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# Beyond the bale

PROFIT FROM WOOL INNOVATION

ISSUE 44 SEPTEMBER 2010

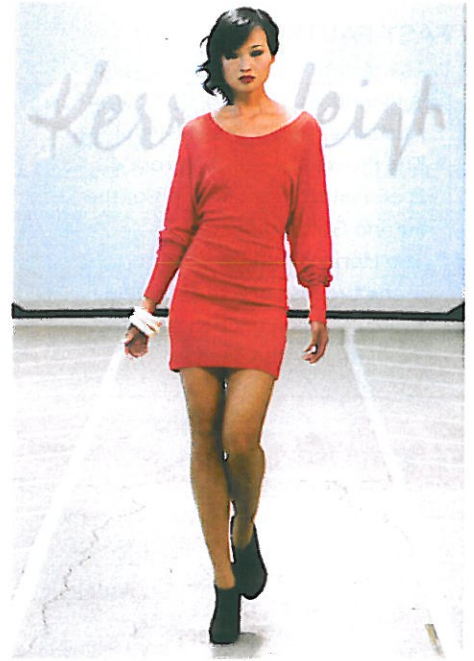
## WOOL INDUSTRY STRATEGY FOR THE FUTURE

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## Nurtured design talent blooms



### FAST FACTS

- Kerryn Langer, a former finalist of The Australian Wool Fashion Awards, now has her own successful Merino wool label in the USA.
- The appeal of Kerryn's Merino apparel product is cross-generational.
- Kerryn believes marketing the natural properties of Merino wool will help expand sales of the fibre in the American market.

**Y**oung Australian fashion designer Kerryn Langer has travelled a long way in the past few years, both professionally and geographically.

It was not long ago that she was a student in Sydney, embarking on her career in the fashion world – she was a finalist in The Australian Wool Fashion Awards (TAWFA), supported by AWI. Now she owns a fashion label in the USA, made exclusively from fine Merino wool, which is stocked in over 55 stores across 18 states.

If Kerryn is anything to go by, TAWFA has certainly been successful in raising the awareness of wool among young designers.

Following her studies in textile design at Sydney University, NSW College of Fine Arts and Whitehouse Institute of Design, Kerryn worked as head designer at leading fashion brand Bracewell which has four

retail stores and stocks to over 120 retailers. It was there that the former TAWFA finalist designed a very successful line of women's 'basics' using fine Merino wool.

After following her American husband back to Los Angeles, she started her own fashion line – 'Kerryn Leigh' – which is based around the concept of sophisticated Merino basics 'for years not seasons'.

Kerryn says making clothes was very much a part of her growing up. "My grandmother and mother used to make clothing for me as a young girl – beautiful, delicate knits and crocheted pieces I had my own personal machinists on-hand to grant me my every fashion wish!

"So, it was a natural transition for me to want to learn how to design and experiment with unique fabrics.

"I remember designing a dress made from a felted-wool material in my first year of fashion college. It was the very first piece that I ever designed, pattern-made and sewed myself. It had 24 panels sewn with exposed seams and a lace cutout, detailed neckline, all in the wool.

"I loved working with the felted wool fabric because it never frayed and held its shape – which is why I still love using wool today, it's so comfortable and breathable and yet molds to the customer's body.

"Designing with Merino is a wonderful experience. Wool's natural properties – its versatility and multi-seasonal usage – make

it the perfect wardrobe classic. Also, I love to travel, and wool is perfect for this – it is light, durable, doesn't wrinkle and easy to pack."

Kerryn believes there is a great potential for Merino sales to expand in the American market.

"At the moment, Americans generally seem to only know cotton and cashmere – everything from supima and pima to modal. There is this funny myth that some women are 'allergic' to wool. I think that's because when Americans think of wool they imagine the 'itchy sweater' they hated to wear as kids.

"So it's super exciting to be able to show them a whole other side to this beautiful, soft and luxurious material.

"I think with the right marketing and education, perception will change in the marketplace and wool in America can and will be perceived as the perfect, preferred fabric."

Kerryn's business continues to expand and has experienced steady growth.

"My product appeals to all generations, so there is a lot of potential for growth. I have received incredible responses from college students, pregnant mums, professionals needing that extra something for a suit and women in their 50s looking for sophisticated, flattering lines.

"Do I reckon wool has a positive future? Absolutely!"

More information: [www.kerrynleigh.com](http://www.kerrynleigh.com)  
[www.tawfa.com.au](http://www.tawfa.com.au)