

**President's Report to the Members of the Australian Polo Council Ltd  
Presented on Monday, 14 November 2008**

It gives me great pleasure to present my sixth and final report to you as President of the Australian Polo Council.

2009/10 has been another busy and at times challenging year for the Australian Polo Council.

The year will always carry the pall of the loss of one of the most significant figures that Australian polo has produced. James Ashton was a tremendous ambassador of Australian sport and a worthy President of FIP. His wisdom was a resource I drew on regularly in the five years that I held this position before he left died. He has been, and will continue to be missed for many years. His contribution to the polo, particularly as President when the APC hosted the 2001 World Cup, will be appreciated by polo players for generations.

Another untimely death in the polo world this year was Charles Stisted. Charles was CEO of the Guards Polo Club, which hosted the Coronation Cup matches in 2005 and 2008 in which Australia played England. I got to know him quite well on those occasions and was distressed to hear of his death. He too will be greatly missed.

Representative polo this year began with a Test Match against South Africa at Kurland in December 2009. Unfortunately, on this occasion the host nation was able to prevail by 11-9. The next contest was against New Zealand at Windsor. The game went to a seventh chukka before New Zealand was able to secure 9-8 win from a penalty. The final representative match was held at the Riverlands Ladies International, again at Windsor. This was the inaugural womens international with the teams from both nations selected by their national associations and authorized to wear national team colours. The Australian ladies were able to secure a win over New Zealand.

Rules have been in focus this year following the adoption of the "no turning rule" in Argentina late last year. The decision of the APC to adopt the HPA rules, with local adaptation as required, was well timed. The APC was able to capitalize on the excellent development work the HPA had invested in. The result was that while there were some teething problems as players and umpires became familiar with the new rules, overall the changes were received very positively. The distribution of the APC Rulebook and accompanying HPA DVD should enable greater familiarization and consolidation. We must also acknowledge the generosity and goodwill of the HPA in making its resources, particularly the DVD available to us.

Umpire accreditation was a significant development this year with the APC running "train the trainer" sessions in Sydney and Brisbane. We also were able to secure Australian Sports Commission endorsement of the APC Level 1 program. The rollout of this program is ongoing.

This year we also saw the final adoption of the Horse Welfare Policy. Considerable care went into its development, to avoid the risk of ill-considered policies leading to significant unintended consequences, particularly given the profile of horse welfare issues in the community generally.

The Handicap Policy received a touchup to resolve some inconsistencies around international players.

We also adopted the APC Board Charter and Board Code of Conduct this year. This is a significant document going forward as it establishes the Governance framework in which the APC operates. Over time I expect Governance issues in sport generally will attract more attention, particularly as commercial interests continue to pervade.

At the last Annual Meeting the APC resolved to develop a Drugs and Alcohol Safety Policy. I am pleased to report that following work undertaken by a well-credentialed sub-committee, a draft policy has been prepared and submitted to the APC. I am hopeful that policy will be adopted later today.

The APC Discipline Policy received close attention this year. The work of Discipline Committee and Committees of Appeal is very demanding and immensely time consuming. I am grateful for all of the work that numerous people have invested in the process this year. I believe the benefits of holding a firm and consistent line have been reflected in the generally improved player behavior observed this season.

Following the increase in APC levies last year, a number of people have expressed concern. We should not be surprised by this as the APC has not been good at communicating its activities to its members. The actual work has been the priority and the communication of that work has had to take a secondary position. That cannot remain the case. The APC needs to be more accountable and a much better communicator than it is now. Regular newsletters will help and the ongoing website development work must continue.

Notwithstanding these initiatives, we must acknowledge that the function of the APC changed significantly. It is now very much "front and centre" with players and others who may feel they have a grievance. On several occasions this year threats of legal action have been made which ultimately the APC was able to resolve. However, in order for the APC to acquit its function fairly, it needs to be sufficiently well resourced to be able to make decisions fairly on their merits, safe in the knowledge that it has the resources to defend its actions if necessary.

Finally, I acknowledge the tremendous work done by the Executive and our fabulous Secretary Amanda. Her wisdom and perseverance has been faultless. We would be lost without her.

Thank you Delegates for your support through the year.

Leon Reardon