

# SHOW

# STARTER

**ROYAL SHOW** \ Jess Parker helps country meet city, writes ANNA KOSMANOVSKI

Teenager Jess Parker, the youngest member of the Royal Geelong Show committee, is a powerful advocate for the event that brings the country to the city every year.

The 19-year-old eagerly spruiks the things that are the time-honoured essence of the show – the prize-winning livestock, the produce and the people who live and work on the land, who bring their best to the competition ring in the city.

For many, the Royal Geelong Show is a fun time out involving dizzying rides, chocolate-laden showbags and maybe a stuffed toy won on a carnival game.

For hardworking volunteers such as Parker, it's a far bigger accomplishment. She says that "the hours, the dedication [and] the passion" of many people in the community make the show possible.

"It's more than the rides and showbags," she says.

Parker, a farmer and agriculture student who lives in Bannockburn, has been involved in the Geelong show since getting roped into it by a neighbour and her dad.

She runs the youth section of the show's cattle events and it's a big effort. But it hasn't been without reward – Parker's hard work has earned her a scholarship to study a bachelor of agribusiness at Marcus Oldham College next year.



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“Being involved in the show society is what’s given me the scholarship,” she says. “The scholarship is actually judged on your involvement with the show society.”

Parker is already busy enough. She commutes to Horsham for her studies and works on the family farm, as well as working on her own business venture, Lochclyde Shorthorn Stud.

Right now, there are cows calving, others to manage and cows she needs to break in.

But even that busy schedule doesn’t stop Parker from giving her time freely to help ensure the annual show is a success.

She says a strong sense of community spirit, as well as the idea of having a passion for something, drives her dedication.

She wants others to know there are other wonders to be discovered at the show, beyond the carnival rides.

“There’s the horses, the cattle and the sheep,” Parker says.

“The only people who sort of go up there are the cattle people, the sheep people, the horse people or the young families who want to take their kids up to the animal nursery to see the cattle show.

“It’d be nice to see not just some of the public, but all of the public, appreciating the work that we do.”

Parker is also quick to debunk any idea the show just happens.

Rather, monthly working bees hum along at the showgrounds all year – increasing to weekly in the final weeks before the big event.

“There’s a lot of work, a lot of hours. I don’t think people realise just how much work goes into it,” she says.

“We’ve had people in our committee who even take three weeks off work around the show.”

Parker is also full of praise for the efforts of others behind the scenes.

“One of the girls on our cattle committee has three children and she’s in there every single day leading up

to the show, organising ribbons and catalogues and making sure all the entries are correct,” she says.

“Everyone knows what goes on at the show when they go there, they see it all.

“But it would be good if they also understood the amount of work the volunteers put in.”

The idea of maintaining the show’s high standards also spurs her on.

Exhibitors who say “how much of a wonderful time they had at Geelong and that they’ll definitely be back again” make Parker proud.

She tells the story of the owners of one stud, who decided to show at Geelong for the first time. They committed to returning because they appreciated “dealing with people who understood where they’re coming from”.

“All of us on the cattle committee, we all show our own cows or breed our own livestock,” she says. “It’s a passion to see it keep going and seeing it kept being run by people who know where the exhibitors are coming from.”

With so much energy devoted to ensuring the event’s success, there’s also huge satisfaction – and perhaps even a sigh of relief – when the crowds start to pour through the gates on opening day.

Parker says 12 months of hard work has a big payoff when it all comes together and she can walk the arena and entertainment areas, watching people enjoying the show’s many attractions.

Being involved in the show behind the scenes has given her a “good hard-work ethic” and taught her responsibility, she says.

She’d love to see other young people also get involved. Parker thinks such opportunities are too important for tomorrow’s show leaders to pass up.

“Without encouraging our youth, we’re not going to have a show,” she says.

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“IT’S A PASSION TO SEE IT KEEP GOING”

## DETAILS »

**Victoria’s biggest show outside Melbourne, the Royal Geelong Show, runs from October 16-19.**

**Held at the Geelong Showgrounds, it opens at 9.30am and runs until 7pm on Thursday, until 10pm on Friday and Saturday and 5pm on Sunday.**

**This year, as well as the rides and showbags, arts and crafts and animal attractions, there’s a new international food court.**

### Light the lights:

Jess Parker with one of her stars, Lochclyde Exterminator Eleanor, known at home as Miss Muppet. (MICHELLE KELCEY)

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