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Campaign for Wool Launch, Sydney Harbour.

KERRY LONERGAN, PRESENTER: Now to the wool gig of the year. It took place last week at the best piece of real estate in Australia, Admiralty House on Sydney Harbour.

Put a ram in the hands of the Governor General with the Opera House as background, add a media pack that knows a good picture when they see one - after all, what could be more iconic than a big woolly sheep, Sydney Harbour and the Opera House - and you had the Australian launch of Campaign for Wool, a five-year program designed to demonstrate wool's natural qualities and versatility.

It started in February with the imprimatur of the Prince of Wales and for our Governor General - a genuine girl from the bush born and bred in wool country near Longreach - this campaign is almost personal.

QUENTIN BRYCE, GOVERNOR GENERAL: You know this, it takes me back to the place I came from, the place I love where my heart is too - right to the centre of the great wool industry in Queensland - to Ilfracombe, that wonderful little town that calls itself the hub of the west.

It's right at the middle of the great sheep stations that are so much of the proud history and traditions of the wool industry. And to see the wonderful Merriman rams here today, it reminds me of so many important things in our history and how exciting it is to see wool doing so well again.

KERRY LONGERAN: And so we had merino sheep grazing at Admiralty House for the first time in perhaps more than 150 years.

That was the novelty and a bit of fun.

However, the campaign message is serious - get consumers to once again choose wool.

STUART MCCULLOUGH, AUSTRALIAN WOOL INNOVATION: We launched it in Saville Row - you might remember last year where we ran some sheep in Saville Row, and that was to bridge, the connection between the sheep and high-end bespoke tailoring in the UK.

We this year take it globally and this is the first launch outside Australia- outside the UK, I should say, and appropriately so. Eighty per cent of the world's apparel wool comes from right here and we're very proud to be launching this and hosted by the Governor General here at Admiralty House today.

KERRY LONGERAN: Of course it wouldn't be a wool gig without fashion and the Campaign for Wool fashion parade included many of Australia's best designers - the young and the new, and the tried and the true.



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DION LEE, DESIGNER: In my collections I think tailoring is a fundamental part of how I design and wool, of course, is really the best fabric to use in any type of tailoring. Yeah, but over the past few seasons we've started doing knitwear, obviously all in merino wools.

I'm currently working on a summer collection at the moment. And I've just been over to Paris to source some really unique, innovative wool technologies. And, yeah, we're using some wool organzas for summer.

So, yeah, there can be a lightness to wool at all times.

CAMILLA FREEMAN, DESIGNER: We mainly use man-made fibres throughout our collections. Specifically for the winter collections our usage of wool is probably about 50 or 60 per cent.

We love working with wool. It's a fibre - it's a beautiful fibre to work with that we can really, really drape, we can mould to any sort of- if it's a soft - obviously, if it's a soft wool, we can drape to all sorts of different fabric styles. And if it's quite heavy, we use a lot of fabrics for trench coats.

KERRY LONGERAN: This is classic Jenny Kee. Miss Kee started designing in the '60s, when she worked extensively with wool, and she retains her enthusiasm.

JENNY KEE, DESIGNER: And what I'm really excited about is the wool that I can now get my hands on that is fine, like these people in this country are now doing, and that I can once again reinvent what I started 40 years ago.

I feel like Chanel, you know - like, she came back. Well, I'm back! I just am. And I want to have pure wool, fine, fine wool with Australian imagery and made 100 per cent in Australia, and that is very exciting for me. So it's like I've come full circle in 40 years.

And you can see that the garment that went out there tonight on the stage, it was timeless. And it was done - that garment, spanned 25 to 30 years ago.

KERRY LONGERAN: So it all looks good. There's nothing like high prices to make producers smile and forget possible problems.

But there's a theory around that this price spike is married to the skyrocketing price of cotton. The big test for wool will come when cotton comes back to a rational price level.

Will the indicator slip back to 1,000 cents or less? Or are the optimists on the money? Is the current price simply about demand?

Will wool once again be the golden fleece?

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