



From Paddock to Product: Connecting Farm and Fashion at the IWTO Congress

Adelaide, 18 April 2024 – The 93rd IWTO Congress took place this week with 350+ delegates from around the world joining Australian woolgrowers, processors, spinners, designers, and retailers in Adelaide, South Australia.

In partnership with Wool Industries Australia, more than 350 members of the International Wool Textile Organisation (IWTO) welcomed speakers ‘from paddock to product’.

The event was opened on 16 April by Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC, Governor of South Australia.

Following the welcome address, attendees heard opening remarks from IWTO President Klaus Steger, Wool Industries Australia President David Michell, and Australian Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Murray Watt (via video message).

A major highlight of this first day of the Congress was the announcement of a new integrity and sustainability programme, the [Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme \(AWSS\)](#), launched by AWEX.

Speaker Katyana Armen of AWEX described the AWSS as a new chapter for wool sustainability certification in Australia. The AWSS is a fit-for-purpose system that independently verifies sustainability practices across the entire wool supply chain, to meet market expectations.

“The Australian Wool Sustainability Scheme will showcase the responsible stewardship of our natural resources, the health and wellbeing of our sheep, the care we provide for

people and communities, and the vitality and resilience of our industry,” said AWEX CEO Mark Grave.

“This programme critically addresses the needs of brands, providing credible verification of wool inputs, ensuring sustainability and quality, and offering a trusted traceability foundation.”

Innovations like this come at a crucial moment for the industry as environmental footprinting moves rapidly toward consumer-facing labelling. Transparency is no longer an option but a necessity, as Australian brand Sportscraft’s Alex Kidis noted.

With the support of scientific evidence and solid on-farm data, the wool industry aims to create a level playing field for all textiles in upcoming European textile legislation.

Australia Delivers Wool to the World

With 18% of total global wool production, Australia is the world’s largest wool producer. There are approximately 60,000 farmers who grow wool from around 75 million sheep. The Merino breed is predominant in Australia, producing 80% of the world’s fine wool that is used in apparel.

Speakers from across the global wool value chain

Participants heard from speakers up and down the supply chain. “This year’s Congress delves into the trends shaping consumer preferences. We explore how the wool industry can better cater to the growing demand for natural, high-performance, and fully traceable wool,” said Klaus Steger, IWTO President.

“The insights and connections fostered at the 93rd Congress will be instrumental in shaping the future direction of the global wool industry. We’ve gained valuable direction on emerging trends and consumer demands, which will guide the industry’s strategic efforts moving forward.” said IWTO Secretary General Dalena White.

Among the many international speakers were Lorenzo Bertelli of Prada Group, Jeremy Berres-Paul of Huckberry, Dion Lee of the eponymous brand, Richard Boide of Dormeuil, and Greg Smith of Bremworth.



Lorenzo Bertelli, Executive Director of Prada

Lorenzo Bertelli took attendees into the exciting world of high-performance apparel and its harmonious integration with environmental management.



Richard Boide, Managing Director at Dormeuil

Richard Boide explored the interplay between casualization and the enduring relevance of formalwear in fashion's ever-evolving landscape.



**Greg Smith, CEO of
Bremworth Carpets**

Greg Smith offered valuable insights into the world of interior design trends, highlighting the enduring appeal and innovative applications of strong wool.



**Lara Phillips, Director of
Pollination Group**

Lara Phillips presented pathways for carbon insetting opportunities for Australian woolgrowers, a win-win for the entire wool industry.



**Jeremy Berres-Paul, Senior
Manager at Huckberry**

Jeremy Berres-Paul showed how Huckberry, the renowned US-based lifestyle and outdoor brand for men, is bulding the retail experience of the future.



**Dion Lee, Creative Director of
Dion Lee**

Renowned for his blend of experimental construction with traditional tailoring, Dion Lee shared his perspective on the identity of Australian fashion.

About the IWTO and the 93rd annual Congress

The International Wool Textile Organisation is the global authority for standards in the wool textile industry. Since 1930, IWTO has represented the collected interests of the global wool trade.

Each year, the IWTO brings the global wool textile industry together at its Congress. This event highlights the work of local wool industries and opens the stage for knowledge sharing and networking.

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