

Wool boom

Australian wool is a hot commodity again, reaping great rewards for growers on the back of surging demand for high-quality Merino products.

Mark Amarant, who operates Benalla's Quality Wool store at 21-23 Hannah St, said now was a great time to be in wool, and growers could cash in fully on resurgent prices by devising a clear plan of attack for selling their clip.

"We are only too happy to sit down with growers and discuss a range of factors, from how they market their wool to their best options for selling it," Mr Amarant said.

"Your marketing strategy and when you sell your wool can really affect your returns as a grower, so that's a personalised service that we pride ourselves on."

The 2016/17 season delivered growers the highest wool prices in recent history, a trend that is expected to be sustained in the short term at least.

Quality Wool managing director Mark Dyson said a growing appetite for Australian wool from consumers had resulted in a positive trickle-down effect for growers.

"The wool story, and in particular Merino, is a very positive one, with the drive by consumers towards quality, natural products, demand has increased and the flow on effect to our grower base is excellent returns," Mr Dyson said.

"We have a very loyal customer base who have



Rapt: Mark Amarant from Quality Wool Benalla with Quality Wool Bendigo's Brett Johnson.

been through trying conditions in the past 10 to 15 years, and those who have stuck with growing Merino wool are now reaping the benefits.

"Demand is expected to remain buoyant, which should lead to good wool prices this season."

The Eastern Market Indicator (EMI) recorded the highest yearly average on record for the 2016/17 season at 1406¢/kg, 151¢/kg above the average for the 2015/16 season.

In the past two weeks it has slipped back, with the Australian dollar moving above US80¢ resulting in the market softening.

Regarding future market movements, Mr Dyson said he was waiting to hear what news emerged from the

Nanjing Wool Conference in China this month.

"Traditionally, the conference is about seeking the buying patterns of the Chinese for the upcoming season," he said.

Mr Dyson said the carding market continued to remain strong with new business being written each week, and continued business on skirting types was coming out of Europe.

At the time of publication, the EMI finished the week ending September 22 at 1525¢/kg, 15 per cent higher (or 238¢/kg) than 12 months earlier.

Established in 1991 in South Australia, Quality Wool is the only independent, locally owned and operated firm in the Australian wool industry.



Adventure: Benalla P-12 students visit Kooyoora State Park.

Sacred sites visited

Students from the Benalla P-12 College Year 10 outdoor education class have attended a three-day Basecamp at Kooyoora State Park.

Kooyoora is about 45 km west of Bendigo and is rich with indigenous culture and European settler history.

Outdoor education teacher Angelica Pahina said students were blessed with good weather with mild daytime temperatures and warm nights.

"The students established connections within themselves, with others, and with the environment by fully immersing themselves in the experience," Ms Pahina said.

"Their learning was enriched by experiencing the indigenous culture first hand through storytelling and visiting sacred sites in Kooyoora State Park.

"All our students conducted themselves with respect and have made our community proud."

Students wrote letters to themselves after the camp, through these letters it is clear that students feel a sense of responsibility in caring for the land.

The learning experience helped them understand the culture and significance

that places like Kooyoora would have held to the Dja Dja Wurrung people.

In Year 10 Benalla P-12 students learn how to plan, implement and evaluate their own canoeing or bushwalking trip.

Through this process, they learn about the procedures involved in organising a trip for a school group, looking specifically at the risks involved in the chosen activity and assessing the environmental issues of the location.

This term students learned about the way Indigenous Australians used the environment and how modern society used the same environment today.

Principal Barbara O'Brien said the wide range of curriculum on offer at Benalla P-12 College provided students with the opportunity to aspire academically.

"Students also acquire and develop skills, knowledge and confidence to work in all areas of their lives," Ms O'Brien said.

"Leadership, organisational and specialist activity skills are also developed through theory and practical sessions, such as the Year 10 outdoor education program."

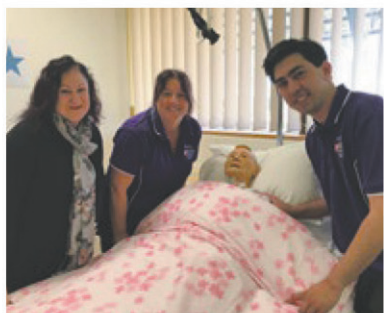


Do you want to make a difference in your community?

GOTAFE's Certificate III in Individual Support not only transforms the lives of patients in need but also the lives of students. After losing two grandparents within 18 months, mother of three Melissa Clough felt inspired to make a difference in the lives of elderly people living in aged care facilities.

"I might not be able to help my grandparents now but I can do it for someone else's. Now that my youngest is at school, it's Melissa time. I really want to make a difference in this world and show my children that no matter how old you are, if you have a dream, go, do it," explained Ms Clough.

Throughout the eight month course, students have the opportunity to undertake placement at local organisations. Trainer Robyn Cloughton enjoys witnessing the growth in students from this experience.



"I constantly see my students change and grow both professionally and personally during the time of this course. People in our community, those who never dreamed they could gain any qualification, now have the opportunity. This is the payback I get, this is why I love GOTAFE, because it gives our students opportunities they never thought existed and the confidence to reach for something higher than they ever dreamed possible. I see this year after year."

Student Avalon Arifin will complete his qualification next month. He found placement interesting and very rewarding.

"It's been a good learning experience, it sets you up well for working in the industry. I found it very helpful to have someone with Robyn's experience training us," said Mr Arifin.

Melissa agrees, describing Ms Cloughton as knowledgeable, upfront and approachable.

Certificate III in Individual Support (CHC33015), Ageing and Home and Community Care, is delivered full time two days per week for eight months at GOTAFE Benalla. Classes commence February 2018. Once completed students may choose to progress onto Certificate IV in Ageing Support (CHC43015). Visit www.gotafe.vic.edu.au or call 1300 GOTAFE to register.

UPCOMING INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT INFORMATION SESSIONS
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