

## Claire Ashton-James

### *Current roles:*

AERA Management Committee Member for NSW  
Chair of Research and Strategic Planning, AERA  
Public Officer, NSWERA State Management Committee  
Treasurer, Sydney Endurance Riding Association (Zone 1)



### *Background:*

I am a failed dressage rider. In dressage, you typically only train for about an hour at most before your horse gets thoroughly bored from dancing around in circles. But I wasn't done riding after 1 hour, so I bought a second horse to ride after the first. When I started looking for the third horse to ride after the second horse was dizzy, I realised I needed to find an equestrian discipline that would satisfy my insatiable love of riding....and I found endurance.

### *What I love about the sport of endurance:*

'To complete is to win'. The motto of our sport means so many things to so many people. To me, it means that when the going gets tough, my focus is on looking after the welfare of my horse, not looking after my ride time or my place in the field. To me, it means that when a fellow rider is struggling or injured, we are more likely to stop and check on them, or ride with them at a walk for as long as needed to ensure they are safe. In our sport, coming in last doesn't mean you are a loser, it means you probably struggled the most and worthy of the most applaud and encouragement.

### *Why am I on so many committees in endurance?*

I've learned that horses have a tendency to become ill or injured, and that can be rather disappointing. Often it means that that you can't participate in the sport as a rider. As a committee member, I can always participate – day in, day out – regardless of my horses' latest handicaps.