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Ekka fashion designers announced for 2017 Stellar line-up set to take audiences Back to Nature

The Royal Queensland Show's (Ekka) 2017 Natural Fibres Fashion Parades will take audiences *Back to Nature* with a line-up of 27 women's and menswear designers from across Queensland interpreting natural fibres of cotton, wool, silk and leather in 30 shows over the 10 days of the 140th anniversary Ekka.

New additions to the much loved and long-running Natural Fibre parades include a student design competition, an educational Fibre to Fashion conversation series, a Maker's Market and dual runway.

Honouring the farming and supply chain links between Queensland grown natural fibres and runway fashion, the designers will showcase garments across categories including daywear, racing/occasion, regional designers and the ever-popular formal/bridal segment.

There will also be a dedicated student design segment featuring the work of students from Queensland University of Technology (QUT), Billy Blue, Australian Institute of Creative Design (AICD) and TAFE Qld.

Natural Fibres Fashion Event Director Laura Churchill said this was an exciting year for Ekka fashion where parade viewers would not just see a broad range of Queensland homegrown fashion but better understand the links between farm to runway.

"I'm so excited to bring such a broad range of designer fashion to the Ekka runway this year and celebrate the links between Queensland grown natural fibres and our designers," said Ms Churchill.

"We have everything from student fashion to emerging designers, one of which will launch her collection at Ekka, through to the most recognisable names in Queensland fashion represented on the runway. It's sure to be a really inspirational show."

Brisbane designers featuring in this year's Natural Fibres Fashion Parades include White Label Noba, Daughter of the Moon, Tengdahl, Urbbana, Sticks and Stone, Pia Du Pradal, Gail Sorronda, George & King, Sacha Drake, Irma J Smith, Maiocchi, George Wu, Wil Valor, Wendy Makin and Darb Bridal Couture. In addition, four regional designers have been selected including Nikke Horrigan (Ipswich), Ella and Sunday (Sunshine Coast), Tyler Giudes (Townsville) and Alexander Kennedy (Toowoomba).

Eight student designers will be selected to feature in the parade through the new Student Design Competition initiative to be judged by an industry panel at the Brisbane Showgrounds on July 10.

The parades celebrate and pay homage to Queensland-grown wool and cotton along with fashion favourites leather and silk, and this year's *Back to Nature* theme for the 140th Ekka will carry through several new elements throughout the show.

"Audiences will be immersed in the sounds of the Queensland countryside from the moment the parades are due to start," said Laura Churchill.

"The *Back to Nature* theme will carry through the entire show, not only in the fashion but the staging, music, and a couple of extra surprises we have planned as well.

"Education is also a key focus this year so we have involved all of the major Brisbane design schools on the runway as well as in a static display of student designer fashion. In addition, the new Fibre to Fashion Conversation Series will offer audiences a snapshot of four key aspects of the natural fibre fashion industry."

The Fibre to Fashion Conversation Series will be hosted by Laura Churchill on the fashion stage at 1pm in between the 12.30pm and 1.30pm fashion shows on August 13, 16, 19 and 20. Speakers include:

August 13: Chantel McAlister, photographer | [The Truth About Wool](#). Chantel's photography project The Truth About Wool is being shot over six months in 2017, capturing the stories, the people, the sheep and the landscape surrounding the Australian wool industry. Brisbane-raised Chantel is a passionate advocate for the wool industry.

August 16: Jane Milburn | [Textile Beat](#) and Leah-Jane Musch | [The Unmaterial Girl](#). Talking all things sustainable fashion and natural fibres, Jane Milburn runs social enterprise Textile Beat, which promotes sustainability, slow fashion, natural fibres and upcycling. Leah-Jane Musch is also a passionate slow fashion activist, on a mission to change the way the world shops, spends, and styles. Her upcycled garments are chronicled on her blog The Unmaterial Girl.

August 19: Meriel Chamberlin | [Full Circle Fibres](#) and Rebecca Lindert, [Australian Super Cotton](#). Fabric technologist Meriel Chamberlin's Full Circle Fibres initiative connects the dots between grower and user. Meriel sources cotton from St George, Qld cotton farm Australian Super Cotton to create 100% Qld cotton, Australian made yarn and fabrics, tackling head on the issue of traceability and integrity in the supply chain.

August 20: Designer forum. Join Natural Fibres Fashion Parade designers [George Wu](#), [Pia Du Pradal](#), [Julie Tengdahl](#) and Mark Ferguson from [Wil Valor](#) as they discuss their affinity for natural fibres and how they incorporate them into their designs.

This year marks the 26th year of Ekka presenting its Natural Fibres Fashion Parades which is Ekka's most glamorous event.

The *Back to Nature* Natural Fibres Fashion Parades will be staged on the Entertainment and Fashion Stage, upper level, Royal International Convention Centre, Brisbane Showgrounds at 12.30, 1.30 and 2.30pm daily during the Ekka.

For further information about Ekka visit www.ekka.com.au

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For further media information, images, interviews and photo shoot requests, please contact Fashion Event Director Laura Churchill on 0405 155 002 or email laura@laurachurchill.com.au

For other inquiries about Ekka contact media manager Veronica Carew on vcarew@rna.org.au

FACTS and opportunities around Ekka natural fibres parades:

- Queensland's cotton industry is valued at \$2.5 billion while wool is \$60 million
- Queensland's sheep belt stretches from the northern border of New South Wales to the Gulf of Carpentaria - a distance roughly 1,200 km long and 800 km wide, covering about 55 million hectares
- Cotton is grown mostly in the south in the Darling Downs, St George, Dirranbandi and Macintyre Valley regions and the remainder is grown near Emerald, Theodore and Biloela in Central Queensland
- In an average year, Australia's cotton growers produce enough cotton to clothe 500 million people
- Designer Pia du Pradal is an avid supporter of Queensland cotton visiting farms at least twice a year to understand and help shape her annual collections (interviews available on request)
- Brisbane's Meriel Chamberlin has developed the first fabrics woven from 100 per cent Queensland cotton under her Full Circle Fibres program, and will speak during Ekka as part of the Fibre to Fashion conversation series
- Brisbane company Packer Leather produces and exports kangaroo leather all over the world for use in everything from fashion to sporting equipment
- Brisbane's Merino Country started in western Qld in 1993 and now manufactures 100 per cent Australian merino outerwear and underwear in Brisbane

Upcoming media opportunities

A range of exciting opportunities exist for media including:

- Model casting June 26 at Brisbane Showgrounds
- Student design competition judging July 10 at Brisbane Showgrounds
- Ekka media launch event July 11

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