

# CHAIRPERSONS REPORT

---

2017 Annual General Meeting of The Arabian Horse Society of Australia Ltd.

As a long-standing member of our society, a Board member and more recently a Chairman I am extremely proud of the progress we have made as a group. In 2011 we experienced dire annual losses of up to \$90,835 at which time all members carried a liability. In absolute contrast our 2016 financials saw a profit of \$96,752, what a remarkable turnaround! In addition, since 2013 we have seen our Championships move from continual deficits to profits with the largest profit ever in 2016 paving the way for a self-sustainable event. Our data base is now strong, assuring security into the future assisting members and affiliates alike. As for the past twelve months, what a turbulent yet rewarding time this has been for your Society. At times the challenges were beyond belief and I wondered if we could ever create cohesion for the vast and diverse tug of the members one against another. On a more personal note, I can tell you it was an extraordinary experience. Situations I expected an easy resolution to became mountains to climb, other challenges I suspected near impossible proved seamless and smooth in transition. I remain a firm believer that from adversity comes diversity and growth. In my report to you this year I will outline some key concerns, remind you of our core values and touch on suggested direction forward whilst paying my respects to our history and origin.

Our membership spans Australia shore to shore and through affiliation with the World Arabian Horse Organisation (WAHO) stretches to global arenas. The 2017 Board of Directors, likewise hails from locations state-wide, which allows catchment and representation for the members across our nation. Let's think back for a minute, to the origin of our society, and it really is just that, a society that belongs in equal part to each of us. In 1937 our Society was instigated by just 8 individuals with the same passion and drive many of our current 3,500 members hold. What a wonderful growth in membership that is! Yet with such an extensive number of members there is naturally differing of opinion, whether simple and strategic or litigious and laborious, more than ever there is division and disquiet amongst our members. Points of contention range from the age-old variance of endurance and show orientated enthusiasts through to complexities and discussions around the virtues of the 'Purebred Arabian' versus the 'Arabian Derivative'. Another modern and increasingly important issue is the appropriateness and use of our code of conduct which I will come back to shortly. No matter what the subject it must remain what it is; highly topical and engaging discussions that your Board must review, consider and evolve to match the ever-changing world that we live in. I am truly proud to have been the 'leading hand' of our Society this year, inspired thoroughly by the absolute dedication of your Board Members. I would encourage you as members to remember that is precisely what your Board and Chairman are; a proactive and devoted group of volunteers who are, like you, members of the society.

While I believe that our sense of direction and structure are stronger than ever, there have recently come forward several points of disquiet from both members and Board members. Some are logistical, others structural but perhaps the most substantial issues raised were in relation to legislative and social media complexities. This brings me to a more serious subject that I would be remiss to omit: "*Conduct Unbecoming*", two major concerns of the year past were based around this concept and in fact hefty investigations were undertaken to ensure that we as members of the society all had a good hard look at ourselves. One such incident involved legal and appropriate stance of a member and the other was directed around the etiquette in use of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or other. Glancing back to the time of our 1937 inception WWII had thrown the world into chaos which of course forced great change and gave rise to the formalisation of many society structures. In this year 2017 we are thrown into a different type of turmoil, that of the World Wide Web. Internet speeds and demands (both upload and download) are faster and more infused through our society than ever before. While initiatives such as NBN have come with applause for some it is at great cost to others and the divide within our shores between Rural/Regional and Urban Australians is exponentially increasing. We face great challenges and have decisions to make regarding appropriateness versus convenience in online meetings and interpersonal group discussions.

Looking forward I believe that the answer to all the issues we currently experience is a cohesive, professional and informed approach with the desire to find positive outcomes. We need transparency and open, emotively intelligent communication styles always. It is imperative that our members understand that the Board is not, and will never be a court of law. We are not in place to resolve legal issues, where and when these arise it is our Society solicitor that will deal with and determine resolution against such complaints. Neither is it the Board's job to deal with quibbles, complaints or personal matters on behalf of an individual or group of members. These complaints are all highly valuable and must be heard but need to be directed via the official process via our administration team and always in writing. There is a clear and well defined role for the Board with specific and easy to follow guidelines. We do not need to reinvent the wheel. The process, structure, ten-year business plan and myriad of other logistical and strategic points are already in place and work very well. The way forward is through an energetic and collaborative approach to the absolute passion, the one point we all have in common:

An absolute appreciation of the magnificent breed of horse 'Arabian'!

Leonie Williamson