

THE LAND

SYDNEY ROYAL SHOWGIRL COMPETITION



NSW SHOWGIRL COMPETITION GUIDE

Prepared by Lauren Elkins, 2nd Runner up in the 2009 Showgirl Competition



Royal Agricultural Society of NSW



I would like to dedicate my
Showgirl experience to 'My Nan'

SHIRLEY FAYE ELKINS

1928 - 2006



The land Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition

INTRODUCTION

Dear Showgirl Entrant,

Congratulations on entering The Land Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition. I trust you will find your showgirl journey both rewarding and lots of fun just as I did. Good luck with your judging, relax and enjoy the experience as it truly is an opportunity of a lifetime!

*Lauren Elkins
2nd Runner Up NSW 2009 Showgirl Competition*

COMPETITION OUTLINE

The aim of the Showgirl Competition is to find a person most suited to represent young rural women of NSW during her term as "Showgirl". The competition encourages the participation and subsequent awareness of rural women's issues and contributions in both local communities and rural NSW.

The society therefore seeks an, articulate and presentable person with a pleasant personality.

The winner will be required to meet a wide variety of people and should be able to converse intelligently about Australia and, in particular, her own district. She will be interviewed by press, radio and television and will be asked to speak about her experiences before a range of groups.

The Royal Agricultural Society of NSW defines a 'local' showgirl as a person with strong family, personal, educational or business associations within the local community. She must also be approved and nominated by her local Show Society and have a genuine interest in and understanding of rural and regional issues.

The competition is highly beneficial to all participants as it plays a significant role in the overall development of rural youth within this country. The entrants gain great insights and personal development through this very rare experience.

The entrants are judged on personality, confidence, ambition and life goals, general knowledge, rural knowledge, presentation and speech. Finalists are also asked to demonstrate purpose and ambition as well as knowledge of their local community and current affairs. Apart from their ambassadorial qualities, entrants are also judged on their involvement in and experience of rural affairs.



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HISTORY

The ASC and the RAS together launched the first Showgirl Competition at the 1962 Royal Easter Show. It was introduced at a time when the RAS was strengthening its links with local organisations through zone conferences, field competitions and symposiums. There were some initial objections to the introduction of the competition, with fears that it might undermine the image of the Society and the Show. In reality, the



competition strengthened the relationship between the metropolitan societies and local bodies. It became widely regarded as a valuable competition, of benefit to all organisations involved.

The contest has done much to maintain the traditional bonds between the RAS and its sister societies in the country. It has grown to be one of the most popular and crowd – boosting features of country show programs. The competition has come a long way in 47 years and now, in 2009, over 600 young women annually enter the competition throughout NSW with competitions being held in over 120 Show Societies.

REQUIREMENTS

- Contestants must be aged 18 and under 25.
- Must be permanent resident of Australia and must reside, be educated, or work within New South Wales for at least three months prior to their local Showgirl Competition to qualify to compete within the State.
- Only candidates nominated by an Agricultural Show Society are eligible for Zone and State Final judging.
- Previous entrants in the Showgirl Competition are eligible to enter. However, they are not to have been one of the 1st, 2nd or 3rd placegetters in a previous State Final.
- Individuals that may NOT enter include staff, Delegates and Councillors of both the Royal Agricultural Society (“RAS”) and the Agricultural Societies Council (“ASC”); and the daughters of both staff, Delegates and Councillors of the RAS and ASC.

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JUDGING CRITERIA

The entrants are judged on personality, confidence, ambition and life goals, general knowledge, rural knowledge, presentation and speech. Finalists are also asked to demonstrate purpose and ambition as well as knowledge of their local community and current affairs. Apart from their ambassadorial qualities, entrants are also judged on their involvement in and experience of rural affairs.



It is interesting to note that the prerequisites have not changed since the inception of the Showgirl competition in 1962, as the RAS

and ASC believe the value of these skills has not diminished.

A standard point scoring system is used to assess each entrant and to determine the winner. Below is a table demonstrating the weighting of each category.

Judging Criteria	Points
Personality	20
Confidence	10
Ambitions & Goals	10
General Knowledge (Local/Aust/Int)	15
Rural Knowledge (General/Local/Show)	15
Personal Presentation (Style/Grooming/Department)	10
Dictation & Speech	10
On – Stage Interview	10
Total	100

JUDGING PROCEEDURE

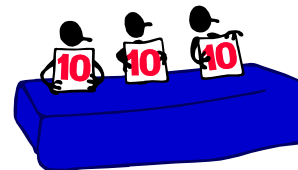
The following judging procedure is suggested for Local Showgirl Competitions and Zone Finals:

Stage 1 - Application Form and Resume.

Stage 2 - Interview

Stage 3 - Luncheon

Stage 4 - On Stage Interview / Evening Presentation



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STAGE 1 – APPLICATION FORM/CV

It is a requirement of the Land Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition that all entrants fill out an application form provided by the ASC/RAS to be eligible to enter. It is extremely important that you put thought into your answers as this is the preliminary portfolio of you as an applicant. You may also attach a resume if you wish. A recent colour photograph is required.



QUICK TIPS

- **FIRST IMPRESSIONS LAST!**
The application is usually reviewed by the judges prior to meeting the entrants. So be different and try to set yourself apart from the others. You can do this in many ways, for example, presenting it in a nice folder, adding pictures, photo library, use of attractive colour and layout. These simple presentation ideas really do make a difference as they show you have pride in your work and this will ultimately set you apart before the judges have met you!
- It is not essential but adding a resume to your application is beneficial. Your resume should include your employment history, education history, career goals, your key skills, and any professional affiliations. You can also add some references and any recent certificates you feel are relevant.

You can find resume templates from [www.careerone.com .au](http://www.careerone.com.au)

- Put thought into your answers, the aim is to sell yourself!

STAGE 2 - INTERVIEW

At each level of the Showgirl Competition entrants are required to have a formal 15 – 20 minute interview with a panel of three judges. These interviews are formal in the sense of structure; however they tend to be more conversational than question and answer.



QUICK TIPS

- When entering the interview room introduce yourself to each judge by shaking their hand and saying for example “Hello. How do you do, I’m Jane Smith”.
- Take your seat when asked by one of the judges, don’t just walk into the room and sit down.

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QUICK TIPS

- When seated sit upright in the chair with your legs together and slightly bent to one side.
- If you are unsure of an answer **DON'T MAKE SOMETHING UP OR RAMBLE!** Honestly you are better off being honest and saying something like I am unsure about that question or ask to come back to it later.
- When asked opinion based questions try to:
1. Say your opinion
2. Why you have that opinion
3. Use an example to support your opinion.
- Try not to answer your questions politically.
- Memorise your application form as you will get asked questions from it. The judges are interested in finding out more about you. So make sure you can easily talk about your goals, aspirations, achievements etc.
- At the conclusion of the interview thank the judges for their time and it is a nice gesture to shake their hands again.



WHAT TO EXPECT TO BE ASKED

General:

- Where employed or where studying.
- Current affairs – State, Australian and international.
- Hobbies, sports, interests, participation in local shows, social life, community involvement etc
- Some general knowledge questions, eg who is the Premier of NSW etc
- Future ambitions/goals
- Your view of the Showgirl Competition and why you have entered
- A couple of names of previous NSW Showgirls
- The names of the 1st, 2nd, & 3rd placegetters in NSW of the previous year



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Local Level

- Discussion regarding your community – primary production, industries and any local areas of interests.
- Local attractions.
- Local, State and Federal representative's names.
- Major issues at the time both agricultural/current affairs.
- Involvement in local Show.



Zone Level

- International event knowledge
- National leaders including agriculture associated Ministers.
- Universal agricultural issues eg. Climate change, water shortage, drought, food shortage, mulesing etc.

State Level

- The questions asked at this interview are similar to those asked at the Zone level.
- This interview is very broad and focuses on argument structure and delivery rather than particular issues.
- Know the names of the presidents of the ASC and RAS and a brief overview of each society.

STUDY TIPS

- Listen to talk back radio – these stations are excellent sources of information. The best time to listen to these is in the morning during the week.
- Watch Landline on ABC 12pm Sundays.
- Subscribe to FarmOnline – Free daily email from <http://www.farmonline.com.au>
- Read the main stories from the Land Newspaper – esp. the opinion/ letters to the editor sections, usually the weekly opinion from the NSW Farmers Federation is quite good.
- Read the main stories from state Newspapers i.e. Sydney Morning Herald, and Daily Telegraph.
- Watch the daily new on the television or Internet



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STAGE THREE – LUNCHEON

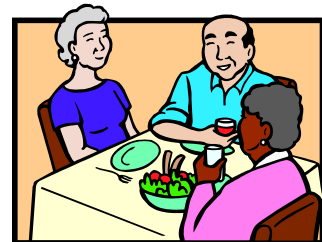
At each level of the Showgirl Competition you are required to attend a formal luncheon. The purpose of the luncheon is to allow the judges to observe each entrant in a social environment. You will be judged on the following;

- Table manners
- Conversational skills
- Your ability to socialise and mix freely with others
- Etiquette
- Dress sense
- General Deportment



QUICK TIPS

- Once seated, unfold your napkin and place on your lap. You can use your napkin for occasionally wiping your lips or fingers. At the end of dinner, leave the napkin tidily on the place setting.
- Do not start eating until the host starts – your hosts are usually the judges.
- Start eating using the utensils from the outside and work your way to the inside with each course.
- Whilst eating, you may if you wish rest the knife and fork on either side of the plate between mouthfuls. Don't talk with your knife and fork in hand, place them on the sides of the plate. When you have finished eating, place them side by side in the centre of the plate.
- If the food presented to you is not to your liking, politely ask the person next to you if they would like to swap. If this is not successful, it is polite to at least make some attempt to eat a small amount of it.
- It is quite acceptable to leave some food to one side of your plate if you feel as though you have eaten enough.
- If you are offered alcohol, you may either accept or decline. However, just remember to drink a small amount.



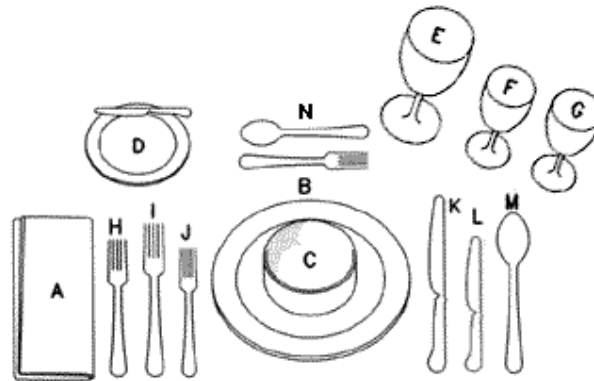
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QUICK TIPS

- If you want something i.e. a drink offer it to the persons next to you first before filling your own glass.
- Don't stretch across the table crossing other guests to reach food, wine or condiments. Instead ask a guest sitting close to pass the item to you.
- Drinking too much wine can be very embarrassing! Where a different wine is served with each course, it is quite acceptable to not finish each glass.
- Be friendly and conversational. Ask people questions about themselves this includes the other entrants too. Don't just concentrate all your attention to the judges as this may detract from your ability to mix freely.
- Try not to dominate the table, listen to others and be polite.
- Always make a point of thanking the host and hostess for their hospitality before leaving.



TABLE SETTING



A	B	C	D	E
Serviette (napkin)	Service plate	Soup bowl on plate	Bread & butter plate with butter knife	Water glass
F	G	H	I	J
White wine	Red wine	Fish fork	Dinner Fork	Salad fork
K	L	M	N	
Service knife	Fish knife	Soup spoon	Dessert spoon and cake fork	

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STAGE FOUR – ON STAGE INTERVIEW / PRESENTATION EVENING

When Local and Zone level entrants are required to attend a presentation evening, they are required to formally address the audience. During the evening you will be judged on the following:

- On stage interview
- Ability to address and connect with the audience
- Composure
- Confidence
- General dialogue
- Deportment and grace
- Ability to socialise
- Ambassadorial qualities
- Personal presentation



I know this sounds daunting! But don't worry – you only have to speak for about three minutes or 180 seconds which ever you prefer! Trust me, it will be over before you know it! Below is some general tips to help you through the night.

PRESENTATION EVENING

The purpose of the presentation evening is similar to the luncheon in that it allows the judges to observe each entrant in a social environment and assess their ability to mix freely with others, grooming, general deportment and social graces.

The evening is usually the best part of the Showgirl Competition as it's a chance for you to relax and meet lots of people whilst have a good time and even have a dance or two!

QUICK TIPS

- You can never be too well dressed! This is usually a formal occasion and it will require you to wear a dress, cocktail or formal is usually up to you. However if you choose to go cocktail, try to wear a knee length dress that shows as minimal cleavage as possible.



- Your hair, makeup and jewellery should complement your dress.
- Try to mingle within the crowd. This doesn't mean you have to speak to everyone, it simply means you should engage in polite conversation with a variety of people rather than socialising with one group of people.
- Have fun and enjoy yourself. These evenings are great!

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ON STAGE INTERVIEW

Your on stage interview will usually require you to answer three quick questions about yourself. The questions will be based upon your application form. Hence, as mentioned previously, know your form well!



Prior to the evening's events you may get the chance to meet the person interviewing you. They will go through your application with you and discuss what you are comfortable to talk about. The purpose of this is to allow you the best opportunity to speak well and to help you relax. The judges are looking for a confident woman who can address an audience with style, grace and intelligence.

QUICK TIPS

- **BE PREPARED!** Write a short summary about yourself and memorise. You can then use this as the basis for every interview and speech you do. Knowing your material well will really boost your confidence!
- The expression 'less is more' is very relevant to public speaking. Keep your answers simple and direct.
- Learn how to use a microphone correctly.
- Engage with your audience – you can do this by using a few anecdotes, practical examples to illustrate your point. This will make it easier for your audience and give them the opportunity to relate to you. When writing your speech, try to think of how you can bring your topic back to the everyday.
- Use humour – this is a sure way to win over an audience and funnily enough it also relaxes you.
- Vary the tone and pitch of your voice to emphasize your points – no matter how interesting your speech may be, speaking in a monotone is a sure way of putting your audience to sleep.
- When speaking try to make a conscious effort to speak slowly and clearly.
- If you make a mistake don't worry. The chances are the audience didn't notice. However if it is obvious, don't apologise, simply pause, make the correction and continue with the rest of your speech.
- Remember—no matter how large an audience seems—it is made up of individuals who want you to succeed!



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PRESENTATION / GROOMING

Throughout all of the judging stages your personal presentation and dress sense will be judged. This doesn't mean that the quality of your clothing will be judged nor does it mean you will have to necessarily purchase new clothing! Your clothing should reflect your personality and grace. Your choice of clothing should suit each occasion and should be stylish yet conservative in design.



The following are some examples of what you can wear to each event. Please note that your interview outfit can be worn to your luncheon, it is not necessary to change. However if you would like to change usually you are provided with an opportunity to do so.

INTERVIEW / LUNCHEON

Skirt suit Business dress Day wear dress Shirt and a skirt

EVENING PRESENTATION

Conservative cocktail dress Full length dress Ball gown

QUICK TIPS

- Clothing should be contemporary and stylish.
- Wear something you are comfortable in.
- Avoid high and thin heels – court shoes are best they don't hurt your feet as much. If in doubt be sure to take along some bandaids with you!
- Your handbag should match your clothing and shoes.
- Hair, makeup, and nails should be simple, tidy, elegant and neat.
- Formal wear should be modest and conservative.
- If you are exposing your legs wear stockings that compliment your skin tone.
- Try to add a bit of colour to your outfit to add that personal touch and make you stand out from the crowd.



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DEPARTMENT SCHOOL

There are a few things that never seem to go out of style. Good manners, consideration for others, and an attractive personality. These are the main qualities that people admire in one another. Department schools teach you the "dos" and "don'ts" of social etiquette and also provide an opportunity for personal development.

Now, I know what your probably thinking... "*Ladette to Lady*", it's definitely not that so don't worry, these schools are actually quite fun! Attending one of these schools will give you the opportunity to brush up on your table manners, social skills, presentation and deportment.

Many associations run department/etiquette schools for young woman; however, most Show Societies encourage entrants to participate in either schools run by Dubbo and Nowra Show Societies. The aim of these courses is to assist the winners and entrants of the Showgirl Competition to give them the confidence to represent their Show Society at a Zone level and to further their career prospects.



Both schools are highly beneficial and the skills taught are extremely valuable for the competition. It is interesting to note that for the past three years all of the NSW placegetters have attended either one of these courses. Despite learning many valuable skills, these courses give you the opportunity to meet other Showgirl Entrants and form friendships. Many of the girls you meet at these weekends you will meet again at the Zone and Sydney Level.

The topics covered by these courses include the following:

- Public Speaking
- Deportment
- Social Etiquette
- Wardrobe
- Makeup



A NSW placegetter also usually attends these courses to give you an overview of the Showgirl Competition and to answer any questions you may have regarding the Zone or State Finals.

CONTACTS

Dubbo Show Society Inc.
Sue Hood
(02) 6882 4364

Nowra Show Society Inc.
Jill Turnbull
(02) 4423 1081

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FUNCTIONS

Throughout your twelve months as Showgirl you will be invited to attend many formal/informal functions and events, some of these may include:

- Attending your local show, where you will be asked to meet and address various people, hand out awards and prizes to winners, and participate in some events.
- Participate in the opening and grand parade of your local show.
- Attend community functions such as Australia Day festivities, Anzac Day, Local club functions i.e. Rotary/Council etc
- Address community groups such as Country Women's Association, Rotary Club, School groups etc.



DUTIES/ROLES

Along with attending functions, you may also be asked to do some of the following tasks:

- Answer questions/interview with the media and prepare press releases.
- Attend and participate in show committee meetings.
- Play a role in preparing the consecutive Showgirls for the following year's competition.
- Speak on behalf of your local show society in an ambassadorial role.

QUICK TIPS

My only tip here is have fun, enjoy yourself and make the most out of your year as Showgirl! Try to attend as many functions as you can, get involved, make friends and you will find your experience to be very rewarding and one you will cherish for a lifetime!

GOODLUCK...

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you require any further information or assistance.

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CONTACTS

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Camden Show

"Still a Country Show"

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Tim O'Brien – Chairman of the ASC Showgirl Sub-Committee
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LINKS/SOURCES

The How To Guide for Showgirls 2009
Miss Anna Unger – Contact ASC for a copy

Agricultural Societies Council of NSW INC
<http://www.agshowsnsw.org.au/>

Royal Agricultural Society of NSW
www.rasnsw.com.au/

Sydney Royal Easter Show

<http://www.sydneyroyalshows.com/sydneyroyalcomps/Showgirl/index.html>

Facebook – The Land 2009 Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition
<http://www.facebook.com/home.php?#/group.php?gid=53774144871>

The Land Newspaper – Rural Press Limited
theland.farmonline.com.au



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