

DNSW Clarendon FAQs

1. Why is DNSW even considering not running competitions at Clarendon anymore? I don't understand.

For over 35 years, Clarendon has witnessed and supported huge changes and growth in Dressage, especially post Olympics in 2000. Originally, most of the DNSW committee were local to the Hawkesbury area and were directly involved in running events at Clarendon. DNSW and Clarendon were viewed as "one and the same" and it was the place to go if you aspired to ride at State or National Level.

The sport has grown significantly (in 2021 there were over 2500 dressage licenses in NSW) and the DNSW Committee has much wider responsibilities.

With the development of other venues and facilities in Sydney and elsewhere, riders now have many more competitions options. Riders can now compete up to Grand Prix at any number of venues across NSW, many offering facilities superior to Clarendon.

Separating DNSW from Clarendon competitions has been considered many times in the past but due to the complexity of the issue the hard decision has not been made until now. We very clearly understand the long-standing historical attachment many members have with the Clarendon grounds, and we always knew there would be those that disagreed with the decision to separate the Clarendon competitions from the DNSW as the State Dressage Authority (SDA). This was never going to be an easy decision, and that is why so much time and effort was taken in making this decision.

The Committee have had to accept that the dressage landscape in NSW has changed over the last 35 years and Clarendon Showgrounds are also becoming less and less fit for purpose. This has become particularly evident to the Committee more recently, given that we have no control over how the showgrounds are managed under our current lease agreement. Further, we believe that the arenas would require significant upgrading to keep up with the standard of other venues in NSW. This would be a huge investment of DNSW funds, at a great risk, given we may not have our lease of the showgrounds with Hawkesbury District Agricultural Association (HDAA) extended past 2025, when our lease expires. This was one of the critical issues in our decision-making, in terms of the viability of continuing to run competitions at Clarendon.

Importantly, members should be aware that other State Dressage Authorities don't run Club level events, this allows them the opportunity to spend more time focusing on developing the sport in the state and offering more training and education for their members and running big events like state and national championships. For example, Dressage Victoria has had time to develop an AOR High Performance (HP) Squad and detailed strategies for

professional riders to enter HP pathways. Because NSW has the additional task of running monthly events, this takes away a great deal of important volunteer Committee time to focus on improving the sport, compared with other SDAs.

As part of its Strategic Planning process in 2022 the DNSW committee revisited the compatibility / viability of running events at Clarendon with the wider responsibilities as an SDA.

2. Who made this decision?

The Dressage NSW Committee is made up of volunteers from the wider dressage community. A full list of current committee members can be found [here](#).

3. What is the basis for this decision?

Acknowledging the significance of Clarendon as the original “home” of dressage in NSW, the Committee agreed that any change to the existing format required a thorough investigation of all possible options including (a) continuing on (b) staying until 2025 (c) reducing the number of competitions, and so on.

For this reason, all members of the DNSW Committee were invited to be involved in a newly formed Clarendon Focus Group, whose purpose was to collect information on each of the issues and consider the pros and cons of a number of options that were identified. Some of the main items considered were

- the role and strategy of DNSW as an SDA
- the role of DNSW running club level events in the Hawkesbury region
- history
- facilities
- operating costs and investment required
- committee and volunteer resources
- risk management in light of HDAA expressing to DNSW there would be increasingly shared usage of equestrian facilities and adjoining facilities by non-related hirers.
- uncertainty of the lease past 2025.

Based on these findings, the Focus Group then made a recommendation to the full DNSW Committee about how best to proceed into the future. This process began in January 2022 and continued throughout this year with the help of an independent facilitator to guide the sessions and ensure there were equitable opportunities for everyone to raise their concerns.

4. Why are the members only being told about this now ?

The recommendation of the Focus Group was put forward to the full DNSW Committee at the April 2022 Committee meeting. Of the 12 DNSW Committee members and 3 Regional Delegates entitled to vote on the recommendation at the meeting, 1 member chose to abstain from voting. The remaining 14 members and delegates voted unanimously to ratify

the findings, which was for DNSW to cease running events at Clarendon, pending the discussions with HDAA regarding the current lease agreement.

Further work was then undertaken to consider the approach to HDAA as that was the first step in proceeding with implementing the recommendation.

At the August 2022 DNSW Committee meeting it was proposed that a letter be sent to HDAA outlining our position and requesting a meeting to discuss options. It was also proposed that a letter be sent to members at the same time, to ensure that members did not hear about the recommendation from non-DNSW sources. The Committee voted unanimously to proceed with this communication strategy.

One week later the information was shared with Members, HDAA and ENSW.

The Committee agreed that the most responsible approach would be to do the research first and be clear on the facts, before “going public” with any outcomes. The aim of the Focus Group was to investigate all the options and come up with a recommendation. The Committee simply did not know what the outcome of the Focus Group would be until they completed their research. The Focus Group approached the question with an open mind and willingness to find the best outcome whilst recognising that none of the outcomes would be perfect.

It is the Committee’s responsibility to look at how DNSW can best meet all of its obligations under the Constitution, and the Focus Group process was used to ensure this was completed in an unbiased and ethical manner.

The Committee acknowledge that the decision has left some DNSW members feeling angry that they were not consulted. This was certainly not our intention, and we regret the upset that this has led to amongst members, particularly those in the Hawkesbury area.

5. What happens to the equipment / assets at Clarendon?

Over the years that DNSW has operated competitions at Clarendon, a large amount of funds have been invested in creating and maintaining the facilities. Most recently, in 2019/20, \$96,000 was spent to replace the timber surrounds of the three arenas and construct the Judges Boxes. DNSW also owns various other “assets” at Clarendon.

It is our hope that these assets will continue to benefit the dressage community into the future as a lasting legacy of DNSW. The opportunity exists for an existing or new Club to take over these assets and the DNSW committee remains very open to approaches from any interested parties who would like to discuss this option.

6. How will Judge Education happen if DNSW don’t run events at Clarendon?

Funding for Judge / Officials Education is provided each year to DNSW from Equestrian NSW. These funds are used by the DNSW Judging Subcommittee to run educational events

(Seminars / Workshops etc) that have traditionally been held at Clarendon with judges across NSW needing to travel to attend.

With improved technology and the decentralisation of dressage away from the Sydney metropolitan area, DNSW is now able to provide Judge Education at many different locations across NSW (metro & regional) as well as online via Zoom. We work together with local Clubs to run Judge Seminars, conduct shadow judging , sit-ins and practical exams in the areas that are most needed.

7. [Why would anyone want to be a member of DNSW if they don't run the competitions at Clarendon anymore ?](#)

As a State Dressage Authority, DNSW aims to be relevant to, and represent the interests of, dressage riders right across NSW. Currently the DNSW membership consists largely of riders who compete at Clarendon and we accept that without the benefit of member discounts on entry fees at Clarendon, some of these members may decide not to continue as a DNSW member. Nevertheless, it is our hope is that under the new membership plan, a wider group of dressage riders will find relevance and benefit in joining. Our aim is to offer more training and education options for riders, similar to what SDAs in other states are able to provide, if the Committee can fully dedicate their time to these goals, rather than focus on running competitions at Clarendon.

DNSW also provides members with Annual Awards covering all levels including Amateur Owner/Rider and Young Rider Awards, and Performance Medals

8. [As a DNSW member I paid membership fees which contributed to the development of the Clarendon grounds. Why don't I get a say/vote about what happens with Clarendon competitions?](#)

DNSW receives significant funding from Equestrian NSW to support its activities as an SDA, including major events, officials' education and regional support. The Membership fees collected are a much smaller amount, less than one-third of the ENSW funding received and are pretty much fully utilised in funding Clarendon entry fee discounts and covering other costs such as the Annual Awards for all levels, Performance Medals as well as rider social events.

9. [What does DNSW do as a State Dressage Authority?](#)

Dressage NSW Inc (formerly, The NSW Dressage Council, and referred to as the DC) became a Discipline Council of the NSW Branch of Equestrian Australia in 1986. Until that time the Council had been in existence as the NSW Dressage Association which was formed in 1967. Equestrian Australia (EA) is affiliated with the international body for Equestrian sport, the Federation Equestre Internationale (FEI).EA is also affiliated with the Australian Olympic Committee (AOC).

DNSW is the controlling body for dressage in NSW, and is termed the State Dressage Authority (SDA). DNSW is committed to the development and promotion of the sport from

junior level to Olympic representation. DNSW seeks to improve all aspects of competition up to internationally accepted levels and provides a comprehensive service to its members.

Functions of DNSW:

- Represents dressage in NSW at a National level
- Makes recommendations on rule changes and contributes to the formulation of rules through the Equestrian Australia Dressage Committee (EADC);
- Represents and supports dressage Clubs in NSW;
- Represents NSW riders at all levels;
- Maintains and approves the NSW dressage calendar;
- Conducts regular seminars and workshops for the education of judges and other officials throughout NSW (most are free of charge);
- Is responsible for the education of judges;
- Conducts exams and training for judges;
- Establishes the dressage squads for NSW;
- Provides training and other educational opportunities for squad riders;
- Provides support for riders representing NSW at State and National Championships;
- Through its Committee, approves grading and downgrading of horses/ponies;
- Provides Annual Awards for Members;
- Provides Performance Medals for Members;
- Provides Medallions for Club Championships;
- Conducts major events such as the Sydney CDI, NSW State Championships, Youth Dressage Championships and from time to time Australian Championships.

DNSW currently has around 500 members.

There are approximately 2,500 NSW Dressage Competition licences.
55 Regional and Metropolitan Dressage & Riding Clubs from throughout NSW are affiliated with Dressage NSW through Equestrian NSW

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