



**Report to be submitted at the
17 March 2018 AGM**

For the year 2017

NATIONAL PRESIDENTS REPORT

Prepared by Pierre Hefer

NATIONAL PRESIDENTS REPORT FOR THE 2017 YEAR

Let me start with a huge big thank-you to all the Provincial Presidents as well as all the Portfolio holders and our Exco and Secretary as well as the South African Equestrian Federation. You have all been wonderful, enthusiastic, passionate and energetic and not only supported me in all the aspects of my work but also helped me through difficult and tricky decisions with great vigour and determination. Thank you one and all, without you I would have failed miserably this year and I am the first to admit it.

Then, a huge thank you to the athletes, coaches, judges, support personnel including parents, husbands and wives, clubs and show holding bodies and other sports administrators and organisers. You guys are truly inspiring, all seem to have an unfailing ambition to be the best that you can be and all with so much love for your horses and the true spirit of competition. Dressage is not an easy sport by any stretch of the imagination, but you would never say so by watching the big smiles and happy faces, day in and day out all around the country. I take my hat off to each and every one of you and wish you much success and happy riding.

Now the serious stuff...

This was my first year as President of Dressage SA and I must confess that it has been a huge eye-opener for me from pretty much the end of the 31 March 2017 AGM that ended at 6pm on that highly charged day. The workload and level of granular decision making placed on the president's office, project involvement and continuous pressure from single minded pressure groups, structures and individuals makes for a complex and extremely high-pressure position. Quite early on in my tenure, I realised that the position was one that had great demands and required daily if not hourly attention to issues to avoid in some cases, far reaching consequences. Of course, add to this that my skill set on almost all Dressage specific challenges was extremely limited. I am enormously thankful to a number of trusted advisors that I continuously called and emailed at all hours of the day and on almost every weekend to help fill in the spaces, expand my knowledge base, separate the noise from the real issues and guide me to the core of the decisions that I needed to make and give me honest advise on the consequences and outcomes of the various options. You all know who you are, and I thank you most sincerely for saving me from countless disasters. There is a further knock-on effect that should not be underestimated and that is the workload, level of responsibility and constant pressure placed on the EXCO, Provincial Presidents and all other office bearers. We need to take stock of this and make improvements to our systems and culture if we want to become more successful at our sport because if we do not, we are bound to loose very good people.

Clearly the office of President turns out to be a full time and hands-on position and not a non-executive position. This places the organisation at a considerable risk as the appointment of an executive CEO to support a president as an Executive position is probably not easily affordable based on the present revenue model and also exposes the organisation to finding a candidate with a very specific managerial and sport specific skill set. Based on the present model, funding such a position would drain almost all the funds marked for all our provincial initiatives.

Recognising the issues described above it was imperative for the Dressage SA EXCO to evolve quickly to ensure much improved and streamlined processes as well as financial and policy framework to relieve the pressure on the higher offices whilst ensuring the overall control of the organisation and this was our mission during the year. Achieving the objective required a very focused approach from the EXCO in both establishing the correct systems and changing mindsets and culture of the organisation. I believe that much of this has been achieved and that the succession risk of this office is not only mitigated but the organisations capability to deliver on the constitutional mandate is largely enhanced.

These are the specific steps that we have taken in clearing the way to an optimised organisational performance:

- Redrafting and implementing a new functional constitution that enhances the organisation.
- Appointing new auditors who could deliver more specifically on our organisations requirements but simultaneously that were affordable.
- Repairing and strengthening organisational relationships with SAEF.
- Investigating, auditing and ensuring that all legacy funding, including Lotto, Gold Circle, Adrian van Wyk Fund, EDS Fund, Riders Fund and Judges Training Funds are all correctly separated, reconciled and cleaned out as to ensure that no organisational risk associated with incorrect reporting and misallocation.
- Ensuring that all accounting and management reporting systems, correctly and easily give management access to all the financial reports required to direct and control the resources and activities of the organisation.
- Repairing and strengthening the organisational relationship with SANESA.
- Establishing a set of General Regulations to control procedures and practices of very many aspects of the sport which somehow were discarded by our parent body that traditionally had ownership of this function.
- Established protocols for the adoption of Rule changes and optimising implementation of our as well as FEI rule test and accepted practice protocols.

To name but a few.

Our EXCO took great pleasure in making a meaningful contribution in the following activities during this year:

- Formalising the protocols and giving the well-deserved recognition to our disciplines honorary life members: Ernst Holtz, Bev Franklin, Petronella Clarke, Eva Sydow and Philippa Johnson-Dwyer
- Assisting in the successful execution of all activities related to the national championships with included SA Champs, SA Youth Champs, the DSA challenge and two 2* CDI championships.
- Making a contribution in growing the capacity both in numbers and in skills of judges, international riders, officials, show holding bodies and all other platforms required to grow the sport.
- Renewing the financial model of Dressage SA in order to be able to deliver at provincial and club level by a new fee structure as well as a well planned and consultative budgeting process.
- Running several polls and surveys to judge not only our performance and decision making at national level but also a huge survey to judge our “customer satisfaction levels” with the general membership and the clubs.

But most of all, assisting the provincial bodies in gaining a greater understanding and involvement with developing a unified culture for Dressage in South Africa.

I thank you, one and all,

It has truly been a privilege serving on the council during the past year.

Pierre Hefer

President Dressage SA