

Meeting of the EFA Board and EFA Branch Chairs



Sunday 17 June 2007

At the Grace Hotel, 77 York Street, Sydney, NSW, 2000

1: Welcome

In attendance

Geoff Sinclair	EFA President	Mike Caplehorn	Chair EFA WA
Kerry Brydon	Director	Bruce Chamberlain	Chair EFA Vic
Peter Hickson	Director	Brian Fitton	Chair EFA Qld
Alexi Kentish	Director	Richard Ireland	Vice Chair EFA Tas
Mary Seefried	Director	David Lawrence	Chair EFA NSW
		Tony Richardson	Board Member, EFA SA
Franz Venhaus	CEO		
Siobhan Laphorne	Minute Secretary		

Apologies received from Branch Chairs Ian Coulson (Tas.) and Rob Goldsworthy (SA)

Meeting opened at 9:35

2: Introduction

The President welcomed all participants and thanked them for their time.

Mr. Sinclair started his introduction to the meeting with the EFA Vision 'To have a vibrant Equestrian community with increasing participation in a professionally-run sport where all members have the opportunity to fulfil their aspirations'. He reiterated the focus on all participants' aspirations from elite to beginner riders.

Communication between the Branch Boards and the National Board is very important and has not occurred enough until now. Two meetings of this nature, one in conjunction with the AGM and one mid-year, are part of the EFA Strategic Plan.

The President posed a number of questions about the future of the sport and pointed out that the people responsible for deciding the answers to those questions were in the room today.

The President stressed that the meeting was not about a power struggle between States and the National Organisation, but rather to work together towards being a better and stronger sport.

The State Branches are the peak bodies for the Equestrian sport in their state. The EFA is a top 10 sport for the Australian Sports Commission and receives very high funding compared to many sports. This funding flows down to benefits to the states including support for events, elite riders, elite judges and more.

The President touched upon the governance of the National Sport Committees, as the new by-laws about tenure will apply from next year and there is a need for new perspectives on the committees.

He spoke about the FEI General Assembly, and the inspiration the Federations can draw from the new FEI President Princess Haya and her new vision and strength. He gave the example of her stance against the perceived corruption of the pay card system in Europe.

The President also acknowledged the contribution of the CEO in the turnaround of the National Office since its days in Adelaide.

The CEO then spoke about the very good relationship that has developed with the ASC and their confidence building in the sport, which is shown in the increased funding and the willingness of the ASC to listen to our needs.

The CEO reiterated that the Branches cannot be recognised by their state departments of sport without being affiliated with the national body, which in turn must be recognised by the ASC.

3: Unity of Purpose

3.1 EFA Strategic Plan

The CEO gave some background of the first EFA Strategic Plans in the history of the Federation and the way that these have aligned now to the four-year plans in the ASC model.

The outcomes chosen by the EFA stakeholders from the first EFA National Forum in 2005 were incorporated in the 2005-09 Strategic Plan and this plan is currently being reviewed.

The CEO of the ASC Mark Peters believes that sports should rely less on government funding and should attempt to develop their own income streams. This is a major focus for the FEI as well. Their commercial department currently generates 25% of income, but the aim is to raise this to 50%. The EFA should follow this aim as well, rather than just raising membership fees.

The EFA is ONE organisation and should be pulling in the same direction. The EFA Strategic Plan should be the basis from which the State Plans are developed.

There was some discussion as to how much the EFA National Plan should be adopted by State Branches. It was stressed that the EFA Plan is only a starting point. States may prioritise items as they apply in their state and may add as many other items as they require. In addition, many items in the National plan do not apply at state level in any case.

The Branch Managers meetings have served to coordinate a number of areas better than ever before and share good ideas.

The linkage between state and national plans gives State Departments of Sport and Recreation confidence that states are implementing strategies that are supported by other states and by the national body.

There was general feeling in the group that indeed Branches should work towards the framework. The National Plan is created with existing knowledge of branch operations, then includes further important input from the stakeholders from the EFA Annual Forums (the Interschools program is an example).

- Qld reported they have a plan that reflects the National Plan and progress is reviewed at each meeting.
- Tasmania has a plan and the manager works towards implementing it.
- The NSW Plan is reviewed annually and keeps the Board focused on its goals.
- Victoria's plan was being reviewed at meetings regularly with the previous CEO and Board.
- WA's Plan is based much on the National Plan and has another layer of state matters. The WA Chairman's approach is to choose a limited number of items to prioritise each year, as a state cannot advance on all fronts.
- SA's Plan is used to keep the Branch on track and prevent digressions.

Qld has been sending a Board member to some of the State Sport Committee meetings to keep communication open and ensure the sport committees meet in an effective and structured way.

This was suggested as a good idea for other states to consider and also to apply between the State and National Board.

Both exercises reduce the "us and them" mentality that can develop in meeting rooms.

There was much discussion about the various structures the State Boards take and the benefits each Branch finds with their structures, as well as past structures and why they were changed.

There are benefits of having the sports communicating with the Board. Whether they are actually part of the Board or simply reporting to the Board is a different dynamic, but there are various methods to maintain communication.

3.2 The MOU

The CEO opened this item with mention of the poor state of the EFA Constitution, which is of a structure that would no longer be permitted in Corporations Law or by the ASC. The EFA Lawyers will be drafting a new constitution and more information will be provided to the Branches in time.

The CEO then gave a very brief background on the history of the MOU. The President advised that the Board spent a day reviewing the MOU at their previous meeting and looked forward to hearing the feedback from the Branches on what has been fulfilled and not fulfilled on both sides, and what may need review – whether they be the Board's suggestions or other ideas the Branches may have.

The group then reviewed the Board's suggested changes and amended several to their satisfaction.

Some changes were quite minor and others prompted some discussion:

Item 3.1 – the review of State governance structures “using, for example, ASC governance principles as a guide.

The agreement of this item by all states in the MOU would give states the leverage to make governance changes that may have been difficult to bring about. The shape of any type of Governance Principles needs to be modified to suit the level of operation (from National to Branch to Club levels).

“Review” does not automatically mean that “change” would actually occur, but means that at least an assessment of the effectiveness of the existing structures would occur.

Item 3.2 - Changes to Branch Constitutions. Why should these require endorsement by the National Board? The CEO believes historically the State constitutions were much the same. Should any changes, therefore, not be discussed with the National Board or even the other shareholders of the organisation? The group felt the word “consulted” would be better.

The group accepted the agreed changes and would seek feedback from their State Boards by end of August with a view to endorse the changes at the next AGM. The completed amendments were then e-mailed to all participants immediately for the consideration of their Boards.

4: Particular Items for Discussion

4.1 Affiliation of Associations

The CEO gave some history of the situation with the ACDS outlining the problems and personalities and the infringement of the EFA’s Intellectual Property (IP) rights to the FEI rules amongst other things.

Bruce Chamberlain gave an overview of the structure of the EFA Vic Driving Committee. The CEO expressed his hope that this structure may be able to lead the way for future growth.

The new committee consists of a representative of each carriage driving club in Victoria – both EFA and ACDS. There was concern amongst the ACDS clubs that EFA Vic would “force” various things upon the clubs. However, at the moment things are proceeding in a spirit of cooperation rather than regulation.

The President expressed concern that too much “cooperation” could lead to the giving away of the EFA and FEI IP and rights. Bruce advised that only three meetings have happened to date and nothing has been settled as yet. The intention is that the structure will eventually comply with all EFA and FEI requirements.

There was much discussion about the various situations in each state between the EFA and ACDS. Qld has pushed forward with developing their groups, a venue and events, which are attracting ACDS members. All states are keeping the lines of communication open.

NSW, Qld and SA will watch the Victorian progress with interest as it may be a very good way to bring their own states forward further.

There was general agreement that affiliation with the EFA means that that clubs shall permit EFA members to compete at “open” competitions: i.e. those competitions that are not closed to all but members of the actual club conducting the event.

The HRCV issue was explained by Bruce Chamberlain. EFA Vic has affiliated PCAV for many years, and has now allowed the parent body of HRCV to affiliate. The group inquired what exact benefits are bestowed upon the HRCV through the affiliation agreement.

The issue centres around whether the affiliation of the parent body bestows rights to the HRCV clubs – e.g. has this affiliation affiliated every HRCV club? Mr. Chamberlain advised “no”. There are some insurance issues that are being discussed by the Victorian community with many possible misperceptions being circulated. Are EFA-insured coaches covered to coach at the individual clubs? The answer is only if the individual clubs are also affiliated to the EFA Vic branch.

There are many other similar issues such as IP, officiating programs etc that are potentially being “sold” at a peppercorn rate.

This also applies to Branches where the state Pony Club association is affiliated, not the individual clubs or any other “association” that has sub-clubs.

It appears that the EFA needs to produce a policy in relation to the affiliation of Associations as opposed to clubs.

The insurance of Associations has been somewhat streamlined over the last couple of years. There is a separate package of rates that is applied to these associations. Aon usually quotes a premium to these associations. There is also a separate affiliation fee that groups such as breed associations pay to the National Office.

The affiliation by an EFA Branch of a state organisation of a disaffiliated National body does not sit in harmony with the action of the National Body and does not present a united face to the community. The EFA approach to such a situation also needs to be clarified.

4.2 NT Branch

The NT Branch was admitted as a shareholder in the 80s and has very small membership each year. Communication is very difficult with the official NT Branch.

In 2001 there was agreement among the Branches to remove the shareholding from the NT, but the wording of the resolution was based around minimum numbers and Tasmania removed its support of the proposal as it felt similarly threatened at the time.

At subsequent AGMs the sentiment has continued that the NT Shareholding should not continue.

A recent visit to the NT by the CEO, the former EFA President Russ Withers and the Qld General Manager Rob Ferguson was well received in Alice Springs, a little more difficult in Darwin, but generally the sentiment appears to be positive among NT members, in particular in terms of the improved services that could benefit them.

EFA NT has not supplied an income and expenditure statement for two years and the statements for two previous years show expenditure items for Public Liability insurance that were not received by the National Office.

In the MOU a certain level of Member Services is adopted by the Branches; however, the NT Branch has not got the resources to implement this.

The President praised Qld for their offer to administer NT and advised the group that NT could still have teams and compete at National Championships and any assets they hold are going to be left with the members and clubs to be administered.

The group agreed to move forward to advise the NT members and officials that the shareholders have agreed to review the NT's shareholding at the next AGM.

4.3 Club-Based Membership System

The discussion opened with some comments about the Swedish Federation's very successful 190,000 member system, an outline of which was distributed prior to the meeting.

The CEO then reiterated that the 2005 National Forum stakeholders felt this was an important concept.

It is also a system that works in most sports in Australia and most Federations in Europe.

Currently people join the EFA for a somewhat limited number of reasons: to compete, to be an official, to be the owner of a competing horse, to take advantage of insurance benefits.

Currently we know which horses have performance cards, the "interest" of members, and what category the members are. We know all Official eventing results, and the grading results in Jumping and Dressage.

We don't know in which sport our members actually DO compete, we don't know which members of affiliated clubs are members of the EFA and which EFA members belong to a club or to a number of clubs.

We don't have a close relationship with individual members or much relationship with clubs.

Why should the EFA change?

Positive changes to the administration workload for Branch staff.

Broadens membership base by being more inclusive to people who are not necessarily competing or ready to compete.

There has not been any change or even a review of the system for 50 years.

Why would clubs want to be a part?

Obviously such a system would require the buy-in of clubs.

The Premium Clubs are being offered a club web site and member management systems, which could form the basis for managing such a system.

NSW Chair David Lawrence questioned the workload to clubs in tax obligations, membership administration etc. The online system actually reduces club burdens by automating a large number of administrative functions and allowing members to join clubs online. Other club volunteers in other sports already use the system.

WA Chair Mike Caplehorn expressed concerns about raising costs at entry point – he agreed that further investigation should occur.

It was noted that at present many clubs charge relatively small membership fees and the addition of branch, national, insurance or other levies could inflate the costs at "entry level". However Bruce Chamberlain advised that it costs in excess of \$200 to join an HRC AV club. These aspects would all require careful investigation.

There was concern about the first financial model that was circulated. We need to ensure no Branches are worse off.

The group agreed that it was a preliminary model only, based on total National figure, and did not take into account State Branch particularities. The meeting agreed that the EFA National Office should devote more resources to a detailed model that does not disadvantage any Branch financially or impinge on the rights of any of the State Branches.

The group agreed that the National Office was to send any new documents and models to the state chairs for input before all state Boards receive it.

5: General Business

5.1 Grand Final Concept

NSW related their meeting with Definitive Events chief Daryl Herbert, which crosses into the other discussions Mr. Herbert has had with the EFA President and CEO about a Grand Final.

NSW and the Branches were pleased for the discussions to continue with the CEO.

5.2 Package to attend Olympics in Hong Kong

Mike Caplehorn and David Lawrence spoke about some ideas such as Squad Riders leading cross-country course tours. Club Equus could continue what work they are doing and take the lead in that.

Ticketing is via one ticket agent only. Reservations are being taken now and allocations will be starting in July. There are some issues about the very low estimate of required tickets that were initially allocated for Australians to for Equestrian tickets.

The Sydney 2000 package provided through the NSW Branch was access to a tent for people who already had tickets. The Hong Kong package may have to work similarly as there is little control over the ability to get tickets.

Mr Caplehorn will to talk to Qantas and Club Equus. Franz to send CoSport details to Mike and the rest of the Branch Chairs.

5.3 NSW Squad Agreements

NSW advises that they have received some feedback from some riders about the agreements.

The President explained that there are some obligations that go along with receiving funding and services on a Squad. All riders but one have now signed and the EFA has been accommodating to all requests and always been open to discussion.

6: Close of Meeting

The President closed the meeting and thanked everybody for their participation and frankness. The EFA can continue to work towards common goals and a stronger sport with continued communications such as this.

The meeting closed at 3:30 pm.