

# RAS TIMES

WINTER 2025 | VOLUME 23-2

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## DISTRICT EXHIBITS

125 years of agriculture and art

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## SHEEP & WOOL

An industry woven together

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## RURAL OUTREACH

The RAS in the community

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## SHOW CHAMPIONS

Sydney Royal Easter Show competition results





*"And the bush hath friends to meet him, and their kindly voices greet him  
In the murmur of the breezes and the river on its bars,  
And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains extended,  
And at night the wond'rous glory of the everlasting stars."*

ANDREW BARTON (BANJO) PATERSON (1864-1941)



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# The future's brighter with your support

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member events, including the long-standing member high tea. These conversations remind me of the deep connection our Society shares with people across the state and country.

This year, I also had the pleasure of attending a morning tea at Government House with Her Excellency the Honourable Margaret Beazley AC KC, Mr Dennis Wilson, and representatives of the RAS, including our RAS Rural Achievers, Young Woman State Finalists, competitors, officials and dignitaries from various competition sections of the Show.

In Her Excellency's address, she referred to the original RAS Prospectus and a translated quote from Cicero included therein: "Nothing is superior to agriculture, nothing more productive, nothing more enjoyable, nothing more worthy of free men."

**T**he 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show represents another joyful chapter in the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW's long and storied history. It was an honour to lead our organisation once again, and a privilege to see our mission in action: forging the future of sustainable Australian agriculture, award-quality produce and animal breeds through competitions, education and events.

The Show is a culmination of years of hard work. Its success simply would not be possible without our dedicated members, volunteers, staff, Council representatives, and their families. Your enthusiasm and tireless efforts continue to embody the very spirit of the RAS — one of service, tradition, and forward-thinking. To you, I offer my sincerest gratitude.

It was a privilege to meet many of you — our members — at the AGM, around the grounds, and at various

We also had the pleasure of hosting our Governor General, Her Excellency the Honourable Sam Mostyn AC at the show. Her Excellency was extremely complimentary to us all as she walked around the Show and congratulated the RAS for the work it does. We look forward to seeing Her Excellency again at the 2026 show.

As we now shift focus to our Wine, Dairy and Fine Food events, and begin preparations for the 2026 Sydney Royal Easter Show, we remain committed to learning from our history, embracing innovation, and together advocating on behalf of Australian agriculture for generations to come.

**John C. Bennett OAM**, President  
Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

**The Show is a culmination of years of hard work. Its success simply would not be possible without our dedicated members, volunteers, staff, Council representatives, and their families.**



## EDUCATION INNOVATION

This year's recipient of the RAS Agricultural Innovation in Schools Award is St Johns College in Dubbo for their International Youth Exchange Program. Thanks to the RAS Foundation, they will receive a \$10,000 grant to further support and develop this cost-effective, immersive agricultural program that promotes sustainable agricultural practices while offering a global perspective on the industry.

This program connects students with Canadian industry leaders for hands-on learning in livestock health, genetics, and advanced agricultural practices. Through visits to leading Canadian agricultural colleges, and Bow Valley Genetics in Alberta, students will have insight into cutting-edge research and technologies.

Since 2023, the Agricultural Innovation in Schools Award has annually recognised NSW schools that showcase agricultural innovation through teaching and learning.

The 2024 recipient, South Strathfield High School, used the grant to build a citrus orchard, incubate 10 Australorp chicks, and run excursions for Years 9 to 12. Over 80% of students experienced their first trip beyond Sydney and, now a year on, the school has experienced a 30% surge in agriculture enrolments.

"The success of the RAS Ag Innovation in Schools Award is a dream come true," says RAS Head of Education Duncan Kendall. "As educators, we know when we invest in bold ideas and real-world experiences, we empower young minds to shape the future of agriculture. Programs like these don't just teach — they inspire global thinking, local action, and lifelong impact."

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million annually into competitions, education programs, and initiatives that champion the very best in fibre, food, and farming.

The Show's ongoing success is, of course, made possible by the tireless efforts of our staff, exhibitors, partners, and over 4,000 volunteers who collaborate to bring this event to life each year. Behind every ribbon, display, and demonstration, is a team whose passion and dedication drive the seamless Show-quality execution that our visitors have come to expect.

My sincere thanks go out to everyone who contributed. Whether behind the scenes or

around the Showground, your commitment is evident in every detail and deeply appreciated.

We will carry forward the spirit and momentum of the 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show this year in all we do through Sydney Royal competitions, education programs, Sydney Showground events and Foundation efforts.

The mission to support and promote Australian agriculture is lived daily through our operations. We will continue to innovate and champion the values that have defined the RAS for over two centuries.

Thank you for being part of this journey.

**Brock Gilmour**, Chief Executive,  
Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

**We invest more than \$11 million annually into competitions, education programs, and initiatives that champion the very best in fibre, food, and farming.**



## CANINE HEROES

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Canine Hero Awards honour the remarkable work of man's best friend – the loyal and courageous canines who have supported humans in extraordinary ways. This year, two deserving labradors received the top dog honour.

**The Companion Dog Award winner**, 6-year-old Ollie, provides comfort and kindness in courts, libraries, schools, and ambulance stations in association with services including Lifeline and the Canine Court Companion Program. "Ollie has an incredible intuition and empathy," says Ollie's Kiama-based handler, Judi Sandilands-Cincotta.

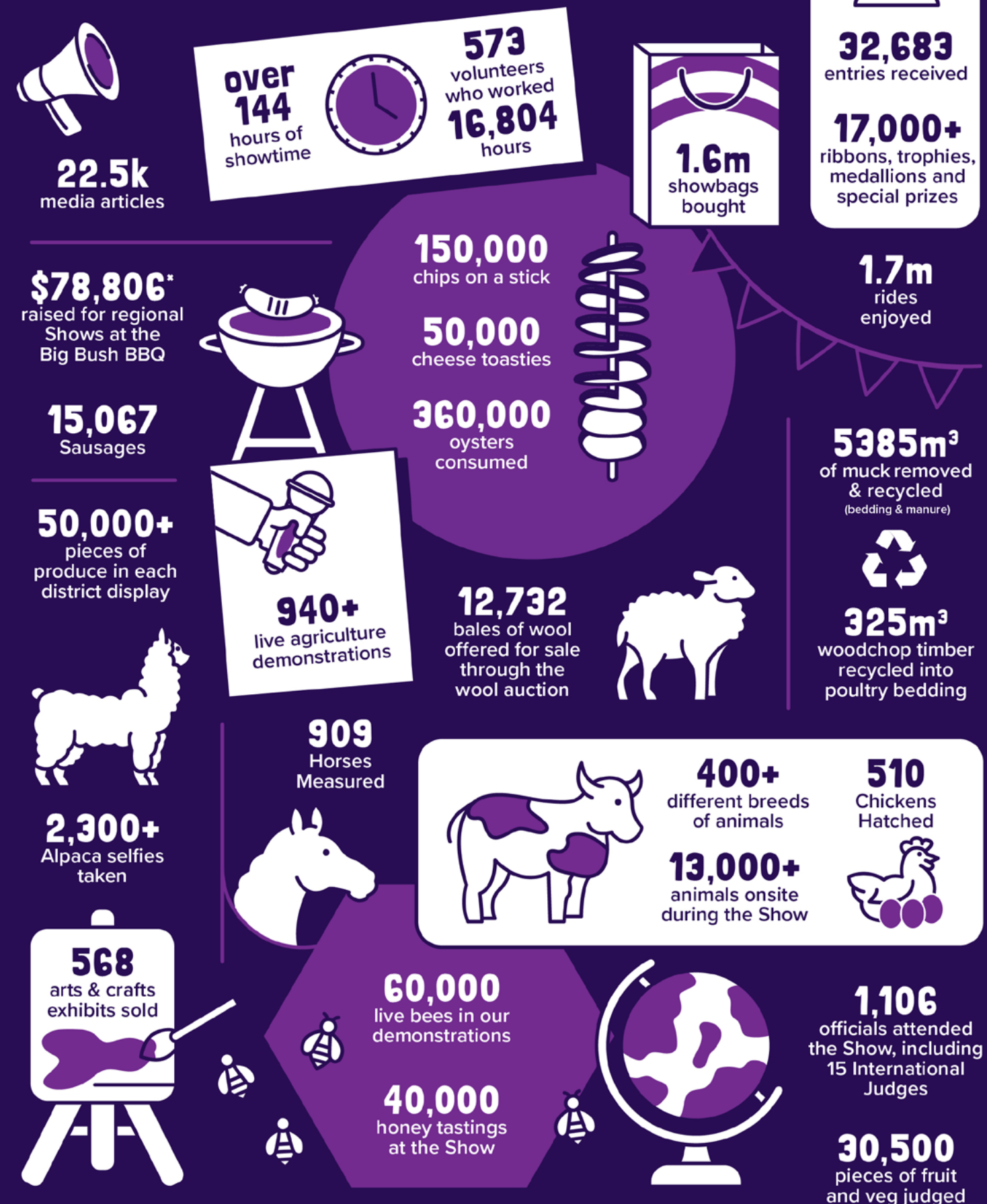
**The 2025 Service Dog Award** was presented to 8-year-old Gandalf, who serves in Fire and Rescue NSW's (FRNSW) Ignitable Detection Canine Unit. Amid hazardous fire scenes, Gandalf can calmly and meticulously discriminate between hundreds of scents, pinpointing trace amounts of ignitable liquids. FRNSW Canine Team Leader Tim Garrett says that, more than a working dog, Gandalf is a "trusted team member, a skilled investigator and true canine hero".

Tim adds, "We are always in awe of the dogs entered and recognising them and sharing their stories also shines a light on the vital programs they're a part of that transform lives in the community."

The award ceremony took place during the ADVANCE™ Sydney Royal Dog Show "Best in Show" Day at the 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show. A \$1500 cash prize was awarded to the handlers of Ollie and Gandalf. Fire & Rescue NSW donated their prize money to the Burns Unit at The Children's Hospital at Westmead.



# The Show at a Glance







# To Our Valued Members

We value you because your membership represents your heartfelt support and willingness to contribute financially to the mission of the RAS, to forge the future of Australian Agriculture.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

Keep an eye out! Membership renewals for 2025/26 will be sent to current members in mid-September 2025. Renewing will entitle you to all our current RAS membership benefits including access to the 2026 Sydney Royal Easter Show (2 - 13 April 2026) as well as year-round reciprocal offers afforded to RAS Members.

If you do not receive your

renewal notice by the end of September 2025, please contact the membership team on 02 9704 1144 or [membership@rasnsw.com.au](mailto:membership@rasnsw.com.au)

## MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Did you know that Membership with the RAS is not limited to only RAS events? Here are the reciprocal benefits available to our RAS Members:

- Tickets to all GWS Giants Home Games (excluding Giants v Swans)
- Tickets to select Sydney Thunder Home Games
- Tickets to select NRL Games at Accor Stadium
- Reciprocal rights to Sydney Cricket Ground and access to the SCG Members Pavilion for nominated events
- General Access to The Australian Turf Club events



**RECIPROCAL MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS – INTERSTATE ROYALS**  
RAS of NSW Membership provides you with Honorary Membership at interstate Royals when you buy a regular price ticket/s on your first day of entry (this admission fee is non-refundable). On entry to the Show, report to the Membership Administration Office with proof of

interstate membership and proof of identity. One honorary membership pass will be given for the duration of their Show.

**For more accommodation discounts and full details of all exclusive reciprocal members benefits, visit [rasnsw.com.au/membership/](http://rasnsw.com.au/membership/)**

## SYDNEY SHOWGROUND EVENT OFFERS

Keep an eye out for our Membership e-newsletters in your email inbox so that you don't miss your chance to register for the draw to win tickets to upcoming events held at Sydney Showground.

**UPCOMING ROYAL SHOWS:**  
**The EKKA, Brisbane**  
9 - 17 August 2025

**Royal Adelaide Show**  
30 August – 7 September 2025

**Perth Royal Show**  
27 September – 4 October 2025

**Royal Melbourne Show**  
25 September – 5 October 2025

**Royal Hobart Show**  
23 – 25 October 2025





# Agriculture on stage

The District Exhibits has been artfully showcasing agricultural excellence for 125 years.

Once a year, farmers from across New South Wales put their heads together: lettuce, cauliflower, and cabbage. The displays they construct using a cornucopia of fresh produce are cause for many Sydney Royal Easter Show attendees to make a beeline, through the bustling food stalls and oyster bars. Up above is the 42-metre-high ceiling of the Woolworths Food Dome; up ahead is the District Exhibits.

Since the District Exhibits formally began 125 years ago, it has flourished into one of the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW's most unusual

competitions – one that is quintessential of the Show and reflects the very heart of Australian agriculture.

Hunter White is the RAS Agriculture Committee Chair and a fifth-generation farmer from Mudgee, NSW. Hunter says that the District Exhibits – and the Show – has evolved beyond simply presenting the best of Australian agriculture.

“What’s become important now is the opportunity for us to build our story – the opportunity for agriculture to tell its story in the city, in Sydney,” Hunter says.

The District Exhibits are assembled onto what looks like a grandstand, but instead of seats, there’s a 30-degree

sloping “deck”. The deck is split into four distinct sections – each themed and assembled by a volunteer team from different regions, or “courts”. From left to right, there are displays by the Western-, Northern-, Southern- and Central Districts.

Blue ribbons are woven across the prize-winning produce and heaviest pumpkins, and signs hang above with painted places, 1st through to 4th. There are three primary contests: the Produce Competition, the People’s Choice Award, and the Display Competition (judged on how each display communicates its agricultural and environmental theme).



In total, an estimated 50,000 pieces of produce are on display from hundreds of producers across NSW. And everything – from the bottles of olive oil to the bunches of eschalots – has been examined and marked by approximately 50 judges in more than 80 competitions.

The Produce Competition has 12 sections: wool; wines; dairy; foods; fruit and nuts; vegetables; cucurbits; preserves; grain; stock fodders; fibres and tropical products; pasture grasses, legumes and other herbage species. After six days of judging, points are tallied. The court volunteers carry produce up onto the deck, arranging marrows and pickle jars according to their planned designs, all before the Show opens to the public in the morning.

If you look closer, every other surface has been painstakingly “seeded” (usually during local workshops prior to the Show). In this process, images are projected, traced, coated in glue and sprinkled with seeds, grains and legumes of different shades and colours.

In a nutshell, each display is a cross-section of that corner of the country.

During the Show, court volunteers maintain their displays and – leaning

over the fence – field questions from the public and sell freshly cut fruit salads and watermelon, commemorative tea towels and totes. Most of the proceeds go towards travel and freight costs.

Hunter says that the opportunity for exhibitors to engage with Showgoers for the whole 12-day event sets the District Exhibits apart from most RAS competitions. “People are really passionate about their produce and are looking for an engaging way to present it,” Hunter says. “If you look at early pictures of the District Exhibits, it looks like a shop. But over the years it has evolved into these artistic creations. The innovation in display design and construction has occurred as a result of interactions between the courts, the committee, the RAS and the judges.

“They’re evolving all the time. It’s moving and growing.”

The first District Exhibits took place at the 1900 Sydney Royal Easter Show, but joint displays from country societies were staged as early as 1876. Individuals, businesses and agricultural societies soon became involved. These early group competitions merged into the idea of courts competing against one another. In 1899, RAS Secretary Frederick

Webster visited regional centres to discuss the organisation and gathering of “products, manufactures and materials” for the inaugural District Exhibits. The first courts to compete were Clarence, Central New England, Grenfell, Mudgee, Nepean, Orange and Tumut.

The history of the District Exhibits mirrors that of Australian agriculture – seasons change, foods and products go in and out of vogue, and some varieties have all but disappeared.

With a background in TAFE horticulture and landscape teaching, Gary Coleman of Newrybar, NSW, cottoned on to the competition’s anniversary when he was designing this year’s Northern District exhibit. He looked through the archives and came up with a “fusion” design that includes callbacks to previous themes and eras of displaying: local photographs, horseshoes, and grass sheaves were inspired by the 1900s; the neatly sorted seed displays were from the mid-century; boat ropes and props from the

**Above:** Setting up the Southern District display for Show.





Northern District's 2012 biosecurity theme and honeycomb patterns from their 2016 pollination display.

Gary says that the core of all designs and themes is the connection between place, people, and produce: "I think the best way to do it is to look around the district and see what they have to give. And there's so much to give."

Once a design is finalised, there's the task of collecting materials. Through the grapevine, many growers have established connections to the competition and know to set aside crops throughout the year, ready for collection. Volunteers take truckloads from every corner of NSW to Sydney Showground. For the Northern District, that load totalled 17 full pumpkin boxes (about 25 tonnes in total, including 7 tonnes of cucurbits).

During the Show, additional fresh produce is stored beneath the slanted deck. Beneath the displays, each court has a space for storage, tables and a kitchenette. In this "back of house" area, longtime court volunteers Brian Winter and Lyn Cregan, both from Glen Innes, swap trade secrets and reminisce about the legendary "showmen" of the District Exhibits over their morning cuppas.

For someone to be good at "showing" in the Produce Competition, they calculate what points are allocated and deducted for – taste, aroma, evenness, blemishes, and so on – to arrange the right pieces, the right way. "That's 'showing'," Brian says.

"Everything varies, from honey to pumpkins to wool," he says. "You don't have to have the very best of something

to win a prize. It's presentation." It takes skill to be a good "showman", Lyn adds: "They just know how to present things. They might only look two and sixpence, but then they make them look a million dollars."

Every court is judged in every category. But there's no sugarcane in NSW's south, nor tropical fruit out west. This is where elimination points come in. Different courts, with different climates, can elect certain sections not to be counted, making this state-wide competition fairer.

Year-to-year, the unpredictability of seasons, droughts or floods is mirrored in the displays – if it led to a fruitful or spoiled harvest. "They [the courts] manoeuvre through that. That's why it's such a tricky competition," says Kim Blayney, RAS Agriculture Events Manager. The RAS administers the competition and provides the stage but, Kim says, it largely comes down to the court's people, who represent their regions and travel "off their farms, off their properties, away from their jobs to come down here and do their work".

"The work that they do, it's phenomenal – it's a year-round pursuit. They're holding this history," Kim says. "They're caretakers of the competition for the future."

In the Dome's foyer, Showgoers are treated to a miniature version of the District Exhibits (but still no mean feat, each display is more than 3 and a half metres across). School students have brought produce to the Show since the early 1900s. A formal Sydney Royal School District Exhibits Display Competition has been held since 2010 for student volunteers to design, prepare, set up and maintain their own display. The five participating schools in 2025 represented regions that spanned Crookwell in the Southern Tablelands to Tempe in Sydney's Inner West.

April Worland was the supervising teacher from this year's champion exhibitor, Yanco Agricultural High School. It's April's fourth year bringing a team of students, and she's keen to see other schools get involved. "Everybody's there for each other. It's a competition, but it's more than that. It truly is," she says.

April says the courts often offer help, produce, and guidance to the schools. "The entire experience consistently serves as a reminder of the strong community that exists within agricultural education and the value of shared learning experiences," she says.

Year 12 student Piper Demamiel was the lead designer of Yanco's winning display, themed "Are You Bushfire Ready?" with the aim to raise awareness about how to protect properties, livestock and lives. The school team used at least 50kg of grain to "seed" their display and transported their materials and fresh produce to Sydney – much of it donated by local businesses and P&C members from the land.

Piper has been involved in the school's competition since Yanco first participated, and was this year invited to steward judging of the grains and rice in the main District Exhibits Produce Competition. "It's such a good atmosphere," Piper says. "They're just



#### WESTERN DISTRICT'S YELLOW BRICK ROAD

Covering the largest geographical area, the Western District encompasses an area that spans from Sydney to the red dirt of Broken Hill. Designer Paije Moyle themed this year "Farmers of Oz". The famous yellow brick road, made of corn cobs, travels from the Emerald City through to a diorama of rural NSW.

Treasurer, and court volunteer of 36 years, Nola Ramsay, was thrilled that the Western District was presented with the Pigs Trotter Trophy for products from Munro's Quality Meats, Wilberforce. For the first time ever, hams and bacons were judged live on the first day of the Show, letting the general public see what goes into judging the District Exhibits.

"I am so excited, but not excited for me. It's so good to go back to the people you have got produce from and say, look what we've got!" says Nola. "It's more than just the people at the Show, it's all our suppliers and growers, that's what we do it for."



such beautiful pieces – works of art."

As Piper will graduate high school this year, she'll pass on the mantle of design lead to Summer Dixon, currently in year 11. "I'm just so excited to come and do a big project that's seen by so many people," Summer says. "We benefit from coming from farms, and sharing the message straight from the source."

While the Schools Competition is introducing the next generation to the District Exhibits, some younger volunteers have already joined the courts proper.

Ben Anderson, 19, is from Penrith with family farms around Forbes and Narromine. He's been coming to the Show for his entire life, with early memories of playing in the horse pavilions and visiting the District

Exhibits. Ben says, "I was walking along, and I spoke with a lady in the Southern District. I was probably 10. I asked her about it, and she said, 'When you're a bit older, come and get in touch.'" He did his first stint as a court volunteer in year 10, selling watermelons.

"This year's the most full-on year that I've been part of the districts," says Ben, who assisted during set-up and stayed on during the Show to volunteer at the court's stall, even helping polish

**Above, Top:** Bob Tebbet (left) and Ben Anderson from Central District. **Above, Middle:** Yanco Agricultural High School representatives (l-r) Ceejay Twigg, Summer Dixon, Bella Palmer and Sienna Longford.





pumpkins. “It feels like every year they are getting more and more into the displays. There is a lot involved. We need younger people, more younger people. Especially when it comes to setting up the District Exhibit,” he says. “Just come and give it a crack. It’s actually great fun and you get to meet and work with great people.”

**W**ith the formal District Exhibits Competition wrapped up, there’s a strong sense of camaraderie and cheer between the courts. In 125 years, many longstanding traditions have evolved behind the scenes.

A few days into the 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show, chalk writing on a plywood sign in the Dome announces: “RAS PUMPKIN BOWLS”. Red tape marks out the boundaries. An audience gathers along the sidelines to watch the tournament – pumpkins are used as lawn bowls, an onion substitutes the jack, and a carrot is used to measure. “You’ve got a good soup out there,” quips one spectator.

For as long as anyone can remember, the courts have bowled pumpkins. While the contest for the Gold Pumpkin Bowling Trophy happens in front of a crowd these days, Lyn – a court volunteer of 55 years – says its origins trace back to when the Show closed to the public over Easter. Court volunteers, mostly from the land, played the game to entertain themselves and enjoy their time together in Sydney. “I know a lady whose grandfather came to the original Show. She said her father used to whistle around the house a whole month before, getting so excited,” Lyn says.

Among the other unofficial court traditions is a DIY award for the most points in the wool: the coveted Beer Can Trophy.

“If that beer can could talk...” says Central District President and Gloucester dairy farmer Alison Kernahan with a laugh. It was Alison’s 8-year-old son, Michael, who won the court’s pumpkin bowling competition this year. She says these social contests help take the pressure off after formal judging: “I know we’re down here for the competition, but we are a family, and we don’t see each other for 12 months.”

Alison clocked 2,500km in 5 days before the Show, picking up and taking produce to Sydney. “But it’s an honour to be able to bring people’s produce, because not everyone can get here,” she says.

This year, the Central District’s members designed their own display rather than employing the services of a



#### THE PERPETUAL SHIELD

Since 1911, the District Exhibits Perpetual Shield has been awarded annually to the winner of the overall point score, encompassing display and produce. It is the oldest trophy in continuous use in RAS competitions.

This year, it was presented to the Southern District. “We hadn’t won it for 23 years, so that encouraged us to get better produce all the time,” says Ken Hewitt, a Grabben Gullen local and the Southern District Manager. He explains that each court is able to pass on the judge’s comments to the growers: “That tells them where they’re going wrong, or they’re going right, and they can improve.”

This year, the Southern District display – which also received the People’s Choice Award – was themed “Agriculture: Where the Magical Story Begins” and featured complex “seeded” cutouts from folk- and fairytales. “It’s art in agriculture,” Ken says. “It’s done in all your grain seeds and oilseeds and pumpkins and fruit, and it paints a picture for you.”



professional designer, as is sometimes the case. They were awarded the Michael Arnott Perpetual Trophy for the highest display score, with their theme “Farmer + Water + TLC = Food & Fibre for Life”.

Before the Show wraps, preparations for next year begin with the prized pumpkins sliced open for their seeds. Collecting starts as soon as the court volunteers return home to the regions – starting with cotton, then corn, then grasses are cut and dried.

Known as a “rogue trophy” (as it’s not



held by the RAS), the Beer Can Trophy also goes home to districts. But this year, it leaves the Showground a bit taller than it was last year – someone’s glued on an additional wooden plinth. This new level of the trophy is covered by tiny silver shields on all four sides, yet to be engraved. By that count, there’s room for

nearly 50 more years’ worth of court champions. And, of course, they can always glue on more. ●

**Above, left:** Lyn Cregan holds the Beer Can Trophy; **Above, right:** Northern District’s freight; **Opposite, top:** Michael Harris bowls.

## TYRRELL'S



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# 2025 SRES IN REVIEW











# Supporting Birds in the Bush

The 2025 RAS Foundation Charity Brunch raised awareness and funds for the grassroots organisation addressing domestic and family violence in country communities.

**W**hen Vanessa Vazquez speaks, she speaks with refreshing directness. Through the windows overlooking the Main Arena, you can glimpse the carnival rides and horse jumping events which thrill Sydney Royal Easter Show crowds. But here, listening to Vanessa in the Playfair Room, the audience is quiet and attentive.

Midway through the Show, on April 16, the annual charity brunch was held by the RAS Foundation to support a grassroots not-for-profit making a difference in rural and regional NSW.

The 2025 recipient was Birds in the Bush: a volunteer-run organisation

dedicated to stamping out domestic and family violence in NSW's Central West.

Vanessa Vazquez introduces herself as a daughter, wife, mother, solicitor, and tree changer. Twelve years ago, Vanessa moved from Sydney to Orange, NSW, where she founded Birds in the Bush in 2021.

On average, one in four women have experienced physical or sexual violence by a current or former intimate partner, and one in three adults are survivors of domestic or family violence in childhood.

Each week, a woman is murdered as a result of violence, usually by someone she knows. "Being a lawyer, you see domestic violence come across your desk a lot... but certainly in the Central West, it's even worse. And it's more than

people know," Vanessa says.

People living in rural, regional, and remote Australia are 24 times more likely to be hospitalised because of family and domestic violence compared to those living in major cities. There are many reasons this is the case: limited access to support services, smaller police forces, and in communities where everybody knows everybody, victims of domestic violence risk further isolation.

This year, with the support of RAS Foundation fundraising, Birds in the

**Above L to R:** Claire Fox, Katie Baddock, Vanessa Vazquez, Zanna Christian, Karen Begnell and Jen Hill.

Image Credit: Clancy Paine.

Bush plan to support the refurbishment of The Orchard, a refuge in Orange for women and children escaping family and domestic violence. They also plan to build a trauma-informed playground at The Orchard's Bathurst location.

To expand its impact, Birds in the Bush is currently developing three new programs to further their cause: Bird Brains, Bird Watch, and The Flock ("I'm a word nerd," admits Vanessa, who chose the "Bird" name to reclaim this derogatory term for a woman).

Bird Brains: an education and awareness program for public schools. It would empower children to identify what violence, and what respectful relationships, look like.

Bird Watch: a network of safe places for disclosure, be it a restaurant, café, hairdresser, golf or bowling club. Operating like neighbourhood watch, a bird sticker in the window would indicate there are people inside trained to support and refer on to relevant service providers.

The Flock: a regional rollout campaign. This will allow Birds in the Bush to spread its wings beyond the Central West; to drive positive change and lead from the regions. Vanessa says, "Bush communities can show the rest of Australia how we do it and why we did it well, because our weapon – which is also our Achilles heel – is that we are tight-knit communities."

"The fact that the RAS Foundation is looking at building sustainable and resilient communities, it makes perfect sense that our missions align. We are trying to stamp out domestic violence. We are trying to shift a culture. And we are also trying to make living in the country a sustainable option, by making it safe and enjoyable for everyone," Vanessa says.

In attendance at the Charity Brunch were RAS Councillors, RAS Foundation Directors and Foundation Patron, Mr Dennis Wilson. Donations were made online, through a silent- and traditional auction which included the sale of a jar of "Rebecca" honey from the Government House beehives, usually reserved as a gift to visiting dignitaries.

In total, the RAS Foundation brunch event raised \$65,000 for Birds in the Bush. Additionally, via Good360 and their generous network of donors, \$54,814 worth (RRP value) of furniture and mattresses has been secured for The Orchard in Orange.

RAS Foundation Manager Cecilia Logan says, "It is rewarding to be able to give grassroots not-for-profits doing great work in our rural and regional



areas this platform, at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, to amplify their stories and help them fundraise for their cause."

Individuals seeking support from **The Orchard's domestic violence services** can contact 1800 959 806. **1800RESPECT national helpline:** 1800 737 732. **Lifeline (24-hour crisis line):** 131 114.

## THE ROOT CAUSE

Last year's RAS Foundation Charity Brunch recipient was The Root Cause, which cultivates wellbeing in country kids through health and food literacy.

Representatives from The Root Cause attended the 2025 Charity Brunch to share an update on their last 12 months. The \$43,000 raised through the RAS Foundation in 2024 has been used to help establish 'EmpowerED Community Collectives' which unites community leaders, businesses, schools, and larger organisations.

Ebonnie Whan, a certified instructor with the Root Cause, shared her experience visiting schools across Northeast NSW with attendees: "The kids have been curious, and they've been engaged, because we offer something real, hands-on and positive.

"What you've given us at the RAS Foundation wasn't just money, it was momentum. It was trust. And it was belief that rural communities deserve access to health education and practical tools to thrive."

## OTHER RAS FOUNDATION SHOW UPDATES

- The RAS Foundation Morning Tea celebrated 82 Rural Scholars who have together been allocated \$518,000 for 2025
- Community groups awarded RAS Foundation funding include: **Tumut Show Society** (\$15,000 to repair the grandstand roof), **Jerangle Rural Fire Service** (\$12,000 for onsite diesel fuel storage), **Woodstock Memorial Show Inc.** (\$20,000 to upgrade water infrastructure), **West Wyalong Show Society** (\$22,000 to repair the Sheep and Angora Goat Pavilion roof), **Commercial Merino Breeders Association** (\$10,000 to support the Flock Ewe Competitions program in NSW), **Dubbo National Ram Sale Association** (\$15,000 to support the NSW School Merino Wether Challenge), **Barham High School** (\$25,000 to build a covered parading pen), **Maclean High School** (\$15,000 to support agriculture programs).
- The Foundation supported 35 secondary school students from Narromine High School, NSW, to participate in the All Roads to the Royal excursion to the Sydney Royal Easter Show
- St Johns College, Dubbo, were provided \$10,000 for the RAS Ag Innovation Award.

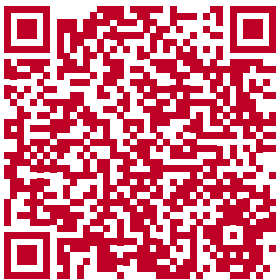




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## A taste of country hospitality

Now an unmissable Show stop, the Rural Students Café  
has celebrated five years of service.

A white picket fence cordons off a corner of the Sydney Royal Easter Show's Fashion and Style Pavilion. Chairs and tables are set up beneath the sign for the Rural Students Café with a pinpointed map of NSW.

More than 150 students from rural and regional communities, and a few keen Sydneysiders, come together to run the café – organised by the RAS and NSW Department of Education to offer those in years 10, 11 and 12 hands-on hospitality and commercial cookery experience.

In 2025, nearly 20 schools from across the state were supported to join the café. In previous years, students have come from as far as Lightning Ridge, Bourke and Broken Hill in NSW's outback.

Philippa 'Pip' Mortimer is a Bathurst-based VET curriculum support advisor who is instrumental in the program's organisation. She explains that – for students and their teachers – real-world experience is often compulsory for their qualification. But in small country communities, finding work placements

is a tough ask.

Gundagai-based teacher Rachel Pearce says she's been like a "pied piper" bringing pupils to the Rural Students Café since it began in 2021. "The opportunities locally are really only pubs and Shows," Rachel says. "It allows kids to come to the city and then, at the Show, they can see that immediate response to their cooking."

Each day that the café is open, a team of about 25 aproned students (representing about 3 schools at a time) prep food in the galley kitchen or work front-of-house.

"Everything works the way it does in industry," explains Peter Kell, a teacher from Denison College, Bathurst High Campus. Peter has run the café since 2023 and is responsible for managing suppliers and stock, delegating tasks, and supervising food preparation. "I try, where I can, to make sure the kids experience all different tasks – from being the day's head chef to washing up. It's all important in the kitchen," Peter says.

When an order is taken, the student who waited the table comes into the

kitchen and hands the docket to the chef who calls, "One plate!"

"Yes Chef!"

A tasting plate is then assembled – ready to be served to one of the 200 customers who will, on average, attend the café each day.

From 2021 to 2025, the café's income has grown by more than 140%. This year, the profit amounted to more than \$50,000. All earnings go back to the participating schools and will fund investments ranging from commercial combi ovens to coffee machines.

"The café has built this great momentum," says Duncan Kendall, Head of Education at the RAS. Duncan explains that RAS surveys show that, in the Rural Students Café's 5 years, it's already become a "ritualistic stop" in many families' Sydney Royal Easter Show experience.

As one feedback respondent put it: "We would like to congratulate the students on this fantastic effort. It is a great example for the general public to see what can be achieved. Top marks to all." ●

WORDS KATE NEWSOME





# Getting a foot on the farm

Despite the challenges, there's an up-and-coming generation of farmers passionate about putting down roots for a life on the land.

**P**icture the 1980s: the mullet is big, the Berlin Wall divides Europe, and the 1985 Australian Farm Rally fought to be heard. At the same time, farmers are stepping from being a son or daughter, to a grower in their own right. For this generation, entering the world of agriculture often meant an apprenticeship and dirty hands.

These days, it is less straightforward. The need to leave home to gain experience and steep land prices are all too familiar challenges faced by our young farmers.

Jack McGee, Felix James and Molly Spencer grew up within a 20-kilometre radius of each other in northern Tasmania, they share the dream of a future in farming. The common search for education and experience after high school has sent them on different paths,

both interstate and internationally.

While Molly and Felix are exploring agricultural education around Australia, Jack aims to manage, own, and expand his parent's lamb and broadacre farm as the seventh generation. For the relevant education his ambitions require, he feels it is necessary to study abroad.

"As soon as I finish high school, I'd like to do a summer's work, but after that I'd like to go to Lincoln University in New Zealand," Jack says.

There's a further challenge unique to Tasmania's young farmers: the difference in climate between the Apple Isle and mainland Australia is greater than the difference in climate between Tasmania and New Zealand's South Island. Jack says, "Universities on [the] mainland – as good as they are – their climate and the way they farm is very different to the way Tasmania farms."

As for contracting startups and graduate programs, there's a wealth of opportunities on offer to Jack and other young farmers, particularly for those with previous experience or connections.

Growers may have relationships with stock agents and field agents that open doors for those continuing their life's work, but someone without six generations behind them risks being locked out. "Getting into farming can be very difficult if you don't have the right connections," Jack says.

Far from his family's operation, young farmer Felix James has been a small fish

**Above:** Molly Spencer holds a pet goat on her family's cropping and contracting farm in Bracknell, Tasmania.



in the big pond of a west Australian harvest. After completing Year 12, Felix spent nine months working on a thoroughbred horse stud before jumping at the chance to work the harvest in the Wheatbelt. Since then, he has also worked in underground drainage schemes.

Despite the diversity of his experiences, Felix is moved to weigh them against studying. "Right now, I'm on the fence. Do I go to ag school? Or do I go and head down a path of just working and trying to find my own way and learn lots by doing lots of different things with lots of different people?" He says, "I start looking and going, should I spend \$70,000 on going to school... or should I just go out and find a spot?"

But to find his spot, Felix, like other young farmers, must navigate cost.

Rural Bank's 2024 report on Australian land prices marked a decade of unbroken growth and saw the national median price reach \$9,575/hectare. Comparatively, the median price surrounding Felix's home is over \$18,200/hectare. This price growth is an issue for young and first-generation farmers who – with prices increasing and the volume of sales decreasing – struggle to compete with the equity of long-established enterprises.

"You start looking it up and going,

**Above:** Jack McGee throws a handful of soil on his family's 600 hectare cropping and lamb property in Bishopsbourne, Tasmania.

well, at the very best I'm not going to pay myself more than \$50,000 a year for the next 30 years... by the time I'm 45 I maybe have a farm that's just paid itself off to the bank," Felix says. "For the next 40 years, I'm going to be paying off debt, it's a bit scary and like, it's doable, but is that the lifestyle you want to lead? [You] start asking questions."

Less than 15 kilometres from where Felix fell in love with agriculture, Molly Spencer overlooks her family's farm with a pet kid in her arms. The mid-morning sun lights up John Deere-green machines working spring green fields.

While Molly sees benefit in her studies at the University of New England, her ambitions lie here in Tasmania, not in Armidale, NSW. She says, "At uni we go and see so much different stuff and it's good to get knowledge from somewhere else other than just in Tasmania, meeting new people and making new connections."

For Molly, every visit home strengthens her resolve to someday have this fate for herself, but each day this dream seems less attainable. "To be able to buy a new farm as a young farmer is basically impossible," she says.

To support young farmers, the Tasmanian Government incorporated young farmers into their AgriGrowth Loan Scheme in 2018. The scheme currently offers five-year loans ranging from \$100,000 to \$3 million but caps a young farmers loan at \$250,000. The scheme is largely intended for dairy farmers building a livestock herd and requires borrowers to turn a profit

within the loan period.

The challenge to Molly, Felix and Jack is that if property prices continue to rise, even at the lower rate Rural Bank foresaw in 2024, education and work experience may not be enough for them to independently become landowners or extract enough value to service a loan.

Despite uncertain futures, the trio remain hopeful. Felix believes that there is immense talent in his generation, and tomorrow's farmers can be found both inside and outside of a family farm. He says, "I think there is a wealth of people who are willing to work really hard, have a good work ethic and want to learn." ●



## THE RAS FOUNDATION'S JB FAIRFAX AWARD FOR RURAL & REGIONAL JOURNALISM AND COMMUNICATIONS

Toby McGee is the 2025 recipient of the RAS Foundation's JB Fairfax Award for Rural & Regional Journalism and Communications, which encompasses a \$10,000 scholarship and internship opportunities at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, The Land and ABC. This article is adapted from a video Toby produced at home in northern Tasmania. "The same way my brother [Jack] feels about farming, I feel about rural storytelling," Toby says. "Making this story only reinforced the idea. Without farmers putting food on every Australian's table, what would we have? There are so many uplifting stories in country Australia, but an equal number of warnings that need to be shared."





# An industry woven together

Mackenzie Archer reports from the Sheep & Wool Pavilion.

It's often said the Australian agriculture industry started off the wool on a sheep's back.

Today's sheep industry is evolving, embracing new opportunities and diversifying beyond traditional markets in response to changing economic conditions. For more than 200 years, one thing has remained the same: Australia's best sheep producers have exhibited at the annual Sydney Royal Easter Show.

For 12 days of the year, a shed at Sydney Showground becomes a microcosm of the billion-dollar sheep industry, attracting breeders, shearers, spinners, officials and the general public

from all corners of the country.

The sound of the auction hammer echoes over the speakers as showgoers gather to watch a live wool auction in the Sheep Pavilion. A process that normally takes place behind closed doors is now on display for thousands to see. Just 15 minutes into the day one auction, \$2.5 million worth of wool has already sold.

RAS of NSW Sheep and Wool Committee Member and Schute Bell Badgery Lumby Northern Wool Manager, Greg Andrews, says the live auction spotlights the importance of the wool industry.

"The idea is to expose our Show attendees to how a wool auction works,"

Greg says. "Over \$16.5 million worth of wool was sold over the two days at the Show and this process happens every week.

"It's a huge industry, and not that long ago Australia rode on the sheep's back. And while it may not do that anymore, it's still a major source of income and a valuable export earner for Australians."

Sheep exhibitors at the Sydney Royal Sheep & Fleece Show showcase the very best wool in the country. "The competitions are run under very strict guidelines. Exhibits (the animals and fleeces) are inspected for soundness and carefully assigned to their classes against a set of firm standards," Greg says. "The

integrity and the scrutiny that goes on behind the scenes, which a lot of people don't see, enables participants to feel confident with the results."

Greg says the wool industry has shifted drastically in the past two decades as more consumers preference finer wool products that don't have the itch factor. "The hardest thing to find now is what we call a 'strong wool', because there has been a movement to reduce the micron of the Australian wool clip," he says.

"Twenty years ago, the average micron would have sat around 21 – and now it is more like 19. There is constant pressure to produce finer and finer micron wools to get that premium into the market."

Long recognised as the benchmark for wool excellence in the state, the Sydney Royal Sheep Show continues to attract some of the finest Merino genetics. These days, the focus extends beyond fleece.

The Merino Production Class evaluates sheep on various aspects – providing a more complete picture of commercial performance. "There is a fleece value component, weight component and eye muscle measuring component," Greg says. "It all came about when the wool industry fell into doldrums about 10 years ago and a greater emphasis was put on meat production."

This class highlights the practical capabilities of sheep in both wool and meat markets, reinforcing the Show's role in recognising well-rounded breeding and reflecting the industry's shift. Many producers now incorporate meat breeds into their flocks.

The Gilmore family's Tattykeel Stud has exhibited at the Sydney Royal Easter Show for more than 50 years, reflecting a long-standing commitment to excellence in sheep breeding. In response to declining wool prices and rising labour demands, the family began developing a new shedding breed, the Australian White, designed to meet the evolving needs of Australian producers.

The Australian White, a meat breed sheep with short, shedding hair similar to a dog's coat, has grown in popularity across the country. Its success reflects a broader industry shift: producers are increasingly prioritising efficiency and profitability. "We've seen just a steady

**"Twenty years ago, the average micron would have sat around 21 – and now it is more like 19. There is constant pressure to produce finer and finer micron wools to get that premium into the market."**



trend in the last 10 or 15 years towards meat sheep, even merino people joining a percentage of their ewes to meat rams," Graham says.

What started as a leap of faith more than three decades ago, is now influencing the sheep industry. In 2022, Graham sold one of his prize Australian White rams for \$240,000.

Among the ribbons taken home this year by Tattykeel include the Grand Champion Australian White Ram and Ewe, the Grand Champion Poll Dorset Ram and Ewe, and the prestigious Supreme Prime Lamb Exhibit. For the Gilmore family, the Show remains an important platform to benchmark the quality of their stud. "It's a barometer to test what you've got and that's why we have been exhibiting here for 50 years," Graham says.

Sheep entered in the Sydney Royal

Meat and Dual Purpose Show also compete in a dedicated production class. Aligning with the qualities required for commercial meat production, strong emphasis is placed on objective data and their carcass qualities, including their growth rates, eye muscle and fat depth.

Over a decade ago, Lachlan Patterson (Kinellar Stud) received a scholarship from the RAS Foundation for his university studies. Included with the scholarship was a membership to the RAS, which opened up the opportunity for him to exhibit his White Suffolks at the Sydney Royal Sheep Show. This year, Lachlan took home the Reserve Champion White Suffolk Ram.

"If you're lining up against other people's sheep, you get to look at what they are doing in their breeding programs and this comparison allows everyone to grow together," he says. "We're giving the sheep the best chance in life to show their full genetic potential and we are competing against other studs that have also done that."

Starting as a teenager himself, Lachlan notes just how important the Show is for youth in the industry. "School children bring their sheep along, learn about sheep and go back and put the knowledge gained



into practice in the industry,” he says.

Nineteen-year-old Elizabeth Sutton (Wattle Farm Border Leicester Stud) is doing just that.

Handling Border Leicester rams at the Sydney Royal Easter Show before she could walk, Elizabeth knows the sheep pavilion like the back of her hand. Though she grew up on a farm, it was the agricultural program at Macarthur Anglican School in Sydney’s southwest that solidified her passion for the industry.

“It was one of my favourite experiences,” Elizabeth says. “I got to teach all the young kids how to take care, feed and just general maintenance of the sheep. It was really enjoyable seeing them learn and then go on to teach younger kids themselves.”

At last year’s Show, Elizabeth reached state level in Merino judging. It was through school that she connected with Greg. “Greg taught me a lot about wool and how to judge it when I went to Sydney,” she says. “Working with him and

other mentors was invaluable and, at the end of it all, they actually offered me a job.”

Elizabeth is now working alongside Greg at Schute Bell Badgery Lumby in wool rehandle.

Greg says the future of the wool industry is in the hands of young innovators like Elizabeth. He says, “Just to see her grow through the whole process, and the confidence and maturity she’s gained from showing and judging at the Sydney Royal Easter Show, is fantastic.”

With over 30 years in the wool game, Greg has witnessed many shifts within the industry – he remains confident in its ability to keep adapting and evolving.

“We are seeing a global movement toward more sustainable products and wool fits straight into that,” Greg says. “Wool will fill a more niche market. Rather than trying to be everything to everyone, I think it’ll become more and more specialised.”

The Show, Greg says, will play a key role in the future of the industry.

“There is a big focus on youth groups and rural achievers at the Show,” he says. “These young people are getting first access to innovators in the industry, people that are making waves in the industry and taking that knowledge with them.”

“I am optimistic about the future of wool and sheep. It has been a crucial industry for hundreds of years and it will continue to be just that.”

**WHAT HAPPENS TO THE FLEECES ON SHOW?**

When fleeces are entered into the Sydney Royal Fleece Show, the RAS receives them about a month prior. They are weighed and a sample is sent down to the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA) in Melbourne. The fleeces are then judged at the Show.

Exhibitors can choose to have their fleece returned to them after the Show for a fee, or to donate them to the RAS. Once classed, the donated fleeces are pressed into a bale – two were pressed in 2025 – which are then sold at the weekly wool auction at Yennora, Sydney. This is all done by Schute Bell Badgery Lumby.

At the 2025 Show, more than 90 fleeces were donated, with the funds going back into the sheep competition. ●

**“We are seeing a global movement toward more sustainable products and wool fits straight into that.”**



Florance McGufficke with her mother Michelle.

# RAS Regional Engagement: Shining a Light on Regional Activities

The RAS continues to make meaningful strides in regional engagement, connecting with thousands of people and ensuring the spirit of agriculture thrives in every corner of the state. Last year, the RAS travelled an estimated 10,000km to support local heroes, education initiatives, community events and shows across the state.

**FORBES**

In Forbes, Anne Earney is the organiser of Bedgerabong Pig Youth Day, an educational event designed to introduce local high school students to the pig industry. Offering hands-on learning opportunities and industry insights, Bedgerabong Pig Youth Day fosters community pride and connection. To everyone present, Anne’s tireless efforts demonstrated the power of education and the importance of nurturing the next generation of agricultural leaders. “Anne’s dedication to the Pig Youth Day has been nothing short of inspiring. Her passion for education and community is evident in every aspect of the event,” says Alana McKewin, Small Livestock Event Manager for the RAS.

**ARMIDALE**

The PLC Armidale Livestock Team Celebration, attended by the RAS, is a fundraising event recognising the school’s achievements in agricultural education, and their long-standing participation in the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

Instrumental in this effort are Tim Light and Briony Looker, long-time cattle exhibitors and mentors. Their guidance and encouragement of young students exemplify the spirit of the RAS – uplifting others, sharing knowledge, and building a stronger future for agriculture. “Tim and Briony Looker have been incredible mentors to young people interested in the Beef Industry”, says Kane Gerrets, RAS Agricultural Youth Initiatives Manager. “Their knowledge and support have made a significant impact on the future of agriculture in regional NSW.”

**CONDOBOLIN**

The Pearl Picnic, held at the 2024 Condobolin Show, was a special event to celebrate the legacy and community of the Young Woman Competition. It was attended by more than 50 past and present competitors from across NSW – spanning six decades – to honour the history, impact, and sisterhood fostered

through the competition.

Florance McGufficke co-organised the Pearl Picnic to bring these women to celebrate decades of regional representation. “Florance’s efforts in organising the Pearl Picnic have brought together generations of Young Woman competitors, creating a sense of unity and pride in our community,” said Paige Cape, Head of Membership and Regional Engagement for the RAS.

The event was supported by the RAS of NSW, AgShows NSW, and the Condobolin Show Society.

From supporting local committees and organisers, to presenting awards and mentoring students, RAS representatives play a vital role in strengthening community ties and promoting agricultural excellence. Each visit is more than a duty – it’s a heartfelt exchange of stories, values, and shared purpose.

Where is the RAS of NSW heading next? Join us on 12 August 2025 in Orange NSW for the 2025 Agritourism Summit: Where Tourism and Farming Connect. [agritourismsummit.org](http://agritourismsummit.org)



Royal Agricultural Society of NSW

## Celebrate Family History Month A Special Member Event

In celebration of Family History Month, join us for an inspiring morning with special guest Dr Shirleene Robinson, who will guide us through an introduction to the role of oral history in recording life stories.

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Enquiries call 9704 1468  
*Morning tea included*







## A Show Legend: Ken Cameron

At the 2025 Sydney Royal Easter Show, Ken Cameron was recognised as the Show Legend.

Since 2001, the annual Show Legend Award recognises dedicated members of the Show family who have made an outstanding contribution to the Show's betterment, while passing on their knowledge to the next generation. For Ken, the award recognises six decades of his commitment and steadfast service to the RAS Horse Committee as a steward on the Main Arena.

Wearing the red steward badge on his blazer, Ken plays a crucial role on the arena by organising competitors, supporting the judge, and ensuring the safety, integrity, and tradition of the Show's equestrian events.

"Ken's been here over 60 years, so he's taught all of us," says RAS Councillor, Duncan Macintyre. "He's just a legendary bushman, cattleman, and he knows all about horses."

"If people arrive here and say, 'What do I have to do?' You say, well, watch Ken over the fence, what he does, and do the same."

Ken's journey as a steward began at age 14. He was attending the Sydney Royal with Dungog's pony club when the first 'Rider In Action' event was held. At that time, few stewards knew the event and how it worked. Ken recalls, "I'd ridden it [Rider In Action] three or four times as a kid. Kids soak these things up so quickly. If they wanna learn, kids are

**"If people arrive here and say, 'What do I have to do?' You say, well, watch Ken over the fence, what he does, and do the same."**

fast. So, they hung a red badge on me, I went out there and told all the adults how it worked."

Now an RAS life member, Ken continues to steward at the Show in Sydney, making the annual trip from his property near Uralla, NSW.

At age 16, Ken was leaning on one of the ivory walls at the Moore Park Showground when Clive Ogilvy, a longstanding RAS Councillor and military veteran, approached. He asked if Ken had been briefed on the duties of a steward and then advised: "When you put that red badge on, you represent this society. You will do nothing by word or deed to bring it into disrepute. When you go out there, all the women are ladies. All the men, they're called sir. However, with children, 'laddie' or 'lassie' – that takes the pressure off 'em."

These words stuck with Ken, who often repeats them to the younger generation at the Show. Ken says, "When I started, there were light horsemen that had been in World War One and they'd gone from Cairo to Damascus on their own horses. These people knew horses, and these people knew people. We're carrying their tradition on. And it's not done because it's traditional, it's done because it works."

Ever humble, Ken is quick to add that – last he heard – there were 1,170 people wearing the red badge of a steward at the Showground, not to mention the RAS Councillors, volunteers and competitors who make the Show what it is.

"I wish I was 14, and starting all over again, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed," Ken says, adding, "The people that are here are at the top of the tree. Regardless of whether it's dogs, cats, goldfish or horses, they didn't get here by being fools. They've got a lot going for them. To be exposed to those people and to learn from them is just stunning."

"This is a unique organisation here; I'm very proud to be a part of it. It's the magnificent animals, and it's the magnificent people that have them." ●

WORDS KATE NEWSOME



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# 2025 SRES Competition Results

ALPACAS

**Best Suri Alpaca in Show**  
'Surilana Ternura,' Suri Alliance, Bowral NSW  
**Most Successful Suri Exhibitor in Show**  
Suri Alliance, Bowral, NSW  
**Best Huacaya Alpaca in Show**  
'Accoyo Genesis Eyes Light Up,' Accoyo Genesis, Inverleigh, VIC  
**Most Successful Huacaya Exhibitor in Show**  
Precision, Baynton, VIC

AQUACULTURE

**Champion Boutique Sydney Rock Oyster**  
Tathra Oysters, Tathra, NSW  
**Champion Commercial Sydney Rock**

**Oyster**  
Tathra Oysters, Tathra, NSW

ARTS & CRAFTS

**The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Arts Committee Award for Best Exhibit in Arts Classes 1 to 11**  
Julie Simmons, Castlereagh, NSW  
**The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Art Prize presented by the RAS President for the best Rural Subject painted in a traditional style**  
Teniel Sauer, Voyager Point, NSW  
**Popular Choice Award for Art, awarded to the artist whose Rural Subject and/or Landscape painting is voted Most Popular by public ballot**  
Ann Meadley, Bradbury, NSW  
**The Margaret Fesq Memorial**

**Perpetual Art Prize for the best painting in Class 1 Rural Subject and/or Landscape Painting**  
David Brayshaw, Greenwich, NSW  
**The Watt Family Perpetual Trophy for the winner of the Best Photograph in Show**  
Jacqui Floyd Normanhurst, NSW  
**The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Award for the Best Black & White Exhibit from Photography Classes 12 to 15**  
Zhenyu Wang, Casula, NSW  
**The Frances Binnie Memorial Perpetual Trophy for the Most Meritorious Exhibit from Classes 35 to 355 in the Standard of Excellence Case**  
Caroline Goodwin, Glenfield Park, NSW  
**The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW Award for Best Australian**

**Working Rural related Exhibit from Classes 249 to 254 and 257**  
Peter Richardson, Thora, NSW  
**The Dorothy Evans Perpetual Trophy for the Best Exhibit in Cake Decorating and Sugar Art Classes 360 to 382**  
Eileen Scriven, Milton, NSW  
**Popular Choice Award For Cake Decorating & Sugar Art, awarded to the Exhibitor whose Cake Decorating and Sugar Art entry is voted Most Popular by public ballot**  
Emily Saran, Brewongle, NSW  
**The Heather Gibson Perpetual Trophy for the Most Successful Exhibitor in Non-Perishable Cooking Classes 385 to 391**  
Jo-Anne Wright, Kariong, NSW  
**The W H Davies Memorial Perpetual Trophy for the Most Meritorious Exhibit in Under 20s Patchwork, Applique and Quilting**  
Isabelle Matsunaga, Turrumurra, NSW

AVIARY BIRD

**Grand Champion African Lovebird**  
Colin Isbister, Baulkham Hills, NSW  
**Grand Champion Budgerigar**  
Luke Connor, Grays Point, NSW

**Grand Champion Canary**  
Andrew Christodoulou, Illawong, NSW  
**Grand Champion Finch**  
George Bousaid, Guildford, NSW  
**Grand Champion Parrot**  
Peter Mrowka, West Wyalong, NSW

BEEF CATTLE

**The Hordern Perpetual Trophy, Best Beef Breed - Grand Champion Male and Female**  
'PC Miss Royal Roll T347 & PC Royal Roll U29,' Pine Creek Angus Stud Pty Ltd, Woodstock, NSW  
**The Urquhart Perpetual Trophy, Supreme Beef Exhibit**  
'Elite Uproar,' Elite Cattle Co, Meandarra, QLD  
**RAS Supreme Junior Champion Interbreed Heifer**  
'Summit Missive U174,' Four Chases Limousins, Dromana, VIC  
**RAS Supreme Junior Champion Interbreed Bull**  
'PC Royal Roll U295,' Pine Creek Angus Stud Pty Ltd, Woodstock, NSW  
**The Gordon Fuller Memorial Perpetual Trophy, Breeder's Group Interbreed**

**'Angus,' Pine Creek Angus Stud Pty Ltd, Woodstock, NSW**  
**PUREBRED STEER & CARCASE**  
**The Coghlan Pure Bred Steer Perpetual Trophy, Grand Champion Steer**  
Calrossy Anglican School, Tamworth, NSW  
**The Coghlan Pure Bred Carcase Perpetual Trophy, Grand Champion Carcase**  
Calrossy Anglican School, Tamworth, NSW

DAIRY CATTLE

**Supreme Junior Champion Dairy Female**  
'Impression Kidrock Bad Reputation,' M & L Flemming, Newry, VIC  
**The Wesfarmers Federation Insurance Perpetual Shield, Supreme Intermediate Champion Dairy Female**  
'Froglands Viral Rory,' BK Farming, Tallygaroopna, VIC  
**The Dairy Farmers Supreme Champion Perpetual Trophy, Supreme Champion Dairy Female**  
'Sorella Gin & Tonic,' Patrick Buckley & April Browne, The Oaks, NSW





**Fancy Dress Calf Competition**  
Katie Strong, Jamberoo, NSW

**DISTRICT EXHIBITS**

**The District Exhibits Perpetual Shield for the winner of the Competition**  
Southern District, NSW  
**The Michael Arnott Perpetual Trophy for the winner of the Display**  
Central District, NSW  
**The Arthur and Marie Johns Memorial Trophy for the Schools District Exhibits Display**  
Yanco Agricultural High School, NSW

**DOG**

**Best in Show**  
Poodle (Standard) J Bennett & L G Wright, Geebung, QLD  
**Best Puppy in Show**  
British Bulldog S Hurford & Miss K S Todd, Shanes Park, NSW  
**Obedience - Best in Trial**  
P J Dalzell, Newport, NSW

**FLOWER & GARDEN**

**Most Successful Exhibitor of Show**  
Highland Dahlias, Mittagong, NSW



**The Banksian Medal for the Exhibitor Gaining the Highest Aggregate Number of Points**  
Highland Dahlias, Mittagong, NSW  
**The John Thomas Baptist Memorial Medal for the Exhibitor with the Greatest Number of First Place Wins**  
Highland Dahlias, Mittagong, NSW  
**Most Successful Exhibitor in Decorative Section**  
Mary Fairlie-Cuninghame, Lane Cove North, NSW  
**RAS Floral Designer Competition**  
Lawrence Kwong & Jeff Smith, Cronulla, NSW  
**Supreme Champion Children's Exhibit**  
Nathan Li, Sans Souci, NSW  
**Supreme Champion Children's Decorative Exhibit**  
Aayush Shah, Annangrove, NSW  
**Sydney Royal School Produce Competition - Primary**  
The King's School Tudor House, Moss Vale, NSW  
**Sydney Royal School Produce Competition - Secondary**  
Oak Flats High School, Oak Flats, NSW

**GOAT**

**Most Successful Angora Goat Exhibitor**

Debbie Scattergood, Bungendore, NSW  
**Most Successful Boer Goat Exhibitor**  
Micathel Boer Goat Stud, Cudal, NSW  
**Most Successful Dairy Goat Exhibitor**  
Laurny Glassey & Ryan Donaldson, Kurrajong Heights, NSW  
**Best Angora Goat in Show**  
Debbie Scattergood, Bungendore, NSW  
**Best Boer Goat in Show**  
Micathel Boer Goat Stud, Cudal, NSW  
**Best Dairy Goat in Show**  
Laurny Glassey & Ryan Donaldson, Kurrajong Heights, NSW

**HONEY**

**Supreme Champion Exhibit (Open Honey Classes)**  
Vanessa Findlay, Coila, NSW  
**Most Successful Exhibitor in Honey Classes**  
Beelinda's Bee Hive, Crookwell, NSW  
**Supreme Champion Small Producers Exhibit**  
David Lyall, Branxton, NSW  
**Most Successful Exhibitor in Small Producers Classes**  
Rod Kay & Lynda Kay East, Lindfield, NSW  
**Best Exhibit in Show**  
Vanessa Findlay, Coila, NSW  
**Champion School Exhibit**  
The Armidale School, Armidale, NSW

**HORSE**

**The Col A V Pope Best Gelding Hack over 15hh**  
'Regal Replica' Universal Stables & Bruce Flood, Coleyville, QLD  
**The F L Crane Best Mare or Filly Hack over 15hh**  
'Regalia,' Ali Kent & Greg Gerry & Darren Telford, Yannathan, VIC  
**Australian National Champion Gentleman Rider**  
Rhys Stanley, Coleyville, QLD  
**Australian National Champion Lady Rider**  
Emma Hutchinson, Nericon, NSW  
**Fancy Dress Horse Competition**  
Oliver Galloway-Smith, O'Connell, NSW  
**Showjump Grand Prix Winner**  
Jeremy Whale & Sam Whale, Baw Baw, NSW  
**World Championship Campdraft**  
Luke Bennett, Dundee, NSW  
**Tentpegging Teams Challenge**  
Gunnedah Tentpeggers, Gunnedah, NSW

**PIG**

**Supreme Champion Boar of Show**  
Gumshire Pork, Keyneton, SA  
**Supreme Champion Sow of Show**  
Gumshire Pork, Keyneton, SA  
**Best Pig in Show**  
Gumshire Pork, Keyneton, SA  
**Most Successful Exhibitor of Show**  
Gumshire Pork, Keyneton, SA

**POULTRY**

**Grand Champion Bird of Show**  
'Leghorn,' Grahame Sharpe & Brendan Sharpe, Kentucky, NSW  
**Champion Hardfeather Standard or Bantam**  
'Australian Game,' Stephen Bailey, Abermain, NSW  
**Champion Softfeather Standard or Bantam**  
'Leghorn,' Grahame Sharpe & Brendan Sharpe, Kentucky, NSW  
**Champion Field & Forest**  
'Turkey,' Akers Flock, Tallygaroopna, VIC  
**Champion Waterfowl**  
'Embden' M F Peel & Fletcher Gleeson, Theresa Park, NSW  
**Grand Champion Egg Exhibit**  
The Henn House, Gunnedah, NSW  
**Champion School Poultry Exhibit**  
'Leghorn,' Elderslie High School, Narellan, NSW  
**Champion Youth Poultry Showmanship Competitor**  
Kollah Cannon, Glenorie, NSW  
**Champion Racing Homer**  
Bryce Bachner, Ellis Lane, NSW  
**Champion Fancy Pigeon**  
Fred Frendo, Orchard Hills, NSW  
**Champion Utility Pigeon**  
Neville Jenkins, Narrawallee, NSW

**SCARECROW**

**Scarecrow Creation (15 & Under)**  
Cammeray Public School, Cammeray, NSW  
**Scarecrow Creation (16 & Over)**  
Peta Rogers, Kirrawee, NSW

**SHEEP**

**MERINO**  
**Supreme Merino Ram**  
Airlie Merino & Poll Merino Stud, Walcha, NSW  
**Supreme Merino Exhibit**  
Airlie Merino & Poll Merino Stud, Walcha, NSW  
**Supreme Merino Ewe**  
Merryville, Boorowa, NSW  
**Supreme Junior Merino**



Merryville, Boorowa, NSW  
**FLEECE**  
**Grand Champion Merino Fleece**  
Greg, John, Jenny Alcock, Bungarby, NSW  
**MEAT & DUAL PURPOSE**  
**Grand Champion Schools Exhibit**  
Macarthur White Suffolk, Cobbitty, NSW  
**Supreme ASSBA Breeds Prime Lamb Exhibit**  
'Suffolk,' Bowen Suffolk Stud, Millthorpe, NSW  
**Supreme All Other Breeds Prime Lamb Exhibit**  
'Poll Dorset,' Tattykeel, Black Springs, NSW  
**Supreme Breeds Prime Lamb Exhibit**  
'Poll Dorset,' Tattykeel, Black Springs, NSW

**WOODCHOP**

**The Manny McCarthy Memorial World Championship 375mm Underhand**  
Brayden Meyer, Kingsthorpe, QLD  
**World Championship 375mm Standing Block**  
Jake Dingle, Mundubbera, QLD  
**World Championship 325mm Tree Felling**  
Daniel Gurr, Deloraine, TAS  
**World Championship 375mm Sawing (Single handed)**  
Mark Bouquin, Springville, New York, USA  
**World Championship 600mm Sawing (Double Handed)**

Jason Lentz, Diana, West Virginia, USA.  
Mark Bouquin, Springville, New York, USA  
**Women's World Championship 275mm Underhand**  
Takah Moore-Barrett, Mackay, QLD  
**Women's World Championship 325mm Sawing (Single Handed)**  
Jodie Beutel, Crows Nest, QLD  
**Champion of Champions (Most Successful Competitor in Singlehanded Events)**  
Brayden Meyer, Kingsthorpe, QLD  
**Most Successful Competitor in Single Handed Handicap Events**  
Owen Lovell, Franklin, TAS  
**Most Successful Competitor in the Ladies Events**  
Anne Paterson, Blackbutt, QLD  
**Most Successful Competitor in Tree Felling Events**  
Cameron Marsh, Bellbird, NSW

**YOUTH AWARDS**

**RAS Rural Achiever**  
James Stephens, Gresford, NSW  
**The Land Sydney Royal AgShows NSW Young Woman**  
Cassandra Bush, Cootamundra, NSW  
**Young Farmer Challenge NSW State Finals**  
Albion Park Agricultural Show Team, Albion Park, NSW  
- Kate Bourke  
- Alison Osbourne  
- Blake Calderon  
- Nick Crawford





# What's on

AT SYDNEY SHOWGROUND | [SYDNEYSHOWGROUND.COM.AU](http://SYDNEYSHOWGROUND.COM.AU)

From scoring the exclusive Australian concert debut of the biggest Latin music star in the world, to sell-out DJ pop-ups and the Sydney Boat Show - 2025 is shaping up to be one of Sydney Showground's most dynamic years yet!

In May, one of the world's hottest DJ's, Australia's own Fisher teamed up with Chris Lake in a pop-up event for 4000 lucky fans that would have raised the roof off the Charles Moses Stadium (Woodchop Arena) if it had one.

We've seen the return of popular consumer shows and festivals, including Meatstock, Everything Electric, Hyrox, the National 4X4 Outdoors Show, Supanova, PBC Baby Expo, with the Dog and Cat Lovers Festivals still to come in August and the Ridin' Hearts Country Music Festival in October. All of these following on from our very own Sydney Royal Easter Show in April.

Tradeshows and exhibitions have been strong throughout the year with

likes of Bunnings, PacPrint and CeMat attracting strong crowds. Meanwhile, our resident immersive exhibitions, Horizon of Khufu and Life Chronicles continue to provide an 'other worldly', VR experience to visitors; the recently opened Bubble Planet offering a sensory (and Instagram-able!) universe. All are definitely worth a school holiday visit.

In the sporting world, the GWS GIANTS AFL team continue to attract an orange 'tsunami' of fans to each ENGIE Stadium home game, and we are looking forward to hosting a number of hospitality events in August around the British and Irish Lions tour of Australia.

For more information, and our full list of upcoming events, head to our website and subscribe to receive event news and exclusive updates.  
[www.sydneystadium.com.au](http://www.sydneystadium.com.au)

## THE CUP'S HALF FULL

Sydney Showground, which welcomes more than a million attendees annually, is taking active steps towards pioneering environmentally conscious events and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050.

Single-use plastics at events are a complex issue. In Australia, stadiums and arenas reportedly chug through around 40 to 50 million disposable cups each year. But through a three-year partnership with WOSUP, Sydney Showground has adopted reusable cups, made from lightweight aluminium to be endlessly recyclable – and also keep your drink cold.

During an event, patrons place these cups in clearly marked bins, to then be sorted, cleaned, and repackaged. This year, Sydney Showground and ENGIE Stadium will save an estimated 2,200 single-use cups per event. During this year's Sydney Royal Easter Show, the number of sustainable cups utilised numbered 26,000.



## SYDNEY DISABILITY & WORKABILITY EXPO

FRIDAY 8 - SATURDAY 9 AUGUST

This Expo brings together a wide range of product and service providers to help people live their best life. It features a range of informative and interactive presentations delivered by industry experts and advocates, as well as employment options to people in the disability community, all under the one roof!

## SYDNEY'S ANNUAL WEDDING EXPO

SUNDAY 10 AUGUST

The largest wedding expo in Australia, with over 150 hand-picked, creative vendors from the greater Sydney region. Plan your entire wedding all under one roof. Our wedding expo is full of samples, expo exclusive deals, inspiration and free offers. It is an event not to be missed!

## SYDNEY BOAT SHOW

THURSDAY 14 - SUNDAY 17 AUGUST

All aboard for a new Sydney Boat Show! Sydney Showground welcomes a vibrant new indoor showcase celebrating



everything boating, fishing, tow sports, and marine innovation. Whether you're a lifelong boater, a weekend adventurer, or just starting your journey on the water, there's something for everyone – from paddleboards and powerboats to fishing clinics and family fun zones.

## CAT LOVERS FESTIVAL SYDNEY

SATURDAY 23 - SUNDAY 24 AUGUST

Join us for an unforgettable celebration of our feline friends. Whether you're a devoted cat parent, a passionate cat enthusiast, or simply enchanted by whiskered wonders, this is the event of the year for you! From Pat-a-cat sessions, jaw-dropping performances by fabulous feline stars, and an Adoption Zone to talks and demonstrations by Australia's top cat experts. For cat lovers it's purr-fect!

## DOG LOVERS FESTIVAL SYDNEY

SATURDAY 23 - SUNDAY 24 AUGUST

An unforgettable celebration of our four-legged friends. Whether you're a proud pooch parent, a passionate dog enthusiast, or just love being around happy hounds,



this paw-some festival promises a tail-wagging good time for all ages. Meet hundreds of beautiful dogs across dozens of breeds, watch jaw-dropping performances by talented canine stars, and learn from Australia's leading dog experts with educational talks and demonstrations.

## FRIDAYZ LIVE

SATURDAY 18 OCTOBER

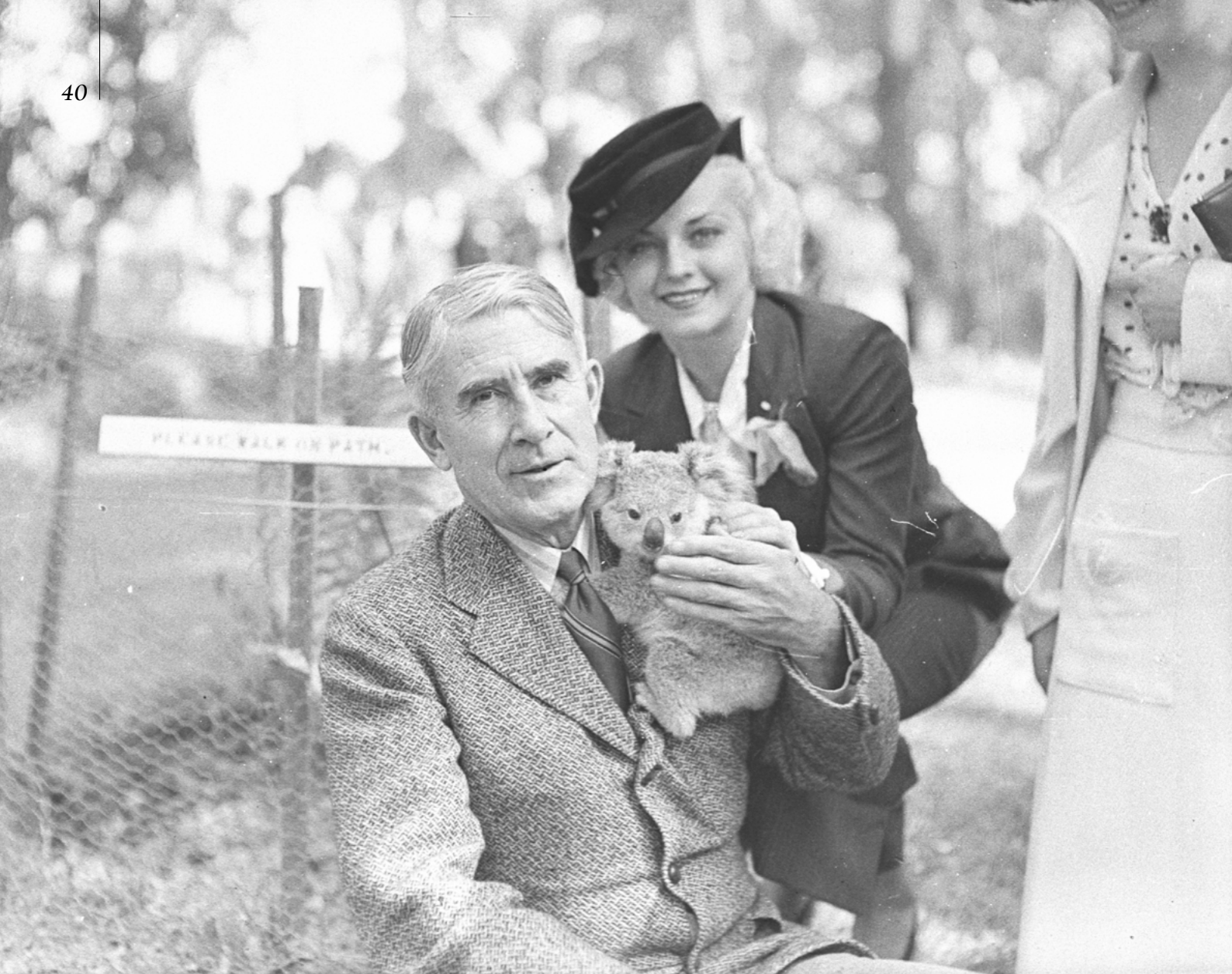
It's back at ENGIE Stadium with undoubtedly its most blockbuster line-up to date, featuring iconic artists behind some of the biggest anthems of all time. Mariah Carey, Pitbull, Wiz Khalifa, Lil Jon, Eve, Tinie Tempah, Jordin Sparks and more!

## RIDIN' HEARTS

SATURDAY 25 OCTOBER

Shine up your favourite cowboy boots and grab your mates – the ultimate country music experience returns to Sydney Showground! US country superstars Megan Moroney and Nate Smith will be joined by Avery Anna, Waylon Wyatt, Blake Whiten, Karley Scott Collins and Australia's own Lane Pittman, Sara Berki and Lewis Love. ●





# Zane Grey's Show

The man who brought us the cowboy goes to the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

In the Sydney autumn of 1936, a very famous American took up residence at the Palace Hotel in Watsons Bay. He was the world's first millionaire novelist Zane Grey – the man who almost single-handedly invented the western as a genre – and whose bestsellers Hollywood turned into films. Australians from all walks of life were massive fans, but for country people in particular, his work had a special place. So, when Zane Grey took himself off to the Sydney Royal Easter Show, it was exciting news. Easter time in twentieth-century Sydney was always a big deal, and the

Easter of 1936 was no exception. From the well-heeled down to the barely shod, the city was awash with people, all of them gathering for the upcoming holidays and the biggest event on the Sydney social calendar: the Royal Easter Show. But there was another fuss in town that year – the American writer Zane Grey.

Grey had arrived in Australia with his entourage in the new year to go big game fishing on the NSW south coast, with the intention of camping at Bermagui. Grey was a pioneer of the sport (fishing and writing were equal passions for him), but he was also a man who loved a new frontier. In our unfished waters, he hoped

to test himself and grab world records.

It's hard for us to appreciate now what a kerfuffle his arrival caused. Australians went nuts for him. The wide-open spaces and strong, independent characters of his books, spoke to people's own rural experience. Right up until the 1980s, most regional public libraries kept a big stash of favourite Zane Grey novels on hand for older readers.

Even non-readers were as familiar with his name as that of their own prime minister. For well over a decade, they'd seen it emblazoned on movie screens and movie posters as the originator of

the cowboy stories they watched each week in the picture houses that proliferated in every state capital, every suburb, every one-horse town.

In Australia, every move Grey made, everything he said and did, no matter how inconsequential, was written up and syndicated around the nation to newspapers large and small. The level of adoring attention Grey was to receive in Australia was unprecedented in his experience. As many as 500 sightseers a day made the pilgrimage to his distant camp for an autograph or a glimpse of him, some of them travelling hundreds of miles for the privilege.

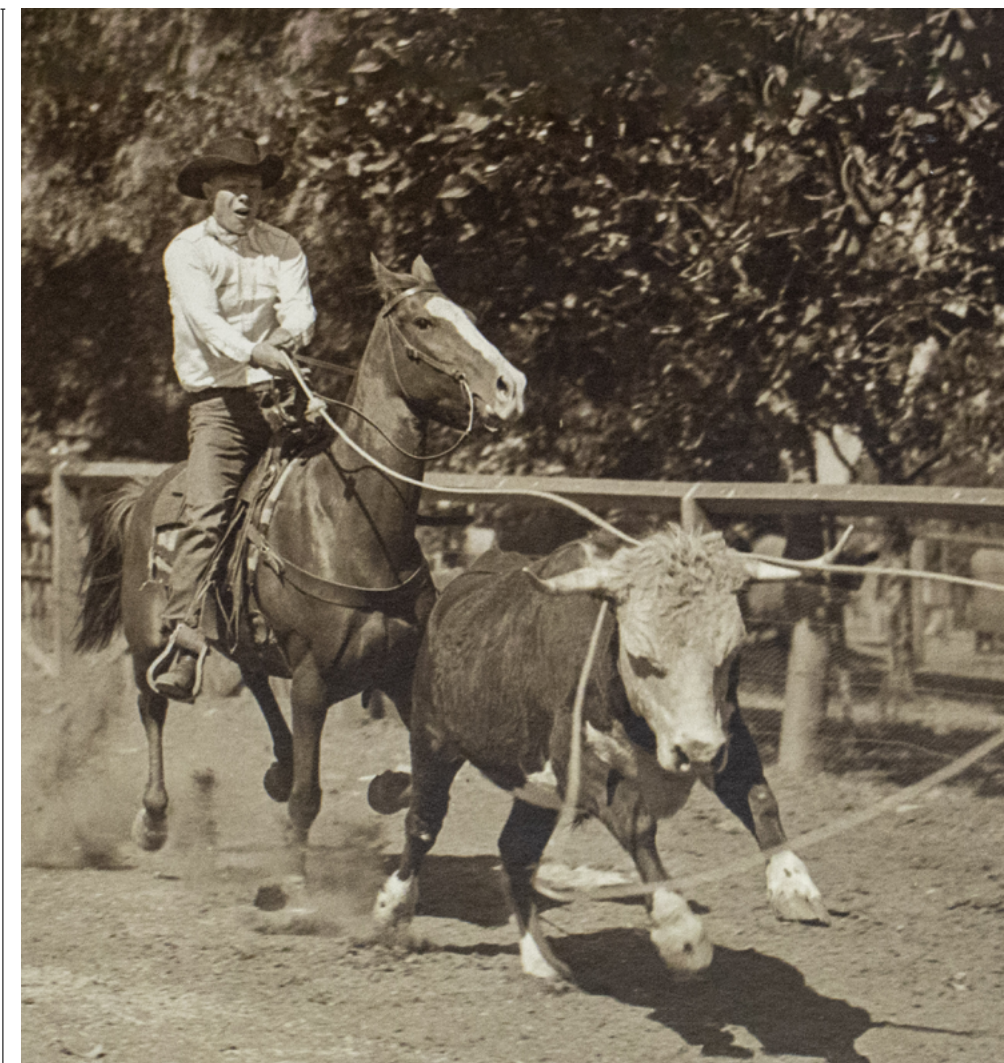
Wealthy socialite sportsmen and women from Sydney and Melbourne also clamoured around Grey, rushing to the south coast and hiring boats hoping to beat him. Suddenly, swordfish and sharks were all anyone wanted to talk about. Great fish were caught, but as the summer waned, the old pull of the calendar kicked in and the wealthy set – many with country connections – hauled themselves back to Sydney to take part in all the usual Show activities and surrounding events.

Grey also returned to the city, using Watsons Bay as a base to continue fishing, while his manager finalised details for a feature film they planned to make on Hayman Island, starring Zane Grey as himself. The ensuing film, *White Death* (1936) featured a marauding shark, decades before *Jaws* (1975).

Good Friday dawned and Sydney woke to extraordinary news that blasted attention away from Show reports. Just off Sydney's Heads, in fine weather the afternoon before, Zane Grey had caught a world-record tiger shark. The shark had been weighed on the beach at Watsons Bay and remained on display for all to see. Over three thousand people turned up and a carnival atmosphere prevailed to rival that at the Moore Park Showground. The monster fish was a marvel.

Over the Easter weekend the weather turned bad, providing Grey with free time at last to see the Show for himself. Though the American tried to keep a low profile, his face was so well known, he couldn't help but be noticed. At the Showground, a keen southerly wind blew across the main arena and down the narrow people-thronged streets that wound between pavilions.

Grey was impressed by the exhibition, saying it was a revelation and every bit as good as the Chicago World's Fair (which seems something of a polite stretch), but he spent little time at the displays. Instead, he lingered at the dog



Like the rest of the world, Australia had begun to go crazy for America and all things Hollywood. Imported roping and trick-riding acts were favourite entertainments at the Show throughout the 1930s.

pavilion and was particularly interested in the horses. Woodchopping also drew his attention, and after watching the competition he stayed on to talk to the axemen. Admiring the efficiency with which they wielded their axes, he called them "fine types of western men".

There were, in fact, real western men at the Show – Americans Johnie Schneider and Joe Burrell, to name two – though it appears Grey did not meet them. They were champions of the US rodeo circuit and appeared as entertainment in the arena. Because of Australia's own bush traditions and country-mindedness, local audiences were naturally drawn to demonstrations of skilled horsemanship

and were educated judges.

But the appeal was even more widespread – in no small part thanks to Grey – now that Australia, like the rest of the world, had begun to go crazy for America and all things Hollywood. Imported roping and trick-riding acts were favourite entertainments at the Show throughout the 1930s. Most performers

**Above:** Champion cowboy Johnie Schneider ropes a bullock;  
**Opposite:** Zane Grey with New York actress Lillian Pertka at the Koala Park, West Pennant Hills, Sydney, 31 December 1935.





were full-time professionals who also worked in movie westerns, often as stunt doubles. Though they came to the Show as entertainers, they were also competitors, taking part in the newly introduced rodeo events like buckjumping.

For Johnie Schneider, the head cowboy of the troupe at the 1936 Show, it was his second year of touring. Just days before the opening of the Show, Schneider was involved in a real-life cowboy drama.

A consignment of livestock for ring events was brought to the railyards at Darling Harbour. From there the animals were to be transhipped to floats

for the short trip up through city streets to the Showground. Johnie Schneider and Joe Burrell were on hand to help with the transfer one morning when three steers escaped. Exciting scenes unfolded. The frantic beasts bolted through the open gate of the goods yard and scattered. One was soon caught, but another crashed through a fence and plunged into the water. It then scrambled up onto a wharf, injuring a watchman, before Schneider lassoed and roped it securely.

That left one more steer running loose through the streets of Pyrmont.

**Most performers were full-time professionals who also worked in movie westerns, often as stunt doubles. Though they came to the Show as entertainers, they were also competitors, taking part in the newly introduced rodeo events like buckjumping.**

**Left:** 1937 Show poster featuring Alice Van, an accomplished Hollywood stuntwoman.

Schneider and Burrell jumped into a passing taxi and gave spectacular chase. Schneider manoeuvred himself onto the running board of the vehicle and, as they neared the steer, he swung his rope and lassoed it. For one thrilling hour, a Zane Grey novel had come to life on the streets of Sydney.

Grey was a great gatherer of stories when he travelled – and he travelled a lot, had been to all the remote American locations he wrote about – and he was also an accurate observer. As he went about the Showground, pausing to watch for a while or exchange a few words, he would have been drinking in the details. He was knowledgeable about outdoor life, and in person did not waste words, having a quiet, unadorned confidence about him that would have appealed to the country people he encountered.

When Zane Grey finally packed up in August and went home after his filmmaking adventures on Hayman Island, he took a load of souvenirs with him. His shopping included opals, kangaroo coats, wallaby blankets and Australian wool products. He was also after some of the axes of the type he'd seen used by the woodchoppers at the Show. He thought them the best in the world, only to discover they were made in Cleveland, Ohio, albeit from an Australian design.

Grey deemed his Australian trip his most successful ever; never had he been so feted and adored. He was determined to come again and did so in 1939 to fish for great white sharks off Port Lincoln. But before then, he had his great Australian novel to write. Called *The Wilderness Trek*, he finished it quickly, but due to a backlog of completed manuscripts, it wasn't published until 1944, five years after his death.

The book follows the fortunes of two American cowboys who join a cattle drive from Queensland to the Kimberley. Whatever Grey wrote about that he'd seen with own eyes in Australia, is accurately rendered, and whatever he hadn't is often fanciful.

Could it be that a few true details – a stockman's hat, his saddle, his drawl, perhaps – made their way into Zane Grey's book as a result of his day out at the Show? We'll never know for sure, but it's certain that the man who popularised the western would have been all eyes. ●



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