



**Equine Pathways  
Australia**



*Photography Credit: Paralympics Australia*

# THE EQUINE PATHWAY TO PARALYMPICS PROGRAM

FOUNDATION, TALENT, ELITE AND MASTERY



## EQUINE PATHWAYS AUSTRALIA

---

**Equine Pathways Australia (EPA)** developed from the real experience of those with physical disabilities who seek to personally develop and improve their life opportunities and wellbeing. Our philosophy is to offer the chance for all people with disabilities (whether acquired at birth, through illness or accident) to participate in a community-based program, sharing their life experiences and goals by exploring para equestrian activities. Our mission is accomplished through integrated health, community and sporting participation programs and the identification and creation of vocational pathways.

EPA is an accredited **Paralympics Australia Centre for Paralympic Preparation**. The organisation uses qualified dressage coaches who work with a team of allied health providers to deliver a wide range of services, including trauma counselling, physiotherapy, occupational therapy, sports psychology, nutritional advice, osteopathy and exercise physiology.

The cornerstone of the EPA Program is our 2-day week end clinics, as further described below, that involve mounted dressage lessons with our experienced coaches, with the assistance of our allied health providers. These clinics are available on an inclusive basis to all riders with physical disabilities, accommodating all levels of riding experience and capability. Each participant develops a set of agreed objectives and goals in their individual performance plan against which their development is measured.

**EPA currently has three key program areas:**

1. General Participation (learning or re-learning fundamental skills)
2. High Performance (preparing riders for higher levels of competition)
3. Vocational (training and assisting riders to potentially re-engage in the workforce)

## PATHWAY TO COMPETITION

---

While EPA programs encourage and nurture all pathways to success and health and favours no particular level of competence or experience, we have found that our programs are an effective pathway for some riders to access opportunities to compete in local, national or even international events, access these riders might not otherwise have had.

As part of the Equine Pathways Australia Program, EPA provides assistance, support and expertise to clubs and organisations who have athletes with a disability to integrate these athletes into their club activities and programs and thereby expand the opportunities to compete in equine sports. This support not only provides greater opportunity for people with a disability to also better integrate into the local community, but it is a valuable resource for organisations, clubs and their coaches who conduct equine sports, to provide a more inclusive and supportive environment guided by the appropriate expertise.



For example, our High Performance pathway can start participants on a journey to participation in para-equestrian events at the Paralympics. Like the Olympics, the Paralympics is held every four years, and is one of the world's leading sporting events. It is regarded as the premier international event for athletes with disabilities.

In 2024, para-equestrian will be one of 22 Paralympics sports at the 2024 Paris Paralympics to be held between 28 August and 8 September 2024 in Versailles, just outside of Paris - one of the world's most stunning and iconic venues.

## THE EQUINE PATHWAY TO PARIS PARALYMPICS PROGRAM

---

The Equine Pathway to Paris Paralympics Program is aimed at bringing together both our general participation and high-performance programs to create a special community based on the strong, inclusive and holistic pathway established by EPA. This is a wonderful and unique opportunity for all participants in the EPA program to share in the journey to Paris.

The program is a comprehensive 3-year plan consisting of a range of clinics, camps and competitions all geared towards preparing our athletes (both human and equine) for this higher level of competition, and culminating in the chance for them to become members of the Australian Paralympic team in Versailles.

While only a very small number can be selected for the team, the supportive nature of the EPA program encompasses all of our participants, regardless of their experience and ability, all bound by a common love of horses and the many benefits received through our riding programs. This program is one important aspect furthering our vital mission to create special collective opportunities for our participants to learn, grow and share their experiences.





# PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The foundation of the Equine Pathway to Paralympics Program is the highly successful two-day clinics conducted across Australia. This innovative program is designed to launch our participants towards their dreams of Paris and beyond. These clinics are run by leading coaches assisted by allied health professionals identified from the Paralympics Australia network, all working collaboratively with our experienced management team.

While all EPA participants have equal access to these first-class services at our clinics, the program also identifies our scholarship athletes who may have the greatest potential to be selected on the Australian Paralympic Team by the Equestrian Australia panel of sectors. These athletes will be given the opportunity to undergo additional development to give them the optimal chance of selection on the team.

Additional scholarship support will include: (i) more targeted competition program development, (ii) team camps that prepare athletes to adapt to the unique Paralympic competition environments, and (iii) support through the EPA Horse Owner program which partners our athletes with suitable quality horses to compete at the highest level.

While our High Performance participants are able to avail themselves of this particular stream to potential selection for the team for the Paralympics, this pathway has been established in tandem with General participant and Vocational programs.

## THE CLINIC PROGRAM

As previously outlined, EPA clinics have a dual focus for participants in the EPA Program. The areas of focus for both the general participant and the high-performance athlete as outlined are delivered concurrently at these clinics by specialised and internationally experienced professionals.

AREA	HIGH PERFORMANCE FOCUS	GENERAL PARTICIPANT FOCUS
Physiotherapy	Manual therapies and musculoskeletal screenings	Manual therapies
Exercise Physiology	Strength & conditioning individualised program	General strength & conditioning to maximise flexibility and endurance
On horse training	Specialised dressage training & skills analysis T1 – T4 & E1. (Refer FTEM table on page 5)	Dressage training F1, F2 & F3 (refer FTEM table on page 5)
Psychology	Psychological Skills Training (PST)	Mental Health, counselling and stress management
Occupational Therapy	Specific to travel, competition etc	General adaptive and motility
Nutrition	General and event based	General
NDIS	Personal support systems	NDIS planning and review
Individual Performance Plans (IPP)	Competition periodisation	General goal setting



## FTEM TABLE – Foundation, Talent, Elite, Mastery

This table demonstrates the distinctions among the Foundation, Talent and High-Performance levels for the classification of the athletes:

<b>NON-ELITE / FOUNDATION ATHLETE</b>	<b>F1</b>	<b>Learning and acquisition of basic movement skills</b>	Learning or re-learning a wide range of fundamental skills and participating in a Learn to Ride program.  Skill, age and confidence appropriate tests e.g. RDA.
	<b>F2</b>	<b>Extension and refinement of movement</b>	Participating in organised and recreational riding activities through local groups and clubs to develop foundational riding skills and confidence.  Classification at National Level Participation tests at RDA and EPA closed events.
	<b>F3</b>	<b>Commitment to sport and/or active lifestyle</b>	Competing at local club or riding school events and attending regular coaching sessions.  Competing in EA tests at RDA and EPA closed competitions.  RDA/EPA Training Squads.
<b>PRE-ELITE / TALENT ATHLETE</b>	<b>T1</b>	<b>Demonstration of potential</b>	Demonstrating future potential by meeting state organisation selection criteria and national pre-elite benchmark criteria cognisant of maturational status of the athlete.  Competing in EA tests at club level.  EA State Squads.
	<b>T2</b>	<b>Talent verification</b>	Confirmed as having talent following participation in an observational trial period (e.g. Talent Identification camps).  Classification at FEI level.  Competing in EA tests at State level.  National B Squad.
	<b>T3</b>	<b>Practicing and achieving</b>	Committed to weekly training and competition within a recognised pre-elite program.  Competing in FEI tests at local and State competitions.  National A Squad.
	<b>T4</b>	<b>Breakthrough and reward</b>	Regular success at local and state level competitions and progress to international classes.  Competing in FEI tests at State and National Championships.  National Next Squad.  Active mentoring role to Foundation level participants.
<b>ELITE / HIGH PERFORMANCE ATHLETE</b>	<b>E1</b>	<b>Senior Elite representation</b>	Selected to national senior team for a major benchmark event.  Selection onto team for CPEDI and Nationals.  National Green Squad.
	<b>E2</b>	<b>Senior Elite success</b>	Medal winner at the Paralympics or World Championships.  Selection onto Australian team for Paralympics or WEG.  National Gold Squad.
	<b>E3</b>	<b>Sustained Elite success</b>	A Paralympic or World Championship medallist over consecutive or multiple high performance cycles.  Multiple Team selection.  National Gold Squad.



## THE NATIONAL CAMP PROGRAM

The National Camp Program consists of two key elements. The first are combination-based camps which focuses on the athlete and the horse, while the second is more focused on just athlete development.

### Combination-based Camps

TOPICS	DETAILS
Veterinary	Fitness, maintenance, preventative veterinary interventions
Periodisation	Competition scheduling: micro, meso and macro cycles
Rules and Tests	Theory and practical
Logistics and competition preparation	Travel preparation
AIS and FEI compliance	Education and certification
Test analysis	Video review
Team coaching	Working in a team environment
On horse, grade specific training	
Competition Preparation	Warmup routine and etiquette

### Athlete Specific Camps

TOPICS	DETAILS
Strength and Conditioning	Screening Home programs
Recovery	Exposure to HP Recovery plans Targeted individual plans for competition
Culture	Contributing to a successful team environment and adopting key values and beliefs
Marketing and Communication	Sponsor and owner relationships Media training Personal PR management
Resilience Training	ADF-based activities
Sport Psychology	Sport psychology and psychological skills training
Nutrition	General Competition specific
Strength and Conditioning	Screening Home programs
Recovery	Exposure to HP recovery plans Targeted individual plans for competition



## OUR KEY PEOPLE

---

The Equine Pathways Australia Program is supported by a team of specialised service providers who have been involved in equestrian sport for many years, not only in able-bodied & Olympic sport, but also in Riding for the Disabled, High Performance and Paralympic sport.

Between them they have coached riders at all levels and have been in head coach or management and support roles at 10 Paralympic Games, 3 Olympic Games, 15 World Championships and countless other international events.

---

### **Management & Administration**

Brett Mace	<i>Chairman</i>
Julia Battams	<i>Program Executive Manager</i>
Sally Francis	<i>EPA Team Management</i>
Sammy Gribbin	<i>Administration &amp; Marketing</i>

---

### **Veterinary Advisor**

Dr. Denis Goulding MRCVS

---

### **Recreational & NDIS**

Shelley Earl

---

### **Exercise Physiology**

Adam Luther	Rachelle Sultana
Joseph Busacca	

---

### **Psychology**

Jack Hudson Williams	Jackie Sandland
Edel Langan	Damien Stewart

---

### **Occupational Therapy**

Kat Steward	Bianca Kinnear
Nicola Hayes	

---

### **Physiotherapy**

Victoria Kahn	Tory Liarakos
Anna Boden	Declan Osborne
Emily Peacock	Chris Wynne

---

### **Coaching**

Mary Longden	Samantha Bartlett
Lindsay Batt-Rawlins	Glenda Hinchcliffe
Tony Uytendaal	Ruth Schneeberger
Jessie Fountain	Heather Currie
Mel Parbery	Jim Collin
Sally Barbera	Liz Owens

---



# PROGRAM SCHEDULE OF EVENTS & ACTIVITIES

Below is the EPA program across each of the 3 years in the plan. Dates of clinics, other activities and confirmation of events for each year will be confirmed by the commencement of each year, though externally organised competitions and events are beyond the control of EPA.

## 2022 CLINIC, CAMP & COMPETITION PROGRAM

2022	VIC	SA	NSW	WA	QLD	NATIONAL CAMP	DOMESTIC COMPETITION	INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
JAN	Competition Preparation Clinic 18/19 Jan					Athlete/Horse Camp Boneo Park VIC EPA Awards Night	Boneo CPEDI 20-23	
FEB	Clinic	Clinic	Clinic					
MAR	Clinic				Clinic			
APR	Clinic	Clinic	Clinic				8-10 National 2021 Para Championship, Boneo	
MAY	Clinic			Clinic		Athlete/Horse Camp Sydney, NSW	Key Event Sydney TBC	
JUN	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic			
JUL	Clinic	Clinic						6 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> CPEDI Hartpury - UK
AUG	Clinic			Clinic				6 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> World Champs Herning, DEN
SEP	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic	MRC Raceday and EPA Promotion & Conference weekend		
OCT	Clinic	Clinic				Athlete Only Camp		
NOV	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic	Athlete/Horse Camp Boneo	2022 Para Nationals TBC	
DEC	Clinic							





## 2023 CLINIC, CAMP & COMPETITION PROGRAM

2023	VIC	SA	NSW	WA	QLD	NATIONAL	DOMESTIC COMPETITION	INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
JAN							Boneo Park, VIC	
FEB	Clinic 19/20	Clinic 5/6	Clinic 12/13					
MAR	Clinic 5/6				Clinic 20/21			Boneo 10-13
APR	Clinic 2/3 Competition Preparation Clinic at Boneo 6/7	Clinic 23/24	Clinic 30/1 May			22 Blue Diamond Ball	7-10 National 2021 Para Championships, Boneo	26-28 April Sydney CDI Lite
MAY	Clinic 7/8			Clinic 28/29		Athlete/Horse Camp Sydney, NSW (TBC)	Boneo Monthly Dressage 14/15	
JUN	Clinic 4/5		Clinic (remove this clinic)		Clinic 26/27		Boneo Monthly Dressage 11/12	CPEDI Boneo Winter 9-12 June
JUL	Clinic	Clinic						6 <sup>th</sup> -10 <sup>th</sup> CPEDI Hartpury - UK
AUG	Clinic			Clinic			26-28 RDA Dressage Championships, Sydney	6 <sup>th</sup> -14 <sup>th</sup> World Champs Herring, DEN
SEP	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic	MRC Raceday and EPA Promotion & Conference weekend		
OCT	Clinic	Clinic				Athlete Only Camp		
NOV	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic	Athlete/Horse Camp Boneo	2022 Para Nationals TBC	
DEC	Clinic							



## 2024 CLINIC, CAMP & COMPETITION PROGRAM

2024	VIC	SA	NSW	WA	QLD	NATIONAL CAMP	DOMESTIC COMPETITION	INTERNATIONAL COMPETITION
JAN	Competition Preparation Clinic						Athlete/Horse Camp Boneo Park VIC	19 <sup>th</sup> -21 <sup>st</sup> CPEDI/Paralympic Selection event Boneo Park, VIC
FEB	Clinic		Clinic		Clinic			
MAR	Clinic	Clinic				Clinic		
APR	Clinic		Clinic	Clinic				
MAY	Clinic	Clinic					Athlete/Horse Camp Sydney	Paralympic Selection event Sydney, NSW TBC
JUN	Clinic		Clinic			Clinic		
JUL	Clinic	Clinic		Clinic			Athlete Only Camp	
AUG	Clinic						14 <sup>th</sup> -28 <sup>th</sup> TBC Paralympic Staging camp* Non-EPA Activity	Paralympic, Paris
SEP	Clinic				Clinic	Clinic		Paralympic, Paris
OCT	Clinic		Clinic					
NOV	Clinic	Clinic				Clinic	Para National Champs TBC	
DEC	Clinic						Dressage Festival Melbourne, VIC	

**Note:**

1. The Paralympic Staging event is a non-EPA event, for selected Paralympic Team members

