

# Women in wool

IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE NATIONAL WOOL MUSEUM, GEELONG.  
PHOTOGRAPHY NICOLE MARIE. LOCATION VICTORIA.

*The Women in Wool project aims to highlight the hard work of women in the wool industry, the tactility of working with wool and the devotion and contribution of an often forgotten group of workers to one of Australia's most important industries. Award winning photographer Nicole Marie traveled across Victoria from Geelong to Warracknabeal, Gerang Gerung, Bendigo, Sedgwick, Gisborne and to "Tarnidwarncoort" to capture these women in wool. Women in Wool portrait project opened at the National Wool Museum on 8 March 2019 to celebrate International Women's Day. The Women in Wool portraits are on permanent show at the National Wool Museum, Geelong.*

“Talking to these women featured on the project about their experiences, what came across so strongly to me was that wool farming and shearing is an integrated team approach, but often only half of the story is documented and shared outside of the sheds.”

NICOLE MARIE, PHOTOGRAPHER.



**Katelyn Clark, Gerang Gerung, Victoria**

*"I really enjoy it for the atmosphere. Once you get the music pumping and everyone's working hard, I love having my dogs there, and being able to pen up and do hard work and all different sorts of stuff, I enjoy all aspects of it. Everything's in sync, it just works. You get in a good team with good people and its so good. You're joking all day, I love it."*

**Advice for younger women** – *"Get in and have a go. Take everything on. Shearers like to give you advice. Take everything on that people say to you then take away the bits that don't work for you, then you develop a style. Simple things like how to pick up a fleece properly so it lands on the table well. You are always learning."*



**Wendy Dennis, Tarnswarncoort, Victoria, [www.tarndie.com](http://www.tarndie.com)**

*"Now women are getting far more recognition, when we were first married, you did it, but you didn't tell people about it. You just did it. It was just what you loved doing. It's no big deal. It's just getting on. In the country you've all got to help. You've just got to get in there and do it. Now its much more working together." "It's a wonderful industry. It's a wonderful world. It's hard but it's good and honest and true."*



**Leearna Cook. Shearer & woolclasser. Baddaginnie, Victoria**  
*Why do you do what you do? Because I live for it. Anything in particular that you love? Love shearing. And challenges in the industry? Being female is challenging. What parts do you enjoy most? The jobs very rewarding. Advice for younger women? Persevere. Anything you would like to add? Have no fear just shear.*



**Chloe Edwards, Woolhandler. Horsham, Victoria**

*"my roll is basically everything from when the sheep is sheared up until it goes to the classer, that includes picking up and throwing the fleece, skirting and rolling it up for the classer to class then it is pressed. There is many challenges that go along with you the industry but the main one would be the lack of workers, there are only about 4000 shearers and around the same amount of wool handlers which seems like a lot but it really isn't. The industry needs more recognition that it gets, there are so many shearers and wool handlers that work so hard at their job and nobody really notices."*



<< **Kirsty Bone, Kirsty Louise Pollock. Wool Classer. Nhill, Victoria.**

*The biggest challenges I find being the team organiser is keeping everyone happy, the farmers, workers, my brothers [shearers], the wool buyers etc. My first memories of the shearing industry is my dad shearing and going at smoko with mum to see him if he was close by. I may of been only 3 or 4, but then typically was a male workforce, now the industry is full of talented women in wool. I think also now safety is a big thing the industry is striving to change, we all deserve to be safe at work and have good facilities. Pop says, "you kids have it easy," we say no you old fellas just did it the hard way.*



**Tilly McDonald, Shearer, Finley NSW**

*[Note: When the portrait was done Tilly had a just had a baby (3mths old) and had already returned to shearing.]*

*"Be prepared to push yourself past pain and want to learn, then you'll succeed. You can't just BE a shearer, you have to love it"*

>> **Joan Wilkin, Sedgwick Victoria, age 96**  
*"I love the outdoors. I love the smell of the shearing shed. It's the animals. I love the dogs and the sheep I love the outdoor freedom of it. I couldn't imagine working in a shop or factory. Back when I was a young woman, my dad wouldn't have dreamt of having a lady in the shearing shed. It was okay to be in the yard, grafting sheep. I could go and help him. But I mustn't go in the shed and upset the other men because they might be embarrassed by a girl being there."*

