



Riding for the Disabled Association NSW



"Bits 'n' Pieces"

Autumn/Winter 2011



"Sunny", Dinah Baron, (Ryde member and Metropolitan Regional Representative) and Kevin at the new Ryde Centre

Congratulations

Margaret Norman and Ian Ramsay

Margaret Norman has today been honoured with the

MEDAL (OAM) OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA IN THE GENERAL DIVISION

Mrs Margaret NORMAN, Old Bar NSW 2430

For service to people with a disability through Riding for the Disabled.

Secretary/Treasurer, Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia, 1982-1984.

President, Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW), 2002-2007;

Vice-President, 2000; Board Meeting Convenor, 2007-2000;

Marketing/Promotions Officer, 2010; Board Director, 1997;

Honorary Executive Officer, 2002-2007;

Honorary Secretary, 1973-1981, 1985-1988 and 1996-1997;

Life Member, since 1986;

Member, since 1973.

Regional Representative, Mid-North Coast Region, 1998.

Regional Representative, Northern Tablelands Region, 1997.

Foundation Member, Taree Centre, Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW), since 1998.

Foundation Member, 'Tall Timbers' Centre, Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW), 1980;

Honorary Secretary, 1980-1984.

Competitor (Swimming), World Masters Games, Sydney, 2009; and at the National Masters Games, Tasmania, 2010.

Awards/recognition include:

Distinguished Long Service Award, Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW), 2006.

Ian Ramsay has today been honoured with the

MEDAL (OAM) OF THE ORDER OF AUSTRALIA IN THE GENERAL DIVISION

Mr Ian Leslie RAMSAY, Bathurst NSW 2795 For service to community health, particularly for people with an acquired brain injury, and to a range of service organisations.

Member, Brain Injury Community Awareness Program, since 2003.

Chairman, Central West Brain Injury Action Group, since 2007;

Member, since 2004.

Committee Member, Bathurst Branch, Riding for the Disabled Association, since 2004.

Member, Management Committee of Banyurra, since 2003.

Community Representative, Bathurst Evans Health Council, 2002-2005.

Held a range of executive positions at local and regional levels within the

Sydney Branch, Apex New South Wales, 1973-1986; Life Member, since 1985.

President, Rotary Club of Bathurst Macquarie, 2002-2003; served in Executive positions, 2000-2003.

President, Rotary Club of Bathurst Daybreak, 1997-1998; served in Executive positions, 1995-2000.

Member, Western District Exhibit Committee, since 1996.

Secretary/Treasurer, Western Group of Show Societies, 1997-2001.

Executive Secretary, Bathurst Show Society, 1987-1998;

Honourable Treasurer, 1978-1987.

Community Representative, Council of Central West Community College, 1996-2001;

Treasurer, Management Committee, 1990-1996.

President, Peel Volunteer Bush Fire Brigade, 1995-2003; Member, 1993-1995.

Policing volunteer, Sydney 2000 Olympic Games and Paralympics.

Junior Legatees Mentor and Intermediate Member, Sydney Legacy, 1958-1964.

*When a man has pity on all living creatures
then only is he noble....* *Buddha*

Vale David Torr



David Torr (Dave) was a valued member of the Ryde Centre of Riding for the Disabled at Putney from the early 1980's.

He was always available to mend anything that was broken or re - hang anything that had fallen. As he was a carpenter by trade this was never an effort for him and there were often jobs needing his attention which he happily gave.

When we needed to be located to another site in the grounds of the Royal Ryde Rehabilitation Centre in the mid 1900's it was Dave who took on the challenge and worked with the Hospital Board and Government Departments to make this a success.

Dave was good at convincing co - volunteers that they could do more than they thought, especially 80 years olds climbing ladders onto the roof and thinking they were OK.

He had a great memory for birthdays and attended many morning teas with the maintenance group on Monday mornings.

NEWS FROM THE CENTRES

The construction of the RDA(NSW) Ryde Centre at Marsfield Park is in the final stages with the Centre volunteers working very hard to prepare for the arrival of our horses at the end of March. Our volunteers, coaches, trainee coaches and horses will all then work together to be ready for the start of classes from the second term of the school year.

On Sunday, 6 March, the Centre hosted a wonderfully successful Volunteer Information Day which included tours, presentations on what is involved in being an 'RDA volunteer' and a sausage sizzle. Four of our potential new horses who will be trialed over the next month were also in attendance and received much attention from new and returning volunteers. It was so exciting to hear the sound of whinnying after listening to the noise of construction for so long. We also have quite a few other horses waiting to come in and be worked and trialed as well.

It was so heartening to have over 80 new and returning volunteers attend and very rewarding to witness such enthusiasm amongst our new developing RDA community.

Our arena is very close to completion with the lining and surface almost finished. Our security fencing around

Ryde



the stable area is complete and horse sheds are very close to being able to house horses. We also have a great free run area for the horses out the back.

The feed shed has a large supply of hay and feed bins are being built and our tack room finally has tack in it. Driveways are going to be completed very soon, our feeding rosters are coming together and we are so lucky to have nine new coaches in training. We are hopeful that very soon we will have coaches working the weekdays to full capacity.

It has been a long journey for Ryde Centre and sometimes it hasn't been easy but our dedicated team has got us to where we are today and it is going to be fantastic!

In the months to come, we look forward to having a Grand Opening Ceremony of this fabulous Centre. We all can't wait till more people from the wider RDA community can come and share our excitement of finally being back in operation and doing what we all do best- providing our riders with wonderful opportunities of therapy with horses.



Harold meets "Digger"



Jess meets "Sunshine"



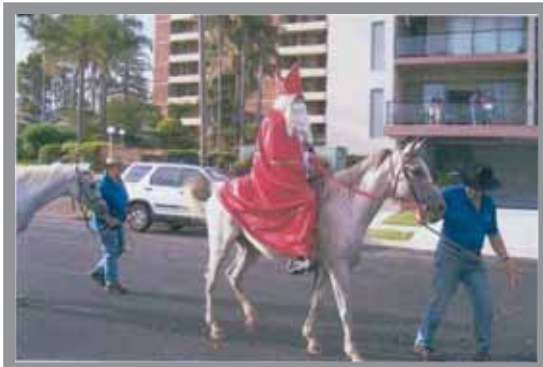
Horse Yards

Wauchope/Port Macquarie

Inner Wheel Club of Port Macquarie West has sponsored "Topper" our Clydesdale/Pony Cross for the third year. On 24th May the ladies came along to watch "Topper" and our other horses and riders in action and to present us with a most appreciated cheque. The beautiful rug donated by one of the ladies last year helped us to raise over \$1000 for our Christmas raffle. We are very grateful for the much needed assistance these hardworking members of Inner Wheel Club give our members. Many thanks also to Margaret Norman for coming along to visit our Centre. It was a most enjoyable morning.

Photos show rider Alex Gillies on "Topper" with volunteer Warren Baird. New RDA pony "Bonnie" with RDA Wauchope/Port Macquarie President Kevin Waldron receiving the cheque with Margaret Norman and Inner Wheel Club of Port Macquarie West President Christine Carter.

The Dutch Australian Festival Team in Port Macquarie approached us to provide a "white horse" to be used in their Sinterklaas Feest to be held on 5 December 2010. Coach Robyn Coombes decided RDA horse in training "Valdi" would be suitable to carry the Dutch Santa in the procession and he proved to be up to the task and handled the noise and applause very well. Here is "Valdi" being led by our President Kevin Waldron with Robyn Coombes leading "Fairy", Valdi's dam, to keep him company. The organisers gave us a donation and certificate and it was a good way to raise public awareness of RDA in our area. "Valdi" is now a valuable member of our RDA horse team.



Orange

The 2010 AGM and Workshop N.S.W. was held at Orange centre N.S.W. in May 2010.

The weather was beautiful and clear with just a touch of early morning high country chill. It was ideal for the welcoming hot tea, coffee and light refreshments prepared by our centre's wonderful volunteers. We welcomed all our visitors from 27 NSW centres to the first day of the workshop.

The previous Thursday and Friday our Board and Councilors met at the Orange Ex-Services rooms at Anson Street, Orange. Templers Mill Motel accommodated our friends from the wide area of N.S.W. RDA centres. This was ideal as the Motel is part of the Orange Ex-Services Club and only a short stroll from the dining room and bar. The gathering of RDA NSW personnel for dinner on Friday night was well attended by locals and visitors - this set the theme for the weekend.

The registrations were taken by a wonderful group and our own secretary Mrs Barbara Edge. The in-door arena was allotted to the workshop speakers and demonstrations. The under-cover horse handling area under the same roof was reserved for Eric and his admin sessions and the speakers. This was well attended and very informative. Feed-back very positive and speakers were very happy to answer questions. Time Keeper was Patrick Frecklington, Orange Centre. The groups were separated by our in-door mounting area, harness room, under cover marshaling area, toilet and showers. People could intermingle but the facilities acted as a buffer so both P.As could operate, thanks to our friend Ray Campbell and his lovely assistant. Viv Thurtell was time keeper for the Admin. section.

The demonstrations of riding were conducted by Maureen Turner with her group riding "Crystal Springs" horses. This demonstration high-lighted the training by dedicated volunteers and the wonderful determination by the clients and the great ability of the horse to "read" their riders and decipher the aids.

The Speakers included Kim Rolles, BVSc our vet, on common ailments, treatments and trust between all parties. The mouth watering meals were prepared and served by "Crystal Springs" volunteers and supporters in and around the Tracey Golding Memorial Hall. The RDA draws all walks of life, people, young, "matured" male and female as volunteers can only be held in the highest regard.

Saturday evening after a glorious day, a first day workshop and admin. with friendship, knowledge and understanding, shared and enjoyed.

We met again at the Ex-Services Coral Sea Room. This was a marvelous venue for our RDANSW AGM with dinner following. Mr. Ken McCarron, a retired old time Stock and Station agent - a very well respected gentleman throughout Australia as his business took him throughout the land - spoke so highly of the RDA movement throughout the country, the benefits to the people with a disability, also to the great achievements of volunteers, their love and loyalty.

It would take more space than would fill a book to write of all the wonderful speakers, attendees, volunteers, clients, horses and all that goes to make such a successful AGM and workshop. I thank each and everyone for their input, loyalty and consideration, not only for people with a disability but for one another and yourselves, "To thine own self be true"

God bless all you wonderful people. *Reg Golding OAM*
RDA "Crystal Springs"

Good to hear from you
once again Reg
Lyn

STATE COACHING WORKSHOP REPORT

28th and 29th May 2011

Hosted by RDA Wagga Wagga Centre



The Wagga Wagga centre is outstanding in every way. It is spotlessly clean and tidy, and the horses are well cared for and highly valued. Many thanks to Bev Amery and the Wagga Wagga volunteers for your warm hospitality, providing us with beautiful food and a wonderful programme of presenters.

The workshop kicked off with Tony Nechvatel, who is a dedicated father of twin autistic boys. One boy has responded well to riding and the other prefers horizontal movement and drums. Tony explained the use of visual aids in communicating with his sons, who are non-verbal. This was a great insight from a parent's perspective.

Second speaker - Sandra Kerr - Coaching riders with challenging behaviour

Sandra explained the importance of positive attitude, and separating behaviour from disability. Setting firm boundaries and teaching a set of basic rules,

Blue rule: RESPECT

Yellow rule: FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS

Red rule: BE READY FOR LEARNING

Green rule: TRY YOUR HARDEST

The above rules need to be taught first and then displayed.

Sandra believes in consequence for misbehaving such as time off horse.

POINTERS ON MANAGING BEHAVIOUR

1. Know something about each child and try to develop a positive relationship with them
2. Be aware of any specific disability the child may have and understand how this impacts on their ability to participate and learn
3. Have well organised lessons
4. Prevent boredom by having lots of short, interesting tasks
5. Activities - age appropriate - achievable for rider's developmentally
6. Praise the behaviours that you want to see.... positive reinforcement
7. Give clear instructions - one step at a time
8. Stick to established routines

MANAGING MISBEHAVIOUR

Focus on behaviour - not child

Give choice of two actions

Listen to what child has to say about the situation

Keep your cool

-Calm approach

-Quietly take child aside

-Don't get into power struggle

-Calmly repeat instructions if necessary

-Never label, be sarcastic or bully

-Do not insist a child with Aspergers or Autism look you in the eye

-Give students time to process information

-Avoid melt downs

-Prepare student for change

-Time out

- "Shut down" allow space

HANDS FREE LEADING - Demonstration by Fiona Little & Margot Bulger

I feel this is a wonderful activity to know and is helpful in so many ways.

Riders are able to bond with a horse and it makes a very interesting change from the usual classes.

- Leaders hold a horse each - not saddled or bridled
- Riders select a horse
- Horse is lead around by leader - rider walks beside
- Lead is handed over to the rider
- Allow rider to massage horse (Leader and Coach keep a close eye on proceedings)
- Rider moves around horse - closely
- Horses enjoy contact and massage - rub down legs
- Rider holds lead or places lead over the horse's neck
- Rider leads horse loosely
- Rider stops - horse stops with rider (if this doesn't work reconnect)
- Talk to horse
- Ask rider to walk at different speeds
- Rider stands in front of horse holding end of lead
- Rider asks horse to back up - flick end of lead if necessary
- Connect with horse once again
- Place lead over neck and walk beside horse
- Set up obstacles such as poles - small jump - cones
- Rider leads horse hands free
- Try for troop line
- Rider puts horse away

HORSE SELECTION - focusing on rider, volunteer and horse By Jan Sharp, Karen O'Neill & Wendy Murray

This was an interactive activity which proved to be quite interesting. The group that I was a part of, was divided in our choice of horse for a double amputee rider - this proves to me the integrity of such an exercise.

HORSE HANDLING - Peter Cowell

Peter demonstrated his technique for gradually desensitizing a horse - gaining trust whilst lunging the horse. This is only to be practiced by a trained and competent practitioner.

CARRIAGE DRIVING - Fiona Little

Certainly an activity we all should consider for our individual Centres, if we are not already doing so. Driving can be a preferred option for some folk with a disability. Fiona explained the protocol step by step, which is quite achievable for Centres that don't have carriage driving already in place.

MOUNTED GAMES - Heather Baker and riders

A very important part of RDA classes. I am always interested in any new ideas, that can be implemented, to make classes more interesting for riders, volunteers and horses.

SATURDAY EVENING'S DINNER - We enjoyed a beautifully cooked dinner and between courses, took part in a crazy hat parade. We were all supplied with a piece of butcher's paper, pipe cleaner, and baling twine (very appropriate) to make a hat. We all

had a great laugh, and some of the hats were spectacular. Imaginations were running wild!

HORSE DENTIST - Joe Price

Joe described himself as a recovering stutterer and proceeded to deliver a very informative and entertaining tutorial. The room resembled a natural history museum with all his horse skulls. He was able to explain how to determine the age of horses by examining their teeth. He was certainly one of the characters of the weekend.

EQUINE NUTRITION - Sarah Gough

We can rest easy in our beds, knowing such clever young people are the future of the horse industry and RDA. Sara a third year vet. student, delivered a very interesting talk.

EQUINE FIRST AID - Georgia Ladmore

Georgia is also a third year vet. student, articulate and confident with her tutorial. Lots of helpful hints on dressing wounds and how to check heart, respiration rates and temperature etc.

EQUINE MASSAGE - Michelle Eastwood

Michelle is yet another third year vet. student. Michelle explained how you don't need massage skills to be able to experience this wonderful bonding with a horse, providing such relief and pleasure to our equine friends. This can only be a win, win undertaking. All horses can benefit from massage, especially our faithful RDA mounts. Therapeutic massage is an undertaking for the professional only.

Lyn Doherty, Coach " Joe Sullivan Centre " RDA Bathurst Centre



hands - free leading demonstration

TAMWORTH

Tamworth Centre is now in full swing into Term 2 of the school year. Terms 2 and 3 are our busiest time of the year with our full range of clients attending our riding days. Terms 1 and 4 are usually too hot for some of our clients to come riding. We are very grateful for the valuable help from two of our local high schools Year 9 students. McCarthy Catholic High and Oxley High schools allow their students to come and assist mainly as walkers.

Two of our Coaches are planning to attend the State Coaching Workshop at Wagga Wagga on 28th and 29th May. The ladies look forward to attending the workshop and associating with volunteers from other Centres.

One of our volunteers, Mr Duncan Martin was approved to be made a life member of our Centre and on April 7th Duncan was presented with his badge on one of our riding mornings. Duncan was very surprised and very grateful. He recently resigned as Secretary after many years and still helps as assistant secretary. Duncan also helps the Centre in many ways attending to the horses and grounds twice each day.

Our Centre is lucky to have him as a volunteer.

Lifelong honour for Duncan

A COMMITMENT to giving people with disabilities the chance to ride a horse has meant life membership of Riding for the Disabled for Tamworth's Duncan Martin.

"This was totally unnecessary," the publicity-shy Mr Martin said.

The assistant secretary of Tamworth RDA has been with the volunteer organisation for about 15 years, with 13 of those spent as secretary.

"I like to be able to help somebody and people less fortunate than I am," he said.

"I enjoy working around the horses."

Mr Martin said he had had a bit to do with horses when he was younger and now enjoyed the effect they had on the people with disabilities who came to ride.

"A lot of them can't communicate well, but the expressions on their faces and the way they relax on the horses, you can see they enjoy doing what they're doing," he said.

"Some have even been taught to ride on their own, and it's good to see their progress."

There are only two life members in Tamworth RDA. The other is Marie Lucas, who was given the honour in 1991.

Riding for the Disabled is a voluntary organisation that runs horse riding sessions for people with disabilities on Thursday at their grounds at the end Peel St end of Marius St in Tamworth.



LIFE OF SERVICE: From left, RDA president John McBride, fellow life member Marie Lucas and new life member Duncan Martin. Photos: Barry Smith 070411BSB04



COMMITMENT RECOGNISED: Tamworth RDA president John McBride presents Duncan Martin with his life membership. 070411BSB02

BALLINA

Horse sense gives riders newfound independence

The last years of Brendan McKee's life were some of his happiest according to his mother Joan, which she credits largely to his time with Riding for the Disabled (RDA) at Teven.

Brendan, who was born with cerebral palsy and a rare genetic disorder, was so changed by his time with RDA that when he passed away in 2007 his ashes were scattered under the big fig tree where he loved to ride with his favourite horse Bert.

"Brendan attended RDA for eight years and the routine of it was great for him; he knew every Thursday morning his red shirt would be put out because it was RDA day," Joan said. "He loved the staff, he loved the horses... just being able to see him do things, like join in a flag race or play polo was just incredible. When he was first born doctors said he would be a complete vegetable and would possibly not live to one. He lived until he was 29 and he proved them all wrong. And the toppest, most incredible years of his life were with RDA; his quality of life was improved 150%."

The year before he died, Brendan was named the RDA NSW Rider of the Year and a special Brendan McKee Memorial Award is now presented each year to the rider who has achieved the most.

"He was always a beautiful young man but from the moment he joined RDA he started coming out of himself. He couldn't talk, but the expression on his face when he rode said it all. "He was never so happy and so free, and never more so than on that last day he rode. RDA was his life."



Brendan McKee on his beloved horse Bert.



Kerry Johnston with Roy the horse and some of her volunteers (l-r) Vonnie Pfeiffer, Barry Petersen, Karen Wong, Jack Izzard, Gabriela Mueller, Rose Wadsworth and Kylie Izzard.

Volunteer coach Vonnie Pfeiffer remembers well the last day Brendan came to ride in August 2007 – the day before he died.

"We explained we were putting him on a different horse, a beautiful white horse called Sam. He was on before we finished the sentence and ready for the paddock, ready to ride to the big fig tree which he loved," Vonnie recalled. "Each week we

write a comment for the rider. That day the comment beside Brendan's name was 'smiled the whole lesson'. The volunteers at RDA were touched by the life of a very special young man and we are all grateful for that privilege. We trust we did make a difference in his life because he most certainly made a difference in ours."

Ballina and District RDA founder Kerry

Johnston has been helping people with disabilities ride since RDA evolved in the late 70s. She has always had an understanding and love of horses, growing up helping her parents who ran the Kings Lynn Riding Academy at Sans Souci and later at Mittagong.

"I suppose as a young person I saw first-hand the effect horses can have on people, and Dad would often talk about

people's comience," she said. "Horses have a slower heartbeat than humans so when people are with a horse they feel more relaxed; calmer. Horses are also very powerful and it takes courage for people just to get on one, and then there's the trust you must put in them to look after you."

When Kerry moved to Teven in the early 70s she was a speech therapist working with people with disabilities, and in 1975 a group of students from Biala Special School came riding on her property.

She said the Ballina and District RDA formed in 1979 and started at a riding ranch at Skennars Head before moving to the present venue in 1981 – the 30-acre horse farm which she manages with her husband David.

Ballina and District RDA caters for people with disabilities from children two-and-half to their oldest rider, who was 84, and there are around 50 to 60 registered riders.

Riders come from various agencies such as Multitask, Biala Special School and early intervention programs. Kerry said for those with mobility problems, a large percentage, riding a horse is a fantastic way to encourage greater movement and flexibility.

"The movement of the horse is really good for them and stimulates the upper body as if they were actually walking," Kerry explained. "We get advice from occupational therapists and physios for a particular child and then we play appropriate games. We might put a toy in the saddle bag on the horse's rump or on its neck and of course they have a natural

curiosity about what's here so begin moving their body, stretching and rotating their trunk to reach the toy, and also developing spatial awareness. We have lots of fun and games on horseback but it works their bodies hard and builds up core strength."

She said it also improves speech and language skills and encourages independence.

"We tell them to speak to the horse, to say 'go' or 'halt' or even click their tongue - whatever they can do," she said. "The power of language with the horse gives them a sense of control. Plus there's a social element where the young children in particular begin to learn to separate from mum. Sometimes mum walks in the ring but we endeavour to get mum to stay outside the ring, and for many that's a big step in terms of independence."

There are around 70 people who volunteer with RDA, some actively leading and tending to the horses, others working behind-the-scenes in fundraising and administration.

Whatever their role, there is a feeling of easy camaraderie amongst the volunteers, and the environment is incredibly relaxed, with tree-studded riding areas, stables and a big paddock for the horses, a lunch area and even a herb garden where children can enjoy a sensory experience touching and smelling the different plants.

Kerry said she often sees great change in the people who come to ride, something that happens quietly over time as they learn to trust and love the horses, and as their own sense of self slowly grows.



Kerry with Sam, the last horse Brendan rode at RDA.

Volunteers wanted

Kerry is always looking for new volunteers and helpers at The Mitchell Centre and welcomes anyone interested to either set up an appointment or come and participate in Barbara Rector's *Learning with the help of the horse* workshop. It is on Thursday, March 17, from 10am to 3pm and costs \$20. It's BYO lunch and people are asked to book early so they can get an idea of numbers.

Alternatively, people can also attend the Adventures in Awareness weekend course on March 19-20. This is aimed more at trainers and educators and costs \$350, once again with registration required as soon as possible.

To book for the workshops or to enquire about how you can become involved with RDA, phone Kerry on 0407 257 129.

"It's both physically and emotionally rewarding. Just riding a horse helps the blood flow better and you get a sense of well-being and confidence, and when you feel confident about yourself you can do anything," Kerry said. "It's a whole bunch of things - being exposed to nature, the horses and even learning the unique equestrian terms of tack and saddle and things, which is its own language."

"There are many stories like Brendan's, and it's wonderful to see parents experience what they are experiencing too; to see how much they love it. It's just lovely to watch that kind of confidence blossom in

a person."

In 2000 Kerry was awarded a Churchill Fellowship to travel to Arizona, where she met and learnt from Barbara Rector, co-founder of the Equine Facilitated Mental Health Association.

Kerry says Barbara has spent 40 years travelling and teaching people about the psychological and health benefits of being around horses. She has spent recent years training others through her Adventures in Awareness programs, which use horses in personal development and psychotherapy.

In Arizona Kerry participated in programs that specifically looked

at how working with horses can help people who have emotional and behavioural challenges.

"Someone who cannot relate and get on with others is as disabled as someone in a wheelchair," Kerry said. "Barb opened up so many new doors and ways of thinking for me in terms of working with horses and personal development."

"What she teaches is that we can learn about ourselves through these animals. Horses give unconditional love and live in the present completely. We're always being told to 'live in the moment' and that's exactly what horses do."

Kerry said, instead of telling people what to do,

allowing them to be in close proximity with horses enables them to learn new ways of relating to others and themselves.

"They can teach us about personal space, about how to approach people in particular, and you can set that task by simply asking someone to say hello to a horse," she explained. "If they barge up to the horse it will move away from them and then they have to figure out how to change that approach, so they learn themselves with the horse rather than having someone instruct them, which is much more powerful."

Barbara Rector is coming to present workshops in Australia this March, visiting Queensland, NSW (where she will talk at the RDA's Mitchell Centre in Teven), and Victoria.

"My dream was always for her to come to Australia," Kerry said, obviously enthused. "The opportunity to hear Barbara speak is something no-one should miss - she is extraordinary."

Kerry said she's interested in looking more at how working with horses can have beneficial health impacts for people with mental illness and depression, while continuing to run the RDA programs.

She knows she can't perform instant miracles but believes gentle contact with horses over time can gradually change a person's outlook and increase their inner happiness.

"We've only really just scratched the surface of what horses can achieve," Kerry said. "With horses you're not asking for a cure, you're just learning from them, and the sense of healing and well-being you receive is phenomenal."

Horse riding coach's 30 years in the 'saddle'



Dianne Parks has been a volunteer for the Riding for the Disabled Association for 30 years.

Picture: PETER CLARK

TERRY COLLINS

DIANNE Parks has always loved horses.

One of her earliest memories is being taken on a horse and cart ride as a weekly Friday treat by her father, who delivered bread.

For 27 years she had her own horse, BJ, and was an active member of the Central Coast Trail Horse Riding Club for many years.

For the past 30 years, Ms Parks has combined her love of horses and her keen desire to help others as a volunteer with Riding for the Disabled at Somersby.

She answered an ad in 1981 and has been there ever since.

In 1982 she started training as an assistant coach and took on the role of treasurer, which office she held until 1995.

She volunteered at Bouddi Pony Club to get more experience and became a coach in 1983 and subsequently a senior coach.

She has also worked for 26 years for the Baxter Juvenile Justice Centre at Mount Penang, which is a great supporter of Riding for the Disabled and has seen hundreds of disabled children gain self-confidence through the centre's programs.

"Seeing these children achieve something and go on to other

WHAT YOU CAN DO

RIDING for the Disabled is always on the lookout for volunteers to help with the 18 classes it runs each week from Monday to Saturday for more than 120 riders with disabilities.

No experience with horses is necessary - volunteers simply need a desire to help someone achieve their goals.

A recruitment and information day will be held at the centre, Kangoo Rd, Somersby, on Saturday between 10am and 1pm. Inquiries: 4340 0388.

things is absolutely wonderful," Ms Parks said.

"Some of them have gone on to compete in the Special Olympics.

"There is no disability when you are achieving."

Ms Parks said her work was a joy and she was surrounded by a wonderful group of dedicated volunteers.

"They all love coming here - I am blessed to have such a great group of people working with me," she said.

Ms Parks is an on-air presenter for Coast FM and has three children and six grandchildren.

We should regard people, animals, trees, rivers, even mountains in the same light as ourselves and realize that we all have much in common.....

Tsunesaburo Makiguchi

Raymond Terrace & Lower Hunter

EXAMINER news

Port volunteer on phone book cover

Ray expects roasting from friends



COVERED: Ray Tucker at Salamander game.

— Picture by Stephen Wark

By SARAH PRICE

A SALAMANDER man expects to cop "a hell of a roasting" from friends when the latest edition of the Yellow and White pages telephone directory is delivered.

The Telstra subsidiary selected Raymond Tucker as the new face of the Port Stephens edition as part of its Australian Creating a Better Future theme.

Mr Tucker's selection recog-

nises his countless hours of community volunteer work from six years of night shifts at Ronald McDonald House, performing at aged care facilities to most recently helping children at the Riding for the Disabled Association.

When speaking to the Examiner Mr Tucker said he did not know he was a contender for the award until he received a letter saying he had been shortlisted.

"I was humbled, you don't go looking for recognition when you do this, the rewards are from the people," he said.

"It's a once in a lifetime opportunity."

Mr Tucker attributed part of his selection to his wife Denise Tucker who had stood by and supported his volunteer efforts.

Distribution of the Yellow and White pages in the Port area was to get underway at the weekend.

Riding for the Disabled Queensland

McIntyre Centre

Moggil/Bellbowie/Anstead area
during the
January floods





Julie Higgins OAM

*41 Rangers Road
Cremorne NSW 2090*

Phone: (hm) 02-9953 1288

(mobile) 0414 698 277

e-mail: uffe.hansen6@bigpond.com

29 March 2011

Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW)
Post Office Box 710
Sydney Markets NSW 2129

Dear Members

Once again I have agonized over selecting just one very special horse or pony to be the winner of the 2011 Shush Memorial Award for the Best RDA Horse/Pony in New South Wales. Every nomination this year, as in the past, is more than deserving to win.

Could the winner be the ever popular Darcy the Pony from Raymond Terrace and Lower Hunter or the excellent all rounder Pedro from Coffs Harbour & Districts or perhaps the evergreen Mecome from Wagga Wagga and then again what about the patient and trustworthy Zida? All of these horses and ponies would be most worthy winners of this award.

However, this year there has been a nomination from the Kendall RDA Centre – “Splash”. This is a small horse with a big heart who is coming to the end of his working life and who has given years of loving service and still continues to bring great joy and delight to his riders. “Splash” is my chosen winner for this year’s Shush Memorial Award and I congratulate this very special pony and his connections at Kendall.

May I again congratulate the excellent nominations for Darcy the Pony, Pedro, Mecome and Zida – you are all winners in my eyes.

May I wish all the members of Riding for the Disabled in New South Wales many hours of pleasure with your beautiful horses and ponies in the year ahead.

My very best wishes.

Julie

Julie Higgins OAM

Poet's Corner

The of the Horse

When your day seems out of balance and so many things go wrong,
When people fight around you and the clock drags on so long,
When most folks act like children and fill you with remorse,
Go out into your paddock and wrap your arms around your horse.

His gentle breath enfolds you as he watches with those eyes,
He may not have a PHD but he is oh so wise,
His head rests on your shoulder you embrace him good and tight,
He puts your world in balance and makes it seem alright.

Your tears will soon stop flowing then tension will be eased,
The nonsense has been lifted, you are quiet and at peace,
So when you need some balance from the stresses in your day,
The best therapy you can seek is out there eating hay.



The Horse

When you are tense,
When you are short tempered,
When you are short sighted,
When you are quick to react,
When you are angry,
When you feel superior,
When you are self absorbed,
things.

When you are arrogant,
When you are lonely,
When you are tired,
When you need to learn,

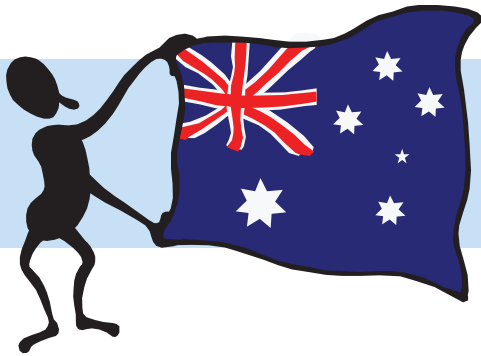
let me teach you to relax.
let me teach you to be patient.
let me teach you to see.
let me teach you to be thoughtful.
let me teach you to be serene.
let me teach you to be respectful.
let me teach you to think of greater

let me teach you humility.
let me be your companion.
let me carry the load.
let me teach you.

After all, I am your horse.

- Willis Lamm (1997)





WAKE UP TIME

When the shearing sheds are silent and the stock camps fallen quiet
When the gidgee coals no longer glow across the outback night
And the bush is forced to hang a sign, "gone broke and won't be back"
And spirits fear to find a way beyond the beaten track

When harvesters stand derelict upon the wind - swept plains
And brave hearts pin their hopes no more on chance of loving rains
When a hundred outback settlements are ghost towns overnight
When we've lost the drive and heart we had to once more see us right

When 'Pioneer' means a stereo and 'Digger' some backhoe
And the 'Outback' is behind the house - there's nowhere else to go
And 'Anzac' is a biscuit brand and probably foreign owned
And education really means brainwashed and neatly cloned

When you have to bake a loaf of bread to make a decent crust
And our heritage once enshrined in gold is crumbling to dust
And old folk pay their camping fees on land for which they fought
And fishing is a great escape; this is until you're caught

When you see our kids with yankee caps and resentment in their eyes
And the soaring crime and hopeless hearts is no longer a surprise
When the name of 'RM Williams' is a yuppie clothing brand
And not a product of our heritage that grew off the land

When offering a hand makes people think you'll amputate
And two dogs meeting in the street is what you call a 'Mate'
When 'Political Correctness' has replaced all common sense
When you're forced to see it their way - there's no sitting on the fence

Yes one day you might find yourself an outcast in this land
Perhaps your heart will tell you then, "I should have made a stand"
Just go and ask the farmers - that should remove all doubt
Then join the swelling ranks who say, "don't sell Australia out"

Thank you Kate
RDA Ryde Centre

Ross River Virus

A Cause of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome in Horses

By Simone Healey BESC and Dr John Kohnke BVSc RDA

Over recent years, there have been numerous reports of a viral-like disease with an initial high temperature, joint pain and lameness, swelling in the lower limbs, loss of appetite and depression which develops into a chronic fatigue-like condition which can last for weeks or months. Affected horses are unable to exercise to their previous level and become 'flat' and tire easily when worked. Many of these horses appear to be infected during the summer months and are often located in areas with fresh water lakes and seaside lagoons or during a wet summer rainfall season. Some properties report recurring symptoms in horses each year, with many owners and trainers suspecting a virus being harboured in the soil from year to year.

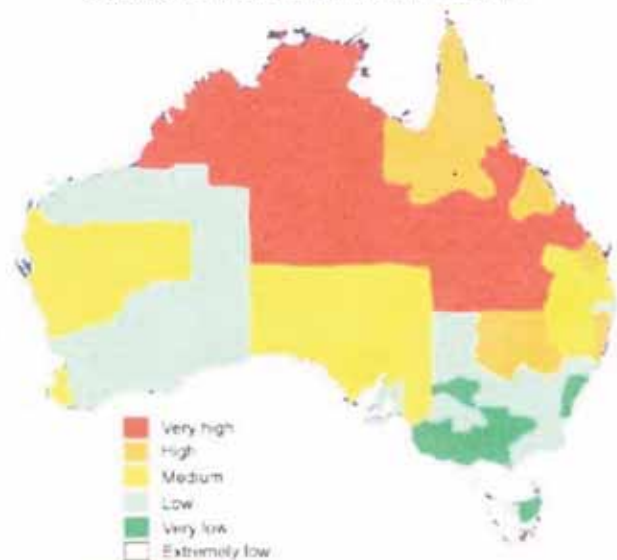
It is now known, following surveys and blood testing for immune antibodies, that these symptoms which resemble the chronic fatigue of Ross River Virus in humans, are due to the same virus, with many horses when they exhibit the above chronic fatigue-like signs, returning a positive antibody titre to the virus.

What is Ross River Virus?

Ross River Virus (RRV) is an arthropod (insect) borne virus (arbovirus) which can cause a number of neurological, musculoskeletal, behavioural and respiratory problems in horses. RRV was first identified in Narrandera and Hay in humans in 1928 and today is reported throughout most of Australia, Papua New Guinea and many islands in the South Pacific. It is a non-lethal disease, however infection can be quite debilitating and symptoms long lasting. In humans, 90% of cases report joint pain and arthritis and 50% develop chronic fatigue syndrome.

Because of its effects, infection of RRV in racing and performance horses can result in great economic loss, while in equestrian and pleasure horses, the often long lasting chronic fatigue-like symptoms are equally frustrating to horse owners. As well as affecting horses, infection can occur in humans, dogs, cats, marsupials and rodents, with kangaroos and wallabies being the most common carrier animals. Kangaroos, wallabies, and humans, as well as possums, flying foxes and birds, can act as natural reservoirs from season to season. It cannot be transmitted directly between them, but instead, RRV is transmitted by female mosquitoes biting the infected host and then inoculating the disease into another human or animal.

Risk of Ross River Virus in Australian Humans



Handy Hint 1

Early Signs of RRV Infection

The earliest sign is a rise in body temperature above 39 degrees for 4-5 days whilst the virus multiplies in the blood and body cells. The horse often becomes depressed with a reduced ability to exercise and a loss of appetite. After the first week following infection, fluctuations with intermittently high temperatures and recurrent bouts of fever and lassitude are often observed, which distinguishes RRV from the more common EHV-1 'stable' virus respiratory infection. Many horses develop soft, cold fluid swellings in the lower limbs and occasionally under the stomach and throat. Some develop swollen and painful lymph nodes under the jaw. After the first 7-10 days following initial infection, other signs including joint swelling and tenderness, with stiffness in movement, reluctance to move and sore muscles are usually noted and some horses appear to be 'tied up' in the muscles during exercise, rather than after exercise. Blood tests fail to indicate an elevation in muscle cell enzymes normally associated with the 'tying up' syndrome.

How is it spread?

RRV is transmitted only by several species of mosquitoes. These vector species (insects capable of transmitting a disease) vary with seasonal and environmental conditions in different regions of Australia. Some of the most common RRV vectors in Australia include *Culex annulirostris* (the major inland mosquito which breeds in fresh water habitats particularly in irrigated areas), *Aedes camptorhynchus* (southern coastal Saltmarsh mosquito) and *Aedes vigilax* (northern coastal Saltmarsh mosquito). In Australia, RRV outbreaks most commonly occur over the warmer months between September and May, peaking during January to March when mosquito populations are the greatest.

Ross River Virus

What climatic conditions favour infection?

The prevalence of RRV has been found to be highly associated with climatic conditions, with rainfall being the most important factor. Areas where RRV outbreaks have occurred have most commonly had high rainfall in the months leading up to the outbreak. Temperature and humidity have been found to be more variable, with outbreaks occurring in both tropical and temperate climates where temperatures range from as low as 6.4°C and as high as 40°C. While high rainfall creates optimum environment for mosquito breeding, the wide range of temperatures recorded during RRV outbreaks can be somewhat misleading. The optimum temperature for mosquitoes to breed is between 25°C -27°C. Although RRV outbreaks have been associated within temperatures and humidity over a broad range, mosquitoes tend to migrate to damp, warm conditions, such as around dams, rivers, tanks and drains where conditions are favourable for breeding. (Refer to the Distribution map of RRV in humans suggesting a warmer, higher rainfall, more northern and coastal incidence).

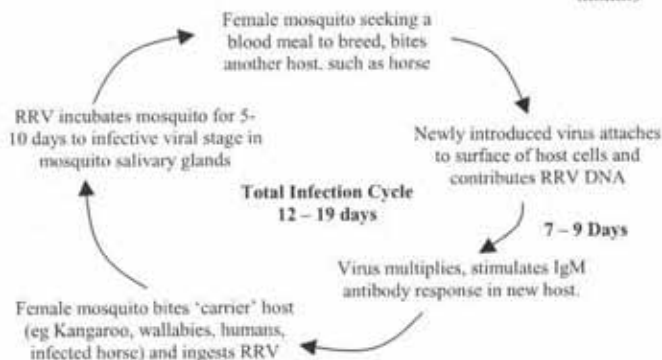
Common Signs in Horses

A wide range and severity of signs can be displayed by horses infected with RRV, with initial signs including fever, joint pain, swelling on the lower limbs and reluctance to move, followed by:

- Behavioural changes such as lethargy, more time spent lying down, as well as loss of appetite, weight loss, poor exercise performance or an inability to exercise with delayed recovery and symptoms of chronic fatigue.
- Respiratory signs including increased respiratory rate and a cough in early stages.
- Gastrointestinal problems including diarrhoea and spasmodic colic.
- Neurological signs including in co-ordination (ataxia), low grade lameness and either reluctance to move, or restricted movement as if suffering chronic muscular and joint pain.
- Anaemia and lower than normal blood white cell counts, with low lymphocyte cell readings.

Viral Transmission / Virology

As RRV is an arbovirus which is transmitted between susceptible host species by mosquitoes. The process of transmission RRV occurs in the following way:



Handy Hint 2

Blood Antibody Screening to Determine Time of Infection

The presence and level of IgM antibodies either alone or in combination with IgG in a blood test, can provide an indication of time of infection, while the identification of IgG antibodies alone is frequently used as an indicator of prior infection with RRV. If you suspect that your horse has been suffering from RRV in its early stages, it is best to take 2 blood samples 2 weeks apart, to not only assist with the detection of RRV, but also to help to more precisely identify the time of infection. This will often coincide with the start of the early symptoms, often associated with a high population of mosquitoes 2-3 weeks after summer rainfall.

Handy Hint 3

Manage Turn-out Times to Minimise Mosquitoes

It is helpful to restrict turn-out times to mid morning - mid afternoon and lock your horse up in the late afternoon prior to the sunset period, the early evening and after dark when mosquito activity is high to reduce the chance of being bitten by a RRV carrying mosquito. If it is your own property, you can install fine flyscreen covers around stable areas to reduce the chance of mosquitoes gaining access to your horses when they are stabled during these high risk periods. It is also a good idea to block off all other openings around the stable block, including the edges of sliding doors. It is also helpful to install an electric mosquito 'zapper' on the walls of the stable aisle or veranda to help control mosquito numbers. A mosquito trap containing an attractant chemical is also recommended to be installed near to the stables to attract mosquitoes away from the body heat of horses.

Did You Know That ...

Infective mosquitoes can harbour the virus and it is possible that at least one species can pass it onto the next generation of mosquitoes through eggs which are resistant to drying under drought conditions. They hatch to 'wrigglers' in water after rainfall and the new mosquito can already be infected without taking the virus with a blood meal to breed.

Diagnosis

During the active acute phase of RRV, the horse's primary response to infection is the production of IgM antibodies, which occurs within 7-9 days post infection. IgM antibodies continue to rise until 2-3 weeks before rapidly declining. As IgM antibodies begin to decline, IgG rises and overrides IgM making it the dominant antibody. Testing for IgM and IgG antibodies in the blood is the only way to diagnose a horse with RRV. The IgG antibody can be identified in the blood samples of affected horses for up to 18 months.

Did You Know That ...

If you are situated in an area with a high risk of RRV transmission, it is important to take measures to reduce exposure to yourself and children. Mosquitoes are most common in the early evening and overnight during the warm summer months, so ensure that you are covered and apply an insect repellent when outdoors and when sleeping. Flywire screens are also recommended on bedrooms and a mosquito net that covers the bed area at night.

Ross River Virus

Prevention

To assist with the prevention of RRV infection in horses, it is important to adopt stringent mosquito control measures particularly after rain when the conditions are favourable for mosquito breeding. Mosquitoes are more active in the morning and evening so it is important to ensure that your horse is well covered, with properly fitting rugs from head to tail during these times.

Some mosquitoes can bite through thin cotton rugs, so that it is best to provide a thicker cotton sheet with neck rug and hood with ear pieces to help provide more complete protection over common target areas for female mosquitoes. A mesh fly veil with ear covers can be used in the evening as an alternative to a hood. When considering an acquisition property or stable/yard housing for your horse, try to keep away from areas known to be populated with mosquitoes and natural hosts, such as kangaroos and wallabies. Heavily populated areas include coastal areas and wetlands with higher humidity where conditions favour mosquito breeding. Properties with stable blocks or yards away from any wetlands or damp and steamy areas are less likely to be a high risk location but mosquitoes can fly to areas neighbouring wetlands.

Other Therapies

Alternative therapies are also commonly suggested as preventative measures. Supplementing the ration with herbs, such as garlic and marigold, are thought to make the horse's blood less palatable to biting mosquitoes. However, avoid supplementing with more than 20g garlic per day/500kg horse, as studies have shown that higher doses of garlic can result in anaemia due to formation of Heinz body particles in red blood cells which significantly reduces their lifespan in the blood. It has also been suggested that mosquitoes are attracted to horses consuming sweet feeds and molasses in the diet, whilst other observations suggest that adding apple cider vinegar (50-75 mL in the evening feed) in place of molasses, may help minimise attraction by mosquitoes. However, none of these measures are totally protective. Citronella, lavender, rosemary and lemongrass are all thought to be natural mosquito repellents. A natural repellent spray which is believed to keep biting insects away can be made from combining the oils of citronella, lavender, paraffin and eucalyptus with distilled water.

Controlling Mosquitoes

The use of tested and approved insect repellents, such as Flygon®, are more protective against mosquitoes for an extended time (Refer to Handy Hint 5). Although kangaroos and wallabies are the natural host animal for RRV, it is a waste of time fencing the perimeter of a property to control their access to paddocks as infected mosquitoes can fly from nearby bushy, wetland areas where wallabies colonise. Moving to an area free of kangaroos and wallabies and high populations of mosquitoes may be a last resort if RRV becomes a seasonal problem on a horse property.

Handy Hint 4

Purchase an Under-Belly Protective Rug

A special rug designed with an under-belly covering to virtually seal and protect the under-body areas from mosquitoes is available in the UK. It is called a Boett Rug®. They can be purchased on the internet or from distributors in Australia. When combined with stabling overnight and windows and doors fitted with fine mesh fly wire, the risk is greatly reduced.

Handy Hint 5

Use a Long Acting Mosquito Repellent

Lightly spray your horse in the late afternoon, especially its lower limbs if you are covering the body with a rug, with a long acting, waterproof insect repellent, such as Flygon®. Flygon is based on natural pyrethrin and citronella oil which results in a low irritant, 24-36 hour long lasting repellent action. Many alcohol based repellents only last for 2-3 hours before evaporating and losing their activity, whilst Flygon® maintains its repellent activity for up to 24 hours between applications.

Handy Hint 6

Supplement with Immune Nutrients

It may be of benefit to give a daily supplement of Kohnke's **Own Activ-8** containing immune active nutrients, such as organic zinc, organic selenium and high doses of vitamin A and Vitamin E, as well as other supportive nutrient co-factors, to help correct low or inadequate intake from pasture or hard feeds to help maintain the immune response in horses with early symptoms. A daily supplement of Activ-8 given for 3 weeks may help maintain optimum immune activity during the critical first 3 weeks of immune challenge to the RRV virus in the blood and tissues. Field trials indicate that Activ-8 can help maintain the appetite and general well-being in horses with suspected RRV infection and antibody titre to the virus. It is important that horses maintain their appetite during the incubation stage of the disease.

Treatment & Recovery

Once RRV has been suspected by the clinical symptoms of depression, joint pain and lower limb swelling, progressing to chronic fatigue-like signs, or confirmed in the horse by detection of IgM and/or IgG antibodies in serology tests, treatment should be commenced. Unfortunately, as is the case in humans, there is no drug-based medication available which is able to suppress or eradicate the virus from the horse's body. Antibiotics and anti-inflammatory agents, including corticosteroids, can be of benefit to help make the horse more comfortable, but they cannot actually destroy the virus. Treatment with non-steroidal anti-inflammatory drugs (NSAIDs), such as 'bute' and Finadyne® can be given to relieve symptoms of pain and swellings. The horse should be rested and stress should be limited, as this can cause a relapse in severity and symptoms of the disease. Most affected horses make a full recovery within 18 months. Usually, by this time, permanent immunity will develop so that the horse cannot be reinfected with the virus throughout the rest of its life.

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EQUITANA COMES TO SYDNEY IN 2011 FOR THE VERY FIRST TIME!

Sydney Showground will play host to the new and exciting equine spectacular, **EQUITANA Sydney**, which promises four days of Education, Shopping, exciting competition and family entertainment from the 10th to the 13th of November.

The inaugural Sydney spectacular will see the launch of “**The Australian Grand Final**”, as Equestrian Australia has joined forces with EQUITANA to develop a national annual grand final for Dressage, Jumping and the new and thrilling Exhibition Eventing. The Grand Final will be conducted within EQUITANA annually, alternating between Sydney and Melbourne.

EQUITANA Sydney will also feature the “**EQUITANA Australian Open**”, which incorporates Australian finals in Campdrafting, Reining and Cutting. The Equitana Australian Open brings the action of elite competition to the Showgrounds, with the best Australian riders competing for a substantial collective prize pool.

As part of the extensive **Education Program**, the Sydney event offers a world class range of Australian Trainers, equine Health Practitioners and International Clinicians. The Dutch superstars, **Edward Gal and Hans Peter Minderhoud**, will be presenting the Dressage Clinic **together**, which promises to be a phenomenal training experience. The Horsemanship Clinic will be delivered by the amazing **Stacey Westfall** (USA), winner of major AQHA and NRHA competitions – without a bridle or saddle! And, our Cutting Masterclass will see the renowned **Bobby Ingersoll** (USA), winner of countless competitions and trainer of many star horses, impart his wealth of knowledge to fans.

The Education Program will deliver over 200 informative sessions and demonstrations over the four days. **Riding for the Disabled (NSW)** have come on board as EQUITANA Sydney’s Official Charity and will be delivering education sessions on **Saturday 12th and Sunday 13th of November**. RDA (NSW) will also have a booth to promote the Association, so pop in and visit them at **Booth 250 in the Riverina Pavilion**.

The Sydney event will see new and exciting elements such as:- a 3-day “Way of the Horse” – Horsemanship Challenge, the Arabian Showcase, Indoor Carriage Driving and Trick Riding Championships, Team Penning, Vaulting, Mounted Games and Miniature Horse competition and much more. Entertainment is also high on the list with displays by the Light Horse Skilled Arms team and Mounted Police, Miniature Horse jumping, music and even Bison Campdrafting, so there is something for the whole family to enjoy at EQUITANA.

And the **Exhibition** will be the largest ever equine shopper’s paradise seen in Australia and at the Sydney Showgrounds, visitors can “shop till they drop” in air conditioned comfort.

For more information on the Sydney program or ticketing and accommodation packages, visit the Equitana website at: - www.equitana.com.au.



Riding for the Disabled Association (NSW)

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2011

MONTH	DAY	EVENT	VENUE
All year round	entries close 30 Sept	Carriage Driving Competition	RDA Centres
July	25 July to 1 Aug	RDA(NSW) Awareness week	RDA NSW Centres
	30	Board Meeting	Sports House
	Day to be decided	Council Teleconference	
August	1	Horses Birthday	All Centres
	27 & 28	State Dressage Championships	SIEC
October	Entries close 6 Oct	Musical Ride (DVD) Competition (winners announced 7 Nov.)	RDA Centres
	14 & 15	Board Meeting	Sports House
	15 & 16	Council Meeting	Sports House
	16	Hunter Region One Day Coaching Workshop	Central Coast Centre
November	10 to 13	Equitana	Sydney Olympic Park

The NDIS Review

By Madeleine Sobb

The current disability services system is unfair and underfunded. This is not something that has just been realised, it has been this way for the past 35 or more years. The last time a National Disability Insurance Scheme was talked about was 1975.

There is so much the media about equality and making sure people of all ages, race, sex, religion, gender etc, get a fair go and have a life that counts. Currently, this is not the case for Australians living with a disability.

The Australian Government asked the Productivity Commission to undergo research



into what an NDIS would look like and how it would work. In February this year, a draft report was released. After more research and investigation, the final report will be submitted at the end of July this year. The government has to then give a final response to the report on 23rd November 2011.

What will an NDIS actually do for people with a disability and their families / carers I hear you ask? It will double funds from the current 6 million dollars per year and be taken up to 12 million per year. It will also be focusing more on individualized services where the person with the disability and their carers will have more control on how their funds are spent and will rely less on the traditional 'service providers' to cater for their needs.

The NDIS is something that will also be used to assist people who acquire their disability through injury or accident. They will have a scheme of their own called a National Disability Injury Scheme (NIIS). This will cater for surgery costs, rehabilitation, equipment, home modifications and more.

Whilst many Australians are pleased that the Government have taken responsibility to conduct research and report on findings for an NDIS, this is not going to mean they will actually implement one, if Australian's don't stand up and say how much it is needed.

The Every Australian Counts Campaign is the official campaign towards supporting people with a disability to make sure an NDIS is implemented. Currently, there are 30,000 people who have signed up to the campaign. However, the campaign needs 100,000 supporters before 23rd November 2011.

Many people campaigning for an NDIS were very disappointed with the new Federal Budget which was released a few weeks ago because no funds were allocated to assist people with a disability. Instead they focused on improving employment and mental health services.

Some comments made by NDIS campaigners were:

- Parents of people with a disability say there is nothing for them in budget - they suggest more support for them could reduce mental health problems.
- In Wayne Swan's Federal Budget speech he said: "Australia has many capable hands, we don't want a single pair to go to waste." Without an NDIS, Australia cannot be certain that will be the case. We NEED an NDIS and we NEED it NOW! Its not about wanting anymore, its an urgent need.

SO HOW CAN YOU HELP MAKE THE NDIS A REALITY?

- Visit www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au and pledge your support by signing up to the campaign.
- Contact all of your email contacts and ask them to sign up to the campaign via www.everyaustraliancounts.com.au --- Ask them to forward it on to their contacts as well. Creating a ripple effect is what we are after!
- Join the 'NDIS NOW' Team for the Sydney City to Surf by visiting www.city2surf.com.au
- Visit my blog at <http://tinymads.blogspot.com> --- I frequently write blogs about the NDIS and the Every Australian Counts Campaign.

Disability reform is something that we know is needed and an issue that is so close to the heart of RDA, so please pledge your support today and together we can make Every Australian Count!