

The Future of Horse Sport in Australia

This document outlines the suggestions for the future of Equestrian Australia and horse sport in Australia

1. The aim should be how to improve horse sport in Australia, not just patch up EA

Vaulting, Endurance, Reining & Driving are currently not well represented at EA except for vague representation for FEI related tasks. There is no representation or discipline committees for them at state level, and the national committees are not prominent in the overall structure of EA.

There is no significant grass roots development program for adult riders or especially children. Historically this requirement has been filled by Pony Club. However Pony Club has weakened over the years, and has also drifted further away from EA sport as the organisation has failed to modernise with EA and particularly FEI.

2. Equestrian sport is made up of different sports, all of which have quite different rules, and many of which have drastically different requirements from the national federation.

Often the membership is split between the various sports; many jumping athletes do not compete in dressage and vice versa. Volunteers are also usually not shared. For all intents and purposes, with some exceptions, it is safe to regard them as different sports.

A future EA must recognise the differences between the sports, but also encourage more cooperation between them.

3. The general rank and file of members feel very removed from the management of the organisation, and there is poor understanding of where one jurisdiction starts and ends.

This can be addressed by making the national organisation responsible for membership, and delegating the high performance tasks in large part to the individual sports. This enables the organisation to be responsive to the membership while at the same time allowing each discipline to focus on their own sport's needs.

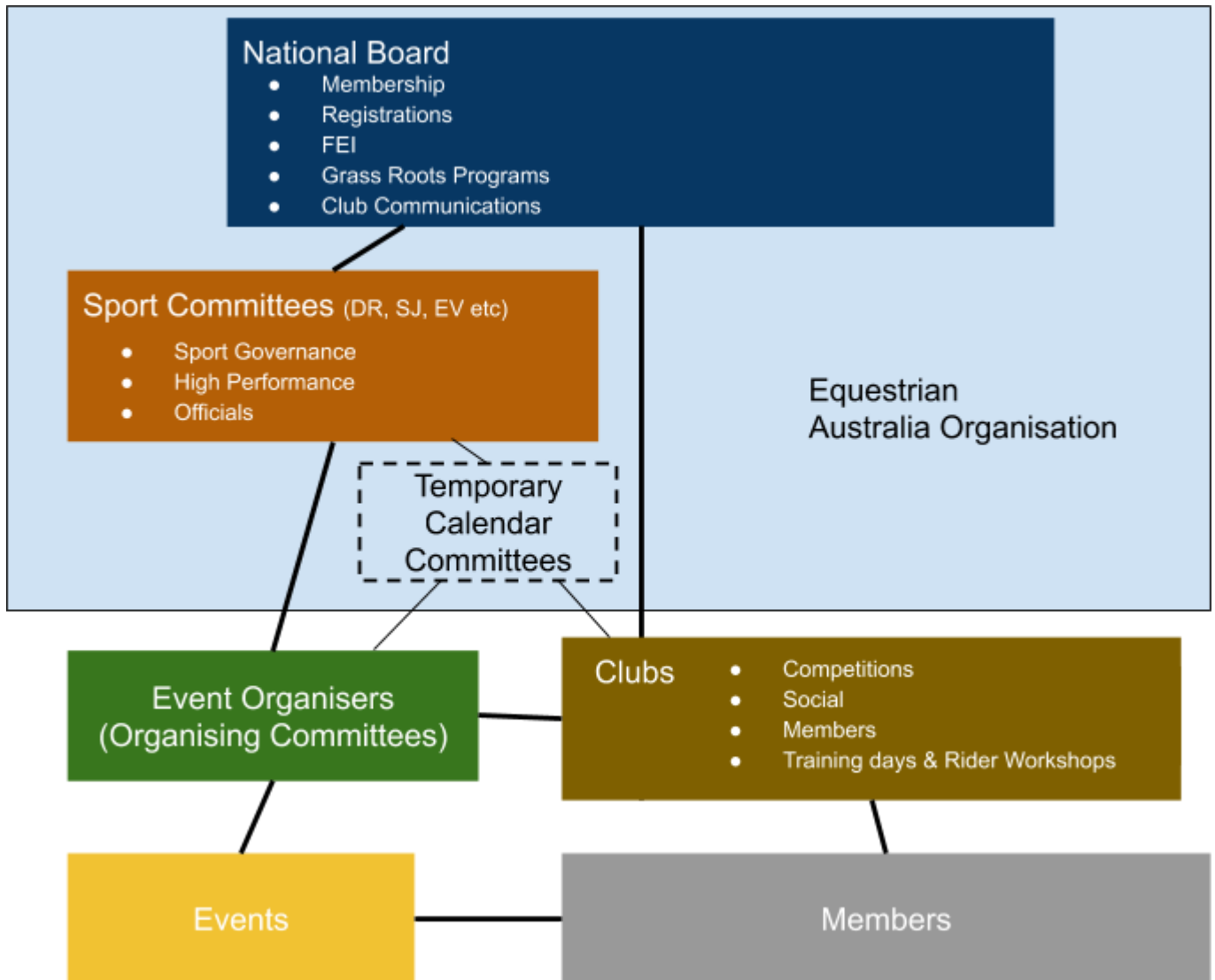
4. There needs to be a clearer pathway for youth to become involved in the sport

Equestrian sport in Australia currently features a system where children and youth riders compete against adults. While this is not completely unfair, since riding skill is not directly correlated to physical ability, it does create a system which is potentially confronting for children and young adults to be able to compete.

Interschools has been very successful and has helped to reduce this impact somewhat. However there is no real progression through the system, it is completely tied to schools (making it difficult for regional students or students of unsupportive schools), and there is a hard stop when the child reaches the age of 18.

Ideally, a system like Pony Club would be ideal, but Pony Club exists outside the scope of EA and has drawn a long way from a feeder position for high level sport it could have been. Therefore, I think there needs to be a new structure within EA which replaces both Interschools and Pony Club with a cross sport structure which features all of EA sports. This should be primarily social and educational, and feature separated competitions.

Proposed Structure



Key points:

1. Eliminate State Branches - members are members of EA directly through their local club
2. Sport (discipline) committees and associated national office staff will be responsible for administering their own discipline, manage their High Performance, and approve competitions.
3. There must be an explicit agreement and culture between national board and discipline committees to develop their High Performance and providing an environment to encourage clubs to provide grass root development and training.
4. There is no specific association of clubs to a particular discipline, all clubs are just 'equestrian' clubs.
5. Clubs must work with each other to organise their local calendars, the office or national discipline committee will intervene if necessary.
6. To progress to the higher levels of competition, a basic horsemanship competency certificate should be required. This is required in other National Federations (especially Germany) and also HRCAV and Pony Club in Australia. These should be conducted by registered Officials from the National board and undertaken by registered coaches and clubs. This will help to increase the basic knowledge and horsemanship (competency) of the membership.

National board should be comprised of:

- One delegate from each discipline: Dressage (2 votes), jumping (2 votes), eventing (2 votes), Para (2 votes), Vaulting, Driving, Reining, Endurance and Show Horse.
- Six Skills based positions with 2 votes each
- One chair
- Total 15 members

Sport Committees should be comprised of:

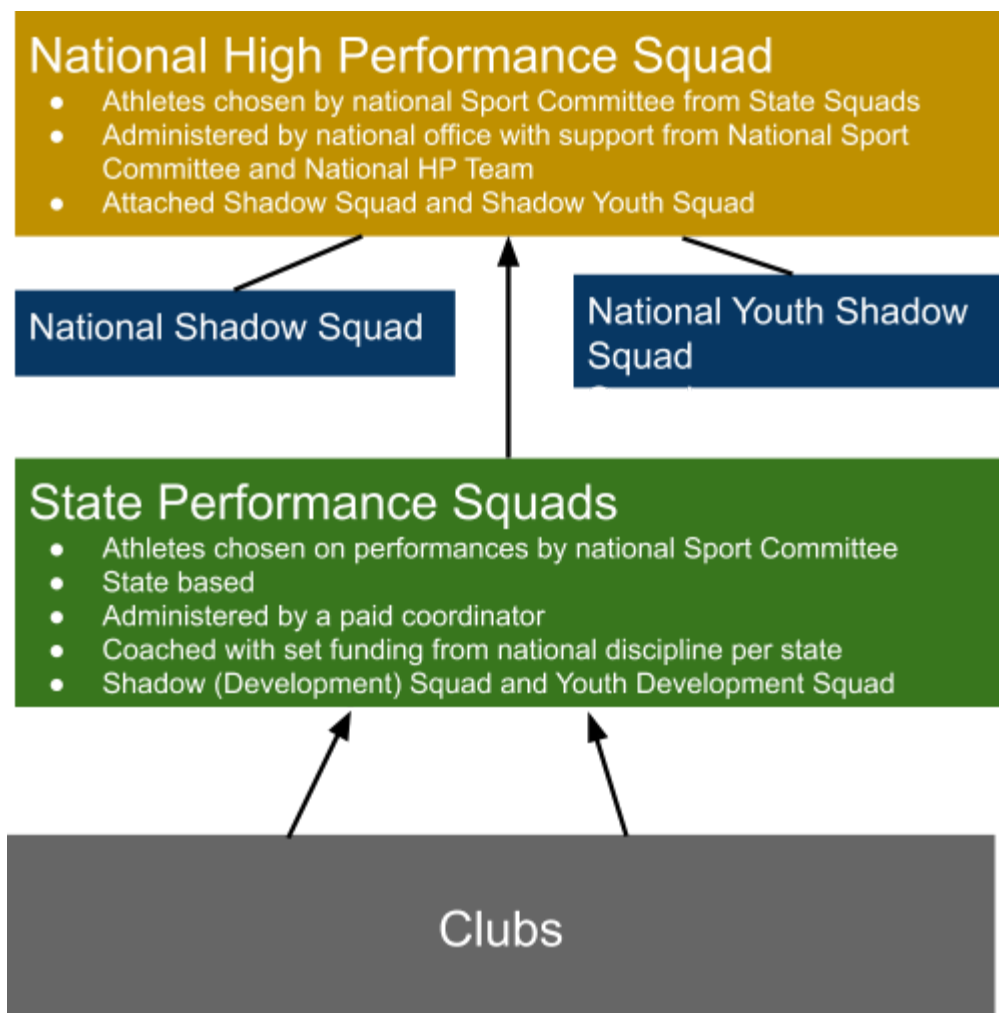
- One delegate for each state (6)
- 4 (sport) skills based
- A riders' representative
- One Chair elected from the rest
- Total 11 members

Pathways

The major concern without the states is the pathways model. We need to get children from Club level through to high performance with proper development, and also recognise adults to get them into the high performance stream. Due to the nature of the geography of Australia, it would seem to make sense to still do this on a state basis. National committees would select these squads.

Clubs would need to be provided with materials to help with this process

Proposed High Performance Structure



Membership

The current membership structure is quite confusing, and each state has its own system and charges.

Suggest a more simple system with three tiers:

- Support membership
- Junior Membership (under 18)
- Full membership

This would be a minimum requirements membership which allows members to access basic services and insurance. There would then be a competition licence for athletes which would be payable per year which would enable competition in official competitions. There is an argument to make these competition licences sport based to accurately distribute funds to the disciplines.

The basic membership should be as cheap as possible to allow as much of a membership base as possible. Even if they are contributing to the club only and not the national organisation, they are providing input for grass roots development.

High Level Competitions also need a registration for the horse as well. General horse registrations should be kept as cheap as possible to encourage mass registrations

	Jumping	Dressage	Eventing	Para Equestrian	Show Horse	Vaulting	Driving	Reining	Endurance
High Level Competition (competition licence required)	1.05cm and above	Grand Prix	5*	FEI Para Equestrian	Nationals State Champs		FEI Level events		Marathon
		Medium Tour	4*			Open			Endurance
		Small Tour	3*			advanced			Mini-marathon
		Advanced	2*			Intermediate			Micro-marathon
		Medium	1*			Novice			Intermediate
Standard Competition	Under 1.05m	Elementary	EvA95	EA Para Equestrian		Pre-novice	Non-FEI levels		Introductory
		Novice	EvA80		Preliminary				
Unofficial		Preliminary	EvA60		Shows	Barrel	Training		

Unofficial competitions are available to all entries. Perhaps available with a temporary day membership.

All State and Australian Championships require a competition licence regardless of level.

Conclusions - Pros and Cons

Pros

- Maximum savings for members, reduction in number of staff required for membership, registrations, administration etc
- Makes EA closer to the membership by making the clubs and grass roots front and centre in their priorities/remit
- Gives each discipline autonomy over their own sport, while remaining within the same organisational structure
- Encourages more grass roots development by requiring club membership.
- Disciplines are free to set their own criteria for HP, with support from the EA HP department
- Creates a very simple and clean structure which is easy to understand for all stakeholders
- Simplifies governance and IT requirements
- Should deliver cost benefit to members by reducing staffing and office overheads

Cons

- Massive change to structure of organisation which will take time to transition, and quite disruptive
- Job losses for 20+ people and dozens more in volunteer roles
- The individual sports remain mainly governed by volunteers
- Requires good communication between National Organisation, Sports and Clubs