Showcasing history through heritage quilts

The National Wool Museum is asking the community to look through its closets and trunks for heritage quilts and waggas, also known and bushman's blankets, to help preserve Australia's history.

The museum is the custodian of one of the country's largest and most significant collections of heritage quilts and waggas.

It is now on the lookout for more stories to share, whether they are treasured family heirlooms, passed from generation to generation, or new creations crafted from upcycled treasures of today.

National Wool Museum director Padraic Fisher said quilts were stories made of cloth and there were great stories across Australia just waiting to be shared.

"Heritage is both our past and our future. It is the things we feel important to preserve and share," he said.

Greater Geelong mayor Stephanie Asher said the Wagga Project was an initiative to build and care for the museum's nationally significant collection.

"We invite members of communities across Australia to play a part in supporting this initiative and ensuring that these items are preserved as a vital historical record of Australian's tenacity in difficult times," she said.

People with a quilt or wagga can either share it online with hashtags #nationalwoolmuseum and #thewaggaproject, add its story to the National Quilt Register or donate it to National Wool Museum's quilt and wagga collection.

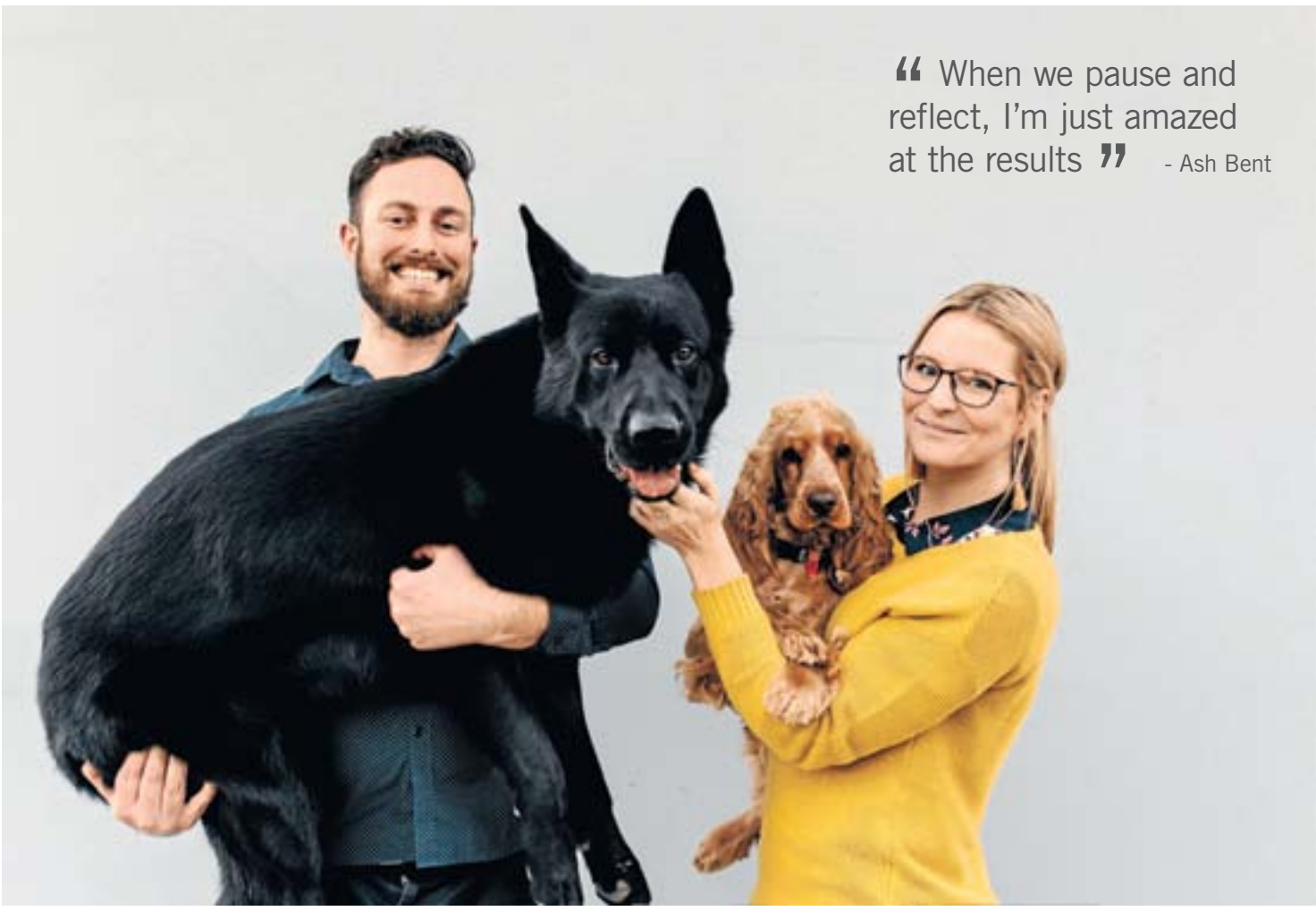
"Quilts and waggas are equal parts history, handcraft, art, storytelling and good old fashion usefulness," Mr Fisher said.

"Today, we recognise textile making is a tradition in excess of 60,000 years – from first people's traditional techniques to cutting edge technologies."

The National Wool Museum in Moorabool St, Geelong, is currently hosting the exhibition, *Necessity: waggas and the art of making do*, until February 13, 2022.

Details: geelongaustralia.com.au/nwm

The National Wool Museum is calling for donations of heritage quilts and waggas. (Supplied)



Sketch & Etch founders Ash Bent, with Sirius, and Tash Craven, with Argo, have a strong focus on healthy workplace culture. (Pictures: Supplied)

Lighting the way in neon

By Elle Cecil

Founded by friends Tash Craven and Ash Bent in 2015, after Ash's drone business literally went down in flames, Sketch &Etch provide customised neon signs to clients across Australia, the United Kingdom and United States.

Sketch & Etch were awarded the Geelong Business Excellence Awards' Digital Engagement Award for 2021.

With a team of 50 around the globe, Sketch & Etch have more than tripled their number of staff in the past 18 months, despite an 80 per cent decrease in revenue at the same time, due to the shutdown of the wedding and entertainment industries thanks to the pandemic.

Co-founder Ash explains how his team was able to come together and completely revamp Sketch & Etch's business model and strategy to suit a more online and digitalised market.

"Digital marketing and engagement is the core of our business and everything that we do, so we've adopted and taken advantage of the technology that we already had there," Ash explains.

"During the last 18 months there have been huge shifts in the retail world and things have been fast-tracked – ecommerce and digital engagement has stepped forward 10 years because of COVID," he says.

Sketch & Etch was nominated for multiple awards and ended up as finalists for both the Digital Engagement Award and the prestigious Business of the Year Award. The actual nomination and entry process was also enlightening and rewarding for Tash, Ash and the team, requiring them to step back from their work and view the business as a whole.

"When we found out we'd been nominated for these awards, especially making the finals of the Business of the Year Award, being recognised as one of the six best businesses in the region was really humbling and something that we are really proud of," says Ash.

"We were excited about the opportunity to go through the process, looking at the business from a bird's eye view gave us a lot of confirmation about the work we've been doing – when we pause and reflect, I'm just amazed at the results."

Despite the difficulties of the pandemic on business in general, Ash was impressed with the courage and strong culture his staff exhibited throughout the past 18 months.

"For our team to be able to come together and execute such an amazing turnaround has just been so inspiring to watch," Ash says.

"As a leader in the business, I've got over 50 people trusting me to create a great environment for them 40 hours per week – we want our team to show up, do the work and then head home as the best versions of themselves for their family, friends and loved ones."

The 2021 Geelong Business Excellence Awards were held as a virtual awards night on Tuesday, October 19 and celebrated the region's clever, creative and resilient businesses and business leaders.

The Murlocs at OK Motels Corio Bay Motel. (Patrick Callow)

Festival set to showcase local talent

A new music festival will hit Geelong and the Bellarine from next year.

Surround Sounds – Geelong and the Bellarine is slated for Thursday, April 14 through to Sunday, May 8 and is a key action from the 2021-2031 City of Greater Geelong Arts and Cultural Strategy.

The festival will feature concerts, workshops, multi-arts collaborations, and exclusive events, designed to deliver a wide variety of musical styles and interests.

Gigs in established venues, to intimate performances in secluded locations, Surround Sounds –Geelong and the Bellarine Music Festival will bring artists, venues and audiences together in a celebration of all-things music.

With music as your anchor, the City of Greater Geelong is looking for ideas that create new opportunities for artists, activate local places and spaces and engage with communities across the region.

Arts, Live Entertainment and Hospitality portfolio chair, councillor Eddy Kontelj said council was proud to present a festival across multiple locations that showcases and invests in local talent.

"Greater Geelong is home to some extraordinarily talented musicians and creatives who should seriously consider applying to perform at Surround Sounds," Cr Kontelj said.

"Local musicians and entertainers have been encouraging us to take the lead on exciting initiatives exactly like this in order to put Geelong back on the map as Australia's live music capital, and through the Arts, Live Entertainment and Hospitality portfolio, that is our intent and aspiration.

"As part of our Arts and Cultural Strategy, council is working to strengthen our region's live music scene and put our artists front and centre."

For more information and to submit an expression of interest, visit: surroundsoundsgeelong.com.au