows, young stock initiatives and, now, youth clinics. In the case of the NSW committee having to be placed in administration for a short period of time all costs associated with establishing a new NSW committee were borne by the National Board.

I would be most remiss if I failed to specially thank the members of the WA Riding Pony committee, especially Eileen Morris, Helen Moore and Julie an De Sande for hosting the Riding Pony 2019 Annual General Meeting. What a beautiful venue it was. Thank you ladies. This is the first Riding Pony AGM to be held in Western Australia and reflects the Board's commitment to being a truly national society.

**Finances:** RPSBS has not escaped the effects of the drought and many other factors which have affected ours and other Breed Societies. In the last financial year, membership income was down by 9% with registration income only dropping by 3.3%. With the significant decrease in expenditure that has been achieved over the past 3 years and in spite of the continued downturn in revenue the Board felt it necessary to invest funds to raise the profile of RPSBS Ltd. and to provide more incentives for members and breeders. The board believes that it must be proactive and that the money invested this year in providing increased professional support services and sponsorships is essential for the future of our Society. It is a challenge to maintain a budget surplus but provide as many benefits as possible to our members. The Company Treasurer will provide a comprehensive breakdown of our finances in the audit figures.

**Fees:** No membership or registration fees have been raised. A number of our fees have either been reduced or abolished over the last 2 years. This year the fee for registering an approved stallion has dropped from \$150 to \$75. The fee for changing registration details has been dropped from \$35 to \$10.

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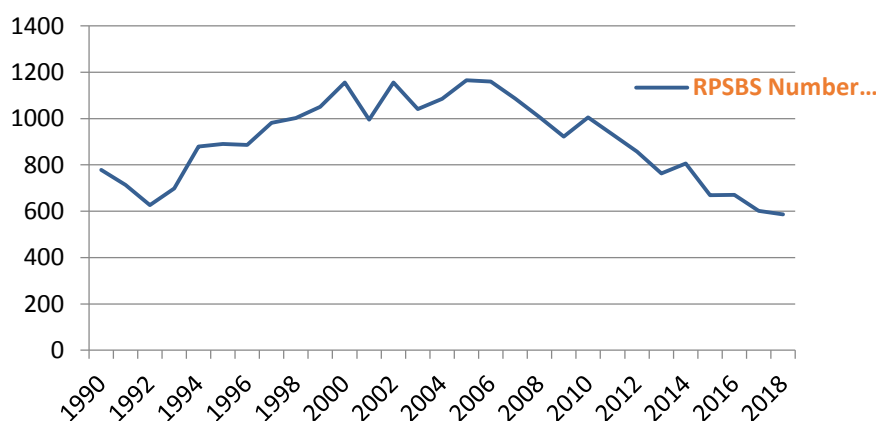
### RPSBS Membership data:

STATE	2016	2017	2018	2019
NSW/ACT	494	568	524	478
QLD	249	254	250	251
SA	125	133	146	126
TAS	48	68	58	45
VIC	464	492	498	431
WA	167	165	142	135
OTHER				7
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>1618</b>	<b>1474</b>

### RPSBS Registration/Transfer data (July- May):

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>Registrations</b>	670	671	602	586
<b>Transfers</b>	763	796	631	585

### RPSBS Number registered



This graph clearly demonstrates the general problem being faced by our Society.

Annie Coxson's 2010 Chair Report highlighted concerns over the falling registrations. There are many factors, such as the Equine Influenza epidemic, Hendra Virus and prolonged drought, beyond our control that have led to the decline in leisure horse breeding. Our task is to keep as many of our animals that are bred registered in our stud book and their owners financial in addition to providing encouragement and incentives for our members to breed ponies. There are so many Riding Ponies competing successfully in the open show ring whose owners are not financial and ponies that have not had their registrations transferred.

One interesting statistic to help put our falling registrations into perspective. Over the last 4 years Riding Pony registrations have fallen 12.5%, Show Horse Council Australasia's registrations have fallen 30%.

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The failure to have ponies registered as youngsters has led to a problem that is escalating. The Society has many applications from competitors that have acquired Riding Ponies and wish to have them registered. In many cases hours of office time are wasted in unsuccessful attempts to trace animals or verify breeding resulting in disappointed owners and Riding Ponies that fails to make it into the stud book. There is a Riding Pony competing successfully at Grand Prix level dressage which is not registered. The Society recently had an instance of Riding Ponies attempted to being saved from a dogger pen where their registrations could not be verified as the breeder had died without registering the animals and the family had destroyed all breeding records not realising their importance. As members of the Riding Pony Society we have an obligation to the animals we breed to guarantee them a future and to the maintenance of as complete a Studbook as we can to pass onto the next generation.

Another set of interesting statistics I discovered whilst researching this report is the number of foals being recorded. Interesting for 2 reasons: Firstly, the numbers of foals being registered has been significantly increased with the introduction of the rule requiring registration in the year of birth and secondly, that these figures indicate there are a significant number of Riding Ponies that have not being registered in previous years.

### RPSBS Foal Registrations

Year	2015	2016	2017	2018
Foals Registered	29	33	51	61

These statistics do highlight that our Society is, and will continue to, operate in challenging and highly competitive conditions. Your Board of Directors is acutely aware of the difficulties being faced by the members of our State Committees. Maintaining relevance in this modern, rapidly changing technological society is a task faced by all Company Directors no matter what the company business. We are looking for new ideas and ways to keep our members and entice those, who have left, to return. As I have previously mentioned, there is a feedback sheet for members to share their ideas, thoughts, problems etc available on the RPSBS web site. We encourage our members to give us feedback and share their ideas.

**Social Media** unfortunately has become an issue for all organisations. Whilst a firm advocate of members having the right to express their views I would ask members, particularly RPSBS Judges, to ask themselves two questions before they post to social media:

1. Could your actions harm the reputation of the RPSBS Ltd or its employees, Board of Directors, and/or other business related individuals or organisations?
2. Are you behaving with integrity, respect and accountability as expected from all members of RPSBS Ltd?

If a member has an issue with a Rule, Policy or any other matter in relation to RPSBS then I ask them to please use the feedback sheet to inform the Board of the relevant issue. Feedback will always be given.

**Risk factors.** Firstly, the German Riding Pony is in Australia and their numbers are growing. They are having success in the show ring as well as the other equestrian endeavours and they will definitely compete for members. Our task is to adapt to this new reality and to explore initiatives that may be of mutual benefit. Secondly, the risk of a slowing economy and ongoing drought could have a significant effect on our members and thirdly, the lack of support from our members for breed shows and led classes

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will result in their disappearance. This will remove any hope of our breeders finding a market for their young stock. Having to hold onto animals until they have competed successfully under saddle in the open show ring is an extremely costly and time consuming task that discourages breeders from producing more than one or two foals a year. If only open classes are available for our ponies then the relevance of our Society will be severely challenged.

**Breeders: We are a Breed Society. Our charter is the promotion of Riding Pony breeding and maintaining a Studbook to record that breeding.** This is and always will be the focus of the Board. The introduction of prize vouchers for the breeders of winning animals acknowledges the essential role they play in the success of those animals and breeders have indicated that this small recognition is appreciated. The Queensland Committee has a perpetual award for the Most Successful Breeder at each of their state shows and I'm sure other State Committees have found ways of acknowledging the breeders of successful animals. Last year State Committees each received \$ 1,500 specifically to be spent on initiatives to encourage the breeding and exhibiting of Young Stock.

All members of our Riding Pony Society have a role to play. Our breeders' job is to produce animals that have both quality and temperament; our Judges have to be beyond reproach and judge to our Standard of Excellence; our committees have to be focused on serving their state members to the best of their ability; our directors have to provide the necessary infrastructure to maintain the Studbook together with the leadership and support to breeders, members and committees; and finally the role of our exhibitors is showcase our animals not only in the open show ring but in RPSBS classes both led and ridden. This is and always will be our challenge and I'll conclude my report by once again thanking my fellow directors, the office staff, our state committee members and all RPSBS members for your support and dedication to our beautiful Riding Ponies.

Thank you

Mike Smith

National Chair