

President's Report for the Year 2008

2008 was another year of growth and development for fencing in NSW.

Highlights for the year included:

1. In addition to our normal very full schedule of state competitions, the NSWFA hosted the Under 15 & Cadet National Championships and the Open National Championships in 2008. Our state competitions benefited from an increased number of events for all level of fencer, and resulted in an increase in participation numbers throughout the year. NSW fencers achieved success in all 3 National Championships (including the Junior Nationals held in Queensland). NSW was successful in winning back the E.J.Szakall Cup for Juniors, and in winning the Janet Haswell Cup for the Cadets. Unfortunately the Cyclone Cup was lost for the first time in many years to Victoria. The role of Jeff Gray as Team Manager/Coach (assisted by Frank Bartolillo) was a major contributor to our success in the Championships and our thanks go to him. Jeff and his team also event managed the championship events held in Sydney and the quality of his work in this area continues to improve each year. Many thanks Jeff.
2. After visiting Sydney in November 2007, the pre-eminent Italian coach Antonio Signorello, decided to immigrate to Australia. He arrived in January 2009 and has been appointed head coach to the NSWFA. The appointment of Antonio addresses a concern that the committee has had about the development of fencing in NSW with the number of our coaches likely to decrease over the next 10 years. Whilst we worked hard to achieve this outcome, we nevertheless have been extremely fortunate to be able to attract Antonio to Sydney. With Antonio's skill and commitment to success, we firmly believe we will have a platform on which to build a bright future for NSW fencing, and grow the overall membership volume to the benefit of coaches and clubs. I would like to acknowledge the role that the Marconi Club played in Antonio's trip to Sydney in 2007. They provided a venue for the 2 week camp he ran and free accommodation and meals for Antonio and his wife. Their hospitality and generosity contributed significantly to Antonio's decision to immigrate to Australia.
3. The introduction of online capabilities, allowing members to affiliate/register with the NSWFA and to enter AFF competitions, has been very successful. This has proved popular with members such that the vast majority of transactions are now done this way. Besides offering member convenience, it greatly reduces the amount of work done by NSWFA officers in maintaining the database, generating reports and communicating with members. The online system continues to be improved by the providers Sportingpulse.
4. In late 2008 we were made aware of reduced availability of the Anne Clarke Centre for are regular competitions. This prompted a frantic search for a new venue over Christmas/New Year which resulted in our move to Marrickville. All indications are that Marrickville will deliver a considerable improvement in facilities, access and storage of our equipment. It also represents a saving in hire charges to the NSWFA.
5. The executive made a concerted effort to improve its communications to members in 2008. This is in addition to normal news items published on the website. Monthly newsletters and ad hoc reminders and items of interest are sent out by email to

members on a regular basis. Pam Zopf is to be particularly thanked for this work. It consumes many hours of her time each month and she does a wonderful job.

6. The finances for the NSWFA have continued to improve, as is detailed in the Treasurer's report. Owing mainly to a number of cost saving activities, the profit from operations increased significantly in 2008 over the previous year. This was despite no increase in fees or NSW competition entry charges in the year. Cost savings included a reduction in the payments made to the AFF for national competitions held in Sydney. This followed a proposal put to the AFF by the NSW delegate in 2007. Savings were also made in the manufacture of medals for schools competitions, and in capitation payments made to the AFF. More savings are expected in 2009 because of lower venue charges, and reduced insurance premiums. The latter is a response to the introduction of a national insurance scheme by the AFF. I would like to acknowledge the contribution by Michael Pruscino as he takes on more of the considerable burden of treasury work.
7. The NSWFA's fundraising activities are starting to become more effective and contributed significantly to our increased profit in 2008. For the first time we were able to attract sponsors for the National Open Championships in November, and I'd like to acknowledge Saddler's Creek Wines, Fencing Repair Service (Peter Witkop), Ray White Real Estate (Volker Hrovat), Alchin Industries (Mike Alchin) and Fairweather & Associates (Duncan Fairweather). A number of other activities including wine sales, Bunnings barbeque and the very popular raffle at the Open Nationals also contributed very well. I would like to thank the ongoing activities of Duncan Fairweather in fundraising, and especially Josephine Snell who was the inspiration and driving force behind the wine, and the raffles to which she also donated prizes. Roland von Zopf, Bob Hargreaves, Kylie Reagan and Veronica Gauke are also to be thanked for contributing prizes to the raffle.

On the back of what we achieved in 2008, we confidently expect 2009 to be even bigger and better. The addition of Antonio to our ranks, and the enthusiasm and professionalism that he is already exhibiting in managing squads and developing younger fencers and coaches, will have a profound affect on fencing in NSW. One of the first tasks for the new executive will be to prepare a new 5 year plan which will take us further in our responsibilities to develop the sport of fencing in NSW.

I would like to thank all those who have contributed to 2008's success. In addition to my fellow executive members, we have been helped considerably by our Armourer, Event Manager and Course Facilitator Jeff Gray. Also the never-ending contribution by Denise Dapre and Alex Donaldson in running our competitions (state & national) is greatly appreciated. Stephen Darragh, Peter Witkop, Sian & Xavier Hicks, Mario Ferraro and of course Pam & Roland Zopf have been of great assistance right across our operations. Harriet Jordan continues to maintain our website to a very high standard, and Anna Slowiaczek keeps our rankings up to date.

Graham Markey
President, NSWFA