

Equestrian Park Management Group (EPMG)

Convenors Report to ACTEA AGM – 9 June 2016

This report provides an overview of the activities of the Equestrian Park Management Group (EPMG) for the 2015/16 financial year. Further details of any of the matters outlined below can be found in the relevant EPMG meeting Minutes.

Overview

The last 12 months has been by previous year's standards reasonably comfortable for EPMG to manage, but none-the-less consistently busy with unexpected matters arising that required our attention.

In terms of managing the Park, EPMG has since the last ACTEA AGM, enjoyed a short period of consolidation following a number of busy years that were heavily focused on completing several large scale developments and many small projects. I think it's fair to say that the committee has enjoyed being able to focus more on the management of the Park this year, as opposed to more development – which I see as two distinctly different activities.

Once again the Park was expertly run by a small group of dedicated volunteers who took care of the committee business and the on-the-ground work required to keep the Park running.

All EPMG members, and other regular volunteers, should be commended for their seemingly endless dedication and cooperation. The proof of the efforts is in the way the Park is looking and performing – the best it's ever been in my view.

Going forward we will continue to bed-down new Park management practices and the committee will start exploring possible new works as outlined in our plots strategic plan.

As Convenor, I am very pleased with the efforts of the committee over the last year and I expect the stability and support of the members to continue for the year to come.

Park Usage

This year has seen a continued strong demand for the Park facilities with over 3050 horse levies being received – this is just shy of last year's total of 3,177.

The demographics of the park user's remains consistent with previous years – that is daily use by local riders, pony club rally days, professional and amateur coaching clinics, and many show jumping, horse trials and dressage events and training days.

The Park booking system appears to be working well and the booking officer (Kate McKenzie) has agreed to continue on for another year.

From all accounts the Park has once again proven to be a popular venue for large scale equestrian events and many people enjoyed the added bonus of now being able to use the renovated plots as a base for the event organisers, volunteers and judges.

Park Management

As foreseen in last year's report, EPMG has overseen a change of Park Manager and we farewelled Peter Core and welcomed Kate McKenzie in November 2015. With her intimate knowledge of the Park, Kate has settled into the role exceptionally well and she is being well supported by the committee and other volunteers.

Unfortunately our volunteer base with expertise of the Park and in particular our machinery will be substantially eroded as a result of the move away from Curtin by Forest Park. The effect of no longer being able to rely on both the help and oversight of Peter, Dave, Grant and others from Forest Park is yet to be seen. EPMG will make adjustments as necessary to deal with this change, and where required we have the ability to engage paid contractors to undertake tasks that can no longer be undertaken by volunteers

Park Projects

Several projects have been either ongoing or completed during the reporting period.

We now have:

- a new machinery shed in the cotter plots which is housing valuable park machinery and club assets;
- black steel fencing around the large sand pads which will allow us to lock off Pad 1 or 2 when we choose to so as to prevent overuse problems.
- renovated plots cottage which is now fully furnished and operational for clubs to use for meetings or events.

In other matters....

- members of EPMG worked with ACTEA to develop a submission to the Heritage Council on the statement of significance and listing of the woolshed and cross country course;
- we contributed to the ACT Biosecurity Strategy; and
- worked with the appropriate government officers to explore possible changes in water allocation.

Park Machinery

The park machinery has performed well overall but some unexpected repairs were required (outlined in detail under Finances). EPMG was successful in obtaining a S&R grant to assist with the purchase of a new small tractor, known as a Mule, that will be suitable for pulling arena draggers around the sand pads and dressage arenas. We are in the process of deciding exactly what machine to buy. This will now alleviate the problems that were occurring by volunteers having to use their own personal vehicles to pull arena draggers. Other small purchases such as whipper snippers and small tools were also approved.

Park Finances

EPMG will be in a strong financial position at end of the 2015/16 financial year. Total income to date was \$35,257 and total expenses were \$24,018. This left an operating surplus of \$11,238. This surplus along with funds retained from the sand pad construction and the S&R grant, enabled us to construct a new shed in the cotter plots which was much needed to store valuable park and club equipment. The total cost to EPMG for the shed was \$22,250

There was some un-budgeted spending required on machinery repairs of \$5,237 but a large proportion of that (\$4,037) was to replace a very worn out motor in the zero turn mower.

Under the new proposed draft ACTEA Licence, additional funding will be allocated to EPMG to assist with the cost of running the Park, which we established last year is no longer possible to do with just volunteers. Details of the new funding regime, including arrangements for the mowing of the Park by the government contractors, will be outlined in the ACTEA Presidents Report to this AGM.

Stakeholder relationships

EPMG and ACTEA continue to meet regularly throughout the year with ACT Government officials on a range of issues. ACTEA and EPMG continues to enjoy a very collegiate relationship with S&R which is productive and mutually beneficial. S&R have commended ACTEA and EPMG for the manner in which we conduct our business and more importantly our stewardship of this very valuable public asset.

EPMG Membership

Membership of the EPMG has once again remained stable over the last 12 months with some changes of representation from ACTDA and ACTSJC.

I encourage User Clubs once again think about member succession planning and to think of ways to involve members from within their clubs to take an interest in the management and development of the Park.

Going forward

Looking ahead there will be a number of challenges and opportunities for EPMG. One such challenge will be the \$28.9 duplication of the Cotter Road between the Tuggeranong Parkway and Yarralumla Creek. This is expected to commence in 2017 and will cause a raft of issues for EPMG including access off the Cotter Road into the park and potentially serious interruptions to our ability to use the areas closest to the Cotter Road. These interruptions could go on for an extended period and may well affect our income if event organisers are forced to go elsewhere.

There will however be opportunities for EPMG to explore new ways to further develop the Park with the injection of additional funding. In particular, I hope the committee will look at what we can do to leverage funding and to continue improving the infrastructure.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I am again very happy with how this year has unfolded and especially grateful for the support from Kate McKenzie who has so boldly jumped in and taken over the Park Manager's role without hesitation; Christine Lawrence for her continuous guidance and sage wisdom on all matters that come across our agenda; Margaret Heaney for her excellent Minutes and Debbie Morrissey for her fabulous job in keeping us financially honest.

The year has not been without its challenges, but overall I think EPMG has again put in a massive effort and the fruits of our labour can be seen in how wonderful the Park is looking and performing. I would like to thank all the members on EPMG for both their individual and collective efforts.

I look forward to participating in the continuing work of the committee with the support and recommendation of my fellow committee members I seek ACTEA's endorsement for the proposed 2016/17 budget (which I table forthwith) and to continue as EPMG Convenor for another 12 month term.

Annabel Dobson

6 June 2016