

ANNUAL  
2019-2020



# AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION INC.

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# EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE AND MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

## COUNCIL 2019-2020

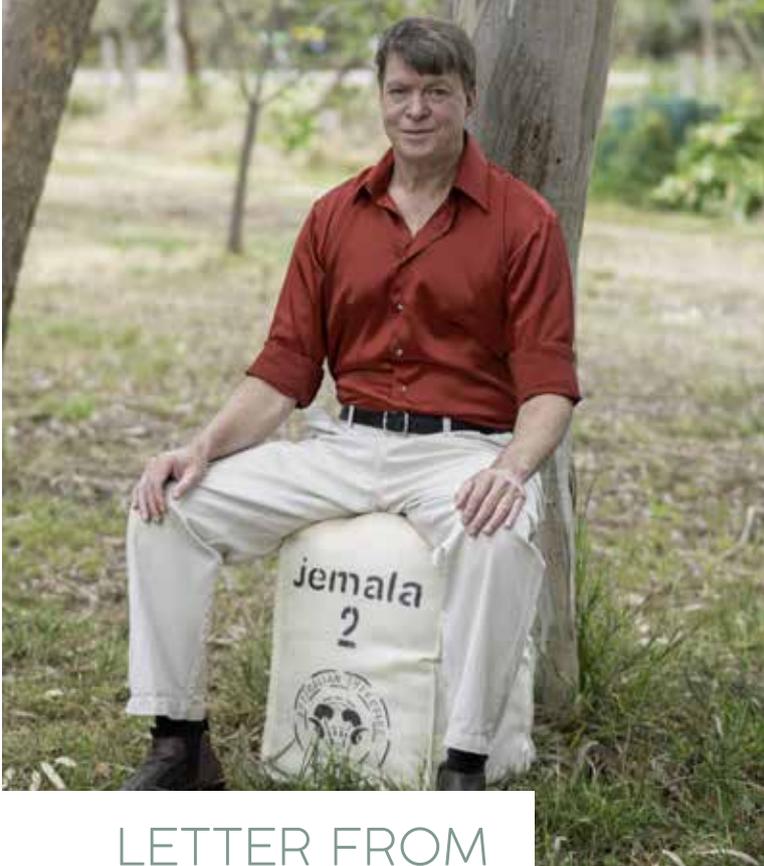
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## LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Another year has rolled past and as usual, much has occurred in the last twelve Months. We have had large parts of our continent ravaged by severe drought for most of this time, testing the resolve, ingenuity and financial resources of many of our members. Trying times indeed. While some areas have now had some rain, many areas are still drought affected and those that have had rain, still need more. Looking through the various reports from our regions, as well as associated articles, it is plain to see that there is enormous variation in the environments in which we produce our fabulous fibre. From Tasmania to Northern New South Wales and from the Eastern seaboard to Western Australia, resulting in a wide range of rainfall averages, stocking rates, genetics, elevations, terrains, pasture types, pest species, ecosystems and property sizes, all of which require an array of management techniques to arrive at our desired destination; the best wool on Earth.

Greasy wool prices have retreated somewhat from the levels seen earlier in 2019. Most pundits put this down to a combination of events, with the largest effect probably due to the ongoing and unresolved trade dispute between the USA and China, as China has been purchasing the majority of the Australian wool clip. Of special importance to our segment of the industry is the ongoing economic uncertainty in Europe caused by the Brexit fiasco. I was in Italy three years ago when the vote was announced. When the result of the referendum was announced, the response was one of horror. What will happen between now and the end of the Year is anyone's guess.

But it is not all doom and gloom. The attitudes of consumers appear to be slowly changing overall, wanting to move away from artificial fibres and the change is more rapid in younger consumers, who are concerned about the environmental impact of their clothing choices. And segments of the industry are trying to assist this change. Earlier this year, I attended a trade fair in Sydney that was the inaugural edition of Raw Assembly, an event focused on ethical and sustainable fashion; a fabulous initiative. Not one artificial fibre in sight! The event was a revelation and the second edition will be held in Melbourne later this year. Talking to the organiser, this second edition will be far larger than the first, as more companies and individuals are wanting to take part, partially due to the success of the first edition and the recognition of the trend away from fast fashion.

More good news comes in the form of the increasing recognition of wool as the ultimate next-to-skin fibre, as more and more elite athletes opt for wool base-layer. In addition, as more evidence of the advantages of wool

in aiding sleep continues to come to light, it is becoming increasingly clear that wool is also the ultimate sleep wear fibre. Many brands are responding to the increased demand for such products and this means an increasing appetite for wool. My opinion is that this demand, for both active wear and sleep wear will continue to increase over time. Given that the comfort factor of next-to-skin wear is paramount, the type of wool required for this application is superfine wool. This is good news for our members.

We have lost some industry influentials this year, reflected in the obituaries in this edition. Robert Beggs AM, a Past-President, Trevor Picker AM and Arnold Goode, have passed away in the last twelve Months and they will be sorely missed. These men have made significant contributions to our industry and their communities and have left them in better shape as a result. I would like to extend my condolences to their families.

Some of our current members have been recognised both inside and outside of our industry. David Rowbottom has been awarded the Australian Wool Industry Medal, John Ive has been awarded an OAM and Simon Cameron has been appointed to the AWI board selection committee. Congratulations are well deserved, but none of these prestigious occurrences happen in isolation. Recognition should also be given to their wives; Susan, Robyn and Ann Louise, as well as the rest of the Rowbottom, Ive and Cameron families. Well done to all concerned.

Following on this theme, we have continued our series of articles on "Superfine Women", with contributions this year from Evangeline Drinnan, Carolyn Ive and Susan Rowbottom. Each of these articles gives us their perspectives on superfine wool production under the individual conditions they experience. I have found these articles fascinating and hope that you do as well.

I continue to be impressed by the amount of work that goes into keeping an organisation like the ASWGA running. As many of us know, the time commitment required is substantial and often clashes with work and other demands upon our time. The sheer volumes of work, travel, meetings and communications that our current and Past Presidents have had thrust upon them is daunting and I would like to express my personal thanks and admiration for the way in which Danny has been leading our association, as well as all the others who have walked in those shoes and continue to offer support and advice when required. That we have been sponsoring and encouraging our younger members to get involved is pleasing to see. We should be encouraging them to get more involved in our association; after all, they are our future.

I must thank a long list of people who have helped me with putting together this edition of our Annual. First and foremost, I thank Melissa Mulley, who has done all the leg-work, chasing up articles, reminding people of deadlines, coordinating with publishers, and assisting me in so many ways. I am certain that this edition would not have made it off the ground without her continual and expert assistance. Secondly, I would like to thank Lyndall Eeg, who has proof-read almost all of the articles you will read. Her assistance has saved me hours and hours of time and has been central to the standard of the Annual before you. Thirdly, I would like to thank Susan Rowbottom, who has, for the last twelve Months, been supplying me with ideas for this edition, as well as the excellent article she has written that you will find further on in this Annual. Fourthly, I would like to thank Simon Cameron, who assisted me with the selection of our winner in the photographic competition and our cover photo, as well as providing advice on several issues and for checking that Melissa and I were on track to produce this document on time. Finally, I would like to thank Vera Taylor, for her help and her article and Lesley Prior and Ian Gill for their contributions, that are not necessarily evident, but are very much appreciated.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Gill', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Jeff Gill



## ASWGA PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2019

It is my pleasure to give the report on the 48th year of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association. It has been my honour to represent you in a challenging year across Australia. NSW has been the hardest hit with drought, where all Superfine regions are severely affected. The New England region is the hardest hit and is still in a desperate situation. Stock numbers have halved in this area, with no sign of relief. The remainder of Australia is coming out of drought at present, but no significant rain is on the horizon for the northern half of our wool-growing areas.

Wool prices have dropped significantly in the last few months of last season, which is a major concern to our members and to all high-quality wool producers. I sincerely feel we need these prices to stabilise and rise back to last season levels if the world wants these special wools in the future.

The only saviour for our elite fibre is the price of mutton which is at historical high levels. These mutton prices, along with wool sales, are making the growing of Superfine more profitable. However, still not at the levels of broader wool growers or fat lamb producers, which makes other enterprises more attractive to younger growers. It is a real pleasure to work for the farmers who are still passionate about growing superfine wool.

Our Annual Fleece Presentation Seminar weekend was well run by the New England Branch. Compliments to all who worked to make the event enjoyable and informative. Congratulations to all our Regional fleece entry winners, especially Daryl and Irene Croake, who took out the Champion Fleece with a very special 90's type fleece.

In August last year I attended the Nanjing Wool Market Conference in China, which has started relationships with Chinese processors.

I attended the IWTO Conference in Venice with Dr Peter Morgan, Past President Simon Cameron and our Young Professional Cameron Gall. Cameron was well received everywhere and we hope Council can continue the sponsorship of a Young Professional in the future.

It was my pleasure to present Mr Kevin Xing, representing the Natsun Company of China, with a Mill Membership to our Association.

We will continue to liaise with Mills around the world; the World is changing and if we wish to succeed in the future, we will have to move with it.

We thank Mr Colin Walker of Bendigo Woollen Mill for his support of the Association with our Fleece Competition.

Superfine wool growers sincerely thank Paolo Zegna and his organisation for their continued support of our Association. The Zegna competitions are a highlight of a wool grower's year. Growers, please support these competitions, as they are very rewarding for all who enter - whether you are a member of ASWGA, or are thinking about joining.

I also thank all those who very generously sponsored events throughout the year. Without these sponsors, the ASWGA would not be able to represent the Australian wool growers who produce stylish wool for the world. We are the only organisation which represents stylish superfine wool growers from grower to end user. We are doing all we can to advertise members' wool to mills and the end user. I thank Dr Peter Morgan who will be presenting quarterly reports on curvature from AWTA Test results and distributing them to all farm and mill members.

I thank AWI for their support and hope our friendship can only grow.

I congratulate Cathy Hayne on her continued support of the organisation.

I wish to thank all Branch Chairs and Councillors for their continued support of the Association.

A massive thank you to Mr Simon Cameron, who has been a rock for me as President. I congratulate Simon on his recent appointment to the AWI's Board Nomination Committee.

Now a very big thank you to Melissa Mulley - our Association is very appreciative of your commitment to ASWGA.

I would like to congratulate Roland Ritson, Neil Carey, Marie Boadle and Richard Gee on their appointment to council. It is our pleasure to welcome them. However, unfortunately, we lose Simon Cameron, Ian Cathles, Russell Meaton and Allan Phillips - we thank them very much for their service to the Superfine Industry.

A very big thank you to Helen Cathles, a former President of ASWGA who isn't standing for Council this year. Helen has represented wool growers on numerous boards for a long part of her life and is still working in other sectors of the animal and sheep industry. Thank you Helen for your long service to ASWGA.

A massive thank you to all the team who have put this edition of the ASWGA Annual together. Jeff Gill, Susan Rowbottom, Lyndall Eeg, Simon Cameron, Lesley Prior, Melissa Mulley and all others that have helped with editorials and photos. Anyone wishing to help in the future please pass on your interest to Melissa.

Thank you to our fleece committee, judges and foot soldiers, as well agents and the AWTA, all of whom either worked, transported or tested fleeces for us. A special thanks to Mark Waters, our Committee Chairman - a great effort.

Thank you,

**Danny Picker**  
ASWGA President



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L/R: Engin Geren - CFO of the company, Fatma Atay - V. Director of Export Sales – Europe, Danny Picker – ASWGA President, Nilufer Aykar - V. Director of Purchasing, Derya Gulen - V. Director of Sales – USA.



## THE 2019 IWTO CONGRESS AND EUROPEAN MILL VISITS

In April, I had the pleasure of attending the IWTO Congress and visit all our mill members in Europe and as well visited some other superfine mills, 9 mills in total prior to IWTO.

We were well accepted, general concern was the global financial situation, Brexit and the China - USA Trade war, as well as the financial situation in Italy and the rest of Europe.

A lot of mills are blending our wools with cashmere, silk and linen at around 10%, I was happy with this as this still leaves us with 90% of a product. I have a greater concern and that is the diminishing wool supply from Australia to the world market. The price per kilo of wool is a long way from where it needs to be to sure up supply for the future of our product.

Wool in excellence was mentioned by all mills. Sustainability, biodegradable, sportswear, transparent, eco-friendly, custodians of land, sheep and wool. With the passion and beautiful benefits of wool, we have to make economically viable for farmers.

Micro plastics not breaking down. Wool can be returned to the soil and returned to nature. Wool is only 1.5 % of world textile market, but the best natural fibre of all. Wool has fallen in supply in all countries for all types of wool.

Mr Wen Chairman of Tianyu China said greasy wool price should be 6 times higher than any other synthetic fibre and mentioned that the greasy wool value is a very small portion of a finished garment.

*Below: Past President, Simon Cameron, Wool Industries Australia Secretary, Bianca Heaney, Secretary General IWTO, Dalena White and ASWGA President Danny Picker at IWTO Congress*



There are 17,000 animal welfare organisations, spending 56 million dollars a year on advertising; we can't compete, so we need to promote positive articles. Social media is a part of the younger generation these days and only 1 in 10 social media stories are positive towards animal and wool welfare. We need to compete through positive articles.

The consumer is the overall boss for wool production, but the wool grower is essential if this wool industry is to survive. 8 billion people worldwide and growing, which means wool and meat should be of high importance in the future.

There has been a general slowdown in production and sales after a 20% increase last season, so an average 20 to 30% reduction so far this selling season, from woollen tops to finished garments, but all hope things will pick up shortly. Trends are towards casual wear and sportswear, with next to skin wear still growing in demand, but suiting is still number one for our best wools.

### Many strong messages.

There are other wool growing countries around the world; 81 of them in total. They are all pushing for market share and are all winning, no matter what type of wool they grow.

Retail is actively looking for unmulesed wool, which means so is all the pipe line of our wool chain.

Many contracts appear will only be for unmulesed wool. New Zealand are supposedly not mulesing and to the extent that nearly all merino wool in NZ is contracted straight to mills.

All Europe are chasing accreditations, sustainability, transparency, ethical, and traceability.

We as Australian Wool growers have to get on the front foot and be positive about growing the best natural fibre in the world. Do our brilliant best to take care of our animals and promote positive stories about the most precious natural fibre in the world. Promote how caring farmers are and the fact we are caring for our animals every time we walk out our farm house door.

Let's publish some wonderful stories about sustainability, environmental caring farmers and how that our fibre is a natural bio degradable fibre and how much we care for our animals.

# ASWGA SEMINAR AND DINNER ARMIDALE 2019

The seminar was a full day of information for superfine growers focused on diversifying Merino enterprises. The seminar was held in the Innovation Centre and the New Woolshed at the University of New England SMART Farm at Kirby. Armidale turned on a bright sunny day – and the wintry Armidale chills stayed away. David and Angie Waters supplied examples of their award winning wool and prizes in the Woolshed, as did Dr Fiona Macarthur, representing Barbervax and Sheep Connect, who supported with trade stand material on Sheep Welfare programs. The week-end attracted nearly a hundred industry participants and the positivity and feedback from the weekend has been amazing.

The Saturday seminars emphasized the importance of the partnership between science and the ag sector – and the very important role that science has to play in the operation of a productive and efficient farming enterprise. (References are to helpful links in the presentations. A copy of the seminar program and presentations are on the ASWGA website – <https://www.aswga.com/eventstechnicalpapers>)

## Dr Rachelle Hergenhan – UNE SMART Farm Industry Engagement Manager:

Rachelle provided a first-hand summary of how the SMART farms are a hub for multidisciplinary research and together with Industry Partners, provide support for research priorities and a hub for ag tech. Some of the projects mentioned were remote sensing to measure carbon biomass, pasture biomass estimation for grazing rotations, methane efficiency research, different uses of RFID technology, education in schools and outreach. <https://www.une.edu.au/about-une/faculty-of-science-agriculture-business-and-law/school-of-science-and-technology/research/parg/smart-farm>

## Dr Chelsea Jarvis – Research Fellow – UQ Centre for Applied Climate Sciences:

Chelsea's presentation illustrated just how variable rainfall is in the New England region (as is the case in all regions in Australia) and how actual rainfall differed from the 'average', the low relevance of existing forecast systems and technologies to key management decisions and the development of new active engagement and extension products, such as Climate Mates, to include information relevant to the pastoral industry,

including pasture growth. <http://www.bom.gov.au/climate/outlooks/#/overview/summary>; <http://www.armonline.com.au/#/>

## Lester McCormick – former DPI Agronomist with an extensive background in the region:

Lester illustrated the consequences pastoralists will face in managing pastures in the current drought and questioned overgrazing if there is no pasture at all; after overgrazing, the incursion of invasive weeds and undesirable grasses, emphasized that with lower autumn and spring rain, the germination and seed production of traditional legumes is challenged and there is a shift to temperate grasses and now tropical legumes. Tropical grasses are now in excess of 400,000 ha in NSW and the trend is moving south. I commend Lester's presentation to you which is on the ASWGA website.

## Dr Francisco Ascui – visiting Associate Professor from the University of Edinburgh:

Francisco spoke of international commitments made by financial institutions to incorporate natural capital in financial products by 2020 and how financiers may use those natural capital risk assessments and translate them into credit risk assessments. (<https://www.unepfi.org/publications/ecosystems-publications/natural-capital-credit-risk-assessment-in-agricultural-lending/>)

## Helen Cathles – (former ASWGA President) and currently Chair of the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions Governing Board:

Helen spoke of the current RD&E priorities of the CISS in its long term rabbit control program and first RHDV1 K5 release (being the first biocontrol agent in 20 years), New Feral Pig Toxin submitted for Government approval and the strategic and integrated approach to wild dog control and focus on Weeds.

## The team from the Sheep CRC:

Dr Lewis Kahn and Johan Boshoff, demonstrated the technological developments now included in the ASKBILL software, including new weather data based on a farm's actual location and showing cumulative



Cameron Gall & Cathy Hayne

and forecast rainfall, the links between rainfall and soil moisture and new features being incorporated into ASKBILL, which will allow communities of processors and growers to predict live weight gain and forecast delivery timetables in the supply chain. Lu Hogan and Johan Boshoff presented a MasterClass on ASKBILL during the lunch break. ASKBILL is unique as there is no other software in the marketplace which allows the producer to fully integrate their farm planning decisions; i.e. taking a forward thinking approach, rather than just a record keeping device. Upon the cessation of the Sheep CRC, ASKBILL has been taken over by UNE, and will continue to be developed across a broad range of ag industries. <https://www.askbill.com.au/#/home>

### Professor Julius Van Der Werf (Sheep CRC) and Peta Bradley (Sheep Genetics):

The next series of sessions presented by Professor Julius Van Der Werf (Sheep CRC) and Peta Bradley (Sheep Genetics). These sessions brought home some of the developments in genomics – more data and better tools, more precise genomic selection and knowledge of genetics. The data and accumulated knowledge means that breeding for key traits can be accelerated. The opportunity exists to develop a specialised superfine index for traditional SF growers. (For instance see the WA Merinotech Selection Index developed by a group of like minded growers). Rich Keniry (in relation to the Merino Lifetime Productivity project) (as Chair of the MerinoLink Site) and Vice Chair of AMSEA, presented background to the MLP project, the concerns that gave rise to its inception, aims, objectives and overall design. The results will be a tremendous step forward in providing data to respond to industry questions relating to lifetime productivity in the merino ewe enterprise. <https://merinosuperiorsires.com.au/mlp-project/>

### Jane Littlejohn (AWI General Manager Research):

We were very fortunate to have Jane speaking at our seminar and providing updates on some of the many AWI funded research projects. Jane's presentation focussed in on updates related to flystrike, observations on resistance to current chemicals, available Flyboss tools to assess flystrike risk - <http://www.flyboss.com.au/sheep-goats/susceptibility/seasonal-conditions-and-geography.php>. Other topics included AWI Wool Biosecurity Strategy (ie protecting in industry in the event of a foot & mouth outbreak), AWI resource kit of risk self assessment for wool handling facilities; the latest research into robotic shearing, and AWI smart tags in design for reflection of real-time behaviour.

### Paul Swan:

Paul presented his IWTO presentation – outlining the current changes to mandatory garment eco-labels by 2023 – the EU has 5 of our 10 largest merino markets. The mandatory labelling will have implications for the whole supply chain. Paul also spoke of how poorly natural products (ie wool) rank in the Sustainable Apparel Coalition Score, and the actions being taken to raise the ranking of natural fibres. Also mentioned were the critical weaknesses in the measurement of fossil CO2 emissions, the UN Sustainable Development Goals and why wool is a prime example of sustainable consumption and that we should take every opportunity to tell that story.

### Noel Henderson:

Noel also presented his IWTO presentation. (Noel attended IWTO as a member and guest of the Italian delegation to the convention.) Noel's presentation highlighted the increasing number of studies, controls and legislation that impact farming, changes to animal welfare standards, the duty of care that owners and managers have based on the Five Freedoms and technological disruption and development, which have both positive and negative outcomes for Australian farmers. Of great interest were his comments regarding work that Avington is conducting with scientists from ENEA (Italian National Agency for New Technologies, Energy and Sustainable Economic Development) trialling the development of an organic application to control fly strike and the challenge that increased temperatures from climate change will have in potentially lengthening the fly strike season.

### Cameron Gall:

We heard from Cameron, the recipient of ASWGA's inaugural sponsorship to attend IWTO under the Young Professionals Program. ASWGA hopes to make this sponsorship an annual event to encourage young producers and enhance their knowledge of superfine wool.

### Danny Picker:

Lastly, our President (recently returned from IWTO and mill visits in Europe) addressed the seminar, thanking sponsors, attendees, and organisers, and impressing on everyone on the need to be positive and united as wool-growers and an industry.

The day culminated in a wonderful evening, at historic Boolominbah House, admirably and humorously chaired for the evening by John

Below: Mark & Lesleann Waters hosted the farm tour at Edington



Croake, representing our major sponsor, Australian Wool Network. Special guests included Wayne McMahon representing the Australian Yarn Company who provide and present the Grand Champion Cleckheaton Trophy, won this year by Daryl and Irene Croake, and we welcomed Kevin Xing and Troy Pearson from Natsun Australia, ASWGA's newest mill member. And by special invitation, Dr Peter Morgan attended as our guest, in recognition of his services to ASWGA, and great service to the industry over many years.

**James Rowe :**

Our surprise guest speaker, James Rowe, retiring CEO after 18 years with the Sheep CRC reminded those gathered of some of the achievements of the Sheep CRC in the wool sector and we hope that James and Sally enjoyed themselves on the evening. James was wonderfully supportive in the organisation of ASWGA's seminar in Armidale in 2016.

**Andrew Blanch:**

And, we were fortunate that Andrew from New England Wool, was happy to say a few impromptu words to the gathering on the latest movement in the wool markets.

*Below: John & Karen Croake with Dr Peter Morgan*



ASWGA sincerely thanks our sponsors without whose support it would not be possible to hold this event. Sincere thanks all our sponsors, Australian Wool Network, AWTA Limited and Rational Nutrition, AWEX, New England Wool, Vitale Barberis Canonico, Sheep Connect, Natsun Australia, Riverina Wool Testers, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby, G Schneider, Techwool, Landmark Armidale, and Endeavour Wool.



**Also thanks to:**

- our ASWGA Fleece Competition sponsors and supporters – Australian Yarn Company and Bendigo Woollen Mills, Australian Wool Network, Landmark, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby & Roberts.
- our Speakers and Presenters, many of whom travelled interstate to support the ASWGA seminar;
- the organising committee, Cathy Hayne, Mark & Lesleann Waters, David and Angie Waters, Tony and Janet Gall and Melissa Mulley for the outstanding success of the 2019 seminar and dinner.



Mudgee is hosting the 2020 event on 23 May 2020, so please **SAVE THE DATE**

*Contributed by Cathy Hayne, ASWGA Honorary Treasurer, ASWGA New England Region Chair*

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# FROM NOBLE FIBRES TO THE FINEST FABRICS

Congratulations to the winners of the 2019 winners and the entrants of the Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy.

At ASWGA, we represent the interests of Australia's superfine woolgrowers, together with the world's leading processors and users of superfine wool. The longstanding collaboration between the Ermenegildo Zegna Group and the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association is testimony to the unwavering shared commitment to maintaining and improving the quality of superfine Australian wools and jointly promote the incredible skills and dedication of the best woolgrowers.

Over 55 years ago, Ermenegildo Zegna established its inaugural "Ermenegildo Zegna Wool Trophy" to award and incentivize growers to improve the quality of superfine merino and has consistently worked to celebrate the importance of this fibre and support growers in their quest to produce the best in the world. This year, for the 56th edition of the prestigious program, Zegna has once again honoured Australia's best growers by awarding the "Superfine Wool Trophy" and the "Vellus Aureum Trophy" during an exclusive gala dinner hosted by Paolo Zegna, President of the Group on 16th April in Melbourne. Our heartfelt congratulations go to the 2019 Superfine Wool Trophy which was won by David and Angie Waters (Tarrangower Merinos - Hillgrove, NSW), with Allan and Carolyn Phillips (Glen Stuart – Deddington, Tasmania) and Ed Hundy (Windradeen Mudgee -Pyramul, NSW) taking 2nd and 3rd place respectively. Congratulations on your achievement producing some of the finest fibres in the industry.

The relationship between Zegna and Australian wool dates back to the early years of 1900 when the company began sourcing this incredible natural fibre. Still today, it's inherent excellence and unique characteristics allows the house to constantly evolve the beauty and performance of its' products. Superfine wool has been, and continues to be, the key to creating many of the company's most precious fabrics and exclusive garments. There are few fibers in the world, natural or man-made, that offer all the characteristics of pure, high-quality wool. It is an ancient staple that was likely used to clothe primitive man and shield him from the elements. Over time wool has traveled through centuries, people and places offering versatile protection from cold, heat, wind, rain and to a certain degree, even fire.

Ermenegildo Zegna understood this more than 100 years ago when he cultivated the expertise required to master the craft of turning precious raw wool fibers into flawless, fine and superfine wool fabrics. Since the very beginning, when young Ermenegildo Zegna first dreamed of becoming the most important Italian manufacturer of precious fabrics, and founded Lanificio Zegna (Zegna Wool Mill) in his home town of Trivero, Italy, he turned his attention to this ancient noble fibre; a fibre which has become a fundamental part of Zegna's most luxurious fabrics. Zegna handpicked the absolute best raw materials from their places of origin and has carefully protected and preserved the largely unaltered artisan process: from wool to yarn, from yarn to fabric, and from fabric to exquisite menswear.

Still today, the most valuable lots of wool fibres travel from countries such as Australia with its prized Merino sheep, or others famous for vicuna, alpaca, cashmere, mohair and silk, all the way to Italy's Lanificio Zegna located 700 meters above sea level in the mountainous region surrounding the city of Biella.

A 2nd trophy, the "Vellus Aureum Trophy" followed almost 50 years later, in 2002 to recognize the quest and celebrate the incredible advances made by Australian woolgrowers for absolute excellence by benchmarking every year the finest woollen fleeces - measuring 13.9 microns and finer - in the wool production countries. In 2016, the finest and best fleece was recorded at an exceptional 9.9 microns, making it still an un-beaten world record.

Today, both competitions continue to be intended to encourage and reward breeders for their commitment to quality, in Australian and New Zealand. The winning fleeces are judged according to a strict set of criteria including fineness, style, strength, colour and evenness.

The winners of the Vellus Aureum Trophy were David and Susan Rowbottom from "Rowensville"-St. Helens, VIC. Aaron and Rebecca Rowbottom from "Myndarra" – Orford -VIC and Robert McClenaghan from "Rockvale North"- Armidale, NSW were respectively 2nd and 3rd in the competition for the first time.

Each of these woolgrowers were awarded by Paolo Zegna during the celebration dinner in the presence of representatives of the major institutions associated with the world of wool. In addition, all fleeces and wool lots entered in the two competitions are purchased by the Zegna Group. A further severe selection of the best of them is transformed into the top line fabrics and finished products of the Ermenegildo Zegna collections.



Paolo Zegna with wool trophy winners Angie & David Waters of Tarrangower

# ASWGA WELCOMES HILLCRESTON HEIGHTS BACK TO THE FAMILY

It is with great pleasure that we rejoin the ASWGA once again. We are proudly a traditional superfine wool operation. I have worked with traditional wool all my life, starting at 15 years of age on our family farm of Hillcreston. Having my late father Trevor as teacher, I embraced all his wisdom and experience and developed a great love for wool.

In 2001, we established our own Superfine Merino Stud, Hillcreston Heights, with bloodlines from Hillcreston and Hillcreston Park. I continue to run the stud alongside my wife Sue and I am now joined with my son Cameron and his wife Ellie. Cameron is a 6th generation wool grower and shares my passion for traditional wool, as we continue to maintain a high-quality product and continually improve our operation.

Our aim is to grow traditional wool, at 15-16 micron, whilst still maintaining the ability to cut a substantial amount of wool. Hillcreston Heights wool is in high demand every year, with many European mills competing for the purchase of our wool. Over the years we have had many 1PP-recognised bales, including this past season. Hillcreston Heights sold the third highest priced bale in 2018, selling a 1PP bale in October 2018. The bale was recorded at 14.8 micron and was purchased by New England Wool, on behalf of Reda SpA. As well as producing premium wools, we continue to breed stud and commercial rams. Hillcreston Heights has an annual ram sale, in conjunction with Hillcreston. This year's ram sale will be held on Friday, 8 November.

As superfine producers, we will strive to continue to produce premium wools. We aim to provide superior superfine rams, so that our loyal clients can continue to grow quality wools that overseas mills demand to make their premium garments.



Sue, Cameron, Rebecca & Brett Picker

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# VITALE BARBERIS CANONICO WOOL EXCELLENCE AWARD

7 OCTOBER 2018

For nearly 150 years the Crawford family of Sierra Park have shown unwavering dedication to producing the highest quality Saxon merino wool. Last night they were rewarded for this commitment at the annual Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool Excellence Award, where the family was announced as the winners for 2018.

The celebration and award presentation were held at the Calyx located in the heart of Sydney's Royal Botanic Gardens. With stunning contemporary architecture and horticultural displays, it was a fitting backdrop to the prestigious event. In attendance were Vitale Barberis Canonico (VBC) representatives, Wool Excellence Club members from NSW, Victoria and Tasmania, industry representatives and media.

As the winners of the esteemed Award renowned Victorian Saxon breeders, Bill, Jenny, Will and Prue Crawford were ecstatic to receive such an honour. "We thank VBC for continuing to recognise the attributes of Saxon wool, which after all the pressure of technology, will allow us to continue breeding sheep we treasure", said Bill Crawford, Sierra Park.

Mr. Davide Fontaneto (Raw Procurement Manager) of Vitale Barberis Canonico presented Bill, Jenny, Will and Prue with the award, which included a cash prize to the value of \$50,000 along with an all-expenses paid trip to Italy to meet with Vitale Barberis Canonico representatives in the Biella region of Italy. The Award is a coveted honour for Wool Excellence Club members, who all strive to produce the best Saxon merino and seek to gain the opportunity to observe the transformation of their wool through to luxurious fabrics.

Davide Fontaneto said of the winning clip, "This year we identified someone within the Club with a long history, someone who could be considered as one of the leaders in Saxon merino production. The Crawfords utilise the lessons and skills from their past whilst looking forward to the future. They have maintained their Saxon breeding and

they are committed to WEC's aims. The 2018 winning clip presented a thick, dense, resilient and sound staple with a tight but defined crimp. The wool from Sierra Park displays the model characteristics of the Saxon wool which is so valuable and sought after by VBC. The genetics, management and dedication by the Crawford family has elevated Sierra Park to a well-deserved winner."

To be eligible for the award growers must be members of the VBC Wool Excellence Club. Members are specially selected by VBC using strict criteria and must demonstrate sustainable wool production and notably the attributes of superfine Saxon merino wool which is most highly regarded by Vitale Barberis Canonico for their high-end fabric production.

The VBC Wool Excellence Award is just one of an array of initiatives created by the company to encourage Saxon wool producers. All members of the Vitale Barberis Canonico Wool Excellence Club need to be accredited under the SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme, a scheme sponsored by Vitale Barberis Canonico and managed by New England Wool. This is a scheme promoting ethical, environmental and high-quality wool production. VBC Wool Excellence Club members benefit from special "purchase contracts" at significant premiums to the physical market, and regular Club meetings where information can be shared between members and with Vitale Barberis Canonico.

"We are now a Club with more than 30 members. We have improved quantities and quality. We have succeeded in following and advancing our ideas - in producing great wool that in our hearts is the same word as passion. We are a strong group of people looking forward to the future", said Davide Fontaneto, VBC.

*Below: Jenny & Bill Crawford, Davide Fontaneto of VBC with Will & Prue Crawford*





Will and Prue visiting the Vitale Barberis Canonico mill in Italy

## 2017/18 Winner: The Crawford family, "Sierra Park", Victoria Valley, VIC

Situated in the Victorian fine wool growing region of Victoria Valley in the Western Districts, Sierra Park is approximately 6,000 acres running 15,000 sheep and is currently operated by two generations of the Crawford family - Bill and Jenny Crawford and their son Will together with his wife Prue.

The Crawford family arrived in Geelong in 1852, from Dumfries Scotland.

In about 1870, William and his wife Helen took up selection of about 700 acres in Victoria Valley. Together with his brother James they commenced sheep breeding and started a fine wool Saxon sheep stud, purchasing cast for age stock from the Woodhouse stud, south of Dunkeld.

The brothers were exhibiting their sheep as grass-fed at local shows with good success. Rams were purchased from Tasmania, including from Belle View.

In 1930 Lin Crawford, aged 13 took over the running of the stud (after successfully challenging his father to the identity of their stud ram). With keen interest he ran the stud, purchasing many rams from the world renowned Winton stud, from 1946 to the present day.

Lin and Margaret recommenced showing and selling rams, winning many champion prizes at the Melbourne sheep show, and local shows.

Sierra Park held the world record price of 10 shillings a pound for wool in the 1950s.

In 1981 Bill and Jenny took on the management of Sierra Park after Lin's untimely death. The stud has continued on very much as it always has, breeding the best Saxon sheep it can, exhibiting the best high performance traits Saxon wool is noted for, always bulky high compression wools that perform so well in the finished garment.

Over the 150 years, Sierra Park has grown from about 600 acres to around 6000 acres. Originally running very few sheep to now shearing around 14-15,000 Saxon sheep.

"We are currently running a mixed enterprise, with a small portion of crossbred lambs bred for meat production and cropping for feed grain and canola."

"Will has been a vital member of the Sierra Park team for the last 13 years, with his wife Prue joining us a year ago. Thankfully we all work together cohesively, this serving us well for the future", said Bill Crawford, Sierra Park.

"We recently had the pleasure of winning the VBC Wool Excellence Award, and as part of our award the VBC Wool Company flew both Prue and I to Italy to inspect firsthand the mill and its operations. The process of seeing our wool starting as a raw fibre and being processed into cloth for suiting was a wonderful experience.

Having never been to Italy it was great to see the passion this company has for the wool that we grow, and the investment that they have put into the mill which has enabled them to produce cloth to such a high level.

The highly skilled people taking wool from its raw form through the spinning and weaving process to producing incredible, top quality products was a spectacular sight. The modern equipment and the employees who run it pay extreme attention to detail and this is reflected in the end product.

It was very rewarding to see that the hard work that goes into growing Superfine wool here, in Australia, is very well sought after and to know that other people share our passion for the same fibre. We were also extremely grateful to experience the wonderful culture of Italy (add comma), spending over a week, with a guide that showed us some of the amazing architecture and scenery in a county with such a long history.

Receiving this award gave us an experience that we will never forget, and one we will always be very grateful to have won." - Will Crawford



## MATTHEW LINKE

I grew up on a farm 'Glenholme', east of Hamilton, at Tarrington Victoria. Attended school locally till Year 11 in 2006 - at this time also completing a Certificate II in Agriculture at South West TAFE. Unfortunately, 2006 was also the year the Western Districts were in drought, so feeding out to sheep was my start to farming.

Saving lambs was also a big part of growing up on the farm, there were many times while still attending school, of late nights going round ewes & lambs, mothering on lambs, feeding pets. A big emphasis is still on saving and raising as many lambs as possible.

Nowadays we pregnancy-scan the majority of our merino ewes for dry, single or twin. A big emphasis is made on extra nutrition of the twin-bearing ewes. All twin bearing ewes are brought into very sheltered paddocks and closely monitored for any mothering issues. This helps in always trying to achieve the perfect score of 100% marking rate or more, which happens still more often than not.

A big effort goes into shearing at Glenholme in which I play a part and preparation of the sheep, making sure they are clean for shearing. In the last 12 years I have learnt a lot about the skirting of superfine wool which requires meticulous care. This makes the fleece wool much more even in style – double skirting the majority of the fleeces. Wool is then classed initially into wool bins. Later on the final classing working with Dad is to make sure that each line of wool is as even as possible before it is pressed.

I have been lucky enough in the last five years to prepare and help class with Dad – 7 bales of wool certified 1PP, which is a big achievement for our small farm. Realising this achievement would not be possible without mentoring from New England Wool buyer Andrew Raeber. With Andy's help we have been able to continually value-add the wool clip.

It was a privilege to be one of the first properties invited into the VBC Wool Excellence Club in 2015. We have been able to slowly adapt true Saxon bloodlines into our sheep and wool clip. Also, to be rewarded for the wool that is produced.

I've found many challenges in growing true-to-type type traditional superfine wool over the years since leaving school. The seasons usually dictate how much wool the sheep grow no matter what we do. We shear in the spring, so a good spring with an early autumn break is ideal to get

the maximum feed on the ground for the sheep to grow plenty of wool and have less impact with dust in the fleece.

On the farm we try not to have a big reliance on chemicals. Over the last decade we have been using biological fertilisers in accordance with soil tests that tell us what nutrients are available to the plant or grass in our situation. I hope that if we look after the environment in this small way, it will look after us.

As a member of the Hamilton branch of the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association, I have been elected as Secretary for the last five years.

In 2014 I completed a Certificate IV in Wool Classing. Not a lot of emphasis is given to classing superfine wool, some of the time was also spent educating the teacher about how we grow and prepare superfine wool to what the mill requires.

Volunteering in the Country Fire Authority takes up a large amount or most of any spare time. Since 2009 I've held positions of Secretary/Treasurer, Lieutenant and just recently elected Captain at Tarrington Fire Brigade. Attending fires locally and around the State, as well as attending many hours of training has helped me to gain valuable experience in leadership.

It's good to know as a fifth-generation farmer that the future of superfine woolgrowing is secure with the support we receive, not only from the broker, but from the mill and it gives me confidence in what we are trying to produce.

*Below: Everard & Matthew Linke with one of their 1PP bales*



# WILL CRAWFORD

The Crawford family first settled in picturesque Victoria Valley in Victoria's Western District in 1852 and it has been home to our family ever since. After settling, my Great Great Grandfather William and his brother James purchased cast-for-age ewes and rams from Woodhouse Stud, from these they founded the Sierra Park Saxon Stud. My Grandfather Lin became well known in the wool and superfine sheep industry during the mid-1900's when the production of Saxon wool was abundant. During this time, Lin made frequent trips to Tasmania to purchase Rams from the Taylor family in Winton.

Sierra Park has been passed down through the generations and I am proud to be running the farm with my parents Bill and Jenny, wife Prue and golden retriever Henry. After finishing school in 2005, I came home to work on the farm with my parents and at that stage the farm was running 100% Saxon sheep, however due to a period of extremely low prices for fine wool and high prices for both cropping and meat sheep, a transition to diversify our enterprise began. Sierra Park remains one of the very few pure Saxon flocks in Australia, however we now maintain a balance of Saxon sheep, prime lambs and commercial copping to balance our income.

We continue to run both a stud and commercial flock and I really enjoy the different aspects of both operations. I feel really lucky to be able to work with Dad as I have learnt so much about genetic selection and stud management and we work really well as a team which is great. Sierra Park from the early days has always relied on working as a team and so men, women, children (mostly slave labour) and workmen have all been involved in the operation.

Recent years have been a lot more enjoyable from a wool growing perspective. We would like to see a good return to wool prices which would allow us to focus more on producing superfine wool and a little less on other forms of income. Recently, we have been accepted into the VBC Wool Excellence Club which offers a premium on some of the higher end of our clip. We were also lucky enough to win their annual award last year and as part of that award my wife Prue and I were flown over to Italy to see first-hand where our wool goes after it is purchased. It was

Below: Will Crawford - Photo courtesy of The Weekly Times



really interesting to see the full process from raw wool through to finished reams of fabric and we feel that this gave us a much better understanding of how the material reacts through various methods of processing. We came away from this trip realising how important this fibre is within the high end fabric market.

We are really fortunate that there are lots of people our age who have returned to run their family farms or who have moved to the area for work, so networking and socialising with younger members of our community is easy... Hockey and golf is a nice break on weekends too.

I think it is important to contribute to a small community like ours and I get enjoyment out of volunteering for the Mirranatwa CFA, Sheepvention and the Dunkeld Sturgeon Stampede committee.

In 2017 I married Prue and together we are looking forward to continuing to work with Mum and Dad to continue our wool, cropping and prime lamb business.

Having grown up around sheep and working on the farm my whole life, I have developed a strong passion to work in this industry and it is great to be able to continue what my Great, Great Grandfather began which is to produce this naturally beautiful Saxon fibre. A great difference between producing wool back then to now is that we are far more able to be connected to the product from sheep selection and production to the end garment which is exciting. This also allows us to capitalise on high end marketing opportunities within the fashion industry.

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## SUSAN ROWBOTTOM

I was born at Warrnambool and raised on a dairy farm at Panmure along with a younger brother. Educated at the local Primary school, one of the last students to ride a horse to school. Secondary education meant a daily bus trip to Warrnambool Technical College later School when it split from Warrnambool Institute, the forerunner to Deakin University.

I married David Rowbottom, in 1975, having met at a Saturday night dance in Warrnambool. This meant moving to the other side of Warrnambool. The first of our four boys Phillip was born in 1978, followed by Ben in 1981, Aaron in 1985 and Gavin in 1988. Our three boys are married to Alice, Bec and Emma respectively, followed by six grandchildren in total.

David purchased land in 1974. Upscaling from 111ac to 307ac, we faced the first of the high Australian interest rates, inflation and wage rises. I continued to work as a keypunch operator at Fletcher Jones (a job now obsolete) to subsidise our income while David sheared. We also share-farmed this enterprise growing to 960ac in later years. Both farming enterprises involved Romney base ewes to breed a prime lamb.

I came home from work one day in 1976 to find I was moving house, leasing land, buying ewes with lambs at foot and maiden ewes in lamb (600 of them) - having invested all my savings and had agreed to an advance from my father-in-law all organised by David.

### SO MUCH FOR WOMEN'S LIB!

This was the start of our Merino farming. The stock was purchased from a retiring farmer who had started breeding traditional superfine Chatsworth House bloodline flock in the 1940s, the first of the Rockbank blood lambs were at foot. The ewes were on the land I was going to lease.

The first wool sold under my name in 1977 (consider that women weren't recognised as farmers till 1994) testing 19-21 micron. Today the flock average is in the low 14-micron range. Mulesing ceased in 1979 as David wasn't in favour of the procedure, something which was as controversial then as it is today! Damned if you do, damned if you don't! Breeding genetics were put in place to breed away from the very wrinkly sheep. The Rowensville Merino Stud was registered in 1995.

Moving in August 1976, the local area flooded from two days of heavy rain on top of an already wet winter. Our new house was standing in a pond of water, (underground drainage finally a solution in later wet years) only the track dry, the farm four paddocks and few trees, a shiny leaf and



old mulberry close to the house! Seems that the mulberry got a regular trim being in the road of updates. The shiny leaf, on the other hand, was never touched, though finally met its maker while the mulberry sails on!

It was from here that David & I formed our farming partnership. Funnily, David had been lectured by his father, "Don't let a woman sign the cheques." A similar lecture my own father (shouldn't that be mother?) had endured when my parents formed a partnership. I wonder how many others heard the same quotes?

Using the neighbours' shearing shed, until purchasing the property in 1981, we built our own shed just in time to offload all unrequired stock in the 1982/3 drought. We survived the drought by sacking the shearer. I prepared the wool while David sheared, our two children watching TV, cot and toys in the wool shed. Some stock was sold (only to receive a bill from the agent who was happy they had received a bid on them) many other farmers' lots didn't.

A venture into carpet wool due to the extra strong Romney wool, ended when a carpet manufacture CEO quoted - "The world doesn't need wool for carpets but needs sheep to eat - breed fat lambs". We now run a White Suffolk stud alongside the merino.

The Elliottdales we bred, along with the other three breeds of Carpet wool sheep and number of the early prime lamb breeds including Romney are found on the Australian Rare Breeds register, <http://www.rarebreedproject.com> e.g. Lincoln, English Leicester, Southdown, Coopworth.

In December 1987, I, along with Phillip and my father-in-law joined other local sheep farmers in a fight with nature to save our stock. 24 hours of rain with driving winds, cutting fences, driving cold, stressed sheep to what shelter we then had. David was in Tasmania for a ram sale! This fast-tracked planting plantations - my job growing our own trees, not only to help our stock but the native birds/animals. Today we work on a Bandicoot habitat project in conjunction with Basalt to Bay Landcare. <https://www.basalttobay.org.au>

<https://www.environment.vic.gov.au/biodiversity/victorians-volunteering-for-nature>

under Land for Wildlife

[https://greatsouthcoast.localised.com.au/announcements/national-volunteering-week-local-business-featured/?utm\\_source=Great+South+Coast+Localised&utm\\_campaign=411b41def4-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2019\\_05\\_22\\_12\\_04&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_3f0aadcb28-411b41def4-560220429](https://greatsouthcoast.localised.com.au/announcements/national-volunteering-week-local-business-featured/?utm_source=Great+South+Coast+Localised&utm_campaign=411b41def4-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2019_05_22_12_04&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_3f0aadcb28-411b41def4-560220429)

A project which helped us win Moynes Shire's 2019 Environmental Sustainability Award (long term).

We faced disaster with the "recession we had to have" (Banana Republic) in 1991/2 combined with the removal of the reserve price for woolgrowers (also felt by many of the world's wool buying mills) and ridiculous interest rates after having purchased more land. Almost bankrupted we again sacked the shearer (same man - "You're not the first call for the week & I expect not the last") and did the work ourselves. We survived while other woolgrowers around us were sold up, some changed to different enterprises, and there were breakdowns in relationships and suicides.

We won a board game "Squatter" after entering a competition for the use of stockpile wool! I along with two local women completed study in Certificate of Rural Office Practice at Glenormiston College. There I met women surviving the same experience across many rural occupations.

In the late 1990s, large scale planting of blue gums began, lasting for ten years, which meant that the district population and community were eroded. The acres of blue gum were now home to vermin including foxes, weeds, wild pigs and kangaroos in plague numbers causing destruction

of fences, pasture and motor vehicles. Koalas strip farm plantation trees to death, while the kangaroos enjoy the garden's roses! Murphy's Law - they usually chew on the rose earmarked for the show bench! Today some plantations have been harvested then replanted, others returned to farming which may cause oversupply in the future. Small local roads are badly damaged by the large number of heavy log trucks daily using them.

Along with the rest of the world we experienced the 2009 Global Financial Crisis, with income dropping considerably. We find ourselves - having survived all that nature and governments have thrown at us - 44 years later, the owners of 526 Ha, two operating sheep studs (6000 head), including award winning Merino acknowledgements. Along the way, we experienced activities never thought of 44 years ago, meeting other wool/sheep growers from different States (omit of Australia), mill tours and owners from around the world. This is something we are endeavouring to introduce to our son Aaron who has come home to the farm.

Being the tail-end of the "baby boomers", we have witnessed the closures of rural institutions - infant welfare centres, primary schools, mothers' clubs, stores, churches, post offices, sporting clubs, secondary schools, shire amalgamation and Landcare groups. Also the amalgamation of farms into bigger enterprises. As women work today to subsidise the purchase/running of farms, other pursuits are also in decline - Red Cross, CWA, garden, embroidery, floral art groups and weekly local dances, as time-strapped women concentrate on farm and family.

An interesting comment I came across - rule of thumb - my grandfather could raise a family with 500 sheep, my father needed 1000 and I need 5000. High input costs impact on any income increase though out Australia's agriculture sector.

Due to the declining population, women are now more involved in shearing than when we started. Not just allowed as cooks, they now fill all positions from rousabout, classer to shearer. "Ducks in the pond" no longer. Also, several farms are now the domain of women bringing new perspective to farming. Wide gear shearing, electric wool presses to raised boards - the shearing shed has vastly changed in my lifetime. From sight only wool classing to full scale wool testing for sale lots no longer sold in long lines of bales but sample boxes. Centralised selling of wool means longer trips to view your yearly income. From wall mounted landline phones to mobile handsets to internet all making a smaller world. Oh, who remembers the Drive-in for movies (local one now a car yard!). Paying for a TV licence, now watch movies via internet superseding cassette tapes and where is a video store?

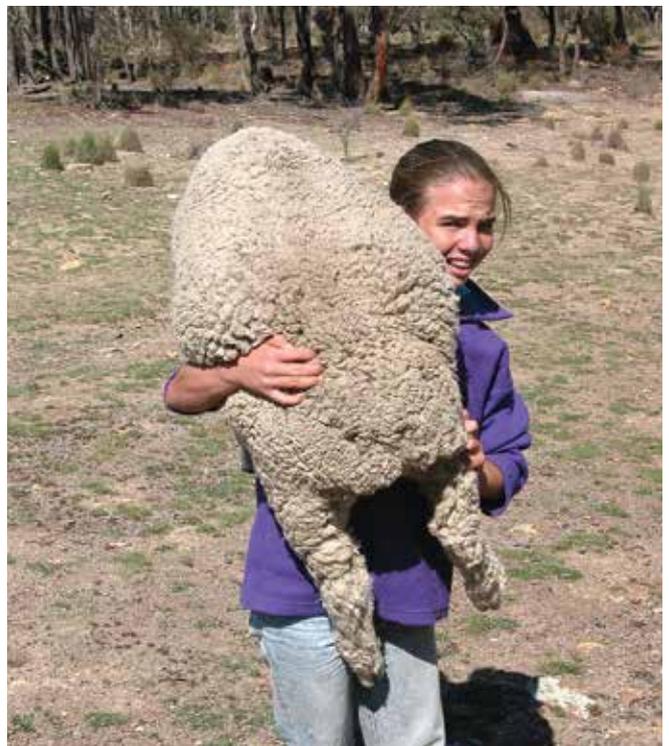
Over the past three years I have enjoyed helping with the production of the Australian Superfine Woolgrowers' Association's annual journal, learning new skills and again joining with like-minded growers, collecting

the stories and meeting the people behind them. But this year I stood down to work on local women's projects.

Having enjoyed the annual Women on Farms Gatherings around different towns in Victoria over the years, I have joined a Committee to bring WOFG 2021 to Port Fairy. It will be the third time in the 32-year history that a gathering will be held in the Western District. I find myself drawing on all the knowledge collected from the different groups from Infant Welfare, Playgroup, School, Red Cross, Landcare, Gardening Club and various sheep breeds with this committee.

## CAROLYNN IVE, TALAHENI, YASS VALLEY

"I only do what Dad has taught me". This was the instant matter-of-fact response by Carolynn (or more commonly Caz to friends) to Tim Marwedel's comments on Talaheni's wool clip and its preparation a couple of years ago. The background to this comment had its origins at the Royal Easter Show wool sale in 2017 after Tim on behalf of G



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Yass - John Hall	0418 478 381
Michelle Humphries	0427 861 815
Michael Gregory	0427 861 817

[www.lbs.net.au](http://www.lbs.net.au)

Schneider Australia, had successfully bid for Talaheni's top fleece lines. On leaving the auction centre Tim caught my attention and congratulated me on the preparation of our clip, particularly the skirting lines. While delighted with this comment, I said I could take no credit for our skirting lines- our daughter Caz handles that part of the clip, diligently preparing three skirting lines on the piece-picking table, based on length, strength, colour, vegetable fault etc. Although Tim had not bought our skirting lines, he volunteered that a single line of skirtings would not have received the price we received for the lowest of the three skirting lines - pertinent and welcomed feedback. My response was to wish Caz could hear this feedback firsthand, as not only did she deserve full recognition for her efforts, but during shearing she had questioned the value of her efforts. Such an opportunity arose at the judging of the Zegna Fleece Awards in Goulburn in January 2018 where we assisted Tim and the other judges. I had only to introduce Caz to Tim for the above story to be repeated for her benefit, prompting Caz's response- although her thrilled persona added a further dimension to the response.

This is just one example of Caz's commitment and attention to detail in assisting not only at shearing time, but whenever possible with sheep and wool activities at Talaheni. Caz is now a Registered Nurse working in the Emergency Department at a Canberra hospital but arranges her work roster to help with sheep and wool tasks at Talaheni whenever possible. With a sharper eye and more tactile finger tips Caz now does all the sheep classing, including the demanding classing of the wether hoggets destined for our Sharlea clients. The team of wethers selected for display at Talaheni for the ASWGA visit in May 2018 were selected by Caz; as was the fleece that received the Fleece Competition Award for Goulburn-Yass region the previous night.

As a regular attendee to the Great Southern Supreme Merino Show, Caz appraises all the sale rams and checks back to their respective stud show teams. In 2014 a Merriginee ram from Alfoxton President family (14.8-micron, 100 percent comfort) caught her attention and 48 hours and



some dollars later ended up in our sire team. This outcome was repeated two years later when a further Merriginee Alfoxton President family ram was offered - this time bidding was more spirited before stalling, which prompted Carolyn to kick me in the ankle and remark, "One more bid and we will have him"- my reply, "Can I take that from your allowance?" The irresistible smile fuelled a further bid which was successful.

Caz has also had an influence beyond sheep and wool activities. Talaheni had traditionally used Kelpies for stock work with a lineage going back to my parents' farming days in Western Victoria from Tim Austin's Elfinvale Kelpie stud. From a very young age Caz took much interest in our neighbour's Border Collies and regularly asked about getting a Border Collie. Her request went unanswered until she served as a flower girl at the wedding of the neighbour's son in 2000 and for her efforts, she was gifted a Border Collie pup - Zac who had been born on Anzac Day. Zac quickly became top working dog at Talaheni under Caz's tutelage and regular sheep work. Before long requests for a further Border Collie lead to Lockie (from Lockington) joining the Talaheni kennel and more recently Mocha (bred by our shearer Graham Coffey, another Border Collie - the Kelpie days are now a distant memory).

While Caz has a fulltime and challenging position in the Emergency Department, sheep are never far from her mind. Arriving at her unit in Canberra one is greeted by a large Welcome sign that features a laser-cut Merino ram silhouette on the wall next to the front door; inside and the cabinet under the television features Caz's town flock- about twenty porcelain and fabric sheep - although anything but a classed line - collected during her travels and then there is a print of Tom Roberts' iconic painting of Shearing the Rams on the wall and Charles Massy's authoritative book The Australian Merino prominent in the lounge room bookcase. However, she has had to downsize from Border Collies to a miniature Jack Russell called Tyro - although still black and white, but more white than black.

I may have taught Carolyn a thing or two about Talaheni's ultrafine Merino flock, but she continues to take that backgrounding to new levels. Talaheni at least is all the better for it.

## EVANGELINE DRINNAN

I grew up spending time riding horses on the family farm near Nagambie and involving myself in Fibrefine Merinos - a flock of superfine merinos run by my parents, together with my aunt and uncle on a property near Malmesbury. I have always loved wool, whether I was roustabouting as a toddler, or wearing my favourite woollen jumper to the Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show and looking at all the different breeds of sheep.

I went to boarding school at St Michael's Collegiate in Hobart and really made the most of their outdoor education program. Amongst other camps, we spent a week on Flinders Island and soaked up the mixture of cattle and sheep farms, remote wilderness and a strong sense of community much like that which I imagine my parents and grandparents grew up in. I fell in love with the natural world and felt a deep desire to ensure it is there for future generations to enjoy too.

I received a scholarship to study Science and Law at the University of Tasmania and decided to aim towards a career in environmental law. Throughout my degree and my time as an exchange student at Colorado State University however, my interest in law dwindled and my interest in agriculture and the environment grew. I am now in my final year of a Bachelor of Science and Philosophy and hope to do Honors in Agriculture.

In 2000, our families started running our flock of pure Saxon Merinos from 300 cast-for-age ewes from two properties that were long-time clients of Sierra Park, with rams from Sierra Park and Winton. Our families have a love for genetics and have bred today's flock of 450 from those

original few sheep. All fleeces are between 14 and 17 microns and have high curvature. I increasingly wonder where this beautiful wool ends up and what the final garment is and hope that one day, we, along with other woolgrowers, can follow the supply chain process more closely. It would be a beautiful thing to see the transformation of the product on the farm to the product in the shop.

More than gaining satisfaction from any success we have as a family, I am passionate about ensuring the success of the superfine wool industry as a whole. I am particularly interested in the way wool can tackle problems of waste, fast fashion, plastic pollution, climate change and human health. Wool is warm, comfortable, breathable, durable, versatile and biodegradable, and the industry is increasingly focussing on sustainable production.

As the years go on, more research will be done on the effects of polyester and other artificial fibres on the environment and human health, and it may well be that wool, cotton and other natural fibres will be more popular alternatives. Attitudes may also begin to change on why people buy what they buy. People may shift away from fast fashion, as they focus more on buying good quality, long-lasting garments that they value, as well as buying local produce to support the local economy and reduce food miles.

I believe the public's increasing focus on sustainability and environmental health is a huge opportunity for the wool industry - one that with the right marketing and smart funding, will see the popularity of Australian wool soar into the future. I hope to be a part of this resurgence.



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## NATIONAL WOOL MUSEUM CELEBRATES WOMEN IN WOOL



The Australian wool industry would not be what it is today without the significant contribution of women. Since colonial times, women have left their mark on the industry – Eliza Forlonge, Elizabeth Macarthur and Anne Drysdale are just a few examples of those pioneering Australian women of wool.

In recent years, the role of women has increased dramatically across all aspects of the wool industry, but most significantly in woolsheds. Over the last decade, the number of women in shearing sheds has almost doubled and it is set to increase further in the coming years.

In 2018, National Wool Museum commissioned photographer Nicole Marie to go on a journey to document the stories of women in the Australian woolsheds.

Nicole Marie is a Geelong-based prizewinning photographer, who has been Finalist in the National Portrait Prize and was the 2017 Winner of the Canon Light Awards. Marie travelled over thousands of kilometres across Victoria to meet, interview and photograph these women based in regional locations such as Warracknabeal, Gerang Gerung, Bendigo, Sedgwick, Gisborne and Colac.

Her road trip resulted in the “Women in Wool” portrait series – a diverse selection of images, including many young female shearers who work in the sheds and have a challenging future in front of them. Many of them started as rouseabouts and have stepped up to becoming shearers. One shearer had already returned to the sheds after having a child only three months before.

The portraits also show experienced wool workers; women who devoted decades of their lives to the industry. As Wendy Dennis, the sheep breeder from Tarndwarncoort (located just outside of Birregurra, Victoria) said, “It’s a wonderful industry. It’s a wonderful world. It’s hard, but it’s good and honest and true.”

The project highlights the hard work of women in the industry, the tacitility of working with wool and the devotion and contribution of an often forgotten group of workers to one of Australia’s most important industries. The project has received significant interest from across the nation. One of the portraits has already been awarded Finalist in the 2018 Australian Photography Awards.

Women in Wool has been conducted in collaboration with the Invisible Farmer project, the largest ever study of women on the land that is creating new histories of rural Australia and revealing the hidden stories of women on the land.

The portraits are now on permanent display at the National Wool Museum.

Visit the Museum at 26 Moorabool Street, Geelong, Victoria 3220. Open every day excluding Christmas Day, Boxing Day and Good Friday. For more information: [www.nwm.vic.gov.au](http://www.nwm.vic.gov.au).



# ELIZABETH MACARTHUR - NEVER 'JUST' A FARMER'S WIFE

By Michelle Scott Tucker\*

Convict ship Scarborough was no place for a gentleman's daughter. Elizabeth Macarthur, wife of the soon to be infamous John, was cold, pregnant and bone-weary. The Southern Ocean pummelled the ship with storm after storm and her soldier-husband and infant son were both grievously ill. Elizabeth prayed.

Somewhere on that roaring sea, exhausted by her nursing duties and constantly pitched and tumbled, Elizabeth was 'thrown into premature labour, and delivered of a little girl who lived but for an hour.' There was no-one on Scarborough to help. No other women were on board and the ship's surgeon was unlikely to have been sober, let alone skilled. We only know of the nameless baby's existence from the single line in a letter Elizabeth wrote to her mother, many months later. There is no record of a shipboard funeral, no record of where the small bundle wrapped in weighted canvas was delivered to the sea and no record of Elizabeth's grief. All we have - all Elizabeth had - is that single record of a tragic hour.

Weeks later, in June 1790, Scarborough and her Second Fleet sister-ship Neptune, limped into Sydney Harbour. After such a beginning, the subsequent achievements of Elizabeth and John are doubly fascinating. A woman of intelligence and wit, Elizabeth became a favourite with the officers and a personal friend to a series of Governor's wives. Over years of privation in a colony on the edge of the world, the Macarthurs painstakingly carved out a vast agricultural empire, maintaining a relationship with the Aboriginal people that evidence suggests was, at least in the early days, based on respect and friendship.

John Macarthur would eventually be credited with establishing the Australian wool industry, but it was practical Elizabeth who ably managed their holdings for a total of twelve years while John was overseas, in exile and disgrace. It was Elizabeth who established the family farms; Elizabeth who in 1812 sent the first commercial quantities of wool to England; and Elizabeth who established the first Australian merino studbook - in the back of an old account book. John sent letter after letter full of advice and suggestions - most of which Elizabeth sensibly ignored. Upon his return, the family faced bankruptcy and scandal, before a widowed Elizabeth became a sharp-eyed dowager whose grown sons and daughters regularly sought her advice and counsel. In 1850, aged eighty-three, she died at Watsons Bay.

Elizabeth Macarthur's life is interesting in itself, but it also serves as a prism through which to view the first sixty years of the colony. She was an engaged participant in many of the important historic, commercial and political activities of her era. To date, if she is mentioned at all, it is usually only as John Macarthur's wife, a staid society matron, rather than as the vibrant woman who, in her own right, played a key role in the establishment of the nation. Elizabeth was a matron who managed an extensive farming enterprise, who regularly rode across her acres to work side-by-side with the former convicts who comprised her workforce and would then come home to her children (she had nine) in order to wash, change and dine in splendour at the Governor's table.

Elizabeth was very much a party to the important decisions that shaped her family's fortunes - including key decisions about staying, or leaving Australia forever. She took immediate and practical action to ameliorate some of her husband's wilder political gaffes. And the farmer's daughter was never simply a farmer's wife, but a farmer and business manager in her own right.

Through Elizabeth Macarthur, we gain a clearer picture of the way women were then, as now, crucial to the economic viability of a family farming enterprise.

*\*Biographer Michelle Scott Tucker is the author of Elizabeth Macarthur: A Life at the Edge of the World (Text Publishing, 2018).*



Below: The unveiling of the plaque dedicated to Elizabeth Macarthur in Sydney



# A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE ON JOHN'S ACHIEVEMENTS\*

Although John was awarded his OAM for service to the superfine wool growing industry, he could also have received it for his service to a combination of environmental restoration, revegetation, water and soil science, landcare, salinity monitoring, climate change science communication and demonstration.

These are fields in which John has already been recognised, frequently with awards, for decades.

Your feature writer almost gave up trying to make a decent 400-word story from the page-long list of achievements in the official citation (above), and from the mountain of additional material that John provided, and from the countless pages of internet entries and references. It simply made my head spin.

But I can give you some context and a thumbnail sketch.

John is well-known among local woolgrowers and landcarers, many of whom have visited John's property (including myself) on one of the many field days he has hosted.

John and Robyn Ive bought Talaheni in the Yass Valley in 1980. It was 250-hectares of degraded country— not a lot of trees and shrubs and much bare soil, salinity and erosion— with a total carrying capacity of less than 200 dry sheep equivalents (DSEs).

Applying the farming passion from his early life and his CSIRO career as a research scientist (1967–2006), John made a long-term commitment to reverse the apparently terminal trajectory of the property and the enterprise. He has achieved this, by scientifically applying detailed and innovative monitoring and diagnosis, diverse regenerative agriculture practices, and a lot of hard work by his whole family.

Within 30 years, the long-term carrying capacity had reached about 1600 DSEs, producing unshedded ultrafine wool (14-micron), which won national and regional fleece awards in 2017 and 2018. Very significantly, separate research by John and the University of Melbourne, has shown that over 40-years, Talaheni has sequestered enough soil carbon to offset all the farm's livestock and energy use emissions and is now better than carbon-neutral.

The property is now such a good example of regenerative agriculture, that it is a highly favoured destination for farm visits and field days by

diverse farming groups including international groups, for scientific farm trials (since 1988) and university post-graduate research. It is the subject of increasing attention in print, audio and digital media and has been used as a case study in two published books, Bill Hampel's *Against the Grain: Fourteen Farmers Adapt to Climate Change*, and Charles Massy's widely acclaimed *Call of the Reed Warbler*.



*Robyn Ive, Wayne McMahon and John Ive*

For decades, John has been a tireless member, leader and innovator in many wool, farming, landcare and conservation organisations. At Talaheni, he has demonstrably proven how to successfully use detailed measurement, recording, monitoring and diagnosis and apply environmental restoration and regenerative farming practices to simultaneously repair a degraded landscape and achieve a much more productive farming enterprise.

An article featuring Talaheni in the ASWGA Annual back in 2004 concluded that:

Although few of us can aspire to the work rate of John, he is a consistent inspiration to the rest of us growers in Goulburn-Yass. He has been, and remains, a committee member and is currently a National delegate to Council. When we start to think that the future of superfine wool looks bleak and the demands for sustainable land use look too daunting, John Ive and Talaheni are there to show it can be done, with commitment and persistence.

This appears to be as true today as it was then and has now been rewarded accordingly.

Interested readers are encouraged to make a cup of tea, google Talaheni, and settle in for a lot of informative and uplifting reading.

*\* Based on an article prepared for Gundaroo Gazette by Feature Writer and former ASWGA member, Alan Cummine.*



# JOHN IVE OAM

“FOR SERVICE TO THE  
SUPERFINE WOOL GROWING INDUSTRY”

## OFFICIAL CITATION

### Primary Industry– General

- Grazier and Land manager, Talaheni, since 1980.
- Committee Member, Conservation Agriculture & No-Till Farming Association, 2010-2014.
- State Committee Member and Southern Tablelands Branch Representative, Grassland Society of NSW Inc, since 1998.
- Committee Grower Member and final Chairman, Australian Wool Innovation - Wool Carbon Alliance, 2009-2014.
- Inaugural Member, Environmental Farmers Network, since 2005.
- Farmer Delegate, External Reference Group, Bureau of Meteorology, since 2017.
- Active Participant, EY Review of AWI, 2018.
- Farmer Member, Soil Carbon Stakeholder Reference Group, Department of the Environment, 2011-2014 and wool grower representative on Sheep Methodology Working Group, 2015-2016.
- Independent Member, Animal Ethics Committee, 1992-1996 and Chairman, 1996-2006.
- Member, Murrumbateman Landcare Group, and previous committee and executive member, 1993-2006.
- Foundation Member and then Chairman, Yass Valley Revegetation Project, 1983-1990.
- Host of field trials for MDBC, DPI-NSW, CSIRO, Greening Australia, since 1988.
- Host of field days, since 1984.
- Researcher, CSIRO, 1967-2006.
- Australian Member, International Board of Editors, Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems, since 2001.

### Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association (ASWGA)

- Member, since 1987.
- Committee Member, Goulburn-Yass Region, since 1990.
- Regional Chairman, Goulburn-Yass Region, 2006-2012.
- National Council Delegate for Goulburn-Yass Region, 2006-2012 and since 2015.
- Attracted sponsorship and co-hosted Annual National Reunion and fleece competition at Talaheni, 2018.
- Finalist, Regional Achievement and Community Agricultural Innovation Award NSW-ACT, 2018.
- Recipient, ASWGA Fleece Competition award for Goulburn-Yass region, 2018.
- ASWGA Project Coordinator, Premium Quality Wool CRC, 1993-2000.
- ASWGA Representative Member, Participant Committee, Sheep CRC since 2014.
- Initiated commemorative superfine wool display, International Year of Natural Fibres, National Museum of Australia, 2009.
- Initiated Australia Post stamp series commemorating International Year of Natural Fibres, 2009.
- Instigated display of superfine wool, National Wool Museum, 2018.
- ASWGA superfine wool classing accreditation, 1991.
- Professional wool classer registration, 1988.

### Other awards and recognition include:

- Protecting Biodiversity from Rapid Climate Change Award, United Nations Association of Australia, 2017.
- Inaugural National Carbon Cocky of the Year, Carbon Farmers, 2011.
- Climate Champion, Climate Variability CRC, 2010.
- Conservation Farmer of the Year Award, Conservation Agriculture & No-till Farming Association, 2009.
- Recipient, Regional Landcare Award, 2006.
- Recipient, Triple Bottom Line Award, United Nations Association of Australia, 2004.
- Regional Achiever of the Year Award- NSW- ACT, 2004.
- Recipient, Community Fellowship, Land & Water Australia, 2002-2003.
- Recipient, Ultrafine Merino Fleece Award, National Merino Sheep Show, Dubbo, NSW, 2017.

# MORE THAN JUST OUR NATIONAL PRESIDENT: DANNY PICKER

Talaheni's main shearing had been scheduled for the weekend of the 3-4th August this year with local shearing contractor Steven Hogan and his team locked in earlier in May. However, on June 18th events took an unexpected turn when John had a stroke while in Calvary Hospital with kidney problems. The legacy of the stroke and three operations involving anaesthetic, lead to lethargy that threatened John's ability to class the Talaheni clip. John asked Danny if his son David was available to help during the shearing, only to be advised that David had three young children and would be unlikely to sacrifice the weekend with our shearing, but Danny himself was prepared to help out - this was on 13th July and John still hoped to be able to do the classing if someone would assist with fleece preparation and general shed duties. Then a few of factors came into play; firstly, John was over optimistic in his recovery and did not regain his normal energy levels. Secondly, the shearing contractor suggested shearing be held on the Sunday as he was committed to a shearing competition at Nyngan (500 km distant) on the Saturday. Thirdly, the previous weekend as the two-tooth ewes were shorn and their fleeces weighed and classed leisurely with just one shearer, John was found wanting and handed over classing duties to his daughter Carolynn early during the first run. John realised then that the following weekend would require a dedicated classer, and this would have to be Danny.

On Sunday 4th August, Danny arrived at about 7.15am having started out on the road before 5.00am on a frosty, foggy morning for the 160 km drive to Talaheni. Shearing started on time and at the rate of about 50 sheep per shearer for the run. While John spent most of the time in a comfortable chair answering the odd question, Danny quickly filled the role as classer and overseeing the preparation of fleeces on the wool table with John's son Steven, while Carolynn managed the skirtings preparation on the adjoining table with John's wife Robyn. Shearing ran like clockwork and was completed just after 3.00pm with about 300 head shorn.

Danny then drove to Goulburn to meet his wife Megan and travelled onto Sydney. And this flurry of activity followed chairing the Annual General Meeting in Melbourne earlier in the week, then attending various regional meetings in Victoria and Tasmania and helping in the odd shearing shed during his travels. By the way, John was sound asleep by 4.30pm having been merely an extra at Talaheni's shearing.

While we are aware of Danny's duties as National President of ASWGA, this is an example of his willingness and commitment to help a fellow member in a moment of wanting. Incidentally, Danny selected a wether's fleece for the ASWGA Fleece Competition and refused any payment for his outstanding duties.

*Below: Danny Picker always willing to help a fellow grower.*





## AUSTRALIAN WOOL INDUSTRY MEDAL - DAVID ROWBOTTOM

My development of our Ultrafine flock has occurred over the same timespan as Susan and I have worked hard to save the very rare Southern Brown Bandicoot from extinction at the adjoining St Helens Reserve. Difficult to achieve as the reserve was on the government burn program and as Bandicoots will not flee a fire, they would likely be wiped out - the powers to be didn't like accepting that fact.

We have come a long way since the early years when I would work out how many sheep I needed to shear to purchase an acre of land. It was not always easy and we went through some very difficult times. The good years and continuing success in the marketplace, with our improving Merino wool clip kept me going. We made many improvements and planted thousands of trees.

Improving the very wrinkly, short stapled Merino ewes we originally purchased into something that didn't require mulesing and produce exceptional wool, was a major challenge and took considerable time to achieve. A top selection of these ewes was accepted for registration in 1995 to enter our newly formed Merino Stud - Rowensville.

Along with the merino flock, we also ran a prime lamb enterprise, starting with a Romney flock which we evolved into an Elliottsdale Carpetwool Stud. Geneticists involved in the development of the Elliottdales taught me a considerable amount of genetics, which could then be applied to the Merino flock. Elliottdales were superseded by a White Suffolk Stud (Wingfield) when Carpetwool prices collapsed.

Winning the Vellus Aureum section of the Ermenegildo Zegna Fleece Competition became a distant possibility as the micron level of our Merino wool became finer and finer. Another challenge. Success came sooner than I could have imagined.

I feel very privileged to be recognised for this success and our achievements in conservation by being awarded the Australian Wool Industry Medal in 2018, as well as Susan being presented with the Moyne Shire Long Term Sustainability Award for 2019.

My work in conservation and improving Ultrafine wool continues, I feel very proud to be recognised and look forward to remaining in the farming industry for whatever time-span my health allows.

## DAVID ROWBOTTOM, ULTRAFINE WOOL BREEDING AND CONSERVATION

- A leader in the ultrafine wool and sheep industry
- An influential breeder of ultrafine genetics to the industry
- Made a commitment to stop mulesing on his property nearly 4 decades ago (1979)
- Conservationist:
  - As a contribution to the Basalt to Bay Landcare Group, land has been set aside on his property to support and protect the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot
  - A member of the local Landcare Committee, VFF, CFA and ASWGA
- International Ermenegildo Zegna, Vellus Aureum fleece awards:
  - 1st – 2014, 2015, 2016, 2017, 2019 – the 2016 winning fleece a record breaking 9.9 micron
  - 2nd – 2012, 2013, 2014 & 2018
  - 3rd – 2016
- Holder of several Australian seasonal records for prices of wool sold by auction
- Nominated for 2015 Glenelg Hopkins Environmental Achievers award
- Nominated for 2018 Moyne Shire Environmental Sustainability award

## AT THE PRESENTATION DINNER HELD AT WOOL WEEK IN AUGUST 2018

*Mr Michell (Chairman of the Federation of Australian Wool Organisations) said Victorian Merino breeder David Rowbottom was cited for his work in ultrafine wool breeding and conservation. The leader in the ultrafine wool and sheep industry is an influential breeder of ultrafine genetics, he said.*

*"He made a commitment to stop mulesing on his property nearly four decades ago in 1979 by thinking a bit ahead of the curve."*

*"He is a conservationist and has made a large contribution to the Basalt to Bay Landcare Group by setting aside on his property, land to protect the endangered Southern Brown Bandicoot."*

*The Rowbottom's Rowensville flock has been very successful in the international Zegna Vellus Aureum fleece awards, winning in 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2017. In 2016, Rowensville's winning fleece was a record-setting 9.9 micron. The flock is holder of several Australian seasonal records for wool prices at auction.*

*Mr Rowbottom thanked his nominator and the judges and said there was a long way to go in development and improvement of superfine wool.*

*"It's a great industry to be in, so thank you all very much."*

*- Sheep Central*

*Photos courtesy of Susan Rowbottom & Stock & Land*



# IWTO YOUNG PROFESSIONALS PROGRAM

## – CAMERON GALL, “WILSONS CREEK”

Earlier this year I was lucky enough to be selected by the superfine wool growers and sponsored to attend the International Wool Trade Organisation Congress in Venice as a young professional.

The IWTO is the recognized global authority for standards in the wool textile industry. Since 1930, IWTO has represented the interests of the wool textile trade at a global level. The Worldwide membership of the organisation encompasses the entire wool textile pipeline, from farm to retail.

The young professional program within the IWTO aims to engage young people from within the wool textile pipeline, to become better engaged and connect with others from all aspects of the industry. Young professional participants came from countries such as the Australia, New Zealand, the United States, South Africa, the United Kingdom, Japan, France, the Falkland Islands, India and Uzbekistan and included a wide range of professions, ranging from wool growers, brokers, marketers, processors and retail.

Topics covered by the conference included seminars and presentations on wool growing, wool trade biosecurity, sustainable practices, market intelligence, contracts and specifications, sheep welfare, market sustainability and the retail environment. The conference allowed me to not only learn a great amount of detail about certain aspects and issues through the industry, but also gave me the chance to meet a number of key people from within the industry and understand their aspects on the industry.

I'd like to express my gratitude to the Association for giving me the opportunity to attend the conference. It has given me a completely new perspective in the industry and allowed me to connect with many others in the industry and start new friendships. This has certainly spurred an interest for me to become involved with far more past the farm gate.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to attend the IWTO conference and encourage any young person who is connected with the Association to apply for this in the years ahead as I think it is a great initiative to spur the interest of our young people within the industry and connect them with people they wouldn't otherwise get the chance to.

*Below: Danny with Matteo Loro of Agnona and Cameron Gall*



*Below: Davide Fontaneto, Danny Picker, Cameron Gall and Alberto Barberis Canonico*



# AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION: ANNUAL FLEECE COMPETITION

The fleece competition attracted eighty fleeces, from eight Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association (ASWGA) regions (Table 1), with an average of just under three fleeces entered per participating grower. Ararat-Barunah had seven growers entering more than twice as many fleeces as the next highest region, New England. Fleeces from each region fell generally within a common quality count range, predominantly 70's to 80's count, although the number of 90's count fleeces increased. Most regions have a relatively wide variation in the Score received by individual fleeces, with over ten points being relatively common. While seasonal conditions varied from region to region, there is little evidence that variation in seasonal conditions hampered any Region from producing high scoring fleeces, as evidenced by the similar highest score for each Region, although maximum fleece range varied across the regions (Table 1 & 2).

**Table 1: Overall summary by Region of 80 fleeces entered in ASWGA Fleece Competition.**

No.	Region	Growers no.	Fleeces no.	Quality range	Weight range	Score range
1	Ararat-Barunah	7	27	70-90	0.7-4.3	55.4-93.7
2	Albury-Wodonga	1	6	90	1.2-2.3	76.4-81.7
3	Goulburn-Yass	3	9	74-90	1.8-3.3	84.6-94.4
4	Hamilton	3	4	74-90	1.6-3.6	83.6-89.9
5	Mudgee	5	9	70-90	2.1-4.3	73.5-96.1
6	New England	9	12	70-80	1.6-4.5	77.4-96.0
7	Tasmania	6	11	70-80	2.2-3.5	82.9-94.3
8	Western Australia	1	2	70-80	2.4-3.3	74.3-81.8
	Total/ Mean	35	80	70-90	0.7-4.5	55.4-96.1

The mean scores of the fleeces entered from each Region (Table 2) highlight some regional variation. For instance, fleeces from New England and Tasmania consistently scored better across all attributes relative to the respective means, while Ararat-Barunah, Albury-Wodonga and Western Australia consistently underperformed relatively to the respective attribute means. The other Regions performed variably. Table 2 also shows the overall ranking of the Regions, with Tasmania narrowly ahead of New England with Goulburn-Yass coming third. The other five Regions were below the mean Score.

Table 2: Mean attribute scores for each ASWGA Region and overall. Dark blue highlighted cells are above the average for the attribute and tan highlighted cells are below the attribute mean. Non-highlighted cells

**Table 2: Mean attribute scores for each ASWGA Region and overall**

Region	Fleeces (no.)	Weight (kg)	Weight (22)	Yield (10)	Trueness (20)	Uniformity (15)	Evenness (18)	Excellence (15)	Score (100)	Rank
Ararat-Barunah	27	2.6	17.9	8.7	16.8	13.1	15.9	12.8	85.1	6
Albury-Wodonga	6	<b>1.8</b>	<b>15.5</b>	<b>8.8</b>	<b>16.3</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>14.8</b>	<b>11.8</b>	<b>78.9</b>	7
Goulburn-Yass	9	2.3	16.9	9.4	17.9	13.9	16.5	13.8	88.5	3
Hamilton	4	2.8	19.0	9.5	16.4	12.8	16.0	12.5	86.1	4
Mudgee	9	2.8	17.8	9.0	17.3	12.7	15.9	12.9	85.7	5
New England	12	3.1	19.3	9.0	17.8	13.6	16.2	13.6	89.5	2
Tasmania	11	2.7	19.0	9.3	17.8	13.7	16.3	13.7	89.9	1
Western Australia	2	2.9	16.4	7.2	15.3	12.5	15.3	11.5	78.1	8
<b>Total/Mean</b>	<b>80</b>	2.6	18.0	8.9	17.2	13.2	16.0	13.1	86.3	
<b>Possible (pc)</b>			<b>81.8</b>	<b>89.0</b>	<b>86.0</b>	<b>88.0</b>	<b>88.8</b>	<b>87.3</b>	<b>86.3</b>	
<b>CoV (pc)</b>		<b>30.0</b>	<b>15.7</b>	<b>7.8</b>	<b>7.4</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>4.7</b>	<b>9.4</b>	<b>7.37</b>	

equate with the attribute mean. The overall mean attribute scores are shown as a percentage of the maximum possible score for the attribute. The coefficient of variation (CoV) is also shown for each attribute.

Of the six attributes judged, the mean score for Yield received the greatest proportion of that possible (89.0 pc) and Weight received the least proportion of the possible score (81.8 pc), thereby indicating high variation in fleece weight of entries, which is confirmed by the high CoV of 15.7 percent after adjustment for quality count. Evenness (88.8 pc), Uniformity (88.0 pc), Excellence (87.3 pc) and Trueness (86.0 pc), all received relatively uniform and high proportion of the possible score (Table 2).

Taking the mean results for each Region, the six attributes judged were variably correlated to the final Score (Table 3). Weight, the dominant attribute, was highly correlated to the Score ( $r=0.742$ ) while Uniformity and Yield were least correlated ( $r=0.707$ ), this is in contrast to previous season, where the difference between the highest and lowest correlated was much wider. These dual, but contrasting correlations, are consistent with the purpose of fleece competitions, namely to reward heavy cutting fleeces within their quality count class and not the quality count per se. On the other hand, it is somewhat surprising that Yield (keeping in mind clean fleece weight rather than greasy fleece weight is paramount) was ranked lowest in determining the Score - although considerably higher than in previous years. Not only does Weight offer the biggest possible contribution (22 pc) to the Score, but the value for this attribute is the best predictor of a fleece's overall Score. On the other hand, with Weight receiving the least proportion (81.8 pc) of that possible, it offers the best opportunity for improvement for underperforming fleeces, this is reflected also in having the highest CoV (15.7 pc) of the attributes. Yield and Evenness are next most important to Weight in determining the Score, although Evenness has the lowest CoV (4.7 pc), reflecting relatively high consistency across the fleeces and suggesting little opportunity for improvement. All other attributes are relatively consistent in variation, as reflected in similar CoVs (Table 2) and provide limited opportunity for improvement.

**Table 3 Correlation and importance rank of each attribute against Score**

Attribute	Weight	Yield	Trueness	Uniformity	Evenness	Excellence
Correlation	0.742	0.707	0.878	0.707	0.721	0.588
Rank	2	4	1	4	3	6

The weight difference between the lightest (0.7 kg) and heaviest (4.5 kg) fleece was surprisingly large, although less than the previous year; a difference of 3.8 kg, or more than a six-fold difference. The extremes had

quality counts of 90's and 74's respectively and although from different Regions, smaller fleece weight difference would be expected. In addition, for most fleece weight intervals (Table 4), there is considerable variation in the Score received- an average of more than 10 points. As expected, there is a general increase in Score as fleece weight increases, peaking for 4.0-4.9 kg interval due to Weight cap. Although with the upper cap for fleece weight, top scoring fleeces need not be in the highest weight interval. In fact, the fleece receiving the highest Score was only 64 percent of the weight of the heaviest fleece, although with a high-quality count, it still exceeded the cap for its quality count. This year, none of the fleeces exceeded 4.5 kg; in the previous year, a number of fleeces exceeded this upper weight, however, the heaviest fleeces had the most uniform Score.

**Table 4: Comparison of mean Score and difference between minimum and maximum Score for different fleece weight intervals.**

Weight (kg)*	Mean weight (kg)	Min Score	Max Score	Mean Score	Score difference
1.0-1.9	1.7	76.4	88.9	82.0	12.5
2.0-2.9	2.5	73.5	96.1	85.8	22.5
3.0-3.9	3.3	74.3	96.0	90.1	21.7
4.0-4.9	4.2	89.2	94.6	92.5	5.4
Overall	2.6	73.5	96.1	86.1	22.6

\*For fleece exceeding 1 kg

Interestingly the composition of the fleece entries has changed significantly over the last six years. In 2013-14, the dominant class was 90's (49.2 pc), then a near even distribution across the Classes in 2014-15, followed by 80's domination (46.7 pc) in 2015-16, then near even distribution again in 2016-17, before domination by 74's (55.7 pc) in 2017-

18. In 2018-19, this trend did not persist, with 80's and 90's being the dominant entries, no doubt due to the tough seasonal conditions across all areas producing Superfine wool.

Table 5: Comparison of entries by Class over the last five years. The blue highlighted cells indicate a broadening of the dominant class over the previous five years, although this trend did not persist this year.

## ASWGA FLEECE COMPETITION

### ROLL OF HONOUR OF PREVIOUS WINNERS

Year	Winner	Region
2013/14	Glen Stuart - Carol & Allan Phillips	Tasmania
2014/15	Avington Merino - Noel & Lyndsay Henderson	Ararat/Barunah
2015/16	Kelseldale - Penny & Russell Hartwich	Ararat/Barunah
2016/17	Windradeen - Ed & Jill (dec.) Hundy	Mudgee
2017/18	Edington Partnership - Mark & Lesleann Waters	New England
2018/19	Oak Hills - Irene & Daryl Croake	Mudgee



**Table 5: Comparison of entries by Class over the last five years**

Class	2018-19		2017-18		2016-17		2015-16		2015-16		2013-14	
	No.	Percent										
60s					1	1.4						
70's	5	6.2	11	13.9	13	18.3	5	4.7	7	12.3	3	4.6
70s-74s							5	4.7				
74's	17	21.2	44	55.7	18	25.4	16	15.0	16	28.1	6	9.2
74's-80's							13	12.1				
80's	29	36.2	22	27.8	22	31.0	50	46.7	19	33.3	24	36.9
80's-90's							4	3.7				
90's	29	36.2	2	2.5	17	23.9	13	12.1	15	26.3	32	49.2
90's-100's							1	0.9				
Total	80		79		71		107		57		65	



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# ASWGA FLEECE COMPETITION 2018-19

Congratulations to *Irene & Daryl Croake* of "Oak Hills" in Mudgee for their win in three categories of the ASWGA Fleece competition, the class 90's along with first place in the Mudgee region and the big one, the "Cleckheaton Grand Champion" Trophy for the best overall fleece.

There were exactly eighty fleeces entered in this year's competition and the results were very close.

Presentations were made at the recent ASWGA Presentation Dinner held in Armidale on 18 May 2019.

*"We are delighted to win the ASWGA Fleece Competition and to bring home a beautiful trophy, plaque and certificates sponsored by Bendigo Woollen Mill and The Australian Yarn Company.."*

*We have been supporting the Competition with fleeces since the outset in 2013. We appreciate the work done by ASWGA in offering the fleece competition and the generosity of Bendigo Woollen Mill and The Australian Yarn Company in sponsoring the many awards.*

*It was a great weekend in Armidale with a full lecture day at "Kirby" woolshed, a lovely dinner, an informative visit to Mark and Lesleann Waters farm at "Edington" and a wonderful chance to catch up with friends from all over." Daryl & Irene Croake*

## THE COMPLETE LIST OF WINNERS:

Mark & Lesleann Waters of "Riverton", Armidale NSW, first place in the Class 74's and Class 70's.

Janet & Tony Gall of "Wilson's Creek", Uralla NSW, first place in the Class 80's and first in the New England Region

Penny & Russell Hartwich of "Kelsedale", Ballyrogan, Victoria, tied with Heather & Geoff Phillips of "Currawong", Tatyoon for first place in the Ararat/Barunah Region.

Andrew & Stuart Drinnan of "FibreFine Merinos", Malmesbury Vic, first place in the Albury/Wodonga region.

Trevor & Kathy Mibus of "Glenara Merinos" Dunkeld, Victoria, first place in the Hamilton Region.

Robyn & John Ive of "Talaheni", Yass Valley, NSW, first place in the Goulburn/Yass Region.

Irene & Daryl Croake of "Oak Hills", Mudgee, NSW, first place in the Class 90's and first place in the Mudgee Region.

Carolyn & Allan Phillips of "Glen Stuart" Deddington, Tasmania, first place in the Tasmanian Region.

James & Faye Pepper of "Mumballview", Mumballup, Western Australia, first place in the West Australian Region.

*Below: Irene & Daryl Croake of Oak Hills Mudgee, with their award for best fleece in the Mudgee district presented by Wayne McMahon of Australian Yarn Company*



A huge thank you to our sponsor Bendigo Woollen Mill and The Australian Yarn Company for the grand trophy and to AWTA for arranging the testing and transport of fleeces for judging. We would also like to thank Roberts Ltd, Australian Wool Network, Schute Bell Badgery Lumby and Landmark/Jackson of Geelong for facilitating the judging, collection and transportation of the members' fleeces. It was a huge effort and greatly appreciated by the Association.

A special thanks to the Fleece Competition Committee which, as always, has done an excellent job.

Finally, thank you to judges David Hart of Landmark and Scott Carmody, Trade Consultant for AWI, for their expertise.

Funds raised from the sale of the wool entered in the competition will go back to the Association.



All images courtesy of The Land



Andrew & Stuart Drinnan & Wayne McMahon



Penny, Sophie and Russel Hartwich, "Kelsedale" presented with their fleece award for the Ararat and Barunah region, Vic, by Wayne McMahon, Australian Yarn Company.

Below: Allan Phillips & Wayne McMahon





# NANSHAN AUSTRALIAN WOOL FORUM AND GOLF TOURNAMENT

The 3rd annual Nanshan Australian Wool Forum and Golf Tournament teed-off this week at the beautiful Riverside Oaks Golf Resort, located in the Hawkesbury region of NSW.

Shandong Nanshan Zhishang Sci-Tech Co., Ltd (Nanshan Zhishang), in conjunction with Australian Wool Innovation Limited (AWI), have proudly developed this wonderful event to give the Australian wool industry a long-term communication platform to discuss wool research, development and innovation aimed at increasing the profitability, productivity and sustainability of Australian woolgrowers.

This two-day event attracts more than 150 woolgrowers and associated parties from across the country and aspires to ignite the future trends of the Australian wool industry, as well as raising money for charity.

The event commenced on Monday the 12th of August with a networking lunch before the welcome address by Hills Shire Council GM and CEO Michael Edgar, AWI CEO Stuart McCullough and Nanshan Group Australia Chairman, Jeremy Song.

Guests were able to meet some key members of the wool industry during the networking lunch.

This year's forum attracted a high calibre of keynote speakers from across the world, including globally recognised food systems innovation expert, Sarah Nolet. The Silicon Valley native discussed the opportunities and challenges for farmers within the Ag Tech sector and the rapid increase in interest from venture capital investors within this space.

UNE Lecturer and Researcher, Jamie Barwick, discussed precision livestock monitoring systems, explaining in-depth about the use of motion sensors and GPS trackers attached to animals to detect changes in activity and movement.

Mark Robinson from the University of Melbourne presented on understanding and preventing shearer's injuries. While Damian Madden, AWI GM Digital, spoke about new technologies and how they are bridging the gap between on-farm to the consumer.

Cleto Barberis, Italian fabric expert, spoke about the current innovations emerging in fabric and fashion and AWI's Global Editor, Lisa Griplas, facilitated three panel discussions with industry professionals from a range of sectors covering a wide snapshot of the wool industry including:

- Woolgrowers (Danny Picker, Don McDonald, Natasha Kessler)
- Trade (Michael Jackson, Mark Denton, Michael Avery, Tom Rookyard)
- Consumers and Fashion (Stuart McCullough, Cleto Barberis, Jonathan Lobban)

The first day concluded with a picturesque dinner overlooking the beautiful Riverside Oaks Golf Resort. Delegates feasted on Australian and Chinese spit roasted lamb, accompanied by locally sourced seafood and a variety of Australian wines.

Day two saw more than 100 participants take to the golf course to compete in the Nanshan Wool Golf Tournament. The beautiful Bungool

Golf Course at Riverside Oaks Golf Resort looked stunning as the sun came out for a fun day of golf.

At the conclusion of golf, guests returned to the clubhouse to attend the Awards Dinner hosted by Australian Wool Ambassador, Catriona Rowntree.

The Nanshan Wool Trophy Award was presented by Mr Jeremy Song and Mr Stuart McCullough to Scott Bowden from Bothwell, Tasmania who produced the best quality / finest wool for Nanshan last year. The Nanshan Wool Trophy Award is designed to reward the woolgrowers who are devoted to producing the best quality wool in Australia.

Awards for the winner of the Golf Tournament, along with many other awards from the day's activities were then presented.

Guests were treated to a four-course fine dining menu, superbly presented by Riverside Oaks Executive Chef, Len O'Mally.

At the conclusion of dinner, a Charity Auction was held that raised almost \$10,000 for Beyond Blue, an organisation that assists with the ongoing mental health struggles of a portion of Australian farmers, heightened lately due to the acute negative impacts of dealing with the effects of the drought.

Nanshan Zhishang would like to thank AWI as an organising body, as well as all the wonderful event sponsors and participants for their support and look forward to hosting another successful event again next year.

If you would like to learn more about the Nanshan Australian Wool Forum and Golf Tournament or the Riverside Oaks Golf Resort, please contact Lisa Giles on 02 4560 3200



# 1PP = EXCELLENCE IN QUALITY, BREEDING AND PREPARATION

Congratulations to the six Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association members who received 1PP certificates for excellence in quality, breeding and preparation in the 2018/19 season. They make up 11 of the 15 1PP bales produced in the year.

Certificate Number	Grower	Brand
4069	A & C Phillips	GLEN STUART
4068	A & C Phillips	GLEN STUART
4064	B & S PICKER (HILLCRESTON) & Co	HILLCRESTON/HEIGHTS / BIGGA
4073	CS & ML SMITH	CSS / MULGOWAN/TRAPROCK
4065	CS & ML SMITH	CSS / MULGOWAN/TRAPROCK
4063	CS & ML SMITH	CSS / MULGOWAN/TRAPROCK
4062	CS & ML SMITH	CSS / MULGOWAN/TRAPROCK
4061	N & P CAREY	KASHMIR / YASS
4074	SARALCO PARTNERSHIP	KINGSTON / TASMANIA
4075	LINKE FAMILY	GLENHOLME
4076	LINKE FAMILY	GLENHOLME

## MULGOWAN, NEW ENGLAND REGION, NSW

Preparation for a display bale is always exciting at the end of shearing. All the best wool comes out all together to be pressed up. It's the fun part of running sheep.

We put coats on all our sheep, to keep grass seed and dirt out of the wool, so a bit of extra work is done throughout the year. We're always very happy when it all pays off.

- Margaret Smith



Clive & Margaret Smith with one of their 1PP bales

## KINGSTON, TASMANIAN REGION

KINGSTON / TASMANIA produced two superb bales of superfine wool. Classer E. Archer ('93) has once again done an outstanding job in meticulously preparing these bales and she has the measurements to back it up:

Lot 1: 16.5 micron, 0.1 VM, 76.8% Yld, 78mm, 10% CVL & 47 Nkt clean Breeding, preparation & excellence.

Source - AWEX



Kingston's Wool Classer Evelyn Archer

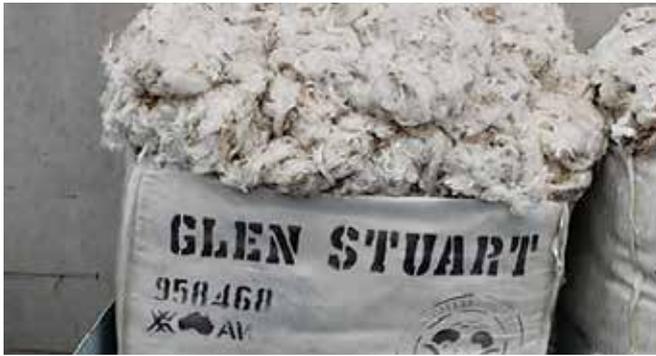
## GLEN STUART, TASMANIAN REGION

Sold during the Tasmanian feature sale at the Melbourne wool stores, the Phillips' bale made 4860 cents a kilogram, almost 3000c/kg above the week's Eastern Market Indicator, the industry benchmark.

The bale was purchased by New England Wool for Reda, a fabric maker that produces traditional Italian suits.

"The staple was very clean and the tensile strength was excellent, it was an exceptional result and good reward for effort."

"We always try and grow the best possible wool we can, and to have that assessed by the panel of exporters and then awarded 1PP status, is confirmation we are achieving a very good result," Allan said.



## KASHMIR, GOULBURN/YASS REGION, NSW

Kashmir's No 6 Bale of Wool received a 1PP certificate last year in September.

This bale was the very best wool our sheep could grow, paddock grown, coated and micron tested, shown and classed over a separate two-day shearing, with input from specialist wool classers and wool brokers. Janet and I tolled for 12 months, changing coats and culling sheep to ensure the highest quality paddock grown wool would be classed into our lead Kashmir / Yass Brand wool sale of 120 or so bales of Ultra Fine traditional Saxon wool. This bale sold to New England Wools along with a large quantity of bales destination Italy.

This bale was the second highest auction sale price for the season and our best price since 1987 Nov Goulburn wool sale - a long time between drinks.

- Neil Carey



## HILLCRESTON HEIGHTS, GOULBURN/YASS REGION, NSW

Hillcreston Heights received a 1PP certificate and was the third top priced bale for the 2018 Season. The bale was sold by Landmark on 31/10/2018. Lot 715W, AUSFINE ULTRA, it was 104 kg, 14.8 micron, Yield 74.7, Length 89 & strength 38. The bale was purchased by New England Wools – for REDA S.P.A, for \$4519 greasy



## GLENHOLME, HAMILTON REGION

Everard, Marilyn and Matthew Linke of 'Glenholme' Tarrington, were again successful in having 2 bales of wool certified 1pp in Melbourne sale M52.

First bale had a micron of 15.7, yield of 73.6, 74mm in length, cv length of 10, 46 Nkt and sold for 3533 c/kg greasy.

Second bale had a micron of 16.0, yield of 76.1, 84mm in length, cv length 11, 49 Nkt and sold for 3424 c/kg greasy.

Both bales were sold into the REDA 1pp Pinnacle Project Contract, through New England Wool.

When preparing wool to be nominated for 1pp, it is important for the shearer to maintain a very clean style with little or no second cuts, as the length of the fleece is critical for classing. Each fleece is assessed for style before double skirting to ensure that the style is completely even within the finished fleece, this is the only time that there is an opportunity to present an even style. Final classing is always done when the shearing is completed, so that the extra time can be spent creating a 1pp nomination. When classing these high quality fleeces, it is very important to be meticulous in the staple length by around 5 mm variation. Staple strength would be checked in various points around the fleece. Only the very light tip white fleeces are considered for 1pp.

Much time is required to take the fleece from the shearer to the bale, as this is to be highest grade wool achievable.



A special mention to Glenara Merinos for receiving a 1PP in July of 2017/18 season

## GLENARA MERINOS, HAMILTON REGION, VICTORIA

The bale, lot 13 in Fox and Lillie Rural's catalogue, measured 14.8 micron, 82 millimetres staple length, eight per cent co-efficient of variation, 46 Newtons per kilotex (Nkt) and 0.2 vegetable matter base.

New England Wool purchased the bale at 4398 cents a kilogram greasy, for Reda's 150 bales of certified 1PP bales for the Italian mill's 150th anniversary.

The wool came off 1.5 year-old ewes and wethers, all of pure Glenara bloodlines.

Trevor said "these sheep were born in autumn, first shorn in October of the same year, and then again the following year in late August, meaning they had 11 months of growth."

The sheep were run on natural pastures at Dunkeld, and Trevor said "that saw their wool grow nice and evenly that helped with traits including strength."



Mibus family, Glenara Merinos, Dunkled, get 1PP bale – Excerpt & Photos courtesy of Stock & Land

# FAMILY AND FRIENDS PAY TRIBUTE TO WOOL INDUSTRY 'DALLION' TREVOR PICKER

COURTESY OF THE GOULBURN POST –  
HANNAH SPARKS

A legend: Trevor Picker was an Order of Australia recipient in 1988 for his distinguished service to the superfine wool industry.

Trevor Picker AM always brought kindness and light to those around him and on Friday as family and friends gathered to remember his life, the sun shone over Bigga.

One of Mr Picker's granddaughters remarked that it was 'pop' who had brought the sun out.

The brightness was fitting for the leader of Australia's superfine wool industry, who died on June 7 in a multi-vehicle car crash after visiting his wife Janet in an aged care home in Crookwell. He was just shy of his 91st birthday.

Mr Picker's eldest son Danny said his father's last words were ones of gratitude to those trying to help him.

"That showed the type of person he was," Danny said.

"Dad didn't have an enemy in the world. He was a very humble man who never mentioned his achievements until the last few years when his stories started to flow fairly wildly with some extra achievements that would make us all laugh."

Hundreds gather: A large crowd listens to the funeral service outside of All Saints Anglican Church in Bigga.

Hundreds attended Mr Picker's service led by The Reverend Sally Cullen at All Saints Anglican Church. His nearest and dearest filled the church, while a large crowd listened from outside.

Locals noted that it was one of the best-attended funerals in the village and that there were more people at Mr Picker's remembrance that evening at Bigga Golf Club than when the club opened.

Bigga's rolling hills dotted with sheep provided a fitting backdrop to the service.

"Dad was always a sheep man," Danny said.

Trevor was born in Crookwell on July 20, 1928, to Sam and Edith Picker. He had an older sister, Molly, who is deceased.

A family man: Trevor with his wife, Janet, and four children Danny, Murray, Grant and Brett.

He is survived by his wife Janet Picker; four sons Danny, Murray, Grant and Brett; half-brother Stephen; 14 grandchildren; 24 great-grandchildren and still counting.

The four brothers were the pallbearers at the service and carried the coffin out to Abide With Me by Susan Boyle.

The family said Mr Picker would always be remembered by them as a legend of the wool game, a passionate fisherman, a Manly Sea Eagles fan and a beloved husband, dad, pop and pop-pop.

He was raised and spent all of his life at his family's property, Hillcrest at Bigga.

"Dad was a very proud independent man until the very end," Danny said.

"He would always visit Mum in the last few years at least twice a week, but always said he didn't want to live in a nursing home."

At a very young age, Mr Picker took over the classing and selection of the sheep on the farm from his father, Sam.

Wool master: Mr Picker tests and examines some sale wool from Hillcrest, Bigga at the wool store in Goulburn where he fetched record prices.

"Dad had very little schooling and started working when he was 14 years old," Danny said.

His father remained dedicated to producing superfine wool and was credited with putting the region's wool industry on the map.

He is also widely remembered for record prices from classing superfine clips around Bigga.

Mr Picker's top price of 1800 pence a pound in 1964 was a world record. He had classed and prepared the wool for that sale with his father, Sam.

Mr Picker generously shared his knowledge with others in the wool industry and often gave his rams away to assist with their flocks.

"In the late '80s he donated a ram to the Mudgee Superfine Wool Growers Association, which was raffled and made the branch viable to continue to this day," Danny said.

A keen sportsman: Mr Picker was a budding fullback with the Bigga rugby league team.

He was appointed to the Order of Australia (AM) in 1988 for his distinguished service to the superfine wool industry.

"He was always very proud to wear his AM lapel badge when the occasion rose," Danny said.

Mr Picker also passed his knowledge of the wool industry down to his four sons.

When they left school, they were put through an apprenticeship, firstly learning how to muster and drench before moving into the shearing shed where they mastered the wool presser, the job of a roustabout, piece-picker and how to skirt a fleece.

"Then classing, that was a different game; Dad's way or the highway," Danny joked.

Mr Picker was also a keen sportsman. He was a budding fullback until he was struck down with polio in his late teens, which shortened one of his legs.

---

**"DAD WAS ALWAYS A SHEEP MAN,"**  
DANNY SAID

---

At about the age of 22, he suffered pneumonia but it was somewhat of a fortunate misfortune.

Sixty-five years of marriage: Janet and Trevor Picker were married on June 3, 1954.

It was the young Janet Hope Howard who was tasked with looking after him. She took him home with her and nursed him for three weeks back to full health.

"Dad and Mum were married on June 3, 1954, and lived with Mum's mother, Doris, at Linton in Bigga until they built our family home a little later," Danny said.

Perhaps it was those early days of Janet nursing Trevor that led to his belief that they knew better than any medical professional.

"A self-acclaimed doctor, he would try to prescribe his and Mum's medicines to the very end," Danny said.

Mr Picker was a keen sportsman and fisherman and would take the family out of town on a fishing trip every year.

The biggest fish he ever caught was a 121-pound Murray cod at Burrinjuck Dam.

He was president of Bigga Fishing Club and one of the chief instigators of netting Murray cod and silver perch at Burrinjuck and Burrendong Dams. He also brought those fish back to stock Wyangala Dam.

The family bought a holiday house in Batemans Bay in 1974 and created many fun memories during their visits there.

Big catch: Mr Picker's record catch was a 121-pound Murray cod at Burrinjuck Dam.

"I remember Dad telling me home brew won't affect you as he took four steps forward and three back!" Danny said.

"We had numerous fishing trips to the flat head grounds with some quite large hauls."

Trevor was also captain of the local bush fire brigade.

"Dad's motto was simply put it out as quickly as possible," Danny said.

Trevor helped to run the Bigga Bears during the '70s and '80s, proudly watching his sons and grandsons play.

"He always told me of his grandchildren's achievements in hockey, football, shearing and harness racing," Danny said.

Trevor was also undertaker of the Bigga district and caretaker of the local cemetery, where his body rests now.

"We miss you deeply, so please rest in peace until we meet again on that riverbank in the sky," Danny concluded.

Friends pay their respects: Australian Wool Network NSW/QLD manager Mark Hedley and former Goulburn wool seller Ray Moroney at the funeral service.

Former Goulburn wool seller Ray Moroney was among the crowd at Mr Picker's funeral and said: "It was as lovely as a funeral could be."

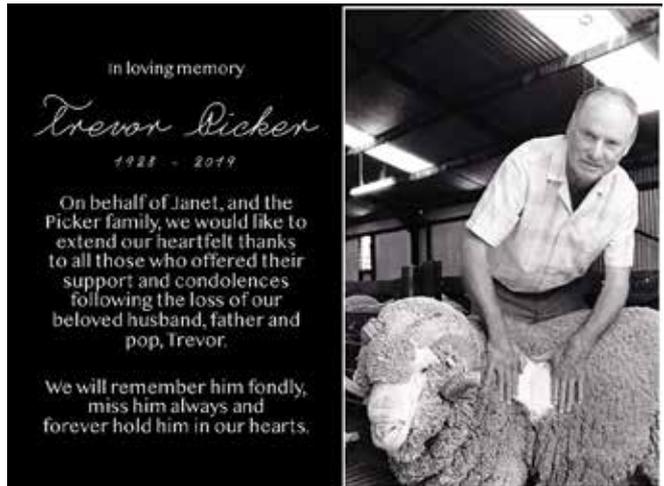
"He was a lovely bloke and this service showed that," he said.

Former Australian Wool Innovation chairman and current board member, Wal Merriman, knew Mr Picker all of his life.

Mr Merriman described Trevor as a "good bloke" and "a dillion among the ultra-fine breeding community."

"We were competitors in the show ring but we always went and had a beer afterwards," he said.

"I hadn't seen much of Trevor in the past few years, but every time I did he always had time for you."



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# W.R.R BEGGS AM

It is with great sadness that the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association has lost one of their own in past president and honorary life member Robert Beggs on 24 July 2019, aged 84 years old. A memorial service was held in Geelong on 1 August to celebrate the life of Robert, which was attended by many.

Below is an article Robert wrote when he was presented with honorary Life Membership of ASWGA for "Outstanding contribution over many years on the Council, Executive and as President which have been recognised and appreciated by all our members. In particular your very challenging and difficult period as President at the height of the demise of the Reserve Price Scheme and subsequent events have been recognised."

Our thoughts are with his wife Margaret, daughters, Jenny, Jane & Sarah, their partners and his six grandchildren

## HONOURED TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE WOOL GROWERS' ASSOCIATION - W. ROBERT R. BEGGS AM

It was my father, Arthur Beggs CBE, who had the vision to establish the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association (ASWGA). He knew from the onset that such an association had to include all Superfine wool growers in the three major producing States and overseas Mill Members. There were several keys to this vision. Through his Wool Board connections, he met Count Aldo Zegna, who because of his large operation in Italy, was able to persuade a number of Mill owners to join as Mill Members. Tasmania had its own Fine and Superfine woolgrowers and it was Rod O'Connor who persuaded the woolgrowers in Tasmania to join the mainland States to for the ASWGA.

"I WAS HONOURED TO BE INVOLVED WITH THE AUSTRALIAN SUPERFINE ASSOCIATION FROM 1981 TO 1995."

The other key to the formation and success is a clear succession. The succession plan means that each State -Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales - elect a President of the Association for a term of three years, and the Vice President from the next in turn State is expected to be the next President. I believe this succession flow is the key to the success of the Association, which has stood the test of time, during the ups and downs of the industry since the Association's inception in 1972. My father founded Merino Stud No 261 at Niawanda, Beaufort in 1932 purchasing ewes from Buln Gherin and Eurambeen, this was later transferred back to Bulk Gherin and he purchased the property in 1945. In 1960, I joined my father in a partnership known as Buln Gherin Partners. Buln Gherin was purchased in 1920 by my grandmother, also Robert Beggs from the Russell family at Mawalok.

## MY INVOLVEMENT WITH THE SHEEP AND WOOL INDUSTRY

My ancestors were Anglo-Irish and emigrated from Dublin in Ireland and arrived in Geelong on 17 March 1850 aboard the ship The Statesman. They had been involved with the fine linen trade and then became involved in farming. From the early days in Western Victoria they were running Merino sheep. My father was already involved with many off-farm activities and in 1963 was elected to the then Australian Wool Board. At this stage I took over the full running of the property and the day-to-day

management. The property ran a sheep enterprise, mainly Merinos, Hereford Cattle, some cereal cropping and a grass hay enterprise. In November 1959 Margaret and I were married and built a house on the western end of the property known as Buln Gherin. After my father died, Margaret and I moved into the homestead at Buln Gherin.

We have three grown-up married daughters and six grandchildren. During the late '60s, I showed Merino sheep at the major sheep shows in Victoria and in the 1980s established a Sharlea enterprise, constructing a purpose-built shed to house approximately 500 sheep. Currently the property is leased by an Estate from Casterton who purchased all our Merino sheep and are in the process of reducing their micron and putting more wool on a larger frame. Margaret and I still live in the homestead and apart from managing a large native garden, are putting a lot of energy into beautifying the property mainly by embarking on a significant tree planting program.

Off farm I am still involved with the Council at Marcus Oldham College at Geelong and the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, whose headquarters are in Canberra. I was honoured to be involved with the Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association from 1981 to 1995. My first involvement was as a regional chairman, then Vice President from 1989 to 1991. It is true that Australia no longer rides on the sheep's back and in my opinion the recent high point of the industry was in 1989 - prices were good and there was no wool in the stockpile. The original floor price for wool, which took the bottom out of the market, was a good scheme. This developed into the Reserve Price for wool and as growers, we got greedy and pushed the price too high and the large stockpile that followed is now history. Superfine wool is the flagship of the Australian Wool Industry and I am delighted that the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association has stood the test of time and continues to be run by dedicated growers with no political baggage, all striving to do the best for their industry.

March 2009

Below: Former President Kevin Dunn presenting Robert with his ASWGA Life Membership Certificate



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# A WILD RIDE – STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

There is no doubt that there is never a dull moment in the wool industry. We have our own internal triumphs and satisfactions alongside various trials, tribulations and disappointments. It is the natural and cyclic nature of things. I wrote in the ASWGA back in 2016 about how buying a bale of wool had changed over the time New England Wool has been in existence, in an article titled

*“For the times they are a-changing” - The Changing Face of Wool Procurement*

I finished that article with the following paragraph;

*“The catchphrase of one of our shareholders, Reda, is “Changes Are Inevitable”. Nothing could be more relevant at this juncture. The philosophy of New England Wool has, and must continue to be, to move with the changes. The management know full well that there is a lot of work ahead, particularly to incentivise superfine wool producers to “stick with it”. New England Wool, with the full support of our shareholders, will continue to invest in and work with superfine wool growers for the mutual benefit of all”.*

Move ahead now to 2019 and the industry continues to evolve and cope with various “speed-bumps” and “opportunities” coming our way. We should work hard together to best deal with those issues we can influence, but we should also develop tools to manage inevitable change as it comes along. Buying and selling a bale of wool is fast becoming a complete marketing operation from farm to fashion – including a backstory, traceability and animal welfare credentials. Now approaching our 30th year, New England Wool is facing the future with optimism and enthusiasm, but with the realisation that we cannot stand still. The world is changing at a remarkably rapid pace.

From the 1990s to the present day, New England Wool has charted the waters through many major events. These included the dissolving of the

Reserve Price Scheme, the creation of AWI and AWEX, the introduction of nylon packs (strongly helped by New England Wool’s pack rebate scheme), the Japanese financial crisis and the GFC, the fall of Russia and rise of China as major wool-using countries, the animal welfare debates (still ongoing and growing in importance), the banning of wool by China from South Africa due to foot and mouth disease - just to name a few.

We experienced three years of phenomenal growth and prosperity in the wool industry between 2016-2018, with most micron price guides and individual types (think cardings!) at record levels. 2019 has seen a reversal of these fortunes, with a rapid fall in prices for wool particularly in the finer microns, whilst at the same time, production has fallen dramatically, due mainly to drought but also the profitability of competing land uses (cattle/fat lambs/cropping). It seems confusing that the market can fall so quickly when supply is in the same fast decline.

A number of factors are at play here – some would say the “perfect storm”.

1. There is a general lack of confidence in consumers and investors and it is not only the wool industry experiencing this - it is widespread. Ironically, no particular financial crisis is in play, no particular war, but it is the sentiment around the globe that something inevitably will happen. The fall-out from Brexit, the tensions with Iran, the “right wing” political movement in many places around the world (but particularly Europe and the States) where looking after “number one” is creating barriers between countries where a more global tone used to exist. These are all factors that in combination create this consumer and business uncertainty.
2. The trade war between the USA and China has escalated and is causing collateral damage in economies all around the world, making trade uncertain and challenging.
3. The lack of consumer confidence means retail and garment stocks are high as sell-out is particularly sluggish.
4. Poor retail means higher than normal stocks of fabrics, yarns and tops around the world. This is particularly the case in China, but is also being experienced in Europe and the UK. Retailers and garment manufacturers may have also purchased more than their normal requirements last season, due to the rapidly increasing prices, so these wool users need to sell two seasons’ worth of stock before they can again enter the market to repurchase.
5. Those wool users needing to buy, albeit reduced quantities of raw product, see the market falling so, if in no hurry, they can wait and anticipate further reductions in offered prices.



6. A drought-affected selection coming out of Australia also creates issues as the low yielding and weaker wools necessitate a discounted purchase price to offset the high processing and transport costs. (There must be some very nice vegetable gardens around the manufacturing plants of the northern hemisphere made with the products of Australian topsoil!).
7. Animal welfare issues still plague the Australian industry (real or perceived), with the reality being that many of our clients are receiving fabric orders specifying a product containing only non-mulesed wool. This may necessitate discounting or neglecting a large percentage of the Australian offering, or worse still, going to other markets where NM product can be more readily sourced.

The points listed above are merely stating the reality of the current situation. It is only by facing the reality that solutions and opportunities can become apparent and grow.

Quality, technology, diversification and innovation will all play their part in meeting the many challenges facing our industry. The casualisation of the workplace was once a threat to the normal formal uses of wool. Now, through innovation and technology, this casual sector has embraced wool and its possibilities including close-to-skin active and fashion wear, shoes, linings for sportswear, furnishings and a multitude of opportunities on the brink of release or still yet to be discovered.

The animal welfare issue is not going to go away and sustainability is a global concept and phenomenon that cannot be ignored. The Australian wool industry has a wonderful story to tell in the sustainability space. We just need to shine a positive light on the many farm practices performed as part of the daily routines of professional wool producers which clearly exhibit a commitment and dedication to sustainability. One example - SustainaWOOL™, now under the guidance of AWEX, can provide the Australian wool industry with a single, reputable and independent scheme to promote the wonderful, high quality, sustainably produced, clean and green fibre – which is Australian wool. Even at the more basic level, declaring every bale of wool on the National Wool Declaration (NWD) is fundamental to telling the good story and providing factual and relevant information to the market – and should be a tool completed by every wool producer in Australia.

Whilst I may manage buying offices in a number of Southern Hemisphere Countries for New England Wool, it frustrates and saddens me to see purchase orders (and this occurs regularly) slipping past Australia, to be operated upon in South Africa, South America and New Zealand, purely on animal welfare grounds. The global industry is clearly demanding and expecting exemplary animal welfare and sustainability credentials, and



right now the concentration is on a non-mulesed future. We should move quickly and collaboratively to raise the profile and reputation of Australian wool in the eyes of all wool manufacturers, retailers and consumers.

New England Wool and its shareholders have been a driving force in the areas of sustainability and the promotion of quality within the wool industry for many years. It has been through this commitment that various initiatives like SustainaWOOL™, specialised buying contracts, the Ultimate Clip Competition and the formation of dedicated grower groups were created. New England Wool is therefore heavily invested in the future success of Australian wool producers, and the industry as a whole. We are totally committed to supporting, assisting and promoting professional wool growers – whatever that future holds. I appreciate that for those in the grips of drought at present, it is difficult to look past the next truckload of feed. I wish I could make it rain. Our Company is well aware of the difficulties being experienced by many of our valued suppliers, but please know we are in your corner and will assist in any way we can.

It is important to put the wool market in perspective. Wool prices are still at historically high levels – levels which underpin profitability of our wool industry. The majority of micron groups remain in the 90th percentile range. The price rises we saw in the 2017/18 were difficult to pass through to the entire supply chain and were therefore deemed to be unsustainable - at least for now. The underlying movement towards clean, green, natural products is undeniable and will create a solid base for our fibre in the years to come. We just need to be savvy in the promotion of our products and the industry in general. More than ever, that includes the positive promotion of raw material production on the farm – and that starts with the passion of the people.

For New England Wool and our Italian shareholders, it is the “people” who are our biggest asset. From the commitment of the wool grower to grow the best quality and sustainable raw material; to the dedication of those selecting, advising upon, transacting and shipping this wonderful fibre; to the expertise in processing this wool to the highest standards, and the know-how to produce the best yarn and then the best fabric - it all comes down to real people.

Below: Andrew Blanch





## THE NEW ENGLAND DROUGHT – RED INK AND RESILIANCE

Those of us who attended the ASWGA Seminar and Dinner at Armidale in May, got more than we anticipated. We saw first-hand the drought. It was the most enduring memory many of us took away from the weekend. This article is based on the experience of two New England Region members, Mark Waters (Edington) and Peter McNeill (Europambela).

Firstly from Mark:

The drought we in the New England are experiencing will be remembered as one of the most severe ever. Parts of the district have been in severe pasture shortage since Christmas 2017. Stock water is now a big problem due to high evaporation and little runoff. Ground cover is a thing of the past and wind erosion of valuable topsoil will very likely become an issue in the windy months of August and September. Our rainfall total for 2019 has climbed to 175 mm (annual average 750 mm). The last 4 months, April to July, have yielded just 40mm.

Many properties have sold the vast majority of their cattle and a large percentage of their sheep. Significant forced sales were the result of drought conditions this year, accentuated by the large amount spent on supplementary feed in 2018. Most growers did not want to launch into another extended period feeding the numbers they had last year.

Supplementary feeding is widespread, ongoing and expensive. Hay has come from as far away as South Australia. The barley is trucked from Brisbane, after being shipped from WA. Feeding will continue at least till the end of September, after that it is up to the gods.

*Below: Feeding at Edington*



At Edington we jugged storms at the start of 2018 and sneaked through with fewer forced sales and less feed costs compared to most. 2019 is very, very different.

Sheep numbers have been reduced by 45%. Our lambing percentage in 2018 was 65%. After the normal sales occurred, we sold four ages of wethers – 3yr, 2yr, 1yr and the weaners (never before sold). We retained all the mature ewes, 1yr ewes (but did not mate them), the ewe weaners and a few wethers that missed the ride on the truck.

Cattle numbers have been reduced by 65%. Cow numbers are down two thirds and we still have a few heifers, but we have no trading stock.

Feeding in 2018 started in June but not heavily, only a maintenance ration. It continued and was increased later until the start of lambing late September. In 2019 from mid-January, we imprint fed the lambs whilst still on their mothers. As the season deteriorated the feeding continued and it is still ongoing. We have never fed in February, March or April before. Feed rates will rise through winter and rise again as the ewes get close to lambing.

Looking for the positives – we have cleaned out most of the dams! There have been good wool prices. The value of sheep sale stock is very good, very different to most previous droughts. This gives us more options. Cattle sales have not been as good, probably because of higher numbers sold. An important aspect to consider was the wonderful cattle prices in the previous three years. This meant many farmers in this district were financially comfortable heading into the drought.

*Below: Barley being trucked from WA to New England via Brisbane for feeding*



As a first world country, we have access to technology that can make dry times easier. Vast amounts of information are easily found, there is greater knowledge of nutrition requirement. We have poly pipe, concrete, cheap steel, pumps, augers, tractors, trucks and we are able to sell stock thousands of kilometres away. We have tax advantages like superannuation and forced sale deductions and FMD's to call on.

The recovery - we plan to slowly rebuild numbers with our own stock and not buy in. Importantly, the land will need plenty of TLC to restore grass cover and then to build organic matter.

So, how does this drought rate? Bad ones were recorded in 1902, 1918-19, a run of years from the mid 1930's to the mid 1940's, 1965, 1982, 1991-92(financially bad, too). The lowest rain recorded has been in 1874 and 1862. Is this one the worst? We all know that Bradman was better than Phar Lap!

Right now, we are looking forward to the end of the supplementary feeding and catching up on all those little jobs that have been postponed; then the fun starts all over - the financial drought.

Peter McNeill's report is similar. Since January 2017 only 1435mm of rain has fallen. This is a misleading 80% of average. In the last 4 months, in an area with an average of 700 mm per annum, we have had just 48.5mm.

Sheep numbers have been reduced to core breeders, a reduction of 30%. They have been fed for the last five months, with no sign of being able to stop before October; if it rains and the days warm up. Peter calculated the feed cost to be a staggering \$57.50 per head for the last 12 months. When asked about the magnitude of this his response was "You have to bight the bullet and feed them properly. This will be the key for recovery after the drought". He added that the wool from a recent shearing and pregnancy scanning results had remained good in spite of the conditions.

At Europambela there has been an extra natural disaster to deal with. Peter writes:

*Below: Result of drought at Europambela*



*Below: Europambela after hurricane like storm blew through the property*



"Just to make life interesting on the 20th December 2018 a hurricane type storm swept across the whole property. It destroyed or damaged many of the buildings, fences and trees. Even though it only lasted about three quarter of an hour, in that time we lost a third of the shearers' huts, two shelter sheds, a machinery shed and kilometres of fences were flattened by trees that had been wind breaks. Luckily no one was killed and the houses escaped."

Before turning the page or moving to another article, have a second look at the photos of the Edington and Europambela sheep. What a credit to their respective owners. It also demonstrates Mark's, Peter's and their respective team's resilience and commitment to the future of their enterprises and their awareness of the recovery challenges ahead, even when they are able to cease hand feeding.



*Destructive winds knocked down tree lines at Europambela*



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# REDA FUTURE PROJECT CONFERENCE AND DINNER HOBART 2018

HOBART, TAS 28 OCTOBER 2018

In line with the ongoing commitment that the Reda textile company has made to Australian wool producers, the annual Reda Future Project Conference took place on Sunday 28th October in Hobart. Reda is a high-end manufacturer of men's suiting, close-to-skin, activewear and technical fabrics and products in 100% wool, situated in the foothills of the Italian Alps, near Biella, Northern Italy. The Reda Future Project was an initiative created by Fabrizio and Francesco Botto Poala, which had its genesis in early 2015. Twenty of the very best suppliers of raw material from throughout Australia were invited to join a very select group. The intention was to build a strong relationship between the producer and manufacturer which would have benefits for all involved. Underpinning the relationship is a 3-5 year supply contract which has a mechanism allowing the pricing to move with the physical market. It also has inbuilt premiums which strongly favour the types of wool most required by Reda.

Fourteen more producers were invited into the Reda Future Project in early 2018.

The conference in Hobart was the third such get-together for the original members of the group and the first experience for the newest members. As a change from the usual format, it was decided to employ the services of a facilitator to help bring the best out of the group and to encourage dialogue and meaningful discussion between group members. To that end, Mr Jason Trompf (Sheep Industry & Agricultural Consultant and Educator) led the group through a number of thought-provoking and sometimes challenging scenarios.

Major topics isolated to increase the value of the RFP group were:

1. Contracts
2. Environment/Sustainability/Animal Welfare
3. Grower image / Marketing / Consumer Education
4. Grower education / Production science.

To this end, it was agreed that focus working groups covering each topic would be formed with meetings planned for early 2019 where Reda representatives would also attend.

Francesco Botto Poala (COO) and Fabrizio Botto Poala (Raw Material Procurement Manager) made presentations covering the current market situation, innovations, research and some very compelling Lifecycle Analysis being done of wool, looking at wool's carbon footprint from the

*Below: Peter and Rosemary McNeill, "Europambela", Walcha with Francesco Botto Poala, COO, Reda (right) and Fabrizio Botto Poala, raw material procurement manager, Reda.*



production-to-retail and the possibility of closing the cycle with a study of the "usage" and "end-of-life" calculations for end products.

Reda uses the equivalent of 20,000 bales per year, with approx. 80-85% of these bales coming from Australia. The Reda company is divided in three business units:

5. Reda 1865 – which is for formal men's suiting. "Every day I wake up and think about how I can sell the equivalent of 12,000 suits per day", commented Reda COO Mr Francesco Botto Poala.
6. Reda Active – production of close-to-skin, activewear and technical fabrics.
7. ReWoolution – garment manufacture/retail of active and close-to-skin apparel products.

Following the Conference, all attendees boarded buses to Glen Albyn Estate overlooking the beautiful Derwent River south of Hobart, for the Red Future Project Gala Dinner. Awards for quality wool production in the 2017/18 season were announced at this dinner, the winner of the very best wool clip having the honour of travelling to Italy in mid-2019 as exclusive guests of the Reda Company.

## AWARDS FOR BEST QUALITY/QUANTITY PRODUCERS IN THE RFP GROUP FOR 2017/18

- |   |           |   |
|---|-----------|---|
|  | 1st Place | John & Caroline Chappell, Dundee, NSW   |
|  | 2nd place | Chris Dunne & Linda Waters, Uralla, NSW |
|  | 3rd Place | Warren Coventry, Armidale, NSW          |

## NEW AWARD

### Reda Sustainability Award

Peter & Rosemary McNeill, Europambela, Walcha NSW

*Below: Third place – Francesco Botto Poala, Warren Coventry and Fabrizio Botto Poala*





## ASWGA PHOTO COMPETITION WINNER 2018-19

SUSAN ROWBOTTOM, "ROWENSVILLE" VICTORIA.  
TITLED "STAGE FRIGHT"

Finally, after eight years of submitting entries in the ASWGA competition, I received the call from Melissa that I had won!

After two years of planning, building, the accompanying adjectives, last-minute clean-up, multi sweep-outs and building work causes a lot of dust! We sheared our first sheep in the new shearing shed this year.

All hands were on deck at 7.30am to start, after much effort. Have we got it right, where do we put that, we need another light here, need more bins and the usual teething problems. The shed was then given the thumbs-up. David - "Put raised board in the other shed now"... Not sure I will live to see that!

I gave the team space to work out the first problems before venturing over after morning tea. I took several photos to record the occasion.

While focusing on a fleece shorn before it was picked up from the board, an inquisitive wether looked out the porthole door. I didn't realise till the photo was reviewed I had captured his investigation. As the saying goes, "Never work with kids & animals" the result can be a joy or... we all have stories of sheep photo shoots!

- Susan Rowbottom

### OTHER ENTRIES



"Strolling" by Alexandrina Seager, South Australia



"Final touches" by Ann-Maree Thomas, Tasmania

# DECLARING WHAT THE WORLD IS DEMANDING

## National Wool Declaration in demand and under review

The Australian Wool Exchange (AWEX) is conducting its review of the National Wool Declaration (NWD) with respect to mulesing status. This review is arguably the most important review to-date, given the large number of issues being considered and the increasing recognition and reliance on the NWD itself.

The NWD is now not only recognised for the level of information being provided but also that it is a traceable document, back to farm.

Traceability is a priority in agriculture and the NWD provides the ability to enable AWEX to communicate with the supply chain from farm through to processor with respect to mulesing status.

The 2019 NWD review received 56 submissions representing all views from farm through to overseas processors. The views of the customer are a very important part of the review. Understanding the overseas customers' needs, their pressure points and importantly trends emerging from their clients across the globe will help drive the future direction of the NWD.

Since 2008, the first year of the NWD, there have been trends and innovations that have come and gone. The constant is change. The review considers these issues on their merit and value to the supply chain. The challenge is to future-proof the NWD so that change is both kept to a minimum and delivering information that is meaningful to customers of Australian wool and beneficial to the woolgrower.

Since its inception, the NWD was developed with the intention of providing accurate and relevant information to the marketplace. This is where the market takes over. The uptake of the use of the NWD, which is a voluntary program, and the decisions made by woolgrowers will be based on the market signals and feedback received.

Support from Growers, grower groups and Brokers has been instrumental in achieving the high adoption rate. This will increase with the continued support of the supply chain.

There are now increasingly significant pricing differences (premiums) between Mulesing Status and importantly, lower (discounts) for non-declared wool (ND). Wool declared NM is achieving on average 55 c/kg clean premium for finer merino wool. This is an example of the market demonstrating its demand for NM-declared wool.

The inquiry for wool types with specific declarations continues to grow.

AWEX is committed to ensuring that the NWD and the Integrity Program that underpins it, provide the greatest levels of confidence to all stakeholders.

The NWD review is likely to conclude in late 2019 - early 2020. Once the review has concluded, the outcomes will be communicated to wool industry stakeholders to ensure its implementation is clearly understood.

The NWD and NWD-IP are successful wool industry programs.



In July 2019 AWEX announced that had received ownership of the SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme from its previous owners; New England Wool Pty Ltd and Italian fabric makers Successori Reda and Vitale Barberis Canonico.

The SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme was launched in 2015 in response to demand from consumers and retailers. Since its inception, over 950 farms have been accredited, making it the largest sustainability scheme in the wool industry worldwide.

"In a landmark decision to expand the scheme to all professional wool producers in Australia, the AWEX Board unanimously agreed to complete the transfer of SustainaWOOL™, in time for the start of the 2019/20 wool selling season", said Mark Grave, CEO of the Australian Wool Exchange.

AWEX, as an independent industry body, will be able to develop and grow SustainaWOOL, allowing wool from accredited farms to be made available to all users worldwide.

AWEX has received overwhelming encouragement and support from the wider wool community to provide the Australian wool industry with a single, rigorously audited sustainability scheme that is independently owned and operated.

Globally, customers of wool are demanding evidence of sustainability through independent and credible integrity programs. Over the last four years, SustainaWOOL™ has become a strong foundation for Australian wool producers to promote their product to the world and gain access to premium markets.

"The textile market is very competitive, and we are aware of the importance of getting this transition right and providing a scheme that caters for the needs of the market now, and into the future. SustainaWOOL fits well with other AWEX programs such as the Code of Practice for Wool Preparation

## NATIONAL WOOL DECLARATION

Table 1: NWD Declaration Rates by State & Mulesing Status for Season 2010-2018

Figures based on % sum of bales, all breeds & wool types, first-hand offered, P&D Certs, excl. NZ									
Season	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<b>National Decl. Rate</b>	42.2	44.6	44.8	43.4	49.5	55.0	61.2	66.0	<b>70.2</b>
<b>By State (%)</b>									
<b>NSW</b>	43.2	46.5	49.6	49.4	56.3	63.1	68.1	71.4	<b>75.3</b>
<b>QLD</b>	30.0	29.4	38.2	35.0	39.5	47.4	52.7	64.5	<b>75.0</b>
<b>SA</b>	43.6	47.9	44.8	45.4	55.7	61.3	66.6	71.0	<b>77.1</b>
<b>TAS</b>	69.1	54.7	55.3	47.0	50.8	67.2	79.9	81.1	<b>81.6</b>
<b>VIC</b>	45.3	49.6	51.0	51.3	60.9	65.2	76.0	79.3	<b>82.3</b>
<b>WA</b>	36.5	34.7	28.4	23.7	20.9	23.9	31.1	34.4	<b>40.3</b>
<b>By Status (%)</b>									
<b>NM</b>	5.5	6.2	6.6	6.3	7.5	9.1	9.9	11.5	<b>13.0</b>
<b>CM</b>	3.1	2.3	2.4	2.4	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	<b>2.5</b>
<b>PR</b>	8.4	12.1	14.3	14.2	18.8	22.8	27.7	31.6	<b>35.6</b>
<b>M</b>	25.3	24.0	21.4	20.4	20.4	20.3	20.6	20.3	<b>19.1</b>
<b>ND</b>	57.8	55.4	55.2	56.6	50.5	45.0	38.8	34.1	<b>29.8</b>

and the National Wool Declaration Integrity Program are recognised and respected globally. SustainaWOOL™ is an extension of these and we are excited and proud to take this on”, said Mark Grave, CEO of the Australian Wool Exchange.

In addition, AWEX has also announced Dr Paul Swan as the SustainaWOOL Program Manager.

Paul has extensive experience in wool production and wool textile research in Australia and internationally and has held a number of past roles for International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO), including Chairing the IWTO Sustainable Practices, Product Wellness and Wool Trade Biosecurity Working Groups.

Paul Swan is recognised globally for his passion and knowledge in this space and will be a valuable asset to SustainaWOOL.

“AWEX is committed to SustainaWOOL™ and Paul’s appointment is an important step towards creating new opportunities along the supply chain”, said Mark Grave, AWEX CEO.

Dr Paul Swan  
SustainaWOOL  
Program Manager



## WOOLCLIP

WoolClip is the first stage of the data pipeline from farm to end user. This web and mobile app tool allows wool growers and wool classers to collate and compile wool shed information into Specification and National Wool Declaration documents and data. WoolClip addresses many of the concerns of receivers (handling manual handwritten documents) by making it easier for users, reducing errors and much faster delivery. Over 20,000 bales have been added to WoolClip Specifications in its first eight months of operation. The number of users and bales entered increases month on month.

Trials using e-bale scanning on farm have commenced using the WoolClip app.



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# AVINGTON

Ethical Growers of Luxury Merino

# SHADES OF WOOL FROM THE TASMANIAN CAMPBELL TOWN SHOW 2019

This year's show was its 181st with a very energetic group of volunteers presenting a varied and interesting two-day event for all patrons. The weather was perfect, the sun shone both days and the crowd numbers recorded as one of the best ever.

This year, the Show Historical Group arranged a new Honour Board in recognition of the New England Wool Trophy. This award has been presented by New England Wool for the last ten years for a fleece of 18.5 micron wool or finer and to be of the most suitable wool for New England Wool and its Italian clients. The fleece entries are to be unrugged and paddock-grown.

There were over forty fleece entries received from around Tasmania, were of exceptional standard and a highlight of the wool section display. The winning fleece was from the Glen Stuart property of Allan and Carol Phillips, who had won the inaugural award in 2009. Second place was to Bonney's Plains (Sam Nicolson), with Mayfield Estate (Bruce Dunbabin) in third place. Previous winners of this prestigious award have been from the Fonthill, Kelvedon, Blanket Bottom and Mayfield properties.

In the Superfine and Fine Merino Fleece Section for Ram and Ewe Classes, successful entries were from Trefusis, Baythorne, Glen Stuart and Echo Cottage. In the Group of Three Superfine Merino Fleeces, Carol and Rodney Westmore of Patterdale were first place, with Bruce Dunbabin of Mayfield second and Simon Cameron of Kingston third.

The Grand Champion Fleece of the show was won by Georgina Wallace of Trefusis, who also won the Most Successful Exhibitor in the Fleece Section with her Merino fleeces. Local sheep entries at the show were few, but good support was welcomed from the mainland.

In the Ultra-Fine section, the winning ribbons went to the Glen Mavis Stud of the Nile. Ninety-six-year-old Jack Talbot, who has been running Saxon bloodline sheep all his life, also won the Junior Superfine Ram and Ewe.

The Champion and Reserve Champion Superfine Ram and the Champion Superfine Ewe was won by Georgina Wallace of Trefusis and the Supreme Superfine Merino Exhibit was also won by Georgina Wallace of Trefusis.

In the Fine Merino (finer than 64's, stronger than 74's) Section, the Champion Fine Ram was awarded to Rod Miller of Glenpean and the Champion Fine Ewe was awarded to Georgina Wallace of Trefusis.

The Supreme Fine Merino Exhibit was won by Rod Miller of Glenpean and the Junior Champion Fine Ram was won by Frank Chester of Camelford.

In the Superfine/Fine Poll Merino section, the Champion and Reserve Champion Rams were won by Peter Rogers of Mount Yulong. Frank Chester of Camelford won the Champion and Reserve Champion Superfine/Fine Poll Merino Ewe.

The Supreme Poll Merino Exhibit was won by Rod Miller of Glenpean and he also won the Champion Superfine/Fine Poll Merino Ram (unprotected).



The annual Fashion Parade at the Show has continued this year with very heavy hearts for all involved, including show patrons, following the death of Beyond Compare fashion promoter Christopher Horne, who had conducted this iconic parade for almost twenty years. The talent, flair, knowledge and enthusiasm Christopher brought to the event at Campbell Town was exceptional.

This year, a very able compere Taylor Clyne who collaborated with Wendie Ridgley of AWI, the 'Couturier of Wool' Tasmanian Jan Dineen and local businesses, the Tasmanian Wool Centre, Coco Blue of Campbell Town and Kachoo from Launceston, provided a beautiful range of wool garments for this year's presentation of Shades of Wool for Winter 2019 to reassure "the show that must continue on".

This event was run by MAA Show Committee members, with the very welcome participation from the Sue Rees Modelling and Department Agency and local children. Throughout the parade, men's wear, women's wear and children's wear collections were shown from many well-known labels, featuring woollens in a wide range of colours.

In the very full two-day program, were Junior Fleece and Sheep Judging competitions, sheep dog trials, shearing state finals and wool handling, as well as the full program of sheep judging, with traditional show activities that entertained those who attended.

Vera Taylor

*Below: Florence and Edwina Nicolson of Bonney's Plains with the New England Fleeces*





*Peter Lette and family, Conrayn Merino stud, Berridale with champion superfine March-shorn ewe and Reserve champion superfine ram.*

# GREAT SOUTHERN SUPREME MERINO SHOW & SALE

CANBERRA, 19-21ST JANUARY 2019

First day of the 2019 Great Southern Supreme Merino show in Canberra saw a full program judging the August shorn classes.

Judges were –

- Superfine– Geoff Rayner, Pomorana Merino stud, Sallys Flat
- Finewool– Sean Ballinger, Waverley Downs Merino stud, Delungra
- Fine/medium wool– Graham Wells, Smoko, Victoria formerly One Oak Merinos, Jerilderie
- Medium/strong wool– Alan Harris, Koole Vale, Costerfield, Victoria

The Superfine wool class was judged by Geoff Rayner and the champion March-shorn ram was exhibited by Andrew and Patrick Davis, Demondrille, Harden. They also exhibited the champion August-shorn ram. The champion March-shorn ewe was shown by Pete, Jayne and Cade Lette, Conrayn Merinos, Berridale, with Malcolm and Hayden Cox, Bocoble, Mudgee, showing the August-shorn champion.

Overall Boorowa district Merino studs took the honours during the 72nd Great Southern Supreme Merino show and sale held in Canberra.

Coming out of what was generally considered the most even line of show sheep seen for a long time, a young ewe bred and exhibited by Guy Evans, Tara Park, Boorowa was judged supreme exhibit, against the Poll Merino ram paraded by Johnathon Dalla, Orrie Cowie, Waroola, South Australia.

Mr Evan's ewe had been shown in the March-shorn medium/strong wool classes where she rose to be judged junior champion ewe and grand champion ewe of the show.

Graham Wells, formerly stud master One Oak, Jerilderie now living at Smoko in Victoria judged the fine/medium wool classes and speaking after the judging of the supreme exhibit said the ewe was outstanding for the correctness of her conformation, with big barrel and good neck extension and carrying a heavy and soft handling fleece.

"It was her balance and structure which got her over the line against the Poll ram," he said.

The Poll Merino ram had been successful in the August-shorn fine/medium wool classes before being judged supreme Poll Merino exhibit and junior champion ram.

Wal and George Merriman, Merryville, Boorowa were awarded the Roger Birtles Memorial Trophy for the group of three rams and two ewes March-shorn; this was their seventh success in that class.

In the August-shorn group class, Gary Cox, Langdene, Dunedoo overcame strong competition to take the sash against newcomer David Zouch, Hollow Mount, Bigga.

In the sale ring, it can only be described as a disappointing event for the stud masters who have put a lot of effort into breeding and preparing their rams for sale to see so little interest.

Many rams did not attract a bid, and it is difficult to understand woolgrower's reluctance when wool and sheep prices are at very good levels, although many would have been feeding their sheep for a long time with no end in sight.

The top price at \$5000 was achieved twice with Merryville and Michael Corkhill, Grassy Creek, Reids Flat sharing the honours.

Mr Corkhill was philosophical about the result and said he met the market although he would have liked to see greater interest, not just for himself but for all vendors.

Rick Power, Landmark stud stock auctioneer thought the sale was tough enough.

"It was a magnificent line-up of rams," he said.

Australian Superfine Wool Growers' Association again manned an information desk over the three-days providing details on the association to prospective members, general discussion with existing members and provided material coming from Sheep Cooperative Research Centre for interested attendees.

*Based on material provided by Stephen Burns, The Land.*

*Below: Superfine judge Geoff Rayner Pomorana Merino Stud, Sallys Flat with John Ive at ASWGA information desk*



# SHEEPVENTION RECORDS SMASHED

The Sheepvention Committee was absolutely delighted with the response to the new three day format. Families and day trippers embraced the Sunday with a fantastic crowd streaming through the gates at 10am. Beautiful weather for the three days meant the crowds didn't let up through Monday and Tuesday.

"Sunday exceeded expectations with a great crowd and fantastic atmosphere. Traders reported fantastic interest and sales. This was backed up by an even bigger Monday with great interest in the Sheep Show as well as the new Innovations Hub. The new Careers trail was really well supported on Tuesday and the junior judging entries were exceptional. Overall this was the biggest Sheepvention we have ever had, the feedback from traders has been very positive so far." Sheepvention President, Will Kinghorn said.



Trevor & Kathy Mibus with their Grand Champion Merino Ram.

The Mibus family's Glenara Merino stud was excited to accept the grand champion Merino ram of the show at this year's Sheepvention. The win was the first supreme champion ram ribbon won by the stud operated by Trevor, Kathy, Rachael and Jacob at Dunkeld.

The Committee have worked incredibly hard on the new format and were delighted with the results from the customer surveys which rated the event experience (on average) nine out of ten. "You cant really expect much more than that. Clearly it was a great experience for our patrons and our exhibitors which is exactly what we had planned for". Said Mr Kinghorn.

The Sheepvention results are available on The Sheepvention Facebook page and website [www.hamiltonshowgrounds.com.au](http://www.hamiltonshowgrounds.com.au)

## FUN FACTS

### AT SHEEPVENTION 2019:

- We sold 602 trade sites 1045 sheep were shown
- There were 143 dog trial runs 10,112 coffees were sold
- 1.18 tonnes of potatoes were consumed
- 3,400 lamb burgers and pies were sold
- 18 tonnes of straw was used (which will be recycled as garden mulch)
- 160 tonnes of woodchips were distributed to trade sites (which will be recycled as garden mulch) The models walked 36 kilometers on the catwalk during Sheepvention fashion parades
- \$913,130 worth of rams sold
- 4,568 children participated in over twenty children's activities
- The top priced ram auctioned for \$35,000 with a private sale topping \$51,000

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# PRICE TAKER TO PRICE MAKER – BREAKING THE CYCLE

Tom Spielvogel  
27 July 2019

After 70 years of farming and producing wool, there were still the very lean years and occasionally the very profitable years. My family (and I from 1949) were still here – producing wool throughout it all so surely, we were “doing it right” as we always managed to survive.

We sheared the sheep, baled the wool and then, with fingers crossed, we sold it. The wool cheque would turn up and when wool prices were low we’d work out how to survive until the next shearing, perhaps there might even be a little to squirrel away in the bank. Some years there was none. When prices were high (far less often than low), we’d do the same but put a little extra in the bank ready for the next inevitable dip in prices.

During a particularly prolonged period of low prices, a group of fellow farmers and I were bemoaning the low prices and how difficult it was to survive as price takers. If only we could be the price makers! How fortunate am I to have such a talented group of friends – one devised the idea of how we could become the price makers and it’s the model I’ve followed ever since!

1. Work out your cost of production for the year (this is easily sourced from your financial reports prepared each year for taxation purposes).
2. Add in your living comfortably factor – there’s not much point working for nothing and this factor will allow for grower variances based on their own individual circumstances.
3. Divide the above amount by the kgs of wool you produced for the year. This will result in the true “break even” cost of producing each kg of wool. This value and above, is when wool production is profitable for you, i.e. below that amount you are going backwards.
4. Sounds simple and logical, doesn’t it? However, when prices are depressed and the magic “Break Even” return has been a long time coming, it can become impossible to hold out.

5. When the bills come in, e.g. rates, school fees, etc, sell just the amount of wool required to cover the expense and “hold” the rest. If the prices remain depressed for a long period, it may be that at the end of it you only have a few bales on hand.

6. Eureka! Prices have finally surged and you are able to sell your stored wool for a profit and you’ve still managed to meet your financial commitments and live comfortably. Sell it all and don’t be greedy – nobody knows where the top of the market is, but you will know that you are selling for a profit.

7. Profits from the stored wool should be ferretted away into FMDs (Farm Management Deposits) ready for the next wool downturn. This will allow you to retain more wool, as the \$ in the FMDs should be used first to pay the bills and living expenses before you need to sell wool for a loss (below your costed breakeven point).

8. Over time, you will be able to store more and more bales during low price years because you have been able to make much more profit during the “good” year(s). Stored wool is effectively just like a “term deposit” and you will wonder why you were ever a price taker selling wool at a loss.

Over 20-odd years ago when we implemented the above process, we only managed to retain ten stored bales – the rest periodically being sold to meet our farm running and living commitments. When prices finally reached our break even point, those few bales made two (2) times the amount than if we’d sold earlier. An interest rate of 200% isn’t too shabby.



Lexi & Mia Klein droving sheep at Karalta



Jo Klein and daughters Mai and Lexi navigating 10km of bridges, fjords, valley walls and unfenced bushland to safely bring several hundred sheep to the shed



## CASHMERE CONNECTIONS BACCHUS MARSH PROCESSORS

Cashmere Connections is a small, family-owned and operated, early stage textile Mill located in Bacchus Marsh, Victoria. Trisha and Charles Esson were originally cashmere breeders and producers but entered the Textile Industry with the purchase of dehairing equipment and two gill boxes when Elite Fibres closed their Geelong Mill in 2002.

Dehairing of the Australian Cashmere clip was the initial focus of the business until AAFL (Australian Alpaca Fleece Ltd) approached Cashmere Connections wanting to try dehairing alpaca fibre. Such was the dehairing demand that Charles Esson, who is an Engineer, developed and built improved their machinery to increase the dehairing capacity.

Customer demand also led Cashmere Connections to develop a top making facility. The gill boxes bought at the Elite auction have been joined by several other preparatory and finishing gills and combs. All equipment is older Schlumberger NSC models, which we at Cashmere Connections feel are more suited to the various fibre types that we work

with. Modifications to some of these machines have been made by Charles to help meet the challenges that some fibre types present. The card, for instance, is a heavily modified Pratt card, with a lot of scope for adjustment, meaning that Cashmere Connections can and have, run a broad range of fibres, from Superfine wools to English Leicester.

Over the past 18 months, we have been working with Wangaratta Woollen Mills in assisting wool growers, designers and others wishing to create 100% Australian Grown and manufactured fibre products to develop their own yarns. Cashmere Connections has been taking the scoured fibre and processing it into combed tops suitable for spinning at the Wangaratta Mill. Wangaratta Woollen Mills then work with the customer to create the type of yarn suited to both their fibre type and the final product.

Cashmere Connections' latest venture is the vertical scour, which Charles has designed and is building himself. The scour is quite innovative, incorporating ideas from other industries. It also incorporates jet scouring technology, on which the CSIRO did research back in the 1960s. As there is no agitation of the fibre whilst it is being scoured, it is anticipated that felting of fine fibres, like cashmere and fine and Superfine wools will be reduced. Labour, energy and water-saving techniques have been built into the system to ensure that it is sustainable. The latest technology in waste water treatment is also being employed. The scour is now close to completion, but before we can offer scouring services, the system, as well as the scoured fibre, needs to be vigorously tested to ensure a quality, reliable service.

Cashmere Connections has slowly evolved over the past 17 years to meet customer needs. With demand for our top making services increasing we are looking to add to our existing equipment so that we can continue to provide an efficient service to customers. Trisha and Charles, along with their daughter Anita, are constantly listening to their customers, looking for ways to improve their services, or to add new ones that are at presently unavailable here in Australia. They are always happy to talk to people interested in value-adding their fibre.

You can contact us through Facebook or our website [www.cashmereconnections.com.au](http://www.cashmereconnections.com.au)



# FOLLOW-UP ON CRISPR/ CAS9 AND POLYESTER

As we all know, the human quest for knowledge never ceases and as a result, over time we accumulate more and more information. This axiom applies to the two topics I wrote about in last Year's Annual, so I thought that a follow-up article was warranted, given the universal importance of these two topics and their relevance to our industry.

Last year I reported that Chinese scientists had used CRISPR/Cas9 to disable a gene called FGF5 in goats, which resulted in more secondary follicles and faster fibre growth. I mentioned that there was no data on the effect of this biotechnological treatment on fibre diameter and suggested that due to how closely related sheep and goats are, that employing this technology in sheep should have a similar effect.

Since then, I have located a report that indicates that Chinese scientists have indeed used CRISPR/Cas9 to disable FGF5 in sheep and of even more relevance to our industry, in Merinos. As predicted, the resultant sheep had heavier fleece weights (at least 18%), but more excitingly, this increase did not correlate with an change in fibre diameter. Given that the Chinese have been demonstrating expertise in cloning as well, having put over one million cloned cattle on the ground in the last 12 Months, they will, should they choose to do so, be able to rapidly expand the number of sheep with this genetic enhancement. This has the potential to disrupt the scale of our exports of wool to China as they could well be moving towards self-sufficiency in superfine wool supply. Time will tell.

That Australia has not been leading the way with this research is, in my opinion, disappointing.

## Plastics and Polyester

Reports on the adverse effects of plastics in general and polyester in particular have continued to appear. Fragments of these materials have been found all over our Planet; from the most remote peaks in the Andes and elsewhere, to the bottom of the Mariana Trench and from drinking water wherever samples were taken, to the very air we breathe and the food we eat. The micro-fibres and micro-plastics appear to be everywhere and given that a percentage of these are nano-particles that are small enough to be able to cross cell membranes, thus entering our cells from our lungs, our guts and our skin, alarm bells should be ringing loud and clear. And the endocrine-disrupting activity of many of these artificial compounds, makes them even more concerning.

Many images have surfaced, from around the Globe, of massive amounts of plastics and artificial fibres in freshwater and coastal waters and in the

various oceanic gyres. They are entangling wildlife, further endangering already threatened species and ecosystems and making areas that were once pristine and attractive, polluted and ugly, which is having an adverse effect on tourism to affected areas. This has led to many jurisdictions to implement bans on single-use plastics, including plastic bags, plastic straws, plastic cutlery and plastic containers, while other jurisdictions are considering the implementation of such bans. While these measures are welcome, it appears that polyester, especially when used in fabrics, appears to have escaped the ire of most of the environmental lobby groups.

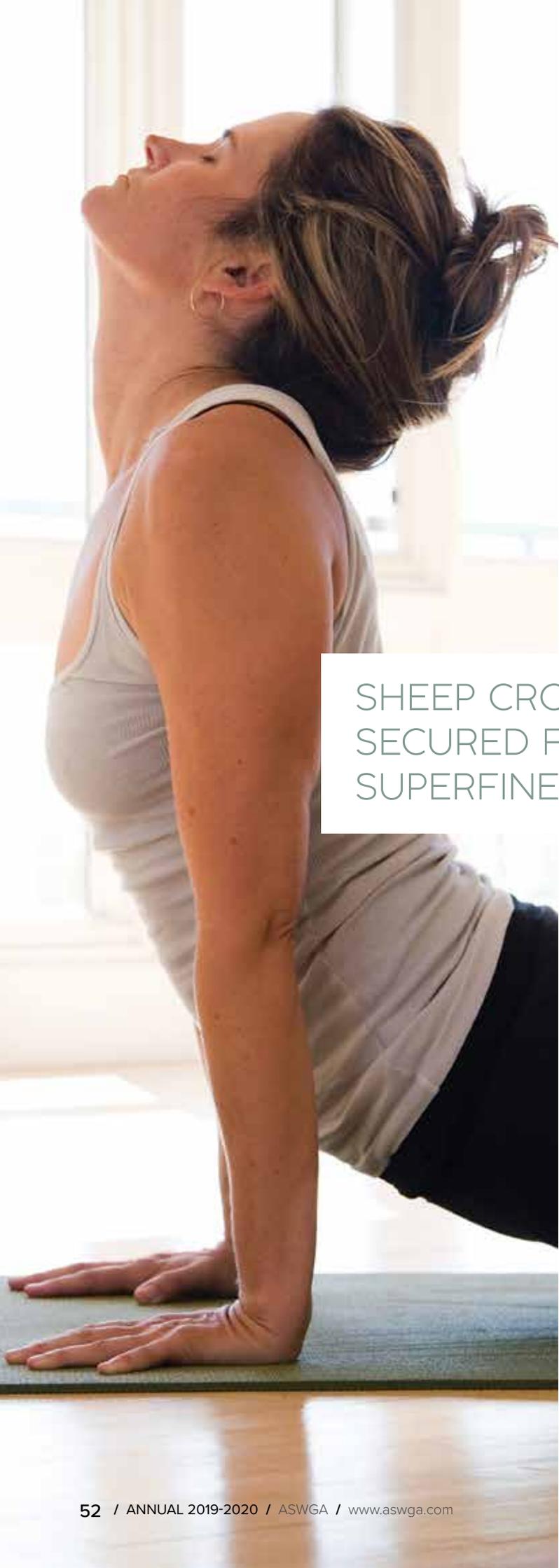
Macroscopic plastics, bags, bottles, boxes and fibres are very visible, as is the effect that they have on marine wildlife and ecosystems in general. This has meant that it is the macroscopic plastics that are now perceived by the public as being the main problem. They are definitely a problem and need to be dealt with, but in some ways they are a somewhat of a distraction. The reason I say this is that as far as the endocrine-disrupting activity is concerned, it is the micro-plastics, nano-particles and nano-fibres that are the real danger.

There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, most of these are too small to be readily visible to the human eye, if not invisible and so do not have an immediate impact on our consciousnesses. Secondly, these smaller fragments have a far higher surface area to volume ratio and this means that they produce far more of the endocrine-disrupting chemicals per unit weight. Thirdly, the smallest of the particles, the nano-particles, as mention above, can get inside our cells and deliver the endocrine-disrupting chemicals directly inside our cells, where any protective mechanisms our bodies may have are completely bypassed.

Getting away from the adverse effect of micro-plastics, nano-particles and nano-fibres on our environment, it appears that the message regarding the health risks associated with wearing clothing and/or accessories containing polyester is not yet getting through. I see little about this risk in mainstream media and wonder if this is due to influence of the large corporations who make this material, who are after all, an extension of the fossil fuel industries. This does not mean that the risk is not there and one can see why they would not want this message disseminated. Even the more environmentally aware youth, who are starting to turn away from artificial fibres for environmental reasons, do not seem to either know of this risk. Mind you, it is heartening that the tide may be turning, regardless of the reason.

*Dr Jeff Gill*





## SHEEP CRC TECH LEGACY SECURED FOR THE SUPERFINE SECTOR

The Australian wool industry has undergone a dramatic transformation since the turn of the century, in no small part thanks to the efforts of the Cooperative Research Centre for Sheep Industry Innovation (Sheep CRC).

After 18 years of industry-focussed R&D, the Sheep CRC has closed its doors for the final time, leaving a legacy which includes the Wool ComfortMeter and genomic technologies to select superior Merino genetics and a challenge to industry bodies to continue to work collaboratively with producers to drive change through research and innovation.

Sheep CRC chief executive James Rowe has been at the helm of the organisation since day one and singles out the Wool Comfort and Handle meters as highlights of the transformative technologies the organisation has delivered, along with the more recent delivery of the DNA Flock Profile test for commercial Merino breeders.

Prof. Rowe said there were two key factors that allowed the Sheep CRC to deliver innovative technologies like these – the first was long-term funding security associated with the Commonwealth’s CRC model and the second was the role of participating industry groups like the Australian Superfine Wool Growers Association.

“Our successes were really built on industry engagement and the strength of the collaborations between producers, processors, researchers, retailers and representative bodies participating in the Sheep CRC,” Prof. Rowe said. “It’s been akin to sharing a long taxi ride – we’ve all contributed to the fare, we’ve enjoyed each other’s company and we’ve successfully reached our desired destination of a more profitable and productive sheep industry.

“The Commonwealth’s CRC funding was crucial to this – it was delivered in long-term tranches, each with well-defined goals, that allowed ambitious research directions to be set and delivered upon by creating an environment for stable multidisciplinary teams.

“The Wool ComfortMeter was a great example of how this model delivered for industry by bringing together producers, wool processors, retailers and researchers to develop game-changing technology and creating a pathway for this technology to be commercialised to deliver ongoing benefit.”

The Wool ComfortMeter and Wool HandleMeter went straight to the key issue of consumers’ expectations of Australian wool and how the user experience could be improved. The technology provides retailers and brands with a means of differentiating their next-to-skin Merino wool products, enhancing consumer trust in their products and increasing their willingness to pay a premium for superfine Australian wool.

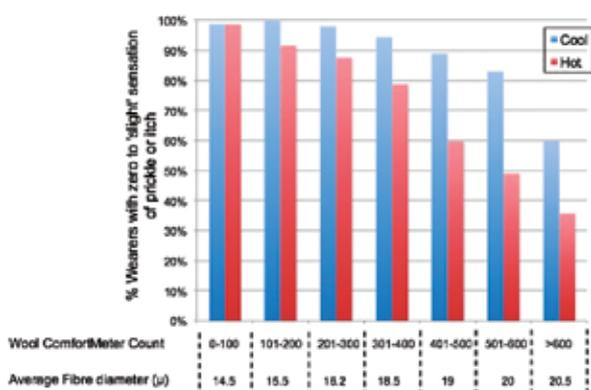


The Wool ComfortMeter allows retailers and manufacturers to specify a numerical value for comfort in their buying orders. Its release in 2014 meant that for the first time, retailers and manufacturers had the means of objectively specifying and promoting a garment on the basis of superior comfort.

Similarly, wool 'handle' had traditionally been measured subjectively by buyers and sellers, who often had differing views on a fabric's smoothness, softness, hairiness, tightness and perceived weight – the Wool HandleMeter also overcame this uncertainty by providing repeatable and objective data.

The ComfortMeter has a novel design that uses a guitar string to count the number of fibres protruding from a fabric that could cause wearer discomfort, and then accurately predicts a consumer's response – crucial information for next-to-skin fabric manufacturers. The Wool ComfortMeter quantifies how comfort levels improve with finer the micron wools all the way down to 13.5 micron, creating a clear product differentiation and the opportunity for price premiums for superfine and ultrafine wools for next-to-skin applications.

**Wool ComfortMeter Count and Wearer sensation of Prickle and Itch under 'cool' (air-conditioned office) or 'hot' (40° and walking) (Sheep CRC 2013)**



The Sheep CRC developed the technology in conjunction with CSIRO, Australian Wool Innovation (AWI), the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA), Deakin University and the Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA). And the accuracy of the ComfortMeter and HandleMeter in predicting the feel of garments was validated by the Sheep CRC, through a series of wearer trials where volunteers have rated the comfort and next-to-skin feel of various garments while exercising in a controlled environment.

This thorough scientific approach gave confidence to wool processors and garment retailers around the World, with the World's biggest knitwear company, the Crystal Group, and the World's second largest textile firm, Ceil Textiles in Mauritius, among the first to test the technology. It also grabbed the attention of leading Australian fashion retailer Country Road, major Chinese knitwear company Mengdi, US brands including Nike, Nordstrom, Macy's and Brooks Brothers, and Jaeger, Next, Arcadia and Bodin in the United Kingdom.



The systems were commercialised by the Australian Wool Testing Authority (AWTA), which continues to promote the technology to the garment trade via [www.woolcomfortandhandle.com](http://www.woolcomfortandhandle.com). As the largest wool-testing organisation in the World, AWTA has provided fabric and garment testing services to wool processors, knitwear companies, fashion houses and garment retailers through its facilities in Melbourne, New Zealand and in China.

The Sheep CRC also transitioned a number of its other tools and technologies to research and industry partners to ensure they continue to benefit wool growers and sheep breeders in the long term. Following the CRC's closure, the digital products RamSelect and ASKBILL are being managed by the University of New England for further development and commercialisation, while genomic products, including the Flock test, are being retailed through Neogen.

In leading the development of DNA testing within the Australian sheep industry, Sheep CRC researchers worked in collaboration with Neogen from the start of the Information Nucleus program in 2007. Drawing on this long-standing partnership, the transition of commercial services to Neogen ensured minimal disruption to services to sheep breeders following closure of the CRC and its Innovation Company.



Sheep breeders will continue to order tests online through [www.sheepdna.com.au](http://www.sheepdna.com.au), with their samples processed and analysed at Neogen's Australian laboratories and results incorporated into the Sheep Genetics databases for assignment of parentage and enhancement of breeding value accuracies.

"Genomic technologies are the key to accelerating the rate of genetic improvement of our flocks," Prof. Rowe said. "A recent economic analysis estimated that genomic tools will increase the value of the Australian sheep industry by more than \$121 million dollars by 2029 as a direct result of the CRC's 12-year research program. Achieving these gains for producers would not be possible without securing a smooth transition of our testing arrangements to a trusted commercial provider like Neogen."

Neogen will continue to employ staff currently based at the Sheep CRC's Armidale base at the University of New England, ensuring continuity of service provision and retention of industry knowledge.

Superfine Merino breeders using objective genetic selection tools will be able to continue using the popular RamSelect system, under new commercial arrangements put in place through UNE. Ram breeders will now be able to list their sale catalogues on RamSelect free of charge

– a significant change to the business model designed to maximise the number of rams listed and enhance the value of RamSelect for ram buyers and the industry.

First released in 2015 by the Sheep CRC, RamSelect is an easy-to-use web-based tool, which allows ram buyers to find and rank rams based on Australian Sheep Breeding Values (ASBVs) that match their own breeding objective.

Ram breeders can easily list their rams on RamSelect by checking the box when creating a catalogue in the Sheep Genetics database. Financial viability of RamSelect will be assured through a \$27.50 per year charge to ram buyers for maintaining a user account where they can store breeding objectives, analyse ram data and benchmark their genetics against the wider industry. Producers with accounts regard them as an invaluable tool facilitating easy monitoring and management of their genetic resources.

Commercial Merino producers who purchase a DNA Flock Profile test through Neogen have their results reported through RamSelect and receive 12 Months' free access to a RamSelect user account to assist with selecting rams based on the test results.

"With the number of account holders growing quickly, we believe this will place RamSelect on viable footing for the long term," Prof. Rowe said. "A user account also makes it easy to keep track of the changing genetic merit of rams purchased each year and of genetic improvement in your flock over time. This is because user accounts have the added benefit of automated updates of ASBVs on all rams so that it is easy to review and manage the ram team when planning for the next ram sales."

- The Sheep CRC's history of delivering impact to industry will be captured for all in a soon-to-be-released book, *Concept to Impact: The Story of the Sheep CRC 2000-2019*.

*Below: ASWGA Councillors Cathy Hayne (Sheep CRC board member) and John Ive ASWGA representative at the final Sheep CRC conference.*



# NATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATION ACHIEVING SMARTER, FASTER AND MORE EFFECTIVE PEST SOLUTIONS

Imagine if you could be alerted by text message to wild dogs as they near your fence line allowing you to react quickly to protect your livestock.

The Wild Dog Alert project is just one of our Centre's many innovative projects which could make this type of technology a reality sooner, rather than later.

Over the past two years, the Centre for Invasive Species Solutions has been bringing together governments (Australian, State and the ACT), industry organisations (such as Australian Wool Innovation and Meat Livestock Australia) and research partners (such as the CSIRO and universities), to come up with smarter, faster and more effective ways to solve our national pest challenges.

The Wild Dog Alert project began back in 2016 and is being led by researchers at the University of New England (UNE) and NSW DPI. The system brings together significant research developments in automated facial recognition of wild dogs (based on camera trap imagery), the latest in digital communication tools (suitable for remote transmission of image data and real-time alert messaging) and the understanding of wild dog movements and behaviour.

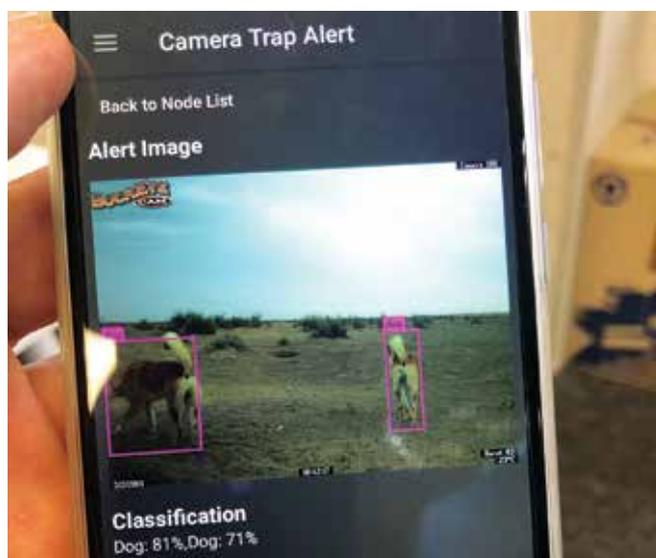
What about if you live in areas with poor mobile reception? The research team is also trialing a camera trap system that uses VHF communication and one using the Iridium Satellite system to achieve the same outcome in areas where telecommunication may not be available.

As part of our Centre's strategic approach to pest management, this project is just one of a series of projects which will ultimately make landscape scale management of pest species, more affordable, timely and efficient.

Some of our Centre's key projects include:

1. Assessment of RHDV2 as a potential rabbit biocontrol agent to facilitate future government regulatory assessment, and a study on how to best optimise new biocontrol agents, such as the new rabbit calicivirus strain RHDV1 K5, released nationally in 2017. This work is being undertaken as part of our Centre's 20-year government-industry rabbit biocontrol pipeline strategy, supported by Australian Wool Innovation and Meat and Livestock Australia.

*Below: A prototype of the type of alert message the land manager would receive once the Wild Dog Alert system positively identifies a dog*



2. Ongoing promotion of large-scale cooperative wild dog management, through the National Wild Dog Facilitator, supported by social research to improve engagement strategies, new wild dog management tools, including the Wild Dog Alert system, the Wild Dog Scan community management tool and a PAPP-based lethal trap device.
3. Developing best practice management strategies and tools for managing feral deer to reduce the impact they have both agricultural productivity and the environment, and,
4. A next generation feral pig toxic bait (HogGone) that is in the final stages of regulatory assessment.

You can learn more about our full research portfolio, including updates on each projects via our Centre's website [www.invasives.com.au](http://www.invasives.com.au)

*Below: A prototype of the Wild Dog Alert system attached to a fence line. If a wild dog walks past the camera, it will set off a chain of reactions which leads to the relevant people being alerted by text message within 10 seconds or less (image supplied by Dr Paul Meek, NSW DPI).*





## MUDGEES

This season we received some good Summer rain. Dams are full but little grass growth due to rainfall not occurring at the right time. This Autumn has been very dry with little rain, but enough to make the grasses and clover stay green but not growing. Some members have stopped handfeeding but I think they will begin again due to the unfavourable conditions.

Hopefully this season's wool will have none, to little vegetable matter and less dust. The wool prices are encouraging for farmers and hopefully will remain good. This is a morale boost for our members.

Ongoing issues which we have been seeing over the years are the number of properties being sold for recreation blocks. Most of these blocks are not running fine or superfine sheep. We are starting to see problems in regard to exotic breeds and fibre contamination from absentee owners who do not maintain their fences and cannot contain these sheep which roam our area.

As with many regions, wild dog attacks are an ongoing problem and members are still losing sheep. We are doing what we can to solve this problem.

Congratulations to Irene & Daryl Croake of "Oak Hills" for their win in three categories of the ASWGA 2019 Fleece Competition. Congratulation also to Ed Hundy of Windradeen for taking third place in the Zegna 2019 Superfine Wool Trophy.

*Chairman  
Murray Price*

## ALBURY WODONGA

This is my first report for our Annual as Chair of our Albury-Wodonga branch, as last year's report was from our outgoing Chair, Ian Humphry. I was relieved that Ian submitted our last report as being very new to the job, I was on a steep learning curve. I would like to personally thank both Ian and Margaret Humphry for the many years of dedicated service they have given our Association, acting as the glue that has held together our branch; thank you Ian and Margaret.

While we have not been doing it as tough as some other areas, it has been exceptionally dry throughout the majority of our region; even in Gippsland, which is a concerning trend. There have been dribs and drabs of rain from time to time, but sub-soil moisture is nowhere near sufficient. On our property, we have lost many established eucalypts, more than 30 years old. They have just curled up their toes and died. My hope is that all of us, not just in our region but everywhere, get plenty of rain to replenish sub-soil moisture, dams and aquifers. Fingers crossed.

Wool prices, as will be reported elsewhere, as well have been volatile, but better than two years ago. We have heard whispers that some of the large Mills that have been offering contracts have scaled back the price they will offer for high-quality superfine wool, which if true, is very disappointing news.

One of our concerns when Australian Country Spinners was taken over, was that we would no longer see the specialist line of Cleckheaton Superfine Merino hand-knitting wool, developed by Brenda McGahan, which was an excellent vehicle for promoting superfine wool globally, outside of the traditional fashion house mechanisms. However, I have seen that this product is still on the market, which is a credit to the Australian Yarn Company. I am very relieved and congratulate them on maintaining this product.

Following up on a suggestion from our secretary, Susan Housego, I chased down a company in New Zealand which has developed a hand-

held scanner that uses near-infrared light that can potentially detect the fibre composition of fabric in a non-invasive method. I followed this up as our Association had been discussing means of protecting the provenance and language of our industry. So I thought it could be a very important innovation, allowing anyone with the scanner and a smartphone, to instantly determine the accuracy of labelling of garments and accessories, thus protecting both the reputation of our industry and the confidence of consumers in products made from our fabulous fibre. I managed to get AWI on board and they are working on calibrating the scanner against their archive of fabric samples. Progress is being made, but not as rapidly as I had hoped.

I must congratulate Andrew and Stuart Drinnan and families, from Fibrefine Merinos, who won first place in the ASWGA Fleece Competition for the Albury-Wodonga region. And congratulations to the winners from all regions, as well as the overall winners. Well done to all concerned.

Our branch AGM was small in number, but enthusiastic in participation, with many ideas bounced around the table. Bright-eyed and bushy-tailed members. We had some change-over in office bearers from last year, with Stuart Drinnan replacing Susan Housego as Deputy Councillor and Assistant Secretary. My thanks to Stuart for stepping up to the plate. I must also thank our President, Danny Picker, for the distance he covered to attend the meeting and the effort he has put in and the support he has given me throughout the year.

Finally, I have two more people to thank, as we sometimes forget the people who do the hard yards in the background. Firstly, I would like to thank Megan Picker for her work behind the scenes, enabling Danny to do what he does as President. Last and by no means least, I want to express my gratitude to Melissa Mulley, whose help I have found invaluable, both as regional chair and as editor of this Annual. Thank you Melissa; I could not have done it without your support.

*Dr Jeff Gill*

## WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Western Region of the Association is struggling to be a viable entity due to low numbers of members. We have had an interesting and enjoyable AGM with only five members and two good guest speakers but failed to attract any new members. With low premiums for superfine wool for too long, there isn't the passion required to get people motivated.

Roland Ritson has been elected President and Suma Reid was elected Deputy President.

The wool-growing regions of Western Australia have had a season of ups and downs. We had good spring rains last year with a long soft finish. Summer stayed dry until March, when a false break with soaking rains did more good than harm, the green pick offsetting the loss of dry feed and giving the sheep a much-needed vitamin boost. The season started late after the driest May on record for most parts saw feed supplies running

low. Good rains came in June for most of the agricultural areas with the exception of an area between Albany and Esperance near the South Coast. Most are still hand-feeding at reducing rates. Soil moisture is well below average for this time of year, so we are highly dependent on good springtime rains. Wool soundness fleece weights seem to be average or better for WA with our highly Mediterranean climate. We can never match the strength of wool from perennial pastures in Summer and high rainfall areas.

The high meat prices have been a welcome relief for all sheep farmers, but along with minimal price differences, are accelerating the shift away from superfine wool production. The interest in true to type fine crimping wool is at an all-time low and a difference in the marketplace is the only thing that will reverse the trend.

*Roland Ritson*

## ARARAT BARUNAH

As the seasons pass us by it seems in some ways they are getting longer. The enjoyable aspect of the previous twelve months is better levels for fine wool realised by the market particularly the Winter/Spring period. The strong demand has been enjoyed by all growers, certainly helping cash flow of the business, but also the enthusiasm for growing fine wool. The Winter was quite good across our region, with some good growth and reasonable feed levels, particularly in comparison with Northern Victoria, NSW and Queensland.

The Spring proved to be very dry with some late November rain providing some late benefit in the Southern areas. Many endured lighter feed levels during this period with the late rain saving our area, allowing the crops to finish and some pasture growth before Summer. Sheep health was quite good with good lambings, but requiring early start to handfeeding.

The second year of our Lifetime Ewe Management course concluded and enjoyed by all. The practical observation of designated aims in condition scoring allowing optimal health in production has been excellent.

The wool clip generally was quite good with more dust from drier Summer and Autumn. Strength was about average, never seeming to be where most want it. The Summer has been long and dry and while not as severe as our Northern regions, it has still been hard with feeding stock and maintaining water systems. The exorbitant cost of grain and hay made it financially taxing. Most producers reduced stock levels to help reduce impact on farms and budget and make getting through easier and achievable. Fortunately, in contrast to many longer range forecasts, a late April break has allowed some growth before Winter.

The latter part of Summer and Autumn saw the dryness impact on the soil with dust storms a major concern. Many producers tried the use of containment yards to help conserve pasture on farms and allow higher growth rate once rain came.

The wool price has continued to ease though the past months spurred by lightening demand. The woolclip that is about to be shorn is undoubtedly dusty showing the effects of the dry.

The Winter period is still quite tight with some handfeeding continuing as the days are short and cooler, but the moisture levels are very good with good rains in the last few weeks, so grass will grow at some stage.

Congratulations must go to Russell and Penny Hartwich and Geoff and Heather Phillips on winning our regional section in the ASWGA Fleece Competition.

The 2018 Australian Sheep and Wool Show was held last July at Bendigo.

Ararat Barunah branch members represented in the ultrafine and superfine sheep sections included Avington (Noel Henderson), Beverly (John Barty) and Kelseldale (Russell Hartwich), these along with Kooringa (Reid family) and Currawong (Geoff Phillips) were also represented in the Fleece Competition.

A highlight was Avington winning the Champion Ultrafine Wool Poll Ram, with all members gaining places in their various sections.

The event at Bendigo is certainly a national show with sheep representing the range of wool-growing areas from throughout Australia. For an enthusiastic wool grower, it is a place where one can view and compare some of the leading studs, their animals and fleeces. I would encourage anyone with an interest in sheep and wool to attend. Take time to talk to the exhibitors and other visitors, strike up a conversation and compare opinions. We are all passionate about what we do.

Our members were also represented at the Ballarat show in late July and Hamilton Sheepvention held in August.

Many thanks to Danny Picker and Melissa Mulley. Danny's leadership of Association is a job that is time-consuming and requires a steady hand. As always, Melissa is a significant contributor to our organisation.

Hoping the market can find an improved level, making life easier for all.

*Geoff Phillips*



## GOULBURN – YASS

Our region has seen drier seasons all round, however a couple of one-off rain events kept us out of the fire and our district is a lot better off than other areas. The current cold, wet and windy Winter weather has hopes of looking to a 'back to normal' Spring. One benefit of this dry spell is, with sheep prices high and feed prices so high, a sheep only has to look at you twice and they're on the truck off to the sale yards. This dry has allowed some heavy culling and what will come out of the Spring will be the very best sheep mobs we can farm.

The wool produced this past season in this region was some of the best quality and highest strength for many years. Prices followed the quality stylish offering of this region, with two growers awarded paddock-grown 1PP appraisals, selling at auction in Sydney. All grower members have received a welcome rise in their wool cheques; some prices have not been seen at these levels since 1987. Even at these price levels, the growers are continuing to leave traditional superfine woolgrowing. They are still moving into other enterprises like fat lambs and cattle, where they are receiving record prices, dwarfing the superfine wool returns.

July 2018 prices must be the base from which traditional superfine wool sells into the future. The monetary returns for these elite quality wools must continue to rise to cover the ever-increasing production costs of leading styles of wool in the sale catalogues. Style, strength, brightness and lustre are what gives wool its unique excellence and it must be paid for, not just pay for micron and weight. Our specialised wool must be recognised as an elite rare fibre that will continue to disappear unless much higher premiums are paid.

Highlights in our region have members punching above their weight with fewer GY members than in the past.

- John and Robyn Ive of "Talaheni" winning the ASWGA Goulburn-Yass Regional Fleece competition.
- Neil Carey and Janet Bell of Kashmir received a 1PP accreditation for a bale of Ausfine Ultra 14.4µm recording the second-highest auction price for the wool-selling season of 4600c/kg (greasy).
- Brett and Sue Picker of Hillcreston Heights received a 1PP accreditation for one bale of 14.8µm recording a return of 4519c/kg (greasy), recording the third highest auction price for the wool-selling season.

It is worth noting here that out of the 5 highest prices paid this season – 4 of those were from growers within Goulburn-Yass Region - congratulations!

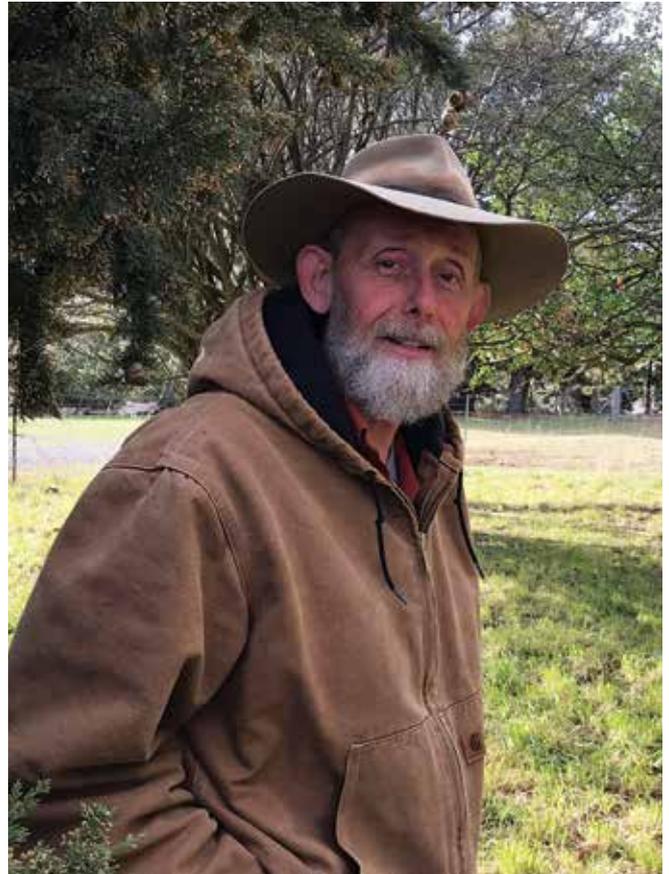
A number of our region members travelled to Armidale, in the New England Region in May, to attend the Annual ASWGA Fleece Presentation

*Below: Neil Carey of Kashmir*



and Farm Seminar weekend. A great time was had by all at a very informative seminar and then catching up with our friends and fellow growers at the presentation dinner. Thanks to all who organised this great event.

Through the hard work of John Ive at the Great Southern Supreme Merino Show and Ram Sale held at the National Exhibition Centre Canberra, we have a new member. We would like to welcome Mr David Bell as a member to our region.



*David Bell of Rosedale*

As retiring Chair of the Region, I would like to welcome Neil Carey as our new Chair and give my sincere thanks to Lyndall Eeg, who has once again taken on the job to be our Secretary-Treasurer.

Thanks must go to Danny and Megan Picker, who have pushed through a difficult season at home, while continuing to put all members from all States first and foremost in their thoughts when representing ASWGA across mills and conferences all over the world.

It is with sadness that we all travelled to Bigga in late June to bid a sad farewell to a mentor and 'Legend of the Australian Superfine Wool Industry', Mr. Trevor Picker AM who had passed away in his 90th year. The large number of attendees showed how highly Trevor was held in esteem in our community. Our thoughts and prayers are with his wife Janet and sons and families. He is greatly missed.

As shearing is about to start and the elite rare superfine wool is classed and marketed to the world, the grass will grow in the warm spring sun, the lambs will prosper and the cycle of wool growing continues. Let's all hope we get paid well for our efforts.

*Ian Cathles  
Retiring Chair  
Goulburn-Yass Region*

## HAMILTON

It's July again! The Hamilton Branch members have had a good year. The Crawfords at "Sierra Park" won the VBC Competition; the Rowbottom family at "Rowensville" were placed first and second in the Velleus Aureum; the Linkes of "Glenholme" received 2 1PP bales; and the Mibus family of "Glenara" won the Hamilton region at the ASWGA Fleece Competition, as well as major sheep prizes at the Ballarat and Australian Sheep Shows.

The season will be the one to forget - after a wet Winter in 2018, it turned into a hot, dry Spring. This left the northern areas with small hay cuts; the southern areas had a small reprieve with some rain in early November and that helped with some growth. Heavy rain in December did not help the already dry grass hold its nutrition. The start of 2019 was very dry for the Western District. Some storm-type rain helped some areas with an Autumn break in early May, but other areas did not receive enough rain to green up until the end of May.

So hand-feeding has cost a lot this year. This year, we personally have fed out nearly all of our substantial drought reserves, causing a major change in our cropping operation to make sure that we can carry our stock through to 2020. This decision was made in April when wool prices were a lot better; by July we are unsure as to whether this was a good idea, but that's farming for you!

The sheep have done well through the Summer and early Autumn, but slipped quickly in the Autumn, with the onset of cold weather and little green grass. Going into mid-Winter now, all the sheep would be 20% lighter than normal, the early lambers have had a poor lambing percentage and later lambing flocks will have ewes in lighter condition than normal, so we will need kind weather.

Winter and Spring shorn clips will be finer, shorter and possibly not as sound, and Autumn and early Winter lambing ewes will especially be tender.

We are thankful, though, for green grass and full dams, and with Spring rains and the warmer temperatures the sheep will put on weight and we will soon forget the last 10 months.

Superfine wool prices have dropped since this time last year and meat prices have risen, so the drift from 70's-74's and finer wool to bold crimping, early maturing sheep may start again, or worse still, the loss of Merino ewes to be replaced by a 28-32 micron crossbred ewe to take advantage of good meat prices.

Throughout all of these challenges, however, it is great to see our members continue to have faith in the Superfine wool industry and continue breeding for and producing the wool of which we are all so proud.

*Bradley Venning*



## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

South Australia has experienced an interesting twelve months, parts of SA have had fair times while a lot of the State has had awful times with very little rainfall.

At this stage last year, I was hopeful of a good end to the season, but unfortunately for a larger part of the State, this did not eventuate. Parts of the South-East fared well but en masse, we did not get a good finish in the Spring. Here at Mount Pleasant, we were one decent rain from a good finish, this meant our hay cut was way down on 2017, less than half and we were not alone. Feed quality was good but not going to last for long. We also did not catch a lot of water so going into Summer, dams were not full - some not even half full. Some could argue that the Adelaide Hills was better off than most of the State. Also, it is rare not to get decent Summer rain.



2018 also saw a lot of hay leave SA to help NSW and Qld farmers. While this at the time was the right thing to do, it helped to create a real shortage this year and anyone who needed to buy-in hay had to pay large sums and source from a long way away. Water cartage was also huge across the state from mid-Summer onwards as people started to run out - all extra expense. One station near Yunta had spent in excess of \$200k on hay when I was there in May and I have never seen sheep struggling as much in the 25 years I have been wool classing there. That is what less than 100 mm of rain for the year can do. Really sad when 2018 lambing percentage around 30%, then only about 60% of them make it through to shearing.

On a brighter note, prices are holding firm with both wool and meat; lambs making very good money already. Thomas Foods announced recently they are going to rebuild the abattoir that burnt down in Murray Bridge on a new site just out of the town, which is a huge boost for SA as a lot of cattle have been going interstate.

May finally saw some good rains, with some follow up as well. Warmer weather has seen good growth - this has helped ease the pressure on handfeeding, especially going into lambing. We are nearly finished and so far, percentages look good, lambs growing nicely and ewes seem to be coming through well, considering the horrible Autumn we had.

Too early to see how this year will end but always optimistic, long-range forecasts not brilliant for the State but can only hope they are wrong. Wool production across SA will be down, tensile strength will also be a factor for some of us. A strong market helps to balance the ledger. Hopefully we can have a good Spring to replenish hay and grain stocks and go into Summer with lots of ground feed and good water supply.

*Nick Seager*

## NEW ENGLAND

**SEASON** To say the seasonal conditions for the last twelve months were deplorable would be a massive understatement. Very low effective rainfall and high temperatures have resulted in severe pasture shortages. Water supplies are extremely low. Widespread destocking has been evident since Autumn 2018 and is continuing. Farmers are now selling some of their core breeders, searching for a level they feel environmentally and financially comfortable with. Almost all are now supplementary feeding remaining animals. It is very expensive and will continue for many months. Due to the heavy level of feeding in 2018, most are gun shy about launching into another very lengthy period of hand feeding, but to retain genetics, this is unavoidable and expensive.

The balancing of the cash outgoings has been the very positive prices for wool and sheepmeat. One very well-known stud breeder commented that "if this is the worst drought ever, then I'll take it". Great that a comfortable cash position multiplies the options available. The current wool market is sliding South, a symptom of the USA/China stoush. This certainly hasn't finished yet.

**RAM SALES** These sales in Autumn were disappointing. Low clearances and price averages were common. Couple this with increased ram presentation costs (feeding). Potentially lower ewe numbers next year point to another tight year for ram breeders

**MEMBER HIGHLIGHTS** The Zegna Wool Competition Dinner took place in Melbourne. It was an exciting evening and good to mingle with other successful growers and industry leaders. David and Angie Waters were successful in defending their Zegna title, picking up their third successive win and a fantastic effort. Mark and Lesleann Waters were awarded tenth place. We are extremely grateful to the Zegna organisation for their long-term support of Australian traditional woolgrowers and ASWGA.

**SYDNEY ROYAL EASTER SHOW** Mark and Lesleann Waters won the Grand Champion Merino Fleece award. Their paddock-run wether's fleece outscored housed entries. They were also awarded the Champion Commercial Value Fleece.

Very big congratulations to Leo and Judy Blanch and team for winning the Champion Ultra Fine Fleece at the Bendigo Sheep and Wool Show in July 2019. An outstanding achievement and tribute to years of pursuit of excellence.

**ASWGA ANNUAL SEMINAR** The ASWGA Annual Seminar/Dinner weekend was an excellent opportunity to showcase the New England region. An informal dinner on Friday night for the early arrivals was very relaxed and enjoyable. The seminar, held at UNE SMART Farm, showcased many of the new ideas and technologies emerging in our sector. Big thanks to David and Angie Waters, for making some of their fleeces available for viewing on the day. The huge amount of information covered topics from climate, ethics, predation and natural capital of your land. There was significant coverage of sheep genetics from the Sheep CRC, which has wound up, effective June 2019. AWI-covered topics included the Merino Lifetime Productivity project and other current R & D programs.

The Dinner and ASWGA Fleece Competition Awards night was held in the historic Booloominbah Homestead. Built in 1880, it was donated by the Forster family to initiate the New England University in 1938. Retiring Sheep CRC boss James Rowe was invited to speak on the key achievements of the Sheep CRC and New England Wool head Andrew Blanch informed the group on some current market trends.

The ASWGA Fleece Competition winners were announced too. Congratulations to overall winners, Mudgee and 90's category - Daryl & Irene Croake. The New England winner and 80's category went to the Gall family from Uralla. The 70's and 74's categories were both won

by Mark and Lesleann Waters. Sunday saw a relaxed visit to Mark and Lesleann Waters' farm to view the drought firsthand and their sheep and shed full of prizes and prize-winning fleeces. A group discussion with stud classer Ron Rayner and Mark took place, explaining sheep type (and why they differ) then importantly, why they are targeted to be joined to different or complementary type rams.

**OTHER EVENTS** The region has been a hub of events over the early part of 2019 – Sheep CRC and Sheep Genetics events in March in Dubbo, It's Ewe Time in April in Armidale, ASWGA Conference in May in Armidale and Merino Lifetime Productivity Project in Armidale in June. The seminar circuit is very full and for ASWGA to continue to attract support for its events, it's important the conference program is of value to members and potential members.

I am buoyed by the support and enthusiasm of our local membership group, in spite of the current challenging and expensive seasonal conditions. One challenging event occurred around Walcha in December 2018, which has left members with a huge clean-up bill as a result of a horrific storm. Europambela suffered significant damage from fallen trees to sheds, yards and many fences. The clean-up will take many months, many hours of labour and many dollars. The Government has declared a natural disaster and are helping partially towards the clean-up.

On the 31st of May we lost ASWGA member Arnold Goode of Spring Creek, Uralla. Arnold was known in the region as the unofficial local historian and contributed to the experience of locals and tourists enjoying his personal recollections and family records. An incredibly generous and caring citizen, Arnold was first to lend a hand to charitable causes. The Goode Bros were renowned for their production of superfine merino wool over many years. Our sincere condolences to Margaret and family.

I would also like to extend my considerable gratitude to Mark Waters, without whose support and sense of humour I would find it difficult to fulfil this role. Mark has also contributed this report – big thanks, Mark.

Sincerely hoping that it will rain soon.

*Cathy Hayne*





Back Row: Danny Picker, Simon Cameron, Ian Thirkell-Johnston, John Taylor – Front Row: Marie Boadle and Carol Westmore.

## TASMANIA

The year was one that saw renewed interest in Tasmanian wool and Tasmanian wool producers. During his visit to Tasmania for the Campbell Town Show New England Wool's Andrew Raeber was reported as saying "I think Tassie produces the best fine and superfine traditional-type wools in the world".

Livia Firth (Eco-Age) released her documentary, Fashion-Scapes: Forever Tasmania that featured three Tasmanian wool growers, including Tasmanian Fine Merino Breeders Association (TFMBA) members Simon Foster and Roderic O'Connor. The focus was on sustainable land management and animal welfare. The film was included in Firth's key note address at the 2019 IWTO Congress. It was also featured at Eco-Age's Green Carpet Awards in Milan where one of the Tasmanians and another Australian wool grower were recognised for their contribution to wool growing and sustainability.

Renewed interest in Tasmanian wool producers and their wool was also evidenced through the Schneider Group's presence at the Campbell Town Show for the first time in many years and a first time visit from a Loro Piana buying agent. The latter commented that he was very impressed by the quality of the local wool, the way the sheep and the land are managed and the fact that there are a number of younger growers really having a go.

The year included great results for members Carol and Allan Phillips (Glen Stuart) who were runners up in the Ermenegildo Zegna Superfine Wool Trophy competition, won the New England Fleece Competition at the Campbell Town Show, had two bales certified 1PP and had the top auction price for Season 18-19 with 6,501 cents (clean).

There were a record six Tasmanian entries in the final top ten for Ermenegildo Zegna Superfine Wool Trophy competition. Three of these,

Snow Hill, (Richard and Sharon Gee), Macquarie Hills (Ian and Vanessa Thirkell-Johnston) and Rose Villa (potential TFMBA member) were first timers. Patterdale and Kingston were also included and along with Glen Stuart have now been finalists for each year the current version of the EZ Superfine Wool Trophy Competition has been run. Congratulations from the TFMBA to David and Angie Waters for their hat trick of Ermenegildo Zegna wins and to Alistair Strickland who classed four of the six Tasmanian finalists. Thanks to all Tasmanian growers who entered this important event.

In May I attended the IWTO Congress (as a private wool grower). The most relevant impressions I gained were, firstly, the power and influence of animal activists and, secondly, the frankness with which delegates discussed major issues such as animal welfare. Tasmanian growers are well positioned to respond and this will be an immediate focus.

At our AGM in July Ian and Vanessa Thirkell-Johnston stepped aside from their respective roles as President and Secretary. I have taken on the presidency and been joined by Marie Boadle as Secretary. The delegates to Council are Richard Gee, Marie Boadle, Carol Westmore and Ian Thirkell-Johnston. Thanks, Ian and Vanessa, for your work for the TFMBA and to Vera and John Taylor for your quiet but critical contributions. Thanks, also, to National President Danny Picker, for attending our AGM and providing the national update.

In spite of the positives the coming year will be challenging due to the rapid decline in wool prices, high costs and increasingly dry conditions. Last year's decline in production, nearly 12% less than 17-18, indicates the continuing attractiveness of alternate farming enterprises. The TFMBA will be working with current and prospective members to tap into the opportunities currently available.

*Simon Cameron*



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E: [aswga@woolindustries.org](mailto:aswga@woolindustries.org)  
www.aswga.com

F: 03 9311 0138

## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

<b>NAME (for mailing purposes):</b>	
<b>TRADING/COMPANY NAME:</b>	
<b>PROPERTY NAME:</b>	
<b>ADDRESS:</b>	
<b>MAIL ADDRESS (if different to above):</b>	
<b>ABN:</b>	
<b>PHONE:</b>	
<b>FAX:</b>	
<b>MOBILE:</b>	
<b>E-MAIL:</b>	
<b>BROKER:</b> Supply List of Types of 3 Best Fleece Lines from Previous Years Clip	
<b>BLOODLINE:</b>	
<b>NUMBER OF SUPERFINE SHEEP (19.5 microns and finer):</b>	
<b>AVERAGE DIAMETER OF SUPERFINE FLOCK:</b>	

\_\_\_\_\_  
SIGNED

\_\_\_\_\_  
DATE

Membership base fee \$265 (GST Incl) plus bale levy \$2 (GST Incl) per bale from last clip up to 300 bales.

A UNESCO City of Design  
festival of makers, designers and  
artists redefining sustainable and  
ethical textiles and fashion

# WE THE MAK ERS

15 May –  
4 October  
2020

DESIGN FESTIVAL

## INVITATION TO ALL MAKERS: SHOWCASE + COMPETITION

A competition and showcase of headwear, neckwear, bodywear and footwear – with a “Makers Marketplace” and “Designer Showcase” to feature emerging and professional fashion designers, makers and artists.

**Entry is free!** With major cash prizes and professional development opportunities up for grabs – now is the time to start thinking about what you are going to make!

For key dates and more information:  
[www.nwm.vic.gov.au](http://www.nwm.vic.gov.au)

NATIONAL WOOL MUSEUM  
#WeTheMakersAU





# Building a sustainable future for Australian wool

## **SustainaWOOL™ is now industry-owned and operated**

In July 2019, AWEX became the new owners of the SustainaWOOL™ Integrity Scheme. AWEX will grow SustainaWOOL™ to allow more international buyers the opportunity to purchase Australian wool confident that it is high quality and produced to high standards. This will increase the opportunities in the market for Australian wool, giving growers and supply chain partners more access to premium wool for premium markets.

**SustainaWOOL™**  
INTEGRITY SCHEME



To be part of the SustainaWOOL™ future, visit [www.sustainawool.com.au](http://www.sustainawool.com.au)

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