

Dear Minister Colbeck,

As the Minister that Sport Australia and the Australian Olympic Committee report to, I respectfully ask that you follow up both bodies and ask how they have allowed the situation with Equestrian Australia to escalate to this level (please follow the links here-in) while reportedly receiving \$13m in taxpayer funds over the past four years . See The Australian 18/6/2020 https://www.theaustralian.com.au/sport/olympics/australian-olympic-committee-sends-warning-to-equestrian-australia-to-lift-their-game/news-story/eeadd4a9c64fc30b8447b2be1c33edc?fbclid=IwAR1QbKzWGyt8G0kPprCe_pdlzdziAtaLcTW8xFDePuEjbNJ6SGMzg5Q_sQ

The situation with Equestrian Australia, and in all likelihood other Australian Peak Sporting Organisations, points to a far larger problem in the performance of administrative bodies under your portfolio.

You may know Equestrian Australia is in turmoil but how has it been permitted to progress to this point? Surely the responsible governing body, Sport Australia, who holds the purse strings, should be monitoring the bodies that they distribute government funding to? Equestrian Australia has been in the news many times over the last decade, for all the wrong reasons. Their record is up on my website if you need an overview : <https://www.horsemouthau.com/ea-and-branch-opinion>

Sport Australia and the Australian Olympic Committee have been asleep at the wheel. Equestrian Australia's constitution and structure were forced on Equestrian Australia by Sport Australia as a condition for government funding. This constitutional requirement has not worked for the grass roots sport members and its function for elite equestrians and pathways is highly questionable, as results at recent Olympics have shown. Pre around 2011, when the constitution was changed, things worked far better, far less drama, fairer, more transparent with the actual members having a direct route to their organisation. I would hope that yourself and Sport Australia take a good look at how the constitutional requirements disenfranchise grass-roots sporting participants.

Sport Australia has a fiscal responsibility and duty of care to check the governance, finances and members services of the sporting organisations that receive government funding; especially when there have been clear warning signs for many years that there are endemic problems. It's not enough to rely on Annual Reports; the Equestrian Australia Annual Reports have been virtual works of fiction and simply a 'pat themselves on the back' exercise that bore little relationship to the facts.

Furthermore, any checks need to be done without warning the target and address the issues that members of the association may have. Sport Australia should not be relying on desperate whistle blowers; they need to do their job thoroughly and include O.H.S. (note the issues the coroner found regarding the recent eventing deaths) and forensic accounting examination. Taxpayers deserve far better processes delivered by Sporting Australia.

Organisation members will not necessarily speak up until the situation is impossible. Equestrian Australia members can't be the only organisations members who fear retribution from their organisation if they speak up. It is abysmal that it has got to this point with Equestrian Australia, over a decade of serious issues with no intervention by Sport Australia until the point of almost no return.

I have also copied this correspondence to the opposition minister for Sport

As the Federal minister for Sport I respectfully ask that you take this information on board and investigate the performance of Sport Australia and the AOC in this matter and the broader associated issues .

C.C.

Hon Don Farrell

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