



# BEYOND THE BELL

The NSW Judges Journal

## WELCOME!

Welcome to the first edition of the NSW Judges Journal, Beyond the Bell!

This newsletter is produced by your NSW Judges Sub-Committee (JSC) who are here to promote your role as judges, keep you up to date on what's happening around the State, Nationally and from the international judge's platform, as well as to help facilitate your education and training as dressage judges.

This journal is here for you and we would love to hear from you about topics you might like covered and also stories you'd like to share. We're trying to mix a bit of serious (technical topics and updates) with a little bit of fun.

Melanie Doyle is looking after the journal so if you have any feedback, topics you'd like addressed or stories to share, please contact Mel via email at [mjdoyle034@gmail.com](mailto:mjdoyle034@gmail.com) or on 0414 991599.

## OVER THE PAGE

In this edition, we'll:

- meet the JSC;
- see who's moving through the ranks;
- hear from Peter Shaw about horse welfare from the judge's perspective;
- chat with Deborah Colbran and Sue Lowe about upgrading with a buddy;
- look at what's new on Engage;
- recap on a couple of Rule changes, and
- report on upcoming events for potential sit-in and shadow opportunities.

# The NSW Judges Sub-Committee

## What do they do?

The NSW Judges Sub-Committee (JSC) is specifically focused on managing NSW Judges' training, education and accreditation, promoting consistent judging across NSW.

## Who are they and what are they responsible for?



### **Julie Jones - Chairperson**

Julie Chairs the JSC and this is her second year in the role. Julie is a B level, YH and PE Judge and also a mentor. Julie lives in the Hawkesbury region.



### **Jobina Kennedy - JE Advisor, A, B, Fast-Track Program and YH Judging**

Jobina looks after our most senior judges, Fast-Track judges, and Young Horse judges. Jobina is an FEI \*3 judge, A level & FEI YH judge and is also a Judge Educator and Mentor. Jobina lives in the Albury region.



### **Ann Maree Lourey – C, D, E & F Level Judging**

Ann Maree looks after all of our mid-level judges ranging from F to C levels. Ann Maree is a B level judge and mentor and lives in the Hunter Valley.



### **Kay Barney – G Level & New Judges, Learning Management System (LMS)**

Kay looks after our newest recruits and those just beginning their judging journey as well as managing the LMS. A great system initiated in NSW that is now being taken up in other States throughout Australia. Kay is an A level and YH Judge as well as being a mentor and lives in the Lake Macquarie region.



### **Nell Marshman – Regional Judges**

Nell is looking after our regional judges and working to ensure those furthest away have a local voice. Nell is an A level, YH, PE Judge as well as being a Judge educator and mentor. Nell lives in the Taree region.



**Sue Birch – Judge records & mentoring support**

Sue is looking after our most valued records so when we come to reaccreditation and upgrading we can find what we need. Sue is a C level and PE judge as well as a mentor. Sue lives in the Hawkesbury area.



**Nastasia Grovenor – General admin support**

Nastasia is helping Kay look after the Learning Management System (LMS) and G level judges as well as providing support for regional judges. Stasi is an F Level judge and is based at Harden between the Riverina and Canberra.



**Melanie Doyle – General Admin support**

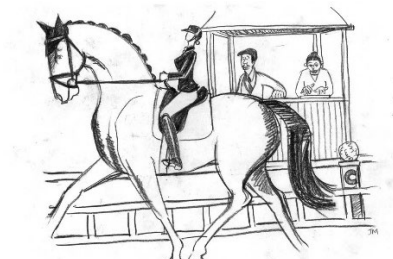
Melanie is providing general admin support and managing the production of Beyond the Bell, The NSW Judges Journal. Mel is an F level judge and is based near the Southern Highlands.

Contact details for all members of the JSC are available on the Dressage NSW website or look us up on the NSW Judges list.

## CONGRATS TO RECENT UPGRADES!

Congratulations to the following judges who have upgraded recently!

Kay Barney - A  
Ann-Maree Lourey & Justin Bayly – B  
Maryann Schiller & Kerry Crees – C  
Sue Lowe & Deb Colbran – D  
Christine Hill – E  
Melanie Doyle – F  
Melinda Hart & Justin Bayly - newly accredited para judges



Artwork by Jacqui Melbourne

We also welcome our new G level judges: Kailiea Goyen, Gillian Green, Avril Drummond & Margaret Erling

## Judging toward a better future *By Peter Shaw*

The first step is to remind ourselves “What is Dressage”, being the harmonious development of the physique and ability of the horse and as a result making the horse calm, supple, loose, and flexible but also confident, attentive and keen. Thereby achieving a perfect understanding between horse and rider.

We know these qualities are revealed by the freedom and regularity of the paces; the harmony, lightness, and ease of the movements; the lightness of the forehand and the engagement of the hindquarters, originating in a lively impulsion; the acceptance of the bridle, with submissiveness throughout, and without any tension or resistance.



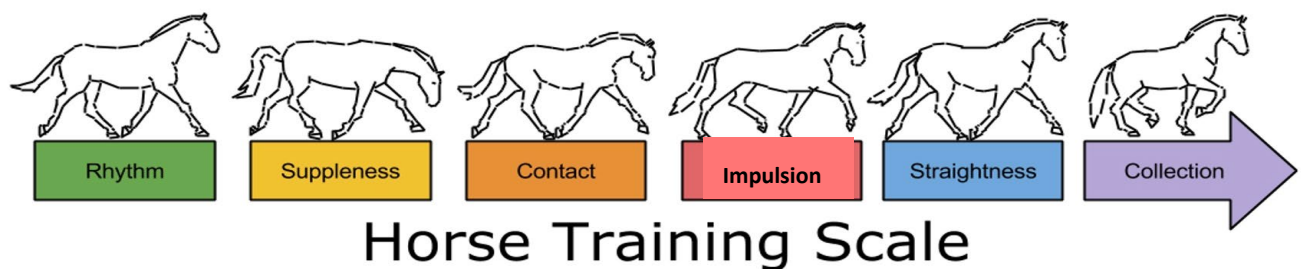


## The Responsibility of the Dressage Judge

The role of the dressage judge is to settle issues, disputes arising during the competition being judged; to refer any case not within its jurisdiction to the OC/SDA, or, at State and National Championships, to the Appeal Committee; to adhere to the Officials Code of Conduct; and to partake in professional discussion about marking and differences with respect for the position and view of each judge and rider.

We also have an ever-increasing role in the longevity of the sport and, of course the welfare of our horses, riders and officials. We always had this role, but with social media and modern techniques becoming more and more prevalent, we've seen a rise in issues that as judges, we can help to prevent as we can help direct the training and potentially the breeding of more suitably built and moving horses.

We must judge correct training adhering to the training scale. We must adhere to these guidelines and not be seduced by flashy leg movers or famous riders, owners or potential invitations to big events. The public, and not always the ignorant public, but an educated one, are watching.



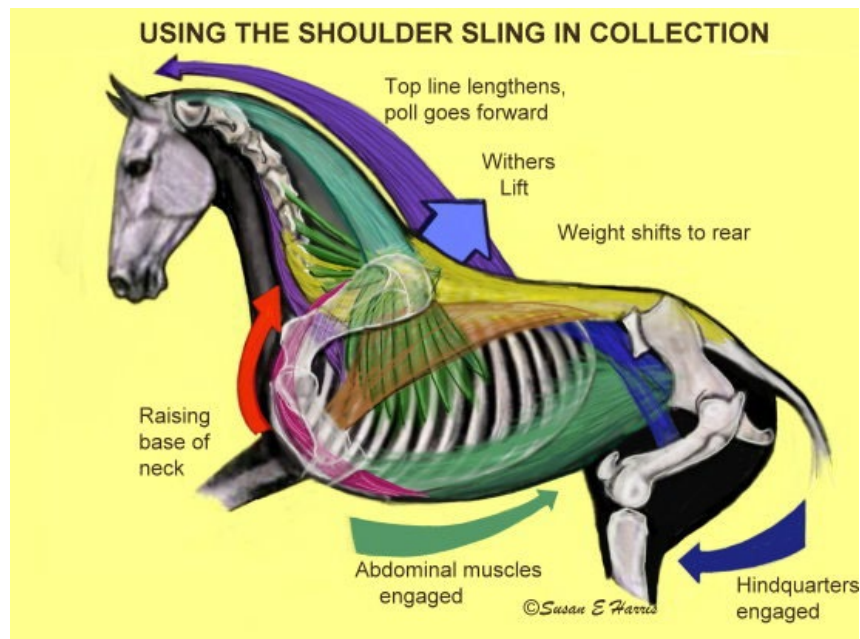
We see more and more lateral walks, short, tight, broken necks, open mouths and blue tongues, flashy front leg movement without the support of an active engaged hind leg and a round supple back.

United we can improve the sport and grow it ethically.

As judges, it is our responsibility to keep ourselves updated and correct in our knowledge, assessment and understanding of how horses progress from the lower levels to the higher levels, systematically and sympathetically. That is our role as gatekeepers for the horses' welfare and the continuation of the sport.

We must be careful to not give lip service to these issues and profess to be doing all we can to improve the sport when horses are winning with flawed paces, short necks, open mouths, wracked with tension.

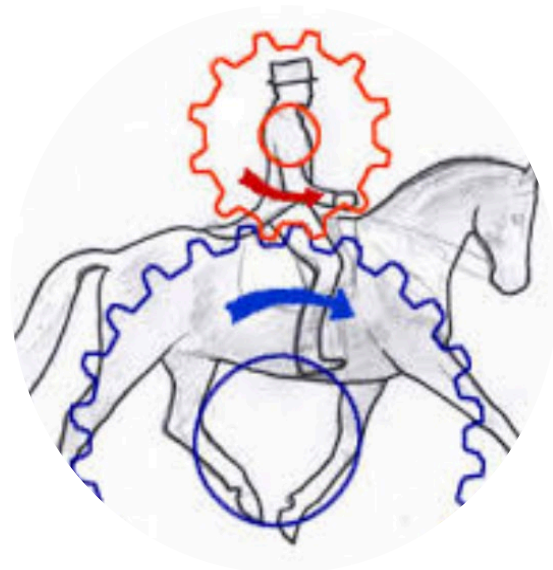
If anyone remembers Marzog and Anna Grethe Jensen, you'll remember an era of harmony, lightness and ease, heralded by this pair winning everything before them, such beauty to watch. We need to train our eye to this sort of harmony.



With horses engaged, rounded backs, uphill, supple, willing and confident, with true paces, reaching into the bridle, not tight and short, impeding the lifting of the back, and core and engagement of the quarters to lighten the forehand. We need to understand what a straight line, a corner, a circle, and from there a shoulder in, travers, renvers and hence half pass actually looks like, with correct aides, as we are losing this simple understanding. I hardly ever see a correct aide for a shoulder in anymore. The gateway to collection is closed from there.

It's important that we understand the biomechanics.

Horses need to be ridden from the back to the front. The fixation with contact, where riders hold the front end in or are taught to, should be replaced by commitment to bring the horses forward from behind and reaching into the bridle, out of the neck, to allow the nuchal ligament to become taut. This in turn allows the wither to be lifted forward and subsequently the back muscles to help open the spinus processes, lifting the back and allowing the core to engage as the quarters engage and the back rounds.



This cannot happen if the neck is held back into the shoulder or wither.

Our judges' comments can help fashion the next steps for riders. Are you adding value with your comments by stating the obvious?

## Helpful judge's remarks & difficult conversations!

What can we say as judges to improve the performance and not simply give a running commentary?

Much as we are not there to train the riders, or as coaches, but we should have enough understanding of the training scale to assist riders with more fruitful remarks other than 'on the forehand', 'Behind the vertical', or 'lacking impulsion'.

Try to think of a comment, with regard to the training scale and the rider's responsibility within that, to direct the rider to an area for focus. Maybe instead remark to 'develop reach to the bridle', 'focus on the hind legs coming forward', 'keep the spine on the line', or 'hurrying of the hind quarters' and many more, could be more helpful.

Also, with welfare issues like the blood rule, or horses on the day not able to perform the test to a suitable level, those conversations must be professionally delivered, whilst still being empathetic, yet firm.

## What now, where to from here?

- Look to the masters, the international masters, for correctness and way of going.
- Ask questions of knowledgeable, experienced horse people, to help understand more what we are looking for.
- Think of ways of improving your remarks to add value.
- Support each other in learning to improve the culture in our sport for the officials, organisers, riders, and, of course, our horses who have no voice, but ours.
- Be confident enough to judge what you see not what you expect to see.
- Keep going as the horses and the sport needs us now more than ever to be there for them.



*Good judging everyone*

## Upgrading with a Buddy *a chat with Sue Lowe & Deb Colbran*

Sometimes upgrading can feel like a lonely process, unlike other education where you have continual interaction with your cohort, you can feel a bit lonely finding mentoring opportunities and it can feel as though it's a bit of a "solo mission". We'd like to change this and thought it would be great to hear how Sue and Deb make the buddy system work for them, so we put a few questions to them.

Sue and Deb have been on a mission with their upgrading journey. Both are now D level judges embarking on their C level upgrades. Deb is based in the Hawkesbury region and Sue closer to the Southern Highlands, neither live on one another's doorstep but they've been able to motivate and help one another through the upgrading process. Providing motivation and support at a time when it can definitely be prone to wane!

### ***Were your friends before starting judging?***

No, we met at our first F level exam at SIEC and just hit it off. Soon after we were chatting about our next steps to upgrading and still do.

We both felt a bit of imposter syndrome when we first started but developed a network of supportive senior judges that could help by fielding our questions on an informal basis and supporting our journey.

We can't recommend networking highly enough. Make sure you reach out to senior judges. A great way to do this is through pencilling for them whenever you can.

### ***What sort of things did you do to help one another?***

We helped one another find shadows and sit-ins. We found we really needed to keep our fingers on the pulse for what's on. We began exchanging ideas about which clubs were good to go to for shadows and sit-ins and who to contact. Sue also became involved with Sugarloaf Club and found that was a great way to line up opportunities.

We helped one another with exam preparation and talked about how we approached issues we came across in judging.

### ***Practical & theory exams can be a daunting prospect – any tips?***

For the practical, we'd watch videos of tests, mark them ourselves and then compare notes and talk about the tests.

For the theory exams we put together a word document, our own set of practice questions. To help us be confident, we went over our answers or approach with judge mentors. Nothing formal, just a call for a chat.

We also recommend talking to Judge examiners, ask them 'do they have any general tips' for theory exams. They all have something to add no matter how general.

### ***What message would you give to new G level judges keen to progress through the ranks?***

Don't worry about the 'no's' you might get along the way to shadow or sit-in requests. Also, don't worry if you don't pass every step the first time. Find a buddy so you can help prop one another up when the going gets tough.

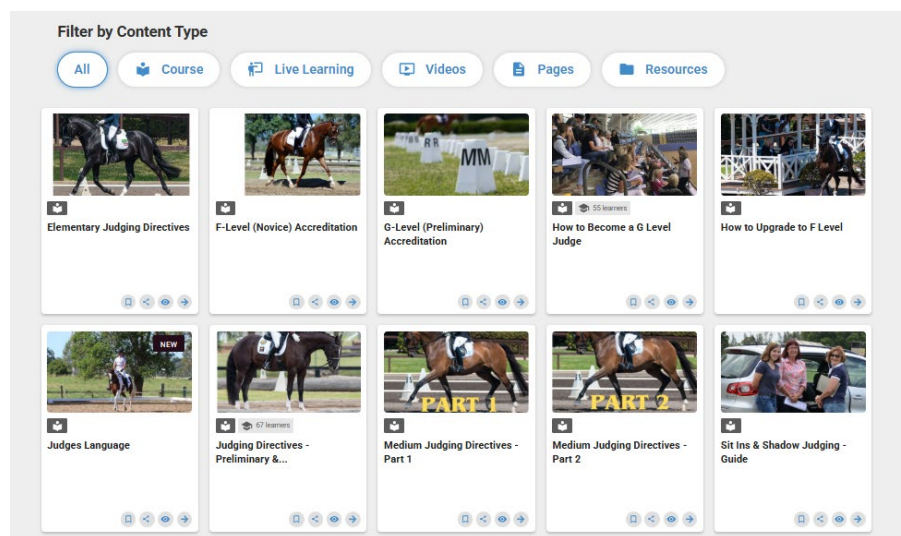
Keep learning, talk to other judges, and don't be afraid to ring mentors!



## What's new on ENGAGE

The team have been super busy adding new material to our LMS, Engage, including a new Course titled "Judges Language" which includes tips and tricks to develop your judging vocabulary. You will find this course in the Catalogue:

<https://officialstraining.ensw.org.au/catalogue>



If you've never logged into Engage before, you'll need a New User activation email. Contact [admin@dressagensw.com.au](mailto:admin@dressagensw.com.au) and Mary will assist you. If you have logged in before but need to reset your password you can do this from the login page.

Here is the login page for Engage LMS:

<https://officialstraining.ensw.org.au>

If you missed the recent Workshop with Jane Ventura on Judges Language, or would like a refresh, a replay of the Zoom session is available to view on the DNSW website:

<https://www.dressagensw.equestrian.org.au/content/educational-videos>

## Training link available on EA website!

Did you know there is a national calendar for dressage judge education on the EA website. Here is the link:

<https://www.equestrian.org.au/sites/default/files/National%20Calendar%20of%20Dressage%20Seminars-Workshops-March%202025.pdf>

### [NATIONAL CALENDAR OF DRESSAGE SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS/PRACTICAL EXAMS](#)

NATIONAL CALENDAR OF DRESSAGE SEMINARS/WORKSHOPS/PRACTICAL EXAMS As at 1/3/25  
Seminars/Workshop are Face to Face unless otherwise stated. March 2025

[www.equestrian.org.au](http://www.equestrian.org.au)

You can find it under the Education tab on the EA home page, then under the I AM AN OFFICIAL heading choose Course Calendar and then scroll down to near the bottom of the page and dressage has its own button to take you through to the above calendar.

## Recap on a couple of Rule changes

87 NSW judges attended the January Zoom Dressage Rules update and were joined by 19 interstate judges and 25 guests/riders. Key take aways from the Update include the continued and essential focus on horse welfare with auricle (ear) hair trimming rules introduced to keep the sport evolving and striving to ensure it earns the social license it needs to continue.

Other rule changes that you might have missed:

- Jumping saddles are now permitted in participation events. For those with relationships with local clubs that may be affiliated with Eventing or Show Horse associations, this might be a good one to pass on to organisers. Our grass roots competitions might benefit from this and it may help bolster numbers at their events.
- There have been some changes to who can now issue Yellow Warning Cards (YWCs); A & B level judges may now issue YWCs. A & B level judges should familiarise themselves with the rules surrounding YWCs (ref Rule 1.6).
- OCs are now recommended to identify a President of the Ground Jury at official competitions so it is clear who should be consulted if a judging issue arises (Rule 6.1).

## Upcoming events and potential sit-in and shadow opportunities

As we head into some cooler months in NSW and perfect weather for events, when riders don't cook under jackets and judges don't fry behind windscreens, the Regional Championships get under way. These can be a great opportunity for those looking to upgrade as these events often have mentor judges where you can sit-in or shadow judge. Upcoming regional championships include:

- Bowral 5-6 April
- Young 11-13 April (lots of Mentors on at this event)
- Wagga Wagga 9-11 May

Another great workshop opportunity is being organised on the back of the Sydney CDI in May. On Sunday the 4<sup>th</sup> of May, Clive Halsall a UK FEI 5\* judge will be presenting to judges and other attendees in the indoor at SIEC. This workshop will be a look "through the levels". Here's a little bit about Clive from Equestrian Life, 7 March 2025:

<https://www.equestrianlife.com.au/articles/introducing-clive-halsall-one-of-the-dressage-judges-coming-to-this-years-sydney-cdi/>

