

SEPTEMBER 7 2021 - 7:00PM

Stawell Pony Club growing in popularity after opening membership to adults

Tallis Miles



+1

Picture: CONTRIBUTED

After making some key changes to their membership model, the Stawell Pony Club has been revitalised with member numbers growing.

In early 2020 the Stawell Pony Club had just four members with only children able to be a part of the group.

But after rallying a committee and making some key changes, the Stawell Pony Club has grown its support base to over 40 in just 18 months.

Stawell Pony Club district commissioner Narelle O'Callaghan rejoined the group after a few years away to help guide it in a new direction.

Ms O'Callaghan said a key step in helping the struggling group was getting together a strong committee.

"Prior to 18 months ago I don't think there were any adult members," she said.

"Adults were able to ride at the ground because of their membership, but not on rally days.

"We got the committee together in two weeks before the AGM and we opened up the club to an adult base.

"To get a committee was the start, then we used social media, word of mouth and 'come and try' days to get people involved.

"Many people who have come to the 'come and try' days will join and they say they have enjoyed the atmosphere of the club."

A life member of the club, Ms O'Callaghan was part of the group for 15 years while her daughter was riding, but when she left Ms O'Callaghan also left.

But she loves the club and wanted to see it thriving once again.

18 months after having just four registered riders the club now boasts 19 adult members, seven junior members, four rookie members, three senior members and eight club supporters.

"We have done it all during COVID and so we have done pretty well to get the club back on the map as such," she said.

"It has been really nice to have the chance to meet new people and widen our friendship group and social group.

"That is one of the things that has drawn more members to us."

Throughout the year the club aims to hold 11 rally events, which run on the first Sunday of each month.

These days involve three hours of rotating disciplines and training with three different instructors as well as lunch.

The Stawell Pony Club grounds are at 49 Bulgana Road, Stawell, and Ms O'Callaghan encouraged anyone interested in joining the group, young or old to get in touch.

"In my role I have been trying to ensure we have a variety of instructors and disciplines every month to encourage people to come along and try different things," she said.

"When we blend the groups with adults and children it has been really good, which I didn't know how that would go.

"Going forward for Pony Club, this is the way to go.

"We don't have an adult riding club in our town, so it makes sense to combine the two age groups for such a smaller population.

"We suggest for people to come unmounted when they first arrive for the day and they need to be registered as a 'come and try' or member for a rally, but we want to see anyone get involved."

Stawell Pony Club vice-president Emma Forrester and president Nell Carter are examples of two new adult riding members. Ms Forrester is from Horsham and Ms Carter is from Haven with both stepping up to save the club by taking on committee positions.

Sue Tyrrell as treasurer and Malinda Hall as secretary also helped for the all important committee, with all holding these positions again after the latest AGM, hosted in August.