



**RIDING FOR THE DISABLED  
ASSOCIATION  
OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED**

ABN 99 116 408 587

**ANNUAL REPORT  
2008 - 2009**

Ability • Freedom • Sport • Inspiration • Courage • Hope • Fun • Friendships

I saw a child who couldn't walk, sit on a horse and laugh and talk

I saw a child who could only crawl, mount a horse and sit up tall

I saw a child born into strife, take up and hold the reins of life

And that same child was heard to say

Thank you God for showing me the way

~~~~ John Anthony Davis ~~~~



# RIDING FOR THE DISABLED ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA LIMITED

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## ANNUAL REPORT 2008 – 2009

Each week over 3000 volunteers at RDA centres across Australia donate their time to assist 4000 children and adults with disabilities enjoy the therapeutic benefits of horse related activities.

RDA is a voluntary, nonprofit organisation and limited company which provides opportunities for anyone with a disability to enjoy safe, healthy stimulating, therapeutic, horse-related activities in Australia.

RDA Centres provide suitable horses, trained volunteer helpers, accredited RDA coaches, riding and safety equipment to run a range of equestrian activities.

The RDA is structured as a federal body of 8 autonomous RDA member states & territories in Australia. The national office supports the work of the member organisations by acting as a central resource coordinating education, training, accreditation and other activities vital to the provision of safe and professional services.



RDA develops abilities & enriches lives through  
therapeutic & recreational equestrian activities

## DIRECTORS' REPORT

In 2008, RDA Australia was just beginning to emerge from the effects of the 2007 outbreak of Equine Influenza in Australia which had a severe impact on the organisation's activities when Eastern States came to an almost complete standstill.

The main financial impact on RDAA was the loss of revenue from rider registration (approximately \$50,000) and cancellation of both the National Dressage Championships and the International Para Equestrian Qualifier, originally planned for October but which had to be rescheduled for January 2008 at an additional cost to the national office.

RDAA was forced to draw down on its limited reserves to keep the national office operating. It needed time to rebuild its reserves but worse was to come.

In February 2009, parts of Victoria were devastated by the worst bushfires in living memory in Victoria, with tragic loss of human and animal life. In May 2009, rising floodwaters and severe storms lashed SE Queensland causing damage to RDA Centres and loss of horses.

These devastating environmental events; combined with the worst global financial meltdown in living memory has made for another tough financial and funding year. We are not out of the woods yet but are slowly rebuilding our financial and funding capacities.

One casualty of the global downturn was RDAA's decision to return Dover Park to its most generous benefactor, Bill Gibbins, as the organisation was simply not in a position with sufficient resources (time, money or staff) to

avail itself properly of this wonderful donation.

In 2007 Bill Gibbins, the owner of Dover Park gifted the estate near Diggers Rest, Victoria for the use of RDAA. The board reviewed the viability of the Dover Park against the background of the global financial crisis, a tough funding environment and the need for RDAA to focus on coaching and serving the needs of coaches and supporting RDA in Australia.

On the basis of this review the Board had to make the decision to hand the property back. We would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank Bill for his kindness in thinking of RDA and applaud him for his vision and generosity.

RDAA took the opportunity to review its national coaching requirements in 2009 after the resignation of Sue Harris, our National Coaching Coordinator (to spend more time with her family) and Rebecca Willis our Projects & Events Coordinator (to take up a position with EA). The Board is extremely grateful to Sue Harris and Rebecca Willis for all their hard work.

A new office manager, Caroline Partridge was appointed to act as liaison person between the States and the national office.

In August 2009, RDAA celebrates its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As we start our fourth decade our organisation is changing and adapting to better meet the needs of our clients.

Our chairman is leading a process of Board Renewal and we seek applications from individuals with the skills and experience to be part of a board that will deliver significant

benefits to our local, state and national organisation.

Throughout 2009-2010 RDAA will attempt to showcase and celebrate the many parts that go to make up this wonderful organisation and the benefits it brings to its riders, their families and its volunteers.

## **COACHING REPORT**

### **Program Delivery**

The core business of RDA has always centred on providing quality equestrian services to people of all ages with a wide range of disabilities.

Training, assessment and ongoing support of coaches, carriage driving whips and hippotherapists is a high priority of RDA.



### **Coaching Evolution**

During 2008 the RDAA Board sought guidance from the State Presidents on what they needed from RDAA. The biggest single need identified was improvement in the delivery by RDAA of support for coaching and training. The board looked at these critical needs and the available resources. This prompted a restructure of the Coaching Department to change the way it provides support to the RDA coaches.

The proposed coaching support model aims to utilise the vast resource of knowledge and experience within the organisation to provide support and to spread this knowledge across a team of specialist experts rather than rely on one or two people. RDAA will use telephone and internet technology to provide a cost effective and responsive service to meet the needs of coaches in the field.

## **Supporting the Development and Training of Coaches**

In 2009-2010 RDAA plans to establish a Skills Bank consisting of a number of specialist coaches around the country to offer telephone support for enquiries on all RDA discipline programs. A national dial-in number would enable callers to select the type of support they require. The caller would be transferred to the specialist requested and the query dealt with. A coaching mentor will provide support to specialists and ensure that performance standards are maintained.

RDAA will continue to work with specialists and writers to progress the completion and distribution of coaching education resources – moving progressively to an online model to reduce costs, improve access and enable more effective delivery of training and resources.

### **Dedicated Coaching Website**

Work is currently being carried out on the development of a new dedicated online Coaches section for the RDAA web site which will enable coaches to access information and ensure improved channels of communication for all RDAA coaches. RDA Discipline Committees are helping RDAA collate content required for website pages.

### **Coach Administration**

RDAA will continue to support Coaching administration through one person. The role will include registration of coaches, coach accreditation records management and liaison with the ASC National Coaching Accreditation Scheme.

### **Coaching Department Reorganisation**

In 2009 Mary Longden was appointed as a Coaching Consultant for RDAA. In addition to helping support existing coaches and coaching courses she will also be rolling out a series of

tailored coaching courses and workshops to increase the number of existing RDA coaches. Mary is a BHSAI Instructor, Level 2 RDA Coach, International Level Three Coach, FEI Para Equestrian International Judge and member of the FEI Para Equestrian Committee; and Chair of the Sport and Recreation Committee of FRDI (Federation of Riding for the Disabled International).

After consultation with RDAA, State Coaching Coordinators and RDA Discipline Committees Pauline Perry agreed to:

- act as Chair of Program Delivery
- liaise between RDAA, State Coaching Coordinators and Chairs of Discipline Committees
- communicate & deliver coaching priorities
- assist the coaching department in 2009
- recruit someone to fulfil this role in 2010

### Dressage Competitions

The National Dressage Competition is always an important part of the RDAA calendar.



However, it can be expensive to compete when travel and accommodation costs are taken into account. These costs can also restrict the number of contestants who wish to participate.

So, in response to the current financial climate and in the interests of making the competition as accessible as possible, RDAA announced that the 2009 National Dressage Championships would be conducted through the submission of videos by contestants. No travel or accommodation required, compete at your local RDA centre!

This exciting and innovative approach aimed to engage a wider audience that we have ever had before.

The RDAA Dressage Committee will run both the Asia Pacific Dressage Championships and the RDAA National Dressage Video

Championships in this new and accessible format for the first time in 2009.

“It’s a wonderful idea because there are so many riders out there who want to compete but can’t travel so this is going to open it up to a lot more riders.” - Averil Troon, Alice Springs Coach

“It’s quite a new thing where you can compete by making a DVD and you just send it off to the judges.” - Karyn Clark, NT RDA Competitor

### RDAA Coaching Events

#### 2009

- National Young Coach Development Program
- Discipline Committee meetings
- Coach Assessors’ workshop

#### 2010

- Carriage Driving Workshop
- National Coaching Workshop

### Equestrian Paralympic Preparation Program



The Australian Paralympic Committee (APC) formed a strategic partnership with Riding for the Disabled Association Australia in March 2006 to manage the Equestrian Paralympic Preparation Program until 2009.

### 2008 Paralympic Beijing Games

5 athletes, 5 horses, 10 support staff made up the Australian Paralympic Equestrian Team for the 2008 Beijing Paralympic Games. They win 2 individual medals; two 4<sup>th</sup> places; a Team 6<sup>th</sup>.

### Future administration of Para Dressage

In April 2008 the APC made it known that they were looking to Equestrian Australia (EA) to take over the administration of Para-equestrian sport. Initial discussions have occurred with RDAA, EA, APC and ASC

representatives. There was agreement that will commence its formal involvement from January 1, 2009.

APC funding will be given to EA who may provide partial funding to RDAA for development of pathways for athletes.

As in all change there will be gains and losses. It will be important that all interests from the RDAA perspective are considered and a range of people be involved in the deliberations and agreements.

### **Funding**

Historically, RDAA has been funded through the Australian Sports Commission (ASC) as a sports and recreation organisation. RDAA, in line with the International Riding for the Disabled movement, is now moving towards a more therapeutic intervention model. At the same time ASC funding is being reduced together with funding from Australian Paralympic Committee (because of international changes outlined in previous section).

The Board of Directors recognise and appreciate the contributions – both in sponsorship and in advice – made by the Australian Sports Commission. We look forward to the continuation of that relationship.



RDAA will celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mid-2009. It is taking this opportunity to restructure the organisation towards a more therapeutic model and to plan for the next 30 years linking its core training curriculum and service delivery model towards a more evidence based practice.

### **2015 FRDI International Congress of Therapeutic Riding**

As part of this restructuring and move towards a more therapeutic model RDAA took the initiative in preparing a bid for the FRDI bid to host the 2015 FRDI International Congress of Therapeutic Riding.



This Internationally renowned and accredited Congress occurs every three years - Germany in 2009 and Athens in 2012. This event would bring together 41 countries to showcase what is happening in equine therapeutic intervention.

Currently there is little research being carried out in Australia on the benefits of animal-assisted therapy. RDAA's bid to host this conference would not only help raise the profile of RDA's work nationally and internationally, but also help RDA to lobby government departments, potential donors and sponsors for funding and assistance to help research, develop and roll out equine assisted therapy across Australia to benefit all of our members.

The FRDI Congress has never been held in Australia. Hosting such an event will enable many RDA riders, volunteers, parents and supporters to attend this prestigious Congress for the first and maybe only time in their lives; to meet and share ideas with RDA supporters from all over the world.

### **FRDI President**

RDAA is delighted to announce the election of Pauline Perry as the new FRDI President 2009-2012. Pauline is a life member of RDAA; Chair of Program Delivery; President RDA Tasmania.

## FUNDRAISING & DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The year started well when the Australian Sports Commission announced increased funding to equestrian sport for 2008-09.

### RDA Paralympic Team

This was followed by a generous donation of \$40,000 from Victoria Racing Club (VRC), a donation of Race Day package from the Sydney Turf Club and a private donation of \$25,000 from two generous benefactors to help get the RDA Dressage Team to the point of departure to the Beijing Paralympic Games. Other local events raised a further \$15,000 to help support our team.

### National Website

To coincide with the commencement of the 2008 Paralympic Games in Beijing and the RDA National Championships in Werribee Park, Victoria a new website was launched on the September 2008 with the aid of a gift from the Cassandra Gantner Foundation. This website and its detailed content incorporated RDA's new logo and branding and has generated a great deal of interest from the public, funders and potential sponsors propelling the organisation worldwide high on Google search engines. You can visit the website at [www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au).

### Myer Foundation Grant

RDA Australia was excited to be chosen as one of 37 charities across Australia to receive \$100,000 each from the Myer Family Philanthropy as part of its celebrations of 75 years of the Sidney Myer Fund and 50 years of The Myer Foundation - to help alleviate poverty and disadvantage and strengthen the nonprofit sector in



Australia. This grant recognised the invaluable work of Riding for the Disabled Association and imposed few constraints on how the funds were to be used.

*'This grant will strengthen the work and support what the national office provides to the organisation across Australia, helping the national peak body improve the quality and depth of assistance to states and territories.'*  
John Harte Chairman RDA

### Ian Potter Foundation



RDA Australia was delighted to be awarded a grant of 100,000 from the Ian Potter Foundation towards its National Coach Development Program.

This grant will provide the maximum benefit to all RDA Australia's members by helping to:

- address the chronic shortage of trained, accredited RDA coaches
- increase the number of clients able to participate in RDA programs
- improve children's outcomes through early intervention programs
- reduce client waiting lists

### PET stock Foundation

In 2009 RDA was delighted to announce a new initiative.



PETstock Foundation generously agreed to sponsor a dedicated

'Young Coach Development Program'.

This program is aimed at young aspiring RDA Coaches aged 17-25 years who wish to develop a more in-depth knowledge and understanding of RDA and what it means to be an RDA Coach.

Participation on this program will also help fast track young coaches towards the next level of RDA accreditation.

## RDA SUPPORTERS

RDA is truly grateful for the support it receives at all levels of the organisation. RDA would like to illustrate the support that the national office has received to date.

## ORGANISATIONS

### Mountain Cattleman's Association VIC



The Mountain Cattlemen's Association of Victoria (MCAV) selected RDA Australia as a recipient of their 35<sup>th</sup> Annual Mountain Cattlemen's Get-Together in 2009.

MCAV captured a wild Brumby 'Rose River' and gentled her through its natural horsemanship course in time to auction the mare at their annual '09 Get together' and their 'Mountain Bred Horse Sale'.



Photo by Bill Backman

100% of the proceeds of the sale of the wild Brumby were generously donated to RDA.

RDA also benefited from national exposure in the R.M. Williams Outback Magazine Issue 64 Apr/May 2009 courtesy of the Mountain Cattleman's Association VIC.

## COMPANIES

### Woolworths



Woolworths Limited Group national office has nominated RDA as its 'Charity of the Month' for November 2009.

## INDIVIDUALS

### John Wright-Smith

A long time supporter of RDA, John has written and published a book of poetry called 'English is a Funny Language'. In July 2009 proceeds from this book had raised \$511. All monies raised go towards the work of RDA.

## Grey Nomads



In June 2009 RDA Alice Springs was lucky enough to have two special volunteers from RDASA pass through.

Joan Lemmon, a RDA Level Two Coach and Assessor and, her husband Bob - who quickly came to be known as 'Bob the Builder'.



Joan & Bob are 'Grey Nomads'. They are spending time on the road going around volunteering at RDA Centres all over Australia, in any way they can.

You can contact Joan and Bob on [rojoa@bigpond.com](mailto:rojoa@bigpond.com) to check if they are going to be in your area if your Centre needs any help.

## RDA 30<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS



RDA Australia is proud to be celebrating 30 years of delivering opportunities for therapy, achievement and enjoyment to people with disabilities.

Founded as a national organisation in 1979, RDA now has 120 Centres across 8 States & Territories.

Every week, over 3,000 volunteers at RDA Centres across Australia donate their time to assist over 4,000 children & adults receive the benefits of horse related activities.

RDA is heavily reliant on voluntary donations (time and money) to deliver its services. In

this 30<sup>th</sup> year, we need this help more than ever.

Throughout 2009 and 2010, the Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia will be raising awareness on a number of themes, together with a series of events and activities to raise funds for, and awareness of, the work of RDA together with its members, friends, donors and sponsors. For example:

- Dressage
- Volunteers
- Carriage Driving
- Para-equestrian
- Hippotherapy

To find out more about what RDA does or to get involved at your State or local level, please browse our national website [www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au) from here you can access each State Office and drill down to your local RDA Centre.

### **Conclusion**

Despite the challenges faced over the last 12 months, the Board of RDAA is confident that a more cohesive and focused organisation will emerge; this, along with the high quality expertise that we have acquired, give the Association the opportunity to grasp and develop the options that have been presented to us. The Board recognizes the efforts of all our professional staff and volunteers throughout Australia and looks forward to working with them to enrich the lives of our wonderful riders and drivers.

Dr John Harte  
RDA Australia Chairman

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## **RDAA Highlights (2008 – 2009)**

### **2009**

- National Coaching Department Restructuring
- Dedicated coaching website section developed
- RDAA launches bid to host 2015 FRDI International Congress of Therapeutic Riding in Australia
- RDAA begins to celebrate its 30<sup>th</sup> Anniversary mid-2009

### **2008**

- National Office re-structure
- National Coaching Workshop takes place at Marcus Oldham College, Geelong, VIC – 100 people attend Coaching Clinic
- RDAA Riders compete in UK and Norway
- RDAA sends Para Equestrian Team to the 2008 Paralympics in Hong Kong who win two individual medals, two 4<sup>th</sup> places and a Team 6<sup>th</sup>.
- RDAA National Dressage Championships take place in Werribee, VIC
- RDA Australia launches new national website [www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au)

## Thank you to our 2008-2009 Supporters

### Major Sponsors

Australian Sports Commission

### Sponsors

#### *Paralympic Sponsors*

- Australian Paralympic Committee
- Elders
- Princes Laundry Services
- Sunset Rugs

#### *National Dressage Championships Sponsors*

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- Swish Horse
- Country Park Herbs
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- Baffetti
- Quest Sanctuary Lakes
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- Wyndham City Council
- Marcus Oldham College

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Cassandra Gantner Foundation

PETstock Foundation

### Donors

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Victoria Racing Club

Gai Waterhouse

Mountain Cattlemen's Assoc Vic

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Willi Robert Fantom

### Memorial Acknowledgements

Joy Campbell (in Memory of Vin Cummins)

Von O'Brien (in Memory of Vin Cummins)

### In Kind Donations

Sydney Turf Club

East Gippsland Special School

Ben Guzzardi

Peter & Marilyn Roberts

Denis & Kim Cardwell, Laurel Hotel

Lou & Sandy Veltrame, Omeo Caravan Parks

Wayne Stewart, Omeo Police

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Lana and Michael, Blue Duck Pub

Chris Commins, MACV

David & Heather Smith

Eddie & Christy Gates

Greg & Ann Carter, Paw Prints Photography

Mal, Gippsland Grain Store

Wayne Tatnell, Egees Graphic Design

Mandy Erfurth

Bairnsdale RDA

Ms. Jan Cox

Moe RDA

Ian Veitch, P. I. Plus Pty Ltd

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Traralgon Veterinary Centre (Dr John Plozza)

Traralgon Stock Supplies (Walker Family)

Lawrence Malady (Moe)

Robert Lont Racing (Traralgon)

For more information on RDA and how you can help please visit our website at: [www.rda.org.au](http://www.rda.org.au).