

News & Media

What the Young Wool Professionals Program Taught Tom Simmons

19 May 2026, 1pm

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Wool

From traceability and innovation to a clearer understanding of the global wool supply chain, the [Young Wool Professionals Development Program](#) gives emerging industry leaders the opportunity to step beyond day-to-day market activity and consider where Australian wool is headed. For AWN South Australian State Manager, [Tom Simmons](#), the experience reinforced the importance of collaboration, transparency, and understanding the supply chain from end to end.

Tom's pathway into the [wool](#) industry began while studying at [Marcus Oldham College](#), where time spent on a Merino property near Hamilton, Victoria, provided his first hands-on exposure to sheep and [wool](#). That experience sparked a strong interest in the sector and introduced him to wool marketing at a practical level.



shaping Tom's understanding of the wool trade and the broader supply chain. This early mentorship laid the foundation for his career and ultimately led him to join AWN in 2023.

Since joining AWN, Tom's development has been grounded in practical experience, mentoring, and time spent on the showfloor. He was closely supported by AWN VIC State Manager, [Kelvin Shelley](#), travelling together, learning market dynamics firsthand, and gaining exposure to buyers and exporters. This guidance accelerated Tom's understanding of the market and helped build the confidence required to support growers effectively.

A pivotal point in Tom's career came when the opportunity arose to step into the South Australian State Manager role, succeeding Rod Miller. Rod was a close mentor to Tom, and the succession provided an important opportunity for further career development. Building on the strong foundation established through mentorship and hands-on experience, the transition ensured continuity for AWN clients while supporting Tom's professional progression.

Tom chose to participate in the [Young Wool Professionals Development Program](#) after seeing the impact it had on peers across the industry. The program's hands-on, end-to-end approach included visits to processors, manufacturers, research facilities, and industry organisations across South Australia and Victoria.

"Seeing the wool pipeline from early stage processing through to finished product manufactured by knitters and weavers. As well as the research and development for the fibre, really reinforced how important it is to understand the whole supply chain, not just the market," Tom said.

A key professional takeaway for Tom was the growing importance of traceability.

"One of the biggest takeaways for me was the importance of traceability. As an industry, we need everything to be traceable if we want to maintain market access and stay competitive internationally."

These insights now inform Tom's conversations with growers, adding greater depth and context to the advice delivered through AWN.

“By further collaborating and building on the critical work that is being done now to increase demand for wool and improve efficiency in processing. The industry can communicate and demonstrate to growers that there’s a strong future in wool.”

For Tom, the program delivered practical insight, a broader industry perspective, and confidence that will directly benefit AWN clients and support a strong and sustainable future for Australian wool.

For more information, contact Tom directly



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