

## RPSBS LTD NATIONAL CHAIR REPORT 2019 - 2020

It is my honour to present the Riding Pony Stud Book Society Ltd. Board of Directors' Chair Report for 2019 – 20.

**In Memoriam:** Riding Pony members, of which I have been notified, that passed away in 2019 - 2020: Foundation member and breeder Sarah Redpath of Chippenham Stud, Victoria; Carole Smith of Tanglewood Stud, Victoria; Laura Thomas, a Victorian member; Robert & Patrick Salway of Wilgo Stud, New South Wales, father and son tragically killed in the devastating NSW bushfires and Sandra Smith of Burwood Stud NSW.

**The RPSBS Board** changes for 2019 - 2020. Alyson Emery, Director elected by SA replaced by Dr. Andrew Hunt; Eileen Morris (WA) replaced by Kathryn Thomas; Ashley Cooper (NSW) resigned in April 2020 with Sandra James then elected as Director. Helen Dohan was replaced by Teresa Edwards as the Board Minute Secretary and Debra Watson replaced Christine Gibbons as Company Secretary.

**State Committees:** A very special thank you must go to all State Riding Pony Committee members. I cannot overestimate the importance of maintaining a state committee in each state. In many cases it's the determination of just a couple of members' that keeps their state committee operating. As the number of breeders and enthusiasts decline, it has become increasingly challenging for our committees in the smaller states and developing partnerships with other breed societies has become essential.

The Board continues to support the state committees by preparing and submitting the state Business Activity Statements at no cost to the states. The Company Treasurer assists the states with the annual audits and has significantly reduced the cost of those audits to \$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. States have had funds made available for shows, and youth clinics. In the cases of the South Australian and Western Australia RPSBS Ltd State Committees having been in administration for a short period of time, all costs associated with the administration and establishment of the new state committees have been borne by the National Board.

State Committees are able to effectively communicate with their members through their Facebook page, their state web site and the monthly Information Bulletin.

**State Committee Changes:** With RPSBS Ltd South Australia Committee having fewer than three (3) elected members after their State Annual Meeting in 2019, the SA committee was put into Administration until a special meeting of SA members could be called for the purpose of electing a new committee. On 17<sup>th</sup> September, 2019 a special meeting of SA members was held at which a new committee was formed. At the election of office bearers meeting held after the special meeting, Dr. Andrew Hunt was elected as the SA Chair, Publicity Officer and Director, Tamara Cooper Vice Chair and Greg Crocker Secretary and Treasurer.

In December 2019, the RPSBS Ltd Western Australia Committee was put into Administration upon the resignation of all the WA state committee members. A new WA committee was formed at a special meeting of WA members on 26<sup>th</sup> February, 2020 with Helen Ransome elected Chair and Kathryn Thomas, Vice Chair and Director, Amanda Gilbert Secretary and Peter Thomas Treasurer and Publicity Officer.

With seven (7) nominations for four (4) positions, an election was required to form the 2020 RPSBS Ltd Victoria Committee. With only 12 members not providing an email address, the ballot was conducted online with ballots being posted to those few members not having email access.

**State Annual Meetings:** Face-to-face State Annual Meetings and Election of Office Bearers' Meetings have not been possible in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions. All the information normally

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provided at the State Annual Meetings is accessible via the state web sites. The 2020 office bearers will be elected as soon as restrictions have lifted sufficiently for states to convene meetings.

**Contracts:** The contract with the Arabian Horse Society to provide our registry and secretariat services is due for renewal in October 2020. The RPSBS Board thanks Helen Dohan, Teresa Edwards and the office staff for their services to our Society and the Arabian Horse Society Board for their support.

The contract with Show Pony Graphics Pty. Ltd. for the provision of Publicity and Marketing Services to the Society was re-negotiated for a three-year period in September 2019 to include editorial services for The Riding Pony Annual. Despina Mitrakis provides the Editorial and Production Services for our Riding Pony Annual. Her responsibilities include the design and maintenance of the RPSBS national and state Facebook pages and web sites; the Leader Board competition; publishing the monthly Information Bulletins; organising the online competitions in addition to all aspects of the Society's publicity and marketing.

The **2019 Annual General Meeting** was held in East Fremantle, Western Australia, on 16<sup>th</sup> June, 2019 together with a members' forum and Judges' seminar. The audited financial statements for the national body and all states, together with the AGM Chair Report are available on the RPSBS web site. The major points of discussion at the forum were how the Society can benefit from the emergence of German Riding Ponies in Australia and that the problem with communication is that many members are not accessing web sites, Facebook or reading the monthly bulletins. It is also important the members ensure their contact details, especially email addresses, are kept up-to-date.

**Governance:** The Board is committed to continued sound governance including scheduled reviews of all RPSBS Policies and Procedures.

The Society's Risk Management Policy had undergone a major review. It and its associated forms are now available on the RPSBS web site for states to access when planning and conducting events.

Behavioural expectations for Directors and State Committee members have been clearly outlined in an Ethics Policy. An Advisory Panel of professionals has been formed to assist the Board with policy decisions and deal with any disciplinary issues that may arise. A disciplinary procedures policy is currently being formulated.

The RPSBS Advisory Panel to the Board comprises:

- Dr. Nigel Nichols – Veterinarian with expertise in corporate and disciplinary matters;
- Dr. Amanda Jefferys – Psychologist and breeder (Willowcroft Stud);
- Linden Hearn - OAM, Educationalist, Breeder, Judge;
- Aaron Schmidt – Solicitor, contractual advice; and
- Tegan Schmidt – Solicitor, commercial advice.

The Society is most grateful to these talented people for volunteering their services.

**Highlights** of the 2019 - 2020 year include:

- The Victorian Committee conducted a most successful youth clinic. Special thanks must go to the organiser Tara Kirk;
- The new South Australian committee is to be commended for ensuring that the RPSBS sponsored All Breeds Show went ahead in spite of being in Administration before the event;
- With over \$9,000 in sponsorship the New South Wales committee were able to conduct a spectacular show in November with UK judges and over \$7,000 in prize money, garlands and rugs;
- Decision to recognise the breeders of ponies winning major awards in the open ring;

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- The Leader Board competition prize pool by RPSBS Ltd. have been increased by \$1,200 so that the highest point scorer in each state receives a cash prize of \$200. This ensures there is at least one winner from each state. A special thank you to the sponsors of this competition. Total value of prize money and trophies for the competition is over \$6,000

**RPSBS Annual:** With a number of major shows being cancelled this year more pages have been made available for articles and for members' photographs and information. Special mention must be made of the editor, Despina Mitrakis for the over 50% reduction in costs in spite of a decrease in advertising and sponsorship.

Members are able to lodge their own photos and information on their animal's successes via the web site. State Publicity Officers provide Despina with photos and results of shows as they happen. Together, these initiatives have saved time that had previously been spent chasing photos and results as the annual deadline approached.

**Finances:** RPSBS Ltd. as other breed societies has not escaped the financial effects of the drought with both membership and registration income down significantly. This combined with the widespread, devastating bushfires during the summer followed by a significant economic downturn thanks to the COVID-19 virus will have a major impact on the Society's revenue for this financial year.

In the 2019 – 2020 financial year, membership income was down 15.1% with registration income down 11.3%. Overall, our income fell 15.5% short of budget estimates.

With the significant decrease in expenditure that has been achieved over the past three (3) years, finding additional cost savings will be difficult. The Society was able to reduce expenditure in the 19 - 20 financial year in spite of the extra costs incurred in re-establishing the South Australia and Western Australia committees. The 6% decrease in expenditure this past year was primarily due to the significant reduction in the cost of producing the Annual.

As of the April 2020, 15% of the member rebate payments are being diverted to assist with the funding of the \$1200 in prize monies being awarded to the six (6) state Leader Board competition winners. For the foreseeable future, sponsorship monies to states for shows and other events will only be made when states can demonstrate sound fiscal management and financial hardship. In 2019 – 20 every state received \$1,000 in sponsorship from the Society.

In spite of the financial downturn, the Board continues to provide further incentives for members and breeders. The Board is committed to being proactive and innovative whilst carefully managing its expenditure in what is most likely to be the most challenging year for our Society. A budget surplus for 2020 – 2021 is extremely unlikely. The challenge for the Board and State Committees more than ever before will be to provide as many benefits as possible to our members and breeders whilst conserving cash reserves as much as possible.

The Company Treasurer will provide a comprehensive breakdown of our finances in the audit figures.

### RPSBS Membership data as at April 1:

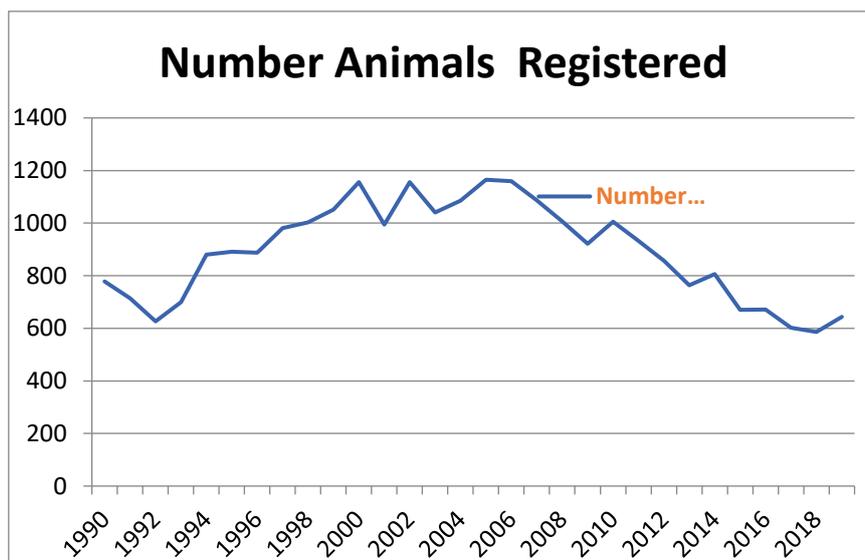
STATE	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
NSW/ACT	494	568	524	478	464
QLD	249	254	250	251	220
SA	125	133	146	126	100
TAS	48	68	58	45	47
VIC	464	492	498	431	364

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<b>WA</b>	167	165	142	135	113
<b>OTHER</b>				7	3
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>1547</b>	<b>1680</b>	<b>1618</b>	<b>1474</b>	<b>1311</b>

### RPSBS Registration/Transfer data (April - March):

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Registrations</b>	651	685	579	552	624
<b>Transfers</b>	777	780	651	587	446



The first objective of RPSBS Ltd. as laid down by the constitution is to maintain an accurate and comprehensive register of Riding Ponies in Australia. It is imperative for the integrity of the stud book that the animals bred are registered.

The increase in animal registrations in 2019 – 2020 must be attributed to the constant messaging to owners and breeders to register their animals while there is a moratorium on the extra charges for animals being registered after their year of birth.

One contributing factor in the decline in transfers and memberships is that a significant number of competitors that are purchasing Riding Ponies for open competition purposes see no need for RPSBS memberships or registration papers.

Concerns over the falling registrations have been raised at Annual Meetings for the last ten years. Many events, beyond our control, such as the Equine Influenza epidemic, Hendra Virus, prolonged droughts and rising costs have contributed to the decline in breeding of leisure horses and, in particular, the decline in the show horse industry.

Comparing the number registrations from January to June gives a very clear picture of how the Society is being impacted this year relative to the last few years.

### RPSBS Animals registered January 1 to June 1

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
<b>Animals Registered</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>233</b>	<b>117</b>

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**In 2020, 24% fewer animals were registered between 1<sup>st</sup> January and 1<sup>st</sup> June than in 2019 and a massive 59 % fewer than in 2018.**

These statistics do highlight that our Society is now operating in challenging and highly competitive conditions. Your Board of Directors is acutely aware of the difficulties being faced by our members and 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.

For years committees have attempted to run foal and young stock shows with little success. With far fewer foals being bred there are few opportunities for breeders to showcase their foals. A National Online Foal Competition being judged by international judges is but one example of how our Society is adapting how services are delivered to our members

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.

**Risk factors:** Obviously, the pandemic has taken a significant toll on the economy and the Riding Pony Stud Book Society has not be immune from the effects of the economic downturn as I outlined in the registration figures. There is also a real risk of the show horse industry continuing to decline at the expenses of the performance horse industry, particularly when there is controversy surrounding the sport's administration. The only certainty is that there are real challenges ahead and that being able to quickly adapt to the changing environment will be imperative.

**Technology:** 2020, the year of the bushfires and COVID-19 has certainly changed our Society. There is no doubt the Riding Pony Stud Book Society will be smaller but this pandemic has forced the world to find innovative solutions through technology.

Some examples of how the Riding Pony Stud Book Society has adapted to this new world:

- The office staff have adapted to work from home during the lockdown;
- Board Meetings and this AGM have been made possible by video conferencing technology;
- A National Online Foal Competition has become possible through technology;
- The online colouring competition was well supported by our children; and
- The Victorian State Committee election was most cost effective and efficient using online voting.

I conclude my report by thanking my fellow directors, the office staff, our state committee members and all RPSBS Ltd. members for your efforts and dedication to our beautiful Riding Ponies and, on behalf of the competitors, a special thanks to the Australian Riding Pony breeders for providing us with world class ponies.

Thank you  
Mike Smith  
National Chair