

# **The Land Sydney Royal Showgirl Competition**

Today my presentation focuses on the Showgirl Competition and the benefits to both the Showgirls entering and the Show Societies. The latter part of my presentation will focus on conducting a Showgirl Competition at a Show level.

## **AIM**

The Showgirl Competition aims to find a young female ambassador for rural NSW and the Agricultural Show movement.

## **THE COMPETITION AND THE BENEFITS**

The Competition attracts over 300 women aged between 18-25 years of age each year and plays a significant role in the overall development of rural youth within NSW.

Following an entrant's success at their local Show, the Showgirl then participates in the Zone Final. Each local Show is a member of one of fourteen groups who come under the umbrella of the ASC. Two groups combine to form one of seven Zones that cover NSW. In February/March of each year, at Zone Finals the Zone judges select, from all the local Showgirl winners 1-3 representatives for the State Final. The number of representatives a Zone can have is based on the total number of entrants that are put forward by their two groups. The ASC advises each Zone who their judges will be. At the Zone Finals the Showgirls meet other young women from rural NSW and gain great insights and personal development from this experience.

The State Final for the Competition is conducted by the RAS at the Sydney Royal Easter Show and usually has between 15-18 entrants. Judges are selected by the RAS. Judging criteria is based on personality, confidence, ambitions/goals, general knowledge, rural knowledge, personal presentation and volunteer/community participation. Finalists must also demonstrate knowledge of their local community and current affairs. In addition to their potential ambassadorial qualities, contestants are also judged on their involvement in and experience of rural affairs. In addition to a 20 minute interview, the girls partake in various social functions in which the elements are judged over a period of six days. A Presentation Ceremony is held at the Show where three prizes are awarded – the State Final Winner (1<sup>st</sup> Place), First Runner Up (2<sup>nd</sup> Place) and Second Runner Up (3<sup>rd</sup> Place). All finalists stay in Sydney for seven days as guests of the RAS to perform official duties at the Sydney Royal Easter Show.

The RAS put together a comprehensive program for the girls while they are in Sydney. The Showgirls, along with a Showgirl Chaperone, attend a variety of functions and activities. This year the girls attended a reception at Government House, visited the Children's Hospital at Westmead, were featured on a moving stage in the Grand Parade and attended an official Opening dinner at the Show. The opportunity for the girls to mix with the Governor/Governor General, Chief of Police, Head of the Armed Services and RAS Councilors is extremely valuable.

The Showgirls also attended an interactive professional development day. The day is designed to help the Showgirls be more effectively and efficiently able to:

Structure and design a public presentation;

Set up and manage interactions with groups and individuals;

Engage the audience through the use of voice, body and movement;

Connect with an audience and build rapport;

Introduce speakers and

Communicate with different behavioural styles.

The Showgirls also presented prizes/awards to various winners in agricultural competitions taking place at the Show.

The winner acts as an ambassador for NSW during her reign and represents the RAS, ASC and her local Show Society at any function to which she is invited during the year. Queensland Shows along with NSW Shows commenced an exchange program a few years ago and this enables The Land Sydney Royal Showgirl to join the Queensland finalists for three days during the State final week in Brisbane.

## **LOCAL SHOWGIRL COMPETITION**

### **COMMUNICATION**

Whilst in most instances participating Show Societies in the Showgirl Competition have either a Showgirl Committee or a Showgirl Coordinator who is responsible for conducting their local Showgirl Competition, it is not the case within all Show Societies. Sometimes it is the Secretary of the Show Society who is responsible for running the Competition at their local Show. However your Show Society is structured, it is imperative that there is communication between the Show Society and the Showgirl Coordinator or Showgirl Committee.

### **FORMAT**

There are no restrictions on how many times a Showgirl can enter the Competition, providing she is aged between 18 years to under 25 years of age as at May 1 in the year of the State Final. Ashley Meyer-Dilley (Bungendore) and Eunice Stiboy (Hillston) have entered the Competition more than once. In fact I would encourage the girls who are younger when they enter the Competition to enter again.

There are no set guidelines on how Show Societies must run their Showgirl Competition. Some Show Societies hold a Show girl Competition at their Show each year, some every second year and some Show Societies don't hold a Showgirl Competition at all, but will put an entrant through to Zone if they are approached. Frenchs Forest Show Society is an example of this. They don't run a Showgirl Competition but last year a young lady, Jessica Winning contacted Frenchs Forest Show Society to be part of the Competition. The Secretary, Helen Kirton, sent in Jessica's forms and she represented Frenchs Forest at the Zone 2 final in Berry earlier this year. Helen attended the Zone Final to support Jessica.

## HOW TO ATTRACT ENTRANTS

Many Show Societies are finding it increasingly hard to find entrants for the Competition. There are a number of ways to encourage young ladies to enter a few of which may include:

- Advertising in the local paper.
- Letters/emails to girls who are likely to enter or that members of the Show Society think may be interested. The Bungendore Show Society Committee approached local girl Ashley Meyer-Dilley to be the 2014 and 2015 Bungendore Showgirl.
- Approach local businesses to sponsor/provide prizes and at the same time ask if they have any suitable candidates in their organisation who they would like to nominate – this is a good way to get your supporters really involved.
- Involve your current Showgirl – she may be able to talk with senior/college students or there may be some youth clubs that she could address. It's very beneficial to have someone who's the same age as the entrants to speak with them on the benefits of the Competition.
- Post on your Show Societies Facebook page and tag local organisations just like Queanbeyan Show Society did when they tagged the Queanbeyan Netball Association.
- Have an information stand at the local Shopping Centre, field days, fetes etc to promote not only the Showgirl Competition but also other competitions that your Show Society runs. This is also a good opportunity to try and increase your membership.

Whether the young women have contacted the Show Society themselves or have been nominated they are required to complete FORM A 'Conditions of Entry' and FORM B 'Showgirl Details'. Once these forms are filled in they need to be given to the Showgirl Coordinator or the Secretary of the Show Society.

The RAS has suggested guidelines for organizing a Showgirl Competition at a local Show. The format is similar to that of running a Zone Final. The benefit of following the RAS guidelines is that it prepares the girls for the Zone and State finals.

If following these guidelines, the Showgirl entrants are interviewed by a panel of three Judges who are nominated by the local Show Society. It is recommended to Show Societies that these Judges are from outside the District and consist of two females and one male, however this is not mandatory. At least one Judge should have knowledge of the local area and try and ensure that no Judge is closely related to any entrant.

The announcement of the Showgirl Winner is a major attraction for your Show so make the most of it. Ensure that local media has been advised of the time for the impending announcement so that they can organise to have someone present. If your Show Society has a Facebook page ask someone to live stream the announcement being made.

## **INVOLVING YOUR SHOWGIRL**

The winning Showgirl of a local Show Society reigns for a year until the next Show. Being a Showgirl means being involved in your local Show. Involve your Showgirls and get them to perform various tasks which could include opening the Show, public speaking throughout the year, presenting prizes for winners in agricultural events, assisting in organizing the next Showgirl Competition, speaking with media, generally being in the public eye and encouraging entry by speaking with potential candidates.

## **SUPPORTING YOUR SHOWGIRL**

Elyse Hudson's 'Behind the Sash' is a fortnightly podcast, with episodes lasting between 10-15 minutes, of an interview with a NSW Showgirl. In these interviews, Elyse asks about their background, their interests, their experiences as a Showgirl and their local community. Its first episode was launched at the end of January 2016 and since then, Behind the Sash has released 35 episodes, interviewed 31 young women and amassed over 300 likes on the Facebook page. Contact Elyse with the details of your Showgirl if she would like to be interviewed. There are a lot of opportunities for both the Showgirls and your Show by supporting them and having them involved. Ashley Meyer-Dilley (Bungendore 2014-15 Showgirl) is now the Secretary of Bungendore Show Society and is heavily involved in organizing the 2018 Zone Final that they are hosting. Grace Eppelstun (The 2016 Sydney Royal Showgirl) is an ASC Group 15 Delegate and the ASC Next Generation Secretary.

Post-Show a photocopy of Form B and a photograph of the winning Showgirl should immediately be sent to your Zone Final Coordinator and the ASC Showgirl Coordinator. The Zone Final Coordinator has a lot to do and it is imperative that all the information regarding each of the Zone Finalists is received as soon as possible. Please note that entry into Zone Finals will only be accepted on receipt of this documentation.

Ensure your Showgirl is briefed on what to expect at the Zone Final and well prepared. Being involved in her local Show and or attending professional development days, such as the one offered by Dubbo Show Society, prepares the girls for the next stage of the Competition. Also ensure that your Show Society supports their candidate at the Zone Final by organizing a Show Society table. Zone Final Presentation evenings are a lot of fun and an opportunity to catch up with friends.

## **In 2018 ZONE FINALS ARE HOSTED BY THE FOLLOWING SHOW SOCIETIES**

Zone 1 – Wauchope 24/2/18

Zone 2 – Luddenham 3/3/18

Zone 3 – Bungendore 3/3/18

Zone 4 – Armidale 10/2/18

Zone 5 – Singleton 24/2/18

Zone 6 – Blayney 17/2/18

Zone 7 – Hay 3/2/18

