

FEI Regional Dressage Forum Day 1 – from Petra Keranen, President, DNSW

There could not be a better venue to host such a star-studded FEI Regional Dressage Forum than Willinga Park. Whether guests have been here on a regular basis or are here for the first time everyone is just enchanted with the spectacular venue. **Terry Snow**, who receives so much praise for his incredible vision designing this space in such details with such a high standard of finishes, started the forum by welcoming everyone. Mr Snow spoke passionately about his desire to elevate all equestrian sports, and his view that there is a great future in this country for such sports but much to rethink first.

Ricky MacMillan was second to speak. Ricky said that for her Equestrian Australia is there for all its members but there is a feeling of disconnect between members and administrators which needs to be addressed. She pointed out that the States are responsible to the members. Equestrian Australia is constitutionally removed, which most participants are not aware of. She then proceeded to ask the forum participants what does EA do well and what can it do better. Ricky finished by saying that EA needs to listen and to engage.

Annette Gribbons described the timeline of Dressage in the USA and pointed out that due to its size the geographical challenges in the US are similar to those in Australia. Over time, the USA developed a structure for coaches and slowly changed the system from buying trained horses overseas to training their own horses in the US, basically riders and horses are now homegrown.

Amanda Bond spoke about British Dressage, Hong Kong and FEI para equestrian.

Great Britain developed a strategic plan focused purely on dressage and kept it simple. They followed this plan which detailed values, vision and how to achieve it. The results speak for themselves, not only regarding results but also growing the sport from 14,000 to 47,000 members in a relatively short period of time.

Once Amanda headed to Hong Kong – Hong Kong Jockey Club, there was the big challenge of space. There is not much inhabitable land left in Hong Kong and together with a large population- the fourth most densely populated region- basically not much room for horses. Again, a strategic plan was developed: Identify - Develop - Deliver. As in the UK there was no compromise. The plan was about performance drive support programs based on results. Great results have since been achieved in Hong Kong.

With respect to FEI Para Equestrian Development, there is a 244% increase in events and a larger geographical spread in events as well.

Michael Milton – wow what an incredible human being – he calls himself the world expert in one leggedness. We watched a video of his speed skiing achievements and in a range of other sports. He really drove home that his fight with cancer and the loss of a leg have made him find the positives. He said that there are many day to day situations where he cannot copy others – that is how humans often learn – and this pushes him to work on unique solutions to problems. He excels at thinking differently. He really drove home that disability enables people to look at problems differently and find different solutions. To be successful in anything one has to believe. It was a very powerful and inspirational talk.