

Australian Fencing Federation Annual Report - 2009

New South Wales

1. Highlights:

- Transfer to a new fencing venue at Marrickville
- Appointment of a Head Coach, Antonio Signorello
- Rejuvenation of State squads in 3 weapons
- 11 new coaches accredited

2. Strategic Plan

NSWFA has set the following key objectives:

- Effective organisation:** Build the organisational capability of NSWFA to provide effective administration and development for the sport. Continue to improve the infrastructure of fencing with efficiently run competitions and training events, well maintained and upgraded equipment and a longer term goal to secure a permanent venue in Sydney. Key to this is the strengthening of the NSWFA financial position through efficient management, budget control and the development of new funding sources.
- Increase participation:** Increase the number of people of all ages taking up fencing as their preferred sport, with a particular focus on introducing juniors to fencing and winning their long term commitment. Encourage and assist existing clubs to grow their membership and foster the establishment of new fencing clubs throughout metropolitan Sydney and regional areas of NSW. The training of new coaches will be a key enabler of this objective.
- Enhance performance:** Improve the skills of fencers through high performance coaching and training programs that will, in time, produce more NSW fencers capable of winning medals in national and international competition.
- Promote fencing:** Seek to raise the profile of fencing as an attractive and dynamic sport in the media, with governments and with the sports community.

In 2009, NSWFA made a good start in working towards achievement of these objectives but much remains to be done.

3. New venue

The move to a new venue at Marrickville has proved successful in terms of storage, amenities, flexibility of use and cost. The Marrickville centre proved capable of staging a major competition with the successful presentation of the 2009 National Open Championships. The venue is used on a weekly basis for squad training and, as needed, for junior camps, coach and referee training.

Penrith Fencing Academy moved into its own dedicated club fencing venue.

4. Competitions

NSWFA maintained a heavy program of regular Sunday competitions, holding 106 separate events during the year, including 38 junior events.

Total competition entries of 991 were slightly down on the previous year.

Major competitions held in Sydney included the 2009 Australian Youth Olympic Festival, the World Cup epee event "Challenge Australia" and the National Open Championships.

Schools Competitions

The annual Schools Competition and Schools League were again well supported and the number of junior registered fencers (schools + U11/13) was at a record level.

5. Head Coach

The appointment of Italian Fencing Master and former Olympic coach Antonio Signorello at the beginning of 2009 has proved successful with Antonio leading a re-invigoration of fencing in NSW through organised squad training, youth development and coach/referee training. Assistant coaches have been appointed to work with Antonio, including Jeff Gray as Technical Director, Epee. Working with the NSWFA Executive, Antonio is developing an integrated approach to the development of fencing in NSW, with a focus on schools and junior development.

6. Coaching

Aware that coaches are the key to developing fencing numbers and skills, NSWFA placed an emphasis on increasing the number of qualified coaches – in all, eleven new coaches were accredited and five were re-accredited.

A Level 1 coaching course was conducted by the Head Coach in accordance with AFF requirements and two coaching clinics were presented by the Head Coach on contemporary coaching philosophy and methods.

Two refereeing clinics were organised by FIE accredited referee Stephen Darragh and the Head Coach.

The listing of accredited coaches and accreditation forms on the AFF website was a positive move that has helped associations and coaches to keep track of their accreditation.

7. Camps

NSWFA organised summer and winter camps during school holidays which again proved a drawcard for junior fencers from NSW and interstate.

8. Regional Development

Some progress was made on regional club development, including the first Riverina Championships held in Wagga with the help of NSWFA and ACTFA. It is hoped this will become an annual event. A new club – PCYC Newcastle – was opened and a teams competition was held in Newcastle.

Outside Sydney, regional clubs are based in Newcastle, Coffs Harbour, Central Coast, Bathurst, Wollongong, Southern Highlands, Blue Mountains and Wagga. In most cases, these clubs are surviving through the dedication of one or two individuals. NSWFA recognises the importance of their work and will provide practical support where possible though resources remain scarce.

9. Membership

Membership numbers totalled 642 in line with the average over the past 5 years. Generating growth in membership numbers over time remains a challenge and development initiatives are aimed at increasing membership to provide a more sustainable membership base.

10. Finance and administration

Turnover was up 5% to \$157,000 however NSWFA recorded an overall loss of \$38,000 in 2009, comprising an operational loss of \$15,000 plus depreciation and expenses accrued from the previous year. This compared to a profit of \$32,000 in 2008. A review of financial administration identified a number of improvements in cost control and book-keeping that are being put into effect.

Online membership affiliation/registration, introduced in 2008, has proved a very convenient and efficient method for members and the Executive.

11. NSWFA Executive

Executive Members during the course of 2009 were:

Graham Markey (President), Duncan Fairweather (Vice President), Pam Zopf (Secretary), Michael Pruscino & Alex Andre (Treasurers), Jess Brooks, Anna Fitzgerald & Josephine Snell (Ordinary Members).

12. Acknowledgements

NSWFA acknowledges the effort and dedication of fencing stalwarts whose sustained commitment has enabled NSW to present successful competitions at state, national and international level. In particular, we note the efforts of DT's Denise Dapre and Alex Donaldson, technical support from Jeff Gray and material support from Peter Witkop. The contribution made by volunteers, coaches, parents and fencers is also recognised and valued.

NSWFA also notes with appreciation the commitment and hard work of Graham Markey, who has stood down as President after 6 years on the Executive during which he achieved a number of firsts, including the engagement of a Head Coach.