



PA NSW Annual Report 2019

Achievements and Challenges

PA NSW strives to enhance our processes with respect to management of the sport and the conduct of competitions, promoting our sport, to increase participation at all levels and across all regions of the State of NSW.

We aim to ensure the sport of polocrosse provides a safe and enjoyable environment for all families and individuals involved.

The following brief provides a snapshot of major issues and progress over the 2019 season and some of our priorities for the future.

Turnaround for Membership Numbers

PA NSW has strived to reverse the decline in numbers through a number of initiatives over the last few years. In 2019 our players totaled 1,427. The PAA fees and insurance costs have been reduced for 2020, particularly for sub juniors and juniors. PA NSW have also kept fees low with the aim of attracting and retaining members.

Enhancing Facilities and playing fields

The ongoing drought conditions across the state over the last few seasons has put significant pressure on all of our members. A number of Clubs undertook self-funded activities to aerate and enhance their playing surfaces.

Given the difficult 2019 season, the work of Clubs to continue to enhance the playing surfaces and facilities is particularly encouraging. A number of Clubs also were successful in obtaining grants to upgrade facilities in the future.

Promotion

PA NSW has supported the Coonabarabran Inter Schools Horse Expo for a number of years. In 2019 PA NSW provided a considerable boost to our sponsorship and provision of promotion materials to raise the profile of polocrosse at this major horse event. The support was very much appreciated and directly resulted in a number of Juniors signing up as social members.

Despite the north and west of the State being drought declared, the annual Narrabri Junior Challenge not only went ahead but was combined with a NZ touring team competition, a highly successful event.

Increasing Participation

The introduction of "Blue Bandage", BB, a non-contact polocrosse program in the 2019 player season introduced more horse riders to our sport and community, with many transferring over to the regular "white bandage" competition within 2019 season, and hopefully joining up again for the 2020 season.

As 2019 was the first year of BB there were lessons learnt and will be built upon and the competition enhanced in 2020. For example, advertising a set time for BB, and

consideration of a stepped competition for past BB players with a competition for adult players graded 2 or below.

PA NSW grants to members

PA NSW continued to maintain the formal grants program to assist clubs and zones to undertake activities to enhance their facilities and playing fields.

One Grounds grant was provided by the State in 2019. \$1,500 was provided to Wagga Club who are going through a process of proactively rebuilding their Club and facilities.

Accessing Government Grants

a) Increasing Participation

In late 2018 the PA NSW Board was successful in securing funding of \$45,000 for the 2019 /2020 season for increasing participation, (*recruit new, return former and retain all*) with a particular focus on women and girls.

This funding gave a much needed boost to our sport which was being challenged by the continued competition from a range of equestrian and other sport options combined with the very dry / drought conditions.

To distribute the grant funds across the membership, PA NSW developed selection criteria and an application form which were circulated via the website and e mails.

Applications were assessed by the Board, with funding approved in principle, and funds released to Clubs upon receipt of an acquittal and an activity report. These reports, while they did vary in quality, proved very useful in providing lessons learnt for increasing participation and promoting the interests of not only female, but all participants in the future.

b) Devolution, Strengthening our grass roots, Clubs and Zones

PANSW obtained a grant of \$5,000 to enhance the governance of our sport through more effective devolution to the regions. It was agreed to conduct of two workshops for our volunteer administrators, Zone and Club officials in early 2020. The "southern workshop" was held in Yass on Saturday 18th January 2020. It was a most successful day with 20 participants from the Southern Highlands, South West Slopes and Central West Zones. The feedback and lessons from this workshop will now be used to run the second workshop in the north of the State in the next few months.

c) Governance

PA NSW must maintain a level of due diligence to continue to benefit from an annual grant of \$10,000 from the NSW Government. This grant provides very much needed funds to maintain and enhance governance of our sport that many members may not be aware of. PA NSW oversight the conduct of over 60 events Club level events each playing season, in addition to representative teams who are selected to compete in interstate, national and international events, and a range of 'new initiatives and competition formats'. This is a massive undertaking for a not-for-profit sporting association to manage effectively with a volunteer workforce scattered across the State.

New communication platform.

2019 saw the role out of a new digital platform, SZine, to enhance communication with our membership. It also facilitated on line nomination processes. This new communication platform allows easy access via mobile devices, with direct links to our web site and relevant forms.

The need for a new website had been identified as a priority for several years, but progress had been impeded due to lack of technical advice and viable options. In late 2019 the Board

let the contract to revise the PA NSW Website and link it to this new digital platform. The new website is hoped to be operational early in the 2020 NSW playing season.

Transparency in Policy and Process - Operating Procedures Manual

The OPM was developed to provide transparency and consistency in the wide range of decision making processes. The NSW Board continues to review and revise the OPM as circumstances and experience warrants.

As 2019 was a 'Nationals selection year' there were some challenges to the adequacy of the current OPM with respect to the Boards role in confirming recommendations of the Selectors.

PA NSW will seek feedback from current Selectors to further review and refine the OPM to ensure Selection processes are clearly articulated and are not ambiguous. The OPM will be amended to ensure it remains a 'go to' document that the membership can be confident in.

The OPM must provide both a statement of Policy and detail agreed process to implement same. It needs to remain relevant and be revised as circumstances warrant.

In 2019 the PAA commenced the development of a similar document to share across the States and should promote consistency and transparency. PA NSW shared a copy of the OPM with the PAA and we have provided input and work comments on the initial draft of the PAA document. The NSW OPM may require amendment to ensure it is consistent with PAA directives.

Coaching

The Coaching Panel is considered to have worked most effectively in this Nationals year. The three person panel kept the Board informed of issues and intent, and took into consideration information and feedback provided from the Confidential on line Surveys. The introduction of this confidential feedback is now being more widely accepted and utilised.

As a result of positive feedback, PA NSW will continue to appoint a "Head Coach" for the 2020 Nationals to provide the option of mentoring and development of all Coaches. The objective is to raise the standard of our Coaches, and retain them through enhanced support and constructive feedback.

Nationals Teams, Coaches and Managers were all announced in September 2019. This target was set, and met, to allow all members to have maximum time to plan for the Nationals campaign.

Uniforms

The move to the On line shop for Uniforms revealed PA NSW had significant older stocks on hand. Over 2019 season these stocks have been reduced, and stronger control over stock orders have been implemented.

In an effort to reduce costs to members, a more affordable Blazer was also identified by the Uniform Officer, and the 'pool' of second hand Blazers for loan to members appears to be working well. (10 Blazers in the pool at end of 2019 season).

Blazer pockets will continue to be available through the former Blazer provider, Rundles of Newcastle, and some members may wish to order tailor made Blazers from this supplier.

The NSW Official Uniform for the 2020 'Australian Nationals' will remain the same as for previous Nationals, to ensure existing shirt stocks on hand are depleted, and to minimize the cost to players that have represented the state previously.

The NSW formal uniform will then be revised for the 2022 Nationals.

Paramedic Service Providers

The 2019 playing season was challenging for securing affordable, qualified paramedics, particularly for the smaller and more remote carnivals. This was for a range of reasons. However PA NSW considers the accreditation process that was introduced in 2016 has ensured an appropriate level of service provision at all NSW events.

The introduction of new NSW government registration system for paramedics in 2018 reduced the number of 'qualified' paramedics available across the State for all users, not just polocrosse. Other users, eg the mines, were in a similar situation and demand for those who were registered under the new qualification process increased dramatically.

The 2019 season also coincided with the release of outcomes from high profile coroner's inquests into equestrian deaths of a few years ago. The Coroner found the event organisers and the paramedic service provider were negligent.

Given difficulty in securing paramedics, late in the 2019 playing season the Board was required to intervene and become the liaison point for communication with one of the Service providers.

The decision was therefore taken to move to a single service provider in 2020. One of the accredited Service Providers was approached and a Contract is being negotiated. This should result in a standard service fee, and importantly guaranteed service provision for all NSW events. The partnership approach being pursued aims to enhance the services provided as paramedics become more aware of our sports needs and venues. This is seen as a major positive step for managing risk associated with our sport.

The PA NSW will be the Contract holder, with costs recovered from Host Clubs. Options to recover the cost of paramedic services will be put to the PA NSW Council at the AGM in February 2020.

NSW Government - Active Kids vouchers processes

In 2019 season the process for utilizing the NSW Government subsidies for "Active kids" was streamlined via use of the Database. This provided a significant level of assistance to polocrosse families across the State.

Communication with PAA

Enhanced communication with the PAA was identified as a need in the PA NSW Operational Plan in 2017. The 2019 season saw a very positive relationship going forward with the PAA.

NSW player, Callum Hughes, has been appointed to the position of PAA Treasurer. We wish Callum well with the new appointment. Callum has been a very successful Club and Zone Treasurer in NSW. The Board would encourage more NSW members and supporters to consider their ability to support the good governance and management of our sport at all levels.

State Level Sponsors

Despite best efforts, PA NSW have not been successful in securing a major State sponsor in 2019. While efforts will continue, Nationals teams have been encouraged to identify team level sponsors for the 2020 Nationals campaign. This is an area where PA NSW needs to focus more effort, and reconsider the strategy and possible connections or experience in the polocrosse community that we could develop over the next few years.

