



Barbara Heine OAM

RDA Australia is mourning the loss of a very special friend and supporter of the Riding for the Disabled Association (RDA). Barbara had been battling a rare and aggressive lymphoma for the past 18 months. Her positive attitude, courage and good humour in coping with her illness was an inspiration to all at RDA.



Photo: Courtesy of Matthew Furneaux (MacedonTelegraph)

Barb's enthusiasm and professional skill in the development of an innovative therapeutic riding program 'Hippotherapy' nationally, was hugely valued and very much appreciated by RDA members in every State.

Barbara was recently awarded the Medal (OAM), the Order of Australia for service to the community through her work with Hippotherapy - a Health Service Division of the Riding for the Disabled Association of Australia; and, to children and their families through her personal charity, the Kids & Families Foundation.

Barbara was surprised and delighted to learn she would receive the medal:

"It's a lovely recognition, but you don't do it for any other reason than it's a passion. I've been involved in philanthropy for a long time and I've always been a volunteer and that's why it's a humbling surprise. You don't expect it and when it's so unexpected, you think 'isn't it wonderful that someone noticed?'"

Barbara was involved in hippotherapy for over 20 years. She came across the therapy in the US in 1987 and brought it back to Australia in 1994. Hippotherapy is a unique treatment approach to rehabilitation provided to children & adults with brain damage by specially trained physiotherapists, occupational therapists and speech-language pathologists using equine movement. Barbara was the RDAA Chairwoman of the Hippotherapy Committee. She said:

"I've been a physio all my life and a horse person all my life. So it was like God had given me the gift of the perfect job. It was the most natural marriage for me of the two things I love and I love kids. I've seen it result in a wonderfully positive change in a child's ability to function. It didn't exist in Australia before then, so all the physios that practice here now I have trained."

Barbara's goal was to one day have RDAA Hippotherapy Programs running in every state.

Barbara's unique contribution, enthusiasm and generous spirit will be sorely missed. The RDAA Board and Members of Riding for the Disabled Association extend their deepest sympathy and our thoughts go out to Barbara's family and friends at this sad time.

Ross Goulden

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RDAA President