

Dressage NSW Inc 2024 Annual General Meeting

Minutes

Held via Zoom

Thursday 12th December 2024

Meeting opened at 7.02pm

1. Welcome and Apologies

Present

Mandy Jones	Julie Jones	Kay Barney
Jo Gunn	Gail Benson	Sue Birch
Zanna Northam	Krystina Burdekin	Lynda Bruce
Mel Gough	Kaye Spence	Bruce McVey
Christan Trainor	Toni Venhaus	Cathie Drury-Klein
Angela Dalby	Imogen Thew	Karma Wilson
Kristen Closson	Marjolyn Thomas	Michelle Becchio
Moir Kelly	Nicky Rockwell	Sue Scaysbrook
Suzanne Cunningham	Wendy Bruszewski	
Mary Houghton		

Proxies

None

2. Apologies

Diana Hitchcock	Franz Venhaus	Dee Vodden
Kyli Bullock	Sally Ann Barbera	Earle Olaisen
Rachael Downs		

The Chair (Mandy Jones) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

3. Confirmation of the Annual General Meeting Minutes, November 2023

Motion: That the minutes be accepted as correct.

Moved: Toni Venhaus **Seconded:** Jo Gunn

Motion Carried

4. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

5. President's Report

The 2024 event calendar has been full to the brim for dressage in NSW with over 200 events scheduled throughout NSW, including closed and competitive events. Over the years we have seen a reduction in the traditional Christmas competition break to now just a couple of weeks' break before competitions start in earnest in the new year. Additionally, there were a number of club training/protocol events. On any given weekend there are between 3 and 7 scheduled events across the state.

The number of dressage licenses has increased in 2024 to 2,800 from 2,735 in 2023.

AOR has grown from strength to strength since its inception and Equibility, a relatively new initiative as a branch of Para-equestrian, is increasing in popularity with many clubs now feeling confident to offer Equibility classes to meet the growing demand for this new competition pathway.

Dressage NSW has co-opted Emily James as the AOR representative. Emily is working on ideas with the NSW Riders Rep, Krystina Burdekin for ways to improve AOR engagement and education.

The volunteers on the Dressage NSW committee have worked tirelessly to deliver successful major events, judge education, develop high performance and Jo Gunn, Honorary Secretary has spent countless hours calculating performance medals and leaderboard results. Her task is complicated by continuing issues with the accuracy of the EA results database. I urge all riders and owners to check their own results on the EA results site, and draw ENSW's attention to any errors.

Events

As many of the NSW major events are held in the early part of the financial year and the DNSW AGM towards the end of the calendar year, a summary of 2023 and 2024 events is included in this report.

Major events were again a highlight of the dressage calendar, however entries across the board are seeing a reduction from previous years. The cost of hosting major events has increased and of particular note this appears to be a growing trend internationally with a number of high profile events especially in the UK being cancelled for financial viability reasons.

The Australian Youth Dressage Championships was held in July 2023 at SIEC. Bruce McVey led a strong team of volunteers to deliver a successful, enjoyable event with terrific performances by talented young riders. Bruce also led the 2024 NSW Youth Championships in July 2024, another successful event. Members may be interested to know that when a state hosts the Australian Youth Championships, that state does not hold their state youth championship the same year. The 2025 Australian Youth Dressage Championships will be hosted by Wagga Wagga Dressage Club which will be a terrific boost for the region.

2023 NSW State Championships saw 214 riders on 291 horses enter 481 tests. This event is an enormous undertaking, incorporating 3 separate state championship divisions - AOR, Para and Open divisions ably overseen by Event Director Karen Lever. 2024 NSW State Championships was again organized by Karen, with 155 riders, 209 horses entering 318 tests. The 2025 NSW State Championships will be held in Tamworth and it is hoped this will be a boost for their region.

Toni Venhaus ensured the 2024 Sydney CDI was another resounding success. The event was livestreamed by Horse and Country, and spectators on the Saturday event enjoyed the stallion showcase. The 2024 CDI saw lower entry numbers than the record high achieved in 2023, however the number of spectators was higher than 2023. After consulting Equestrian Australia a CPEDI was not incorporated into the event. Instead, the Para Olympic selection event was held in conjunction with the Hawkesbury Dressage Festival in July 2024. Toni Venhaus' stewardship of the event was superb as always. Jo Gunn admirably coordinated the volunteers. Plans are well underway for the 2025 Sydney CDI.

Toni also ran the 2024 Australian Dressage Championships with 136 riders, 189 horses entering 343 tests. The 2025 Australian Dressage Championships will be held at SIEC.

Judge Education

Judge education during the 2023-24 financial year saw DNSW hold 2 workshops: 1 virtual (79 attendees), 1 at SIEC (44 attendees), 4 seminars: 3 at SIEC, 1 at AELEC, resulting in 4 upgraded and 4 newly accredited judges. At the recent 2024 Australian Championships a number of exams, shadows, sit ins and other activities to support upgrading judges were offered.

The DNSW judge education platform, Engage, has continued to grow and has recently welcomed Victorian judges who are excited to access and benefit from the educational resources which streamlines education and enhances opportunities for judges. The content includes videos, clear descriptions of movements and required knowledge. It also reduces the costs to judges while they gain knowledge and move through the accreditation or upgrade process.

Steward Education

With the introduction of the rule requiring an accredited EA Steward to officiate at all Open Competitive competitions, steward education has been another focus. In the 2024 financial year three steward courses have been held with 31 newly accredited EA Stewards: Hunter Valley (12 attendees: 6 new accreditations and 3 refresher), Young (14 attendees: 7 new accreditations and 1 refresher) and SIEC (19 attendees: 18 newly accredited.)

General Education

In addition to dedicated judge and steward education the 2024 Sydney CDI Workshop was run as a 'through the levels' masterclass starting from Novice and progressing through to Grand Prix presented by Sandy Hotz, FEI Level 3/4* Judge from USA.

Thanks to Equestrian NSW's sponsorship of \$3,500 EA accredited coaches and judges were able to attend free of charge.

High Performance

In line with EA directives, High Performance will transition to 'Pathways' and DNSW looks forward to working with EA/ENSW to implement the template for Dressage Pathways .

In the meantime, members may recall from last year that the HP Squad was re-named the HP Team to better reflect a culture of sportsmanship, collaboration and support. High Performance riders continue to meet regularly at clinics where they work as a team with the goal of developing each horse to Grand Prix and shine at all our biggest events. This year all members of the team have stepped up levels and been in the top prizes of all competitions at all shows. The team has also shown commitment to each other and the benefits of team work shines through. Team clinics, zoom calls, a team chat and a team aisle at all shows develops this spirit where all watch, help and support each other for the big cause to support and collaborate to be better as riders and sportspeople. The success of our team members at this years competitions shows this is a great formula. The HP Team is open to all DNSW members who achieve qualifying scores, and coordinator Zanna Northam has her eye on results enabling her to identify riders for a 'watch list'. The HP Team currently includes an AOR and Young Rider as well as professional riders.

Regional

In the latter half of 2023 funds were disbursed to a number of clubs to support their activities, in particular the South East NSW "4 Clubs Challenge", a wonderful initiative for the region. Dressage NSW provides medals to clubs (on request) for their championship events.

In 2024 funding was also used to support regional judge education and Dressage NSW assisted clubs running judge education seminars by facilitating the theory and submitting attendance reports to EA in most cases eg Tamworth, Jinderra, Hunter Valley.

A number of Dressage NSW committee members also volunteer their time as officials or scribes at regional club competitions and attend educational initiatives hosted by clubs.

Horse Welfare

The DNSW committee continues to keep abreast of horse welfare issues. Competitions throughout the state are run under the rules of EA and FEI and accredited Stewards monitor horse welfare and rider safety at all EA events.

Horse welfare must always be paramount. Clubs and riders throughout NSW have expressed concern with the '2 test' rule introduced by EA in 2022 as this rule is not consistent with other disciplines, eg eventing, where a horse can compete in 3 phases in one day, showjumping where horses may compete in 3 rounds, and show horse where the number of classes per day is limited only by the show program. At the recent EADC/SDA meeting DNSW lobbied for a rule change to allow 3 tests at lower levels. The outcome is not yet known.

Horse welfare must always be at the forefront of any decision.

Challenges

An ever present challenge is the availability of judges, and the very full calendar impacting the availability of judges, stewards and venues. Dressage NSW invests significant resources into judge education and our judges are then utilised by other disciplines including pony club, eventing, interschools and more recently working equitation. This is not sustainable unless all user groups identify people from within their own ranks to train as judges.

The ability to run financially viable competitions has been impacted by the current financial landscape. Clubs are facing rising costs including costs associated with rule compliance and venue hire. Events are increasingly needing to pass these costs on to the riders, often resulting in reduced entries which further impacts the viability of the event. The rising cost of living poses challenges that impact all facets of the sport. We have anecdotal reports of riders having to decide between the cost of training or competing as frequently. Much discussion amongst riders is happening on social media around increased costs and how this is leading to riders cherry picking which events they can attend.

Volunteers are a decreasing resource, which has been felt not only across all equestrian disciplines, but across other sports and community organisations in general. The DNSW committee believes that our volunteers are one of our most valuable resources. Many of our new regular volunteers are coming through from our younger sport participant ranks. We are hearing reports of long standing and valued volunteers not being able to keep up with the use of the current technology and seeking to retire from their traditional volunteer role. Volunteers are a special breed and we certainly hope our valued helpers find ways to continue their involvement in the sport. It is important that riders continue to volunteer at local and major events to help minimise entry fees and assist the viability of events.

Club competitions underpin the sport and a number of clubs are reviewing their competition day models and increasingly pivoting to the previously popular model of clubs offering both competitive (formerly Official) and closed restricted/unrestricted (formerly Unofficial) competitions at each event. This model tends to cater for a broader section of the riding community and places less of a drain on resources such as judge and steward availability, volunteers and the financial implications for both riders and clubs.

Clarendon

As members will be aware, HDAA will not be renewing the Licence Agreement with DNSW. In 2022, with no prospect of renewing the licence expiring in 2025, DNSW considered early termination in an endeavour to save continuing outgoings in the form of licence fee and maintenance. At the request of 'Save Clarendon' DNSW agreed to not seek early termination and a sub-committee led by Sue Scaysbrook continued to run competitions and training days in 2023 and 2024. The final event led by this team was held in November 2024 and the DNSW committee extends thanks to the sub-committee members.

Save Clarendon commenced lobbying the broader community in August 2024. A 12 month trial for the grounds to be hired on a 'user pays' basis was proposed. The proposal included an offer by DNSW to place \$100,000 in trust for remediation of the grounds should HDAA deem the trial unsuccessful. Regrettably HDAA declined this proposal. At the time of writing negotiations with HDAA, Hawkesbury Council and ENSW are ongoing while HDAA is still seeking to enforce the terms of the Licence Agreement requiring DNSW to return the grounds to flat earth.

I would like to acknowledge all DNSW Committee members and thank them for their ongoing commitment to our sport. Of particular note, volunteer and hostess extraordinaire, Gail Benson will step down from her DNSW Committee role at this AGM having served the maximum time under the Constitution. We thank Gail for her many years of dedication and contribution to the sport. Gail assures us she will still be the 'face of hospitality' at our major events – thank you Gail!

Sue Birch, Kylie Bullock, Mel Gough, Lynda Bruce, Jo Gunn (Secretary) Kay Barney (Vice-President) and Di Hitchcock (Treasurer) contribute as elected committee members. Julie Jones (current Vice-President and Chair of the Judge Sub-Committee) and Zanna Northam (High Performance) are eligible and have nominated for re-election for a new term. Our regions are represented by Area Delegates:

Mel Gough (Metro and surrounds), Bruce McVey (Hunter/Central Coast, North Coast, New England), Kaye Spence (Southern Region/West/Murrumbidgee), Christan Trainer (South Coast/Highlands/Illawarra) Completing the committee are co-opted members Toni Venhaus (Major Events) and Krystina Burdekin (Riders Rep)

Thank you to all committee members for countless hours contributing to our sport.

Dressage NSW is most grateful to Equestrian NSW for their ongoing support, enabling it to deliver and develop the sport throughout the state.

Mandy Jones
President
Dressage NSW
December 2024

6. Honorary Secretary's Report

Dressage NSW has had a busy year overseeing the running of four major events, the Sydney CDI in April, NSW Youth Dressage Championships in July, NSW Dressage Championships in August, and the Australian Dressage Championships in October. These events require a huge commitment from the teams involved in the organisation and rely heavily on volunteers to ensure a successful outcome. Many thanks to our exceptional event directors who pull everything together. Toni Venhaus did an amazing job running both the Sydney CDI and Australian Dressage Championships with her committed teams. We saw the return of a stallion show and service auction at the CDI which was a very helpful fund-raising initiative. Toni's continuing commitment is greatly appreciated by the committee and dressage community. Karen Lever ran a very successful NSW Dressage Championships and worked wonders in securing sponsorship and ensuring we ran to a tight budget. NSW Youth Championships was very well run by DNSW committee members with Di Hitchcock, Bruce McVey and Sue Birch at the helm.

We have also had a successful year providing multiple judge education opportunities and exams assisting in the ongoing objective to increase the number of judges across all levels in all regions. In February we ran a multi-level judge seminar and competition at the Sydney International Equestrian Centre. The format worked very well and was well attended by judges and competitors. We will run a similar event in February 2025 and will include seminars for all EA levels, FEI levels and Young Horse over three days. A number of steward education courses have been held both in 2023/2024 in the regions and metropolitan area increasing the number of stewards considerably.

The Clarendon Sub-Committee have run a number of successful competitions and training days throughout the year at the Clarendon grounds which were very popular. The DNSW committee and riders are grateful to the team involved. The licence agreement between Dressage NSW and Hawkesbury District Agricultural Association ends on June 30th, 2025. The future of the arenas is still under discussion and we all hope for a positive outcome.

As the SDA (State Dressage Authority) we manage the day-to-day administration of the sport throughout NSW. Our responsibilities include:

- representing dressage in NSW with the EADC (Equestrian Australia Dressage Council)
- running major events held within NSW
- liaising with the EADC with regards to formulation of the rules of the sport
- supporting our high performance dressage team
- maintaining the NSW dressage event calendar
- conducting seminars and workshops for judges by way of the Judges Sub-Committee
- assisting with steward education

- facilitating and supporting judge's exams and shadow opportunities by way of the Judges Sub-Committee
- providing annual awards and performance medals for our members

Planning is well underway for 2025. After our judge seminar and competition in February we have the Sydney CDI running from April 30th – May 3rd. The Australian Young Rider Championships is being run in Wagga Wagga in July by the local club. The NSW Dressage Championships is moving to AELEC in Tamworth in August 2025. The Australian Dressage Championships will again be run by NSW at SIEC in mid-October.

Eleven committee meetings have been held since the last AGM.

The Committee would like to thank Gail Benson for her long-standing dedication to Dressage NSW. Thankfully Gail will continue to assist with hospitality at major events and I'm sure will continue to arrange the extremely popular Pirouettes Party where our annual award and medal recipients are recognised.

We acknowledge that despite our best efforts clubs are continually struggling to secure judges and stewards at times especially when multiple events are being held. Judge and steward education continues to be a major focus of the DNSW Committee, and we will do all we can to support this statewide for the benefit of everyone in NSW.

A major challenge to Dressage NSW and all clubs is the ever-increasing cost of running events. We are very grateful for the wonderful sponsorship by many generous companies and individuals, and the annual funding we receive from ENSW.

We continue to struggle to find enough volunteers at our events. We cannot run without people helping us. Please consider giving some of your time to the sport you enjoy.

DNSW Membership numbers have decreased this year. A handout of the member statistics is attached for your reference.

Our Annual Awards and Performance Medals qualifying period for 2024 was from the September 4th 2023 to September 2nd 2024. The qualifying period in 2025 will be from September 2nd 2024 to August 18th 2025

147 Performance Medals were won by members this year of which 18 were Gold , 46 Silver and 83 Bronze. Congratulations to all our medal recipients and our annual award winners.

In accordance with the DNSW constitution four (4) committee positions become vacant each year. We have received six (6) nominations: Sally-Ann Barbera, Krystina Burdekin, Julie Jones, Zanna Northam, Marjelyn Thomas and Karma Wilson.

The voting process is being handled by Vero Voting. The outcome will be announced at the AGM.

In closing, thank you to all our hard working Committee members and Delegates for your assistance and support during the past year.

Joanna Gunn
Honorary Secretary
Dressage NSW
 December 2024

7. Honorary Treasurer's Report

In the absence of the Treasurer, Diane Hitchcock the vice-president Kay Barney delivered the report and also responded to questions submitted by members regarding the financials.

This year has been a demanding one for all DNSW committee members and event organisers especially as they take on running our major competitions. The aim is always to break even at each of the competitions and organising committees endeavour to have a contingency in the case of a loss. This year has seen extra financial burdens due to increased costs, which must be passed on to competitors in order to make an event financially viable. Unfortunately, and acknowledged by DNSW, the extra financial burdens often impacts a competitor's ability to enter an event.

We have also had a major restructure with our accounting methods:

You will notice several new line items in the audited accounts. This is a reflection of new P&L codes in order to micronize our accounting which will enable us to identify exactly where we are spending our funds and to assist Dressage NSW to achieve a sustainable future.

As an example, historically some items have been posted as 'Expenses', whereas in 2024 they are now more correctly coded as 'Cost of Sales'. We have removed codes that relate to events from 'Expenses' and recoded them under 'Cost of Sales'. The reason for this is that event or activity expenditure is only incurred if it directly relates to events or activities – so it is a 'cost of sale'. For example, if we didn't run the competition there would be no 'cost of sale'. In contrast, general administration is an expense for DNSW as administration costs are still payable regardless of whether an event was run.

We are also now breaking down entry fees received from Nominate into entry fees, stabling, bedding, camping etc to better correlate with the SIEC invoices which have the corresponding breakdowns of charges. This enables us to better analyse our accounts and income/expenditure for events.

The audited accounts show apparent variances when compared with the previous financial year however when analysed within the accounts, the totals are within margin of last year's figures.

Whilst this may appear confusing at first glance it allows for better reporting across the board and I will speak to these changes at the AGM

Lastly, I would like to give my appreciation to the entire committee who have helped me over the past year.

A special shout out to all our Event Directors who did a fabulous job running our events in a fiscally responsible manner despite the drop of entries and sponsorship opportunities.

Diana Hitchcock
Hon Treasurer
December 2024

Sue Scaysbrook queried the accuracy of the pie chart which was attached to the Treasurer's report and questioned if the Treasurer's report could be accepted under the circumstances.

In the absence of the Treasurer the vice-president Kay Barney agreed there were errors in the pie chart which will be directed to the Treasurer, but explained that the chart was an addendum to the Treasurer's report and not part of the Treasurer's report.

Motion: That the Honorary Treasurer's Report be accepted
Moved: Marjolyn Thomas **Seconded:** Jo Gunn
Motion Carried

Motion:

a) That the committee resolves that financial report presents fairly the financial position of Dressage NSW Incorporated as of 30 June 2021 and its performance for the year ended on that date in accordance with Australian Accounting Standards, mandatory professional reporting requirements and other authoritative pronouncements of the Australian Standards Board

b) At the date of this statement, there are reasonable grounds to believe that Dressage NSW Incorporated will be able to pay its debts as and when they fall due.

Moved: Mel Gough

Seconded: Kay Barney

Motion Carried

8. Appointment of Auditor

Motion: That DNSW appoint "Tinworth & Co" as auditor for the 2024/2025 financial year.

Moved: Nicky Rockwell **Seconded:** Jo Gunn

Motion Carried.

9. Committee Elections

President Mandy Jones advised the meeting that Gail Benson was stepping down from the committee at the conclusion of her 3 x 3 years term. Gail has been on the DNSW committee for 20 years. Mandy thanked Gail for her time and her hard work, and states that Gail was most deservedly the "Face of Hospitality" in NSW dressage.

In accordance with the DNSW constitution four (4) committee positions become vacant each year.

Gail Benson stepped down after 3x3 year terms as per the constitution.

Julie Jones and Zanna Northam had to restand as per the constitution.

Krystina Burdekin filled a casual vacancy mid-term and had to restand.

Five (6) nominations were received being from Julie Jones, Krystina Burdekin, Karma Wilson, Marjelyn Thomas, Sally Ann Barbera and Zanna Northam.

A ballot was conducted by Vero Votes.

The committee members elected as a result of the ballot, for the 2025-2027 term were Julie Jones, Krystina Burdekin, Karma Wilson and Sally Ann Barbera.

10. General Business

There was no general business.

11. Close of Meeting the President declared the meeting closed at 7.28pm**DNSW Membership Comparison****As at June 2024**

Members	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
Ordinary	445	440	455	445	437	405	405	405	236	261
Life & Hon	90	90	83	84	83	84	83	82	82	82
Junior	31	38	69	75	66	61	52	61	44	38
Total	566	568	607	604	586	550	540	548	362	381

DNSW Committee Attendance Record July 2023 to June 2024

	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun
Elected Committee	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom	Zoom
Mandy Jones	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A
Julie Jones	AP	A	A	A	AP	AP	C	A	A	A	A	A
Kay Barney	A	A	A	AP	A	A	C	A	AP	AP	AP	AP
Jo Gunn	AP	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A
Dee Vodden	A	AP	A	A	A	A	C	A	AP			
Di Hitchcock				A	A	A	C	AP	A	A	A	AP
Gail Benson	A	A	A	AP	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A
Kathy Shelley	A	A	A	A	A	A	C					
Krystina Burdekin										A	A	
Kyli Bullock	AP	A	A	A	A	A	C	AP	A	A	AP	AP
Lynda Bruce							C		AP	A	A	A
Mel Gough	AP	A	A	AP	A	A	C	AP	AP	A	A	A
Sue Birch	A	A	A	AP	A	AP	C	A	A	A	A	A
Sue Cunningham	A	A	A	AP	AP		C					
Zanna Northam	A	A	A	AP	A	AP	C	A		AP	AP	A

Co-opted members

Krystina Burdekin	A	AP	A	A		A	C		A	A	A	
Pamela Bice	A	A					C					
Toni Venhaus	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	AP	A	A	AP	A

Delegates

Bruce McVey	A	A	A	A	A	A	C	A	A	A	A	A
Christan Trainor			A	A	AP	A	C	AP	A	AP	A	A
Kaye Spence	A	AP		A		AP	C		A	A	A	A
Marjolyn Thomas		A	A		AP		C					
Mel Gough	AP	A	A	AP	A	A	C	AP	AP	A	A	A
Nadya Marshall	A	AP	A	AP			C					
Pamela Bice	A	A					C					

Code:

A	Attended		
Ap	Apology Meeting cancelled	-	Not in attendance
C			Not on Committee at the time