

Opinion by Elite Rider Kerry Mack

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EA AFTER THE FEDERAL BOARD ELECTIONS

What an exciting new board we have to lead our sport into the future. What a skilled group of people to work out the strategies to revitalise the organisation. Thank you so much to all those people who stood (we could have appointed at least two skilled boards), and all the members who took an interest and talked to the state boards and to the state who voted wisely. Thankyou to the people who took the time to get the information into the public domain, especially Caroline Coleby and Sandy Morphett from Eques who got this debate into the public domain.

The new board will only be able to make good decisions if they have good information to base them on. The members who know what has been going on must work to get the information to the board through the public domain including this website or more directly to board members. Of course there is a position still vacant and that is the Athlete Representative. I do believe we need an experienced and bold person who has been close to the Olympic process to contribute to the board.

Who is there prepared to stand for this role?

The Australian Dressage championships took place last weekend and EA was of course a hot topic of discussion. As always there were people in the know discussing the Olympics and the high performance programme.

The High Performance Review has been conducted. Is it true that the only independent participant was Geoff Sinclair? So the people responsible reviewed themselves. Is that a good way to identify problems and learn from them, or is it more likely that problems may be minimised? Is it true that some important stakeholders and witnesses were not included? Is it true that some

or all the Olympic riders were only able to participate in the review by filling out a questionnaire? Is it true that some key stakeholders were not invited to contribute? Is it true that EA rented a house nearby for 83,000 pounds, providing convenient accommodation for EA staff including physios but not made available to the coaches who had to travel up to 2 hours by public transport to get to the venue? I heard that a private person found similar accommodation for less than a quarter of this price. Is it true that EA declined to provide support to manage the media regarding the appeals lodged by Hayley Beresford when they had a full time media person on site? This media problem put extra and unnecessary stress on riders who received hate mail!! Is it true that high performance manager Brett Mace flew home and back to London to attend a single meeting?

What has been done to understand the needs of owners and make owners experience more rewarding? Owners make a huge commitment to our sport for little return. Owners I spoke to at the very least want a fair and transparent selection process that they can trust.

Are the people in the office administering our sport doing a good enough job? There are many other questions which need to be addressed. We need the people who know the questions and those who know the answers to contribute to the debate.

Another very important part of the EA revolution (as I like to call it) is to look to the other levels of governance and work to get the right people in the committees, people who can think strategically. For example nominations have been called for the Australian Dressage Committee. I have nominated for this. I would like to see a committee able to think strategically and have close links with the board and with the high performance portfolio, and with the High Performance Dressage coordinator (this position will be advertised soon, we were told at the riders meeting). Dressage funding will be slashed after our Olympic results, more so than showjumping and eventing. We need to work together to develop innovative low cost ways to improve our performance. Heath has some great ideas about riders working closely with

judges using video techniques to improve test riding. I am keen to explore the model of mentoring which underpins medical education and is mutually rewarding for mentor and mentored. Perhaps we can use the sports psychologists already available to us more effectively. I am certain many other members will have creative, practical and cheap ideas that we could trial quickly to get the show on the road while we work out the longer term plan. We need urgently to address the needs of owners. Let's start by asking the few owners of elite and potentially elite horses what would add to their enjoyment and commitment. For example someone could ask the owner of San Andreas what would help him leave the horse with Jayden Brown.

In Victoria we have some well known problems, but one example is the perpetual complaints about dressage judges. Now dressage judges are generally well intentioned members of our sport diligently doing their best. They have the courage to put their opinions on paper. If they are underperforming we must provide better education for them. Riders must participate in judges' clinics especially those with quality horses, international judges should be utilised more for joint rider and judge's clinic. The riders must help the judges' education panels to educate judges to use the marks and recognise quality paces and training, positively.

I am using dressage as the example as that is what I know, but you should think about your discipline, look at the committee structure and ask what are the problems? What are the solutions? Who are the people who can work strategically to implement change? Then ask those people to stand up, as the positions come up for review. We do not need the knockers; we need positive and creative people to lead.

Thankyou for taking the time to read this

Kerry Mack

HORSES MOUTH COMMENT- This was from 2012. The same mismanagement and problems still exist in 2020 despite so many allegedly skilled boards. When will we stop doing the same things with the same results?

