

10 April 2026

Australia's Best Graduate Wool Classers Shine at 2026 National Competition

Australia's finest emerging wool classing talent was on display at the 2026 AWEX/TAFE NSW National Graduate Wool Classer Competition, held at the iconic Sydney Royal Easter Show on Tuesday, 7 April 2026. Recognised as the premier national competition for graduate wool classers, and the only competition of its kind in the world, the event brought together the top wool classing graduates of 2025 from across the country, competing for the industry's highest accolade — the coveted "Golden Stencil."

Hosted by the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW, the competition was organised and proudly sponsored by the Australian Wool Exchange Limited (AWEX) and TAFE NSW. Finalists travelled from New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, and Tasmania, highlighting the national significance of the event.

National Award Winners Announced

- The prestigious 2026 "**Golden Stencil**", alongside \$500 in prize money, was awarded to Matthew Cox from Dubbo. Matthew graduated from TAFE NSW and was trained by Kayla Garner.
- Second place and the "**Silver Stencil**", including \$300 prize money, was awarded to Amelia Brown (Rylstone), trained by TAFE NSW, Kim Jenkins.
- Third place and the "**Bronze Stencil**", with \$200 prize money, went to Amelia McCrabb (Wanganella), trained by TAFE NSW, Kayla Garner.
- In addition, Matthew Cox was awarded the **DAS Campbell Prize** for Top NSW Graduate, recognising outstanding performance among New South Wales competitors.

The winning graduate's RTO and trainer were also presented with the **Dennis Teasdale Perpetual Trophy**, awarded annually to the training organisation and trainer of the overall competition winner.

A new award was announced by TAFE NSW for a student showing commitment to their training. The inaugural Stuart Murphy Legacy trophy was awarded to Tom Lockyer from Guyra, NSW.

Industry Applause for Emerging Talent

AWEX Chief Executive Officer, Charlie McElhone praised the calibre of competitors and the strength of the next generation of wool professionals.

"In my short time with the wool industry, it has been made clear to me about how important Australia's wool classing system is to positioning Australian wool as the highest quality in the world." Mr McElhone said. "Emerging wool classers of the calibre that we have seen today play a vital role in ensuring growers attain the best possible value from their clip. This is something that should be acknowledged and celebrated."

Mr McElhone also acknowledged the important role of education providers.

"It is important to congratulate training organisations across the country like TAFE NSW, for the role they play in training classers of such a high calibre," he said. "Today's competitors not only showcase the top echelon of Australia's 12,000 strong wool classers but also reflect the efforts of these educators."

Challenging Competition Format

The competition aims to recognise excellence in wool classing and education, while enhancing the profile of wool classing as a respected profession and rewarding career pathway. Now in its second year featuring a WoolClip task, the competition challenged graduates across a comprehensive range of skills. Finalists completed:

- Three classing tasks using fine merino, medium merino, and crossbred simulated clips
- A wool valuation
- A WoolClip task
- An oral presentation to the judging panel

Expert Judging Panel

The 2026 competition was judged by a highly respected panel of industry experts:

- Mr Gerard Buchanan, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby Wool Brokers
- Mr Stuart Murphy, TAFE NSW
- Ms Renee Timberlake, Australian Wool Exchange Limited

AWEX has proudly sponsored the National Graduate Wool Classer Competition since 2012, with Mr McElhone noting its ongoing importance to the industry.

“The national competition represents the pinnacle for wool classing graduates and has generated significant enthusiasm while elevating the profile of wool and the specialist skills required in wool classing,” he said.

To get a firsthand look at the event, see the following videos:

[2026 AWEX/TAFE NSW Wool Classer Graduate Competition Wrap-Up Video](#)

[AWEX/TAFE NSW National Graduate Wool Classer Competition Winner Announced Video](#)

Charlie McElhone

AWEX CEO