



## **Australian Polo Federation Chairmans Report 10 December 2020**

Dear Members

2020 has certainly been a most extraordinary year.

COVID-19 caught us all off guard early in the year as we had to quickly adjust to a new normal and adapt our sport to various State restrictions and recommendations.

We had some exciting polo scheduled for the year which sadly was cancelled due to COVID. Some states were more fortunate than others with the Autumn season all but wiped out in NSW & QLD. This affected the Polo International which was scheduled to be played at Windsor as International travel was brought to a standstill.

The travel restrictions also impacted our Junior Australian team who were excited to take on New Zealand, however their trip was yet another casualty of the virus.

COVID also had an impact on our membership numbers but the drop was not as significant as we first feared. Overall membership is down by 4 %. Membership numbers for the year, including polo schools reached 894. Considering so much polo was cancelled in the first half of the year, we are pleased that our numbers were not further affected.

It wasn't all bad news though. The Australian Open was able to be held at the new fields of Larapinta Equestrian Centre in QLD. From what I hear, this is an impressive new facility and the event attracted a significant crowd who adhered to the COVID safety measures. The Australian Open will be held in QLD in 2021 then in WA the following year.

Polo can also now be played in Noosa on a small field that can play 3 a side. This has been fantastic for introducing polo in QLD with a number of new players being welcomed into the sport.

NSW had a successful Spring Season with polo played at most clubs and some highly competitive games in the NSWPA run J K Mackay and Hector King Cup played in the Hawkesbury. Ellerston also ran a 12 & 8 goal tournament in the Hunter.

The SA, WA and Victorian Seasons are now underway and we wish them all the best for an uninterrupted and successful season.

To my fellow board members, I would like to thank you all for your contributions to the APF over the past 12 months. I thank Brooke Dawson for her 4 years on the Board and her contribution to the



Governance, International and Polo Development Committee's. We wish her well in her future engagement with the sport and look forward to seeing her at tournaments in the new year.

I would also like to make special mention of Amanda Jansen for the 13 years she spent as the Executive Officer of the APF and who resigned in September. Amanda was instrumental in setting up the governance and policies for the Federation and we are grateful for her dedication and many hours spent administering the sport and supporting the Directors. Thank you very much Amanda.

We welcome Shauna Laverty to the role as Executive Officer. Shauna has been NSWPA Secretary for the past 2 years. Having worked with Shauna as NSWPA President, I know her to be extremely capable and professional and look forward to working with her in 2021.

Although 2020 was a disrupted year, we look forward to 2021 being more positive.

The focus for us in 2021 will continue to be increasing the revenue and commercialisation of the Australian Polo Federation. We need to increase the income of the APF to allow us to carry out the important work we need to undertake as a national body. These include running Test and International matches, player development at both a junior and senior level, and horse welfare – which is increasingly in the spotlight in all horse related sports.

I am also keen to pursue the Polo Stud Book. Whilst Australian polo ponies are already recognised at an International level, I believe an Australian Polo Stud Book would help to build and enhance Australia's polo reputation around the world.

Thank you.

**Stephen Philip**

**Chairman, Australian Polo Federation**