

Phillip Island Monthly Club Evaluation – Judge Feedback for - FEB 2026 - Subject –OPEN- Judge – Johanna Botman

Please refer to Judge Instruction Letter for ratings: HC (Highly Commended) - C (Commended)

Sequence by Title	Member No	Title	Judge Rating	EDPI
1	326	Jeetho Hall		<p>It's brave to try something different. You have colour matched your frame with the building and done well with that.</p> <p>That you have used a wide angled lens – perhaps even a fisheye is evident and I like to see images that look at the world in a different way. I like that you haven't tried to straighten the image. I think that you if you had taken the shot from closer, you could have created more tension and towering in the image.</p> <p>My concern is that the frame is dominant. I like that it is a square frame, but so much of the image is the yellow frame, so little remains for that fabulous old building.</p>
2	326	Loch Brewery		<p>Again, I can see that you had a lot of fun with the lens, and I can feel the joy in creating and maintaining the distortion that the lens allows.</p> <p>There are some interesting details in the vegetation on both sides of the image that give the image a kaleidoscopic feel, and that's pleasant.</p> <p>Again, the yellow frame dominates and detracts from the space available to you to show off your work, and there are some artifacts in the yellow frame that make the processing look careless.</p>
3	326	Loch Royal Hotel		<p>You've probably worked out, by now, that I am not a fan of the way these images have been presented. I think that this one is the weakest of the three. The yellow mount is the widest and there is the shadow bulge on the right-hand side.</p> <p>You have left evidence of your use of the touch up tool in the clouds above the hotel and to the left of it. If you wanted those to be a feature, you would need to create more clouds.</p> <p>Don't get me too wrong here. I like the images themselves. I like the use of the widest possible angle and I like the distortion created. I think that the</p>

				presentation is not the best. I think that you've used up too much real estate in the frames and not given enough to showcase your talents.
4	889	Black Shouldered Kite	C	<p>These are stunning birds and are usually quite cooperative when it comes to photography. You've captured this one really well. I like the shadow over one eye and the light in the other. The feather details are clear and I like the dark background. All too often, long lens bird photography creates a white background.</p> <p>I'm getting fussier in my appreciation of bird photography. I am learning to appreciate the further difficulty of capturing birds 'doing something'. So, while this is an excellent photo, I haven't given it a higher award because I think that the capture is a little too easy and the bird is not doing anything remarkable.</p>
5	896	Cheeky		<p>It's interesting that you chose a square crop for this image. It is a cute little animal, and it's always good to see our native animals in the daylight.</p> <p>For me, you have cropped too close. I think that there is some lovely bokeh in the background and that you should have left more of that. If you left more on the left hand side, you would have created both room for it to 'move into' and some negative space that would have separated the animal from the background and made for a more interesting image.</p> <p>I find that this crop is so 'in my face' that I can't see much of the animal except all that fur.</p>
6	852	Close call	C	<p>I've heard judges say 'there's always a pelican/seagull' ... but this is no ordinary pelican photo.</p> <p>You have captured movement and drama. Your image shows that through the splash of the water – that makes us look at the seal, and the movement of the wings that makes us look at the pelican.</p> <p>The shallow depth of field really helps to isolate the action from the background but gives enough definition for us to place the action in context.</p>

7	862	Coober Pedy SA		You have captured some lovely clouds and there's good colour transition from the high grey/blue to the firey yellow of the sun. The wide angle has worked well for you to capture the scene. The car and caravan in the foreground give us something else to look at and provides some scale..
8	915	N_Croc	C	I like that you have used the 2:1 ratio in this image. That emphasises the size of the animal. It shows that we don't need to see all of it to be in awe and to be scared. You have shown restraint by choosing to focus in on the business end of the animal. I like the muted palette – it's almost monochrome.
9	885	Deadwood		<p>I've gotta tell you that I'm not a fan of the dead tree genre. That said, I think that you have done reasonably well with this one. There's good texture and shape and shadow. The blue sky helps to tell us where the tree is – or, perhaps, why it died.</p> <p>I'd like to see that you cropped it differently. Whether that's in camera or after in post processing, I'd like to see more of that blue sky. I'd like to see some negative space because I think that that would help us to see the tree in terms of a story.</p> <p>Ultimately the images needs a third thing. You have sky and tree – that's two things. A jet trail? A moon? A bird or its nest?</p>
10	875	Diving Tern	C	<p>What a terrific capture. The image is really clear and detailed. From the downy white on the beak to the clarity in the feathers. I like that it's not just the bird. Although none of it is in focus, we can clearly locate the bird in terms of the sky, the sea and the cliffs.</p> <p>You've also given the bird lots of room to dive diagonally across the image and that helps to tell the story.</p>
11	889	Dragonfly	HC	There's both a stillness and an energy in this image. You have created that by capturing the stillness of the body and the movement of the wings.

				Recently I've tried to capture the odd dragon fly and given it up as a worse venture than bird photography. That is to say that I understand how hard it can be to get a really good shot of one of these hyperactive, tiny creatures. Well done.
12	875	Egret		<p>There are some excellent bird images in today's competition, and I'm sure that you know how good some of your competitors are. And I think you know that to be competitive, you need absolute clarity, you need the bird to be doing something that makes it harder to capture well and you need the luck of a good background.</p> <p>In this one, there is less clarity to the structure of the bird. Yes, I can see the edges of the wing feathers, but overall, there's not enough contrast in that whiteness to show more definition.</p> <p>They are terrific feet, and I'm pleased that you have tried to capture the movement of the bird.</p>
13	862	Egret Kingscliff		<p>The monochrome treatment and the square crop grab our attention, and you have some lovely bokeh in the water. I can see that you have used a shallow depth of field and that can be dangerous when trying to create a sharp image. The bird isn't sharp and that's sad. It could have been a terrific image if it was pin sharp.</p>
14	361	Flannel flower trio		<p>There are aspects of this image that I really like. That contrast between the flowers and the black background works really well. My main concern is about where the focus sits. You have used a narrow depth of field, and in doing so, you really need to make sure that what you want in focus really is.</p> <p>There are areas that are really sharp – like the stamens at the top of the middle flower, but then there are areas that are blurred and I think they detract. That petal that is leaning towards us is just too much for me.</p>

	902				
15	Forest fog	HC			<p>There's a lot to like in this image. Your use of monochrome accentuates the moodiness of the forest. Your crop that makes it a panorama shows us that forest in more of its glory.</p> <p>There's an interesting change in fogginess from left to right – dark to light. That is interrupted by the denser bush but that helps to balance the image and to give us something 'different' to look at.</p> <p>Your choice of which part of the forest to preserve is interesting. The strong verticals of the eucalypts is pleasing, but happily interrupted by the occasional diagonal of fallen timber or branches.</p>
16	885				<p>Galahs are my favourite Australian bird. They always seem like they are having a lot of fun. This one seems to be checking out a hollow and that's an interesting setting to give context for the bird and tell us a story. And I like that it is on the horizontal.</p> <p>But, that background is very bright and we lose the tail feathers in that. They become too much like that background. The bird itself isn't sharp and that detracts from the image. Bird photos are really hard to take, but don't give up.</p>
17	885				<p>Nice that you captured the bird on the thirds. I like the negative space provided by the sea. I like that the eye and beak are so clear. The back end of the bird is less in focus so takes away from the image.</p> <p>I find the image a bit flat. I'd like to see some shadow so that there is more fullness to the bird. I know it may not have been a sunny day, or that the sun had been hidden by cloud for a while, but it is worth the wait if you can. Or come back another day.</p> <p>This is a good shot, but one that is easily taken. For me, what I like to see is that you attempt to make something different of it. Can you get lower for a different angle? Were there footprints in the sand? Other birds nearby?</p>
18	852	Grantville sunset	C		<p>Lovely lines and colours. Love that the foreground is only on one side of the image. This is an example of how you can produce an image that does not</p>

				meet the 'thirds' rule and still have impact. I think you have captured the colours and mood of the sunset really well. The details of the boat and the fisherfolk are clear and help to tell your story. Well done.
19	915	N_Guitars		<p>There's some real potential in this image. There's lots of detail and so many guitars. What I would like to see is that you find a way to highlight something about them. Doing that will help us to see why you chose to take this image and why you think that the subject is so interesting.</p> <p>Is this a display that someone else has created? If that is the case, then you need to make sure that your capture of it makes it yours. Submitting photos of someone else's artwork is not acceptable.</p> <p>There's some flare from the light source that I find annoying. I keep wondering if the image is upside down.</p>
20	325	Hello		<p>A good effort at trying for a cute image. This galah clearly knows that you are taking its photo. Your point of focus is on the body, and we can see the texture of the feathers, but what we always want to see in any animal is the eye, and, sadly, that's not as in focus as I would like.</p> <p>That background is very bright. Toning that down would help to emphasise the colours in the bird.</p> <p>I do like that it is 'doing' something', but I'd like it to be less soft so we could appreciate the texture in the feathers.</p>
21	866	Nobbies Sunset	C	<p>You've captured some fabulous clouds and colour in this sunset. There's something about a yellow and grey sunset that appeals.</p> <p>What I don't find appealing is the dominance of the rock formation. I think that you should look closely at the previous sunset image with the jetty and think about how it was more restrained by keeping the jetty to the half way in the image. You have let this move across our field of view to the second third and that makes it dominate. Will I get invited back if I tell you that I think that it is</p>

				not a particularly attractive rock and could probably be a better prop in your image if it is silhouette?
22	325	Noojee rail trail	C	<p>I really like these heritage bridges, but they are buggers to take good photos of. You've made a good attempt. I do like that you have used the path and the decking as your lines. They work. The people - not so much. It's a shame that the man in the red jacket hasn't changed places with the hooded person. While that red of the rain coat works well, the orange sign doesn't. It wouldn't take too much to remove it.</p> <p>All that said, I think you have done well with a difficult subject.</p>
23	892	Nooji Sunset		<p>One of the things that we learn to accept about sunsets – or sunrises – is colour. We come to expect that we will see the reds and oranges - perhaps pinks and blues – that tell us that the end of the day is nigh. Or evenings spread out against that sky. Sadly, this image doesn't do that for us. There is very little in this photo that indicates that it has been taken at the end of the day. And this is why titles are important for images. Controversial, I know. But if you provide an image a title that is suggestive, then you need to deliver. I don't think that this one does this.</p> <p>That makes it sound as if my criticism of the image is purely about the title. That's not the case, even if it has disappointed me.</p> <p>I think you have captured a memory, a scene that you liked and reminds you of a time and place.</p> <p>What I'd also like to see is something in the foreground. Kids playing, a dog or someone on the jetty.</p>
24	399	Norman Island		I spent December along the south coast of western Australia and used up lots of 'film' trying to take good photos of the beauty and awe. You have given it a decent go. You have used the vegetation to frame the scene and there's even an obliging seagull to try to provide a subject.

				<p>What I'd like to see is some detail. I think this is taken from too far away or with too short a lens. I suffer badly from that too.</p> <p>The challenge is to find ways to show the beauty of the scene in a way that does not encompass the whole. The previous image of the croc shows us that we can appreciate the whole by being shown a part.</p>
25	866	Orchid	C	<p>This is a photo with a WOW factor. By changing the background to monochrome, you have accentuated the colour and fleshiness of the orchid. I like that you have filled the frame with the flower. You have created good depth of field and I wonder if this is a stacked image. Not that that makes any particular difference – just something for me to think about in terms of how to take such images myself.</p>
26	325	Pier	C	<p>I looked at this one long and hard. There are some things that I really like about it. I like the layers of colours in the hills and clouds behind – the way that they emulate the layer in front of them and how they darken to create distance.</p> <p>I like that there is bright sunshine on the pier and the line of red safety devices is appealing. You've even got a couple of birds photo bombing!</p> <p>There are just a few things that I'm not so happy about. I don't understand what the yellow and white thing is next to the shed. And I'd like to have seen a little more angle on the part of the pier that leads out on the left hand side. Just enough to give us a different angle to make it not quite so squashed up against the side of the panorama.</p>
27	902	Red capped Robin		<p>A difficult capture and you've done a good job. There's just not quite the focus that we need to think of this as a good photo. These little buggers are happy to sit and be photographed so I think that a little more patience and a little more depth of field would make this a great photo.</p> <p>But you have framed him well and that branch adds good texture and interest.</p>

	884			This is the time of year when scenes like this greet us as we drive through the countryside, and I really want to take a good shot of them. I find that the farmers don't give a fig about photographers and don't do much to line the bales up or group them appropriately for us. You have chosen a good time of day to capture colour, but I think that you haven't really made best use of that light. There are some really bright patches on some bales that are unpleasant and make the scene look over processed. I can see that you want the bales to be the subject, but I think that you haven't really guided our gaze to them in way that makes them interesting. It's a hard one to do well, and you've given it a decent go.
28	884	Rolled Hay		
29	911	Setting sun reflection	C	I like that you have used the 'airless horizon' concept for this image. The wide angle shows us the gammut of the intertidal zone. It's good to see that you have tried to give us a different view of something that could be ordinary. There are some who may not be forgiving of the sun flare or the brightness of the sun, but I will because it so close to the horizon and has little impact on our appreciation of the scene
30	896	Shell on Smiths		I've tried to take images like this myself and find that they are really hard. The camera wants to focus on the surface of the water rather than the subject below it. I know that we aren't meant to see a sharp shell, but the lack of clarity in the sand doesn't work for me. There are relaxing wavy lines of the water that soften the shape of the shell and they point to some potential for a stronger image.
31	896	Sleepy Koala		You've used the vegetation around the koala to frame it nicely and to give the image good colours. There are some areas of brightness on the leaves and bark that make the animal a little darker and take away from my appreciation of the lovely curve of the hand. Nice enough image but needs something to give it some umph. I'd like to see the koala looking at me. I need to see face and eyes for it to be a good image.

32	361	Sunflower brightness	C	<p>Three sunflowers at different stages of development tell us a story. The clear delineation of the subject from the background is well done. I don't have to tell Richmond fans about how pleasing yellow is against a black background!</p> <p>There's some textures in the petals that are caught well.</p> <p>So many threes! Three colours, three flowers and all making use of their own third of the image. These subtleties help to make this a lovely image.</p>
33	889	Swallow Fledgling	HC	<p>A super cute image that is really clear and well composed. Those tufts of downy feathers help us to see how young and vulnerable the bird is and also show us that it is out in the breeze. There's a story to the bird in these fine details. I like that you have mirrored the colours of the bird with the colours of the perch.</p> <p>Well done.</p>
34	911	Swans at Churchill island		<p>You've captured interesting texture in the water and it's a great colour. For me, those two swans are too far away and not clear enough to create interest or be the subject.</p> <p>This is a case where the number three is important. If you could have captured three swans, not necessarily together, they would make for a more interesting image. But they do need to be closer.</p> <p>Your squarer crop helps to create a more interesting image, but the subjects need to be closer to the viewer.</p>
35	866	The Beach	C	<p>Speaking of threes, this image clearly shows the three aspects of the intertidal zone. There's a real peacefulness to the image. I think that you've tried to capture some clarity in the sand to give us some foreground – the shadows help you with that – but I don't think it quite works.</p> <p>I like the simplicity in this image.</p>

36	902 The Horn	<p>There's drama in the clouds and in the colour of the suns last rays. I don't think that you have captured it at its best.</p> <p>I think that this image shows that you had a dilemma about what your subject is. Is it the structure? Or is it the sunset? If it is the structure, then some fill in flash to emphasise the texture in the paving to match that on the wall. If it is the sky, then we need to see less of the structure and wall.</p> <p>And it just needs something else. A person or a coat or a tripod.</p>
37	911 The Prom Lighthouse	<p>One of the issues with taking coastal scenery is that the vegetation that survives on our coast is not very photogenic. I can see that you have used the vegetation to frame the scene, but I think that your frame is a bit heavy handed. I would like to see the vegetation used more as a vignette, or perhaps just on one or two sides. I think that you should look carefully at the texture of the vegetation to decide which is better to use, or to use sparingly, to enhance your image.</p> <p>The lighting is interesting, and I like that the rocks look as if they have been given a monochrome treatment</p>
38	875 The stream	<p>I like your use of a slow shutter speed to soften the water. I'm not always a fan of using the rule of thirds, but your use of it in this image makes for an interesting take on this scene. Your stream makes use of the third line in the foreground, up the right hand side and at the point where the stream disappears into the forest.</p> <p>You've done well with a difficult scene, and of the similar scenes today, this is probably the best.</p>
39	892 Tooronga Bridge	<p>Your use of a wide angle ensures that you have included the bridge, and I like that you have tried to use it as a frame. For the bridge to work, you need something else. Someone on the bridge – preferably wearing red, or even just your camera case. I do understand that scenes like this contain lots of 'nature's junk' and they can be hard to work around. In this case, for me, there's too much. The bark hanging down the left-hand side feel like my fringe</p>

				in my eyes and I want to brush it away. You've used a wide angle to capture the water and the tree ferns, but then 'wasted' space with the distraction.
40	884	Tooronga Falls		<p>There's nothing more peaceful than a wander through some of our native forests and finding flowing water. The not so nice thing is trying to capture the colours of the scene through our lens. Greens are some of the most difficult, and I will admit that I still don't know how to process them well. Perhaps you and I can have a tutorial on it, because this feels overprocessed, over saturated in your pursuit.</p> <p>Good wide view of the river and good capture of the water. I like that you have that little bit of the river coming straight at us on the right hand side. That's good framing. Just let down by the processing.</p> <p>And what are those circles of rainbow? In the top?</p>
41	892	Tooronga River		<p>I like that you haven't used a wide angled lens so that you focus on what's important in the image and that's the river.</p> <p>You've captured a part of the river with tree fern fronds that are in good nick and that's important to delivering a pleasing image.</p> <p>I think you could improve it by framing the river in a way that lets our eyes wander further upstream before it leaves us in the forest.</p>
42	361	Tulips Painterly	C	<p>The two other images that you submitted have lead to this and I like it. Not just 'cos I'm Dutch, but because you have created an image that has requires us to look closely to appreciate.</p> <p>Each image has become more artistic, and more simple. I like this one. I like that you have kept only that part of the flowers and vase that are needed to show us your skill.</p> <p>This kind of image is contentious and there are some judges who wouldn't like, or credit, such work. I'm not one of them. I think that if you can show that you know how to use the tools available to you, then you should go for it. On the understanding, of course, that the original image is yours.</p>

43	852	Warning _ Crash Immanent		<p>Good title and that emphasises the sign in the background. I can feel your excitement at seeing this and wanting to capture something interesting. For my money it is a shot just a little too soon or too late. I'd like to see the image after this one where I can see the sign separately from the birds, or the one before where the birds have some space to fly into.</p> <p>Two things that always attract our attention are eyes and words. So if you have these in your image, you can bet that the observer will see them first – so creating them as the subject.</p> <p>In this image, you have two subjects! Both the birds (eyes) and the text, yet both of them are on top of each other. Some separation of those subjects would make this a fabulous photo.</p>
44	399	Whisky Bay		<p>Nice rocks and sky but needs something in that foreground to keep us in the story. For a sunny day, the image is somewhat dull and that surprises me. I think that you could undertake some processing in what clouds are there to give the sky some contrast.</p> <p>I think that the angle that you have taken the image could be better. This is from a bridge? From a lower angle, you may find that the horizon moves from centre to the thirds and could make for a more interesting take on this scene.</p>
45	399	Whisky bay 2		<p>You have presented me with a panorama, and I'm going to assume that you have done that so that you could emphasise the sweep and grandeur of those rocks and their reflections.</p> <p>For me, I'd like to see more of the foreground and less of the vegetation on the hill behind. I can see that you have the waterline at about half way. I think if you raised that to the top third you would have a more dramatic image.</p> <p>Another thing to consider is to highlight the colour of those red rocks. Did you consider what you could do if you concentrated on them and their reflection? That's that thing about highlighting a small part of a scene to accentuate the whole.</p>

46	896 Yellow Bird		<p>You have captured the bird in good light and there's some good clarity in the feathers. By now you will have noticed that I have rewarded those bird photos that show the bird off while it is doing something that gives us more of an idea of it as a magnificent animal.</p> <p>This one doesn't quite get us there. I'd be interested to know what it is that hangs from its beak. That it is not clear detracts from the image. It looks as if it is spittle, and that makes it gross.</p>