

Introducing . . .

Pony Club for Those Without Horses

There is an exciting new pathway for people to join the Pony Club system.

Pony Club has been in Australia for 80 years and has benefitted thousands of riders and their horses. PCA has always been passionate about making horse riding safer for humans and better for horses. Now we want to make it possible for children and adults who don't yet, or are unlikely to ever have their own horse, to enjoy the Pony Club experience too. If they do go on and get their own horse, they can join a Pony Club.

We are in the process of accrediting interested, quality horse riding centres around Australia so they can deliver lessons using the highly regarded Pony Club Australia syllabus to those who don't have their own mount.

It won't mean your Pony Club has less members, because Centre Membership is designed precisely for riders who cannot currently join a Pony Club. What it does mean is a new pathway for riders to get involved in Pony Club. If riders 'test out' Pony Club at a PCA accredited riding centre, they may be encouraged to get their own horse and join an existing Pony Club like yours and attend rallies. We know you will have some questions. Hopefully these will answer them for you. If not, please contact us.

Has this been done before?

Yes, and very successfully. For the past 10 years, Pony Club in the United Kingdom (PCUK) has made it possible for riders without horses to work through the Pony Club Syllabus by riding school horses at riding schools they have approved. In fact, around 40 percent of all UK Pony Club riders ride at PCUK Linked Centres. Some of these riders will never be in a position to own their own horse. Others will go on to own their own horse and join a Pony Club. Those who discontinue riding will at least have a better appreciation of what the sport entails.

Will it work in Australia?

We are already getting plenty of interest in the concept of 'Centre Membership' from potential



riders and from riding centres. We have a waiting list of potential riders so it is clear there is a demand for this opportunity.

How does Centre Membership work?

The Centre Membership program is for riders young and old who are new or returning to riding. Centre Member Riders will join Pony Club Australia and ride at Pony Club Accredited Centres.

Centre Membership is **ONLY** for riders who do not have their own horse, or the exclusive use of a horse. Riders will be transferred to club membership at a Pony Club if those circumstances change.

Centre Membership is a great way for us to welcome new participants into our sport whilst maintaining our priority on rider safety and horse welfare. It also means that people can make more informed decisions before deciding to purchase a horse, and will be better educated to provide optimal horse care.

What if our club already has 'Riders without Horses' activities/open days?

Your club can still operate this program. But from now on, it may be more convenient for the club to refer these enquiries to a local PCA accredited riding centre.

I have a friend without a horse; can I tell them?

We hope you will. People can register their interest with the PCA Participation Manager who will let them know if there is an accredited centre nearby, or when one in the district becomes accredited. This is a very new concept and more centres are enquiring about the process. As riding centres sign up, they will be listed on the PCA website as well.

We have a riding school/centre in our district; can we tell them?

Yes, we hope you will. A centre will need their own school horses to run this program. Information on the PCA website will help them find out more, or they can contact the PCA Participation Manager (details below).

Why is this open to adults too?

Many Pony Clubs already have adult riders, while others have lifted the age of membership to 25 years or more, having seen a need. PCA has also seen a need among those who do not have their own horse. There are adults who used to go to Pony Club and who now want to return to riding but don't want to jump back in and buy a horse straight away; adults who want to share riding with their friends and family; adults who want to learn under a recognised, successful system of instruction; nervous adults who want the security of a school horse, and those who dreamed of going to Pony Club when younger but never got the chance.

What are the benefits for our Pony Club?

Our new Centre Membership program has been funded by Sport Australia, so it does not require any additional work from clubs, but clubs get to benefit in a number of ways:

- Centre Membership is only for riders without their own horses (the riders who are ineligible for club membership). If and when Centre Members get their own horse – or the exclusive use of a horse (ie a full lease), they will be transferred from centre membership to a club membership and will need to join a club to continue working through the PCA Syllabus.
- Centre members count in our member numbers, so they will increase the number of Pony Club members in your district. This makes your grant and funding applications more persuasive.
- Growing the number of participants in our sport is good for everyone working, playing and competing in the horse community and industry.

- Where Centre Members participate in club-run events, events may be more highly attended. This can make them more profitable and increase competition which helps all our riders develop.
- When coaches from Pony Club Accredited Centres seek additional training through the PCA NCAS, they will enrol in Pony Club coach training programs.
- There will be more work for PCA NCAS coaches as centres seek coaches to fulfil increasing demand at their centres.
- As we promote Centre Membership, we are simultaneously promoting the Pony Club brand for our clubs.

We can't wait to hear about all the other unexpected benefits that will come from expanding the Pony Club community to riders without horses.

What can we, as a Club, do to help?

- Some Pony Clubs may be interested in helping train new coaches for centres, as coaches at accredited riding centres must be qualified to teach the PCA syllabus.
- Some centres may want their members to attend their local Pony Club – maybe to compete, or perhaps attend a rally as a visitor. This will give you the chance to promote the benefits of Pony Club (and in particular your Club) to potential new members. (Centre members have Personal Accident and Public Liability insurance whilst undertaking Pony Club activities.)
- You can download the Centre Member brochure from the PCA website and hand it out or email it to visitors to your Club, who are interested in joining your Club when they get a pony. You can start them on the Pony Club journey straight away, at a riding centre.
- You can distribute brochures to local schools and community centres or place a notice in your school and community newsletters.
- We love to promote good news stories from our clubs. Please let us know how Centre Membership has benefitted your club and you might find yourself in the Pony Club newsletters, social media and mainstream media. (We also want to know if there are any issues, so we can assist.)

For further information, contact the Participation Manager Kirrilly Thompson on 0413 616 650 or centremember@ponyclubaustralia.com.au