

The official magazine of the RNA

# SHOWBIZ

SPECIAL OLYMPICS EDITION 2025

## GAME CHANGER! SPECIAL REPORT

PAGES 2-7



COUNCIL, EKKKA & RQA NEWS  
FROM PAGE 8



RNA | THE ROYAL NATIONAL  
AGRICULTURAL AND  
INDUSTRIAL ASSOCIATION  
OF QUEENSLAND



BRISBANE  
SHOW  
GROUNDS



ROYAL  
INTERNATIONAL  
CONVENTION CENTRE  
BRISBANE AUSTRALIA



ROYAL QUEENSLAND SHOW



ROYAL  
QUEENSLAND  
AWARDS



An artist's impression of patrons in the new Machinery Hill Grandstand

"The Athletes Village project will provide the major infrastructure upgrades needed so the Ekka can continue for another 150 years at its original birthplace following the first show in 1876."

"The RNA and Lendlease share the Queensland Government's vision to provide an unforgettable experience for athletes plus deliver long lasting legacy benefits."

# SPECIAL MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT



The Premier of Queensland, the Hon David Crisafulli MP, announced on March 25 the Brisbane Showgrounds as the venue for the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games Athletes Village.

This follows a joint submission from the RNA and our long-term development partner Lendlease proposing the Showgrounds as the home of the Athletes Village to the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA).

Together with Lendlease, the RNA is delighted our joint submission was accepted as it will provide once-in-a-lifetime legacy benefits not just for Brisbane, but also rural and regional Queensland.

As a location, the Brisbane Showgrounds is a hyper-connected precinct that will offer seamless Games and city integration, delivering an exceptional experience for the world's greatest athletes, while showcasing the best of Queensland.

This announcement represents an historic milestone for Brisbane

by providing vital generational infrastructure to a famous landmark synonymous with Queensland's social, cultural and sporting heritage for almost 150 years.

The project involves major upgrades to the Showgrounds precinct, including a new Main Arena grandstand replacing Machinery Hill.

It will restore significant heritage listed assets, including the Ernest Baynes and John MacDonald grandstands, providing greatly improved and much needed disability seating and enhanced venue accessibility ensuring a lasting legacy.

It will also provide a new multi-storey horse pavilion adjoining the new Machinery Hill grandstand with direct access to the Main Arena, plus the restoration of the heritage listed horse stables along Gregory Terrace and will enable us to recreate and reimagine the iconic Cattleman's Bar and Stockmen's Bar and Grill.

The Athletes Village project will provide the major infrastructure

upgrades needed so the State's largest and most loved event, the Royal Queensland Show can continue for another 150 years at its original birthplace following the first Ekka in 1876.

During construction, the Ekka will continue to operate as normal in the lead-in to the 2032 Games, with project works planned to start following the 2026 Ekka.

Four years ago, the RNA announced the Ekka will not operate in its usual capacity on grounds in 2032 and will explore ways some competitions can continue offsite during the Olympic year.

The project's residential villages will be located predominantly along Brookes Street, O'Connell Terrace, and Alexandria Street – on land already allocated as part of the 2011 Brisbane Showgrounds Redevelopment Masterplan.

This ensures no additional land is needed while providing the million visitors a year to the precinct with new and upgraded accessible

facilities for generations to come.

The RNA and Lendlease share the Queensland Government's vision to provide an unforgettable experience for athletes plus deliver long lasting legacy benefits.

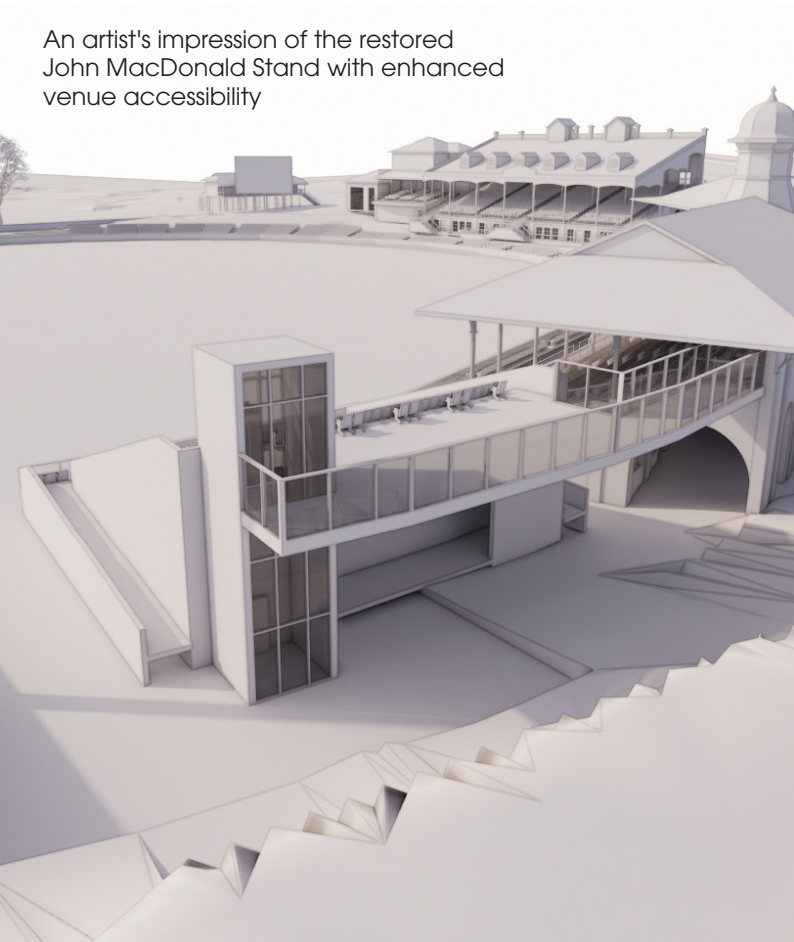
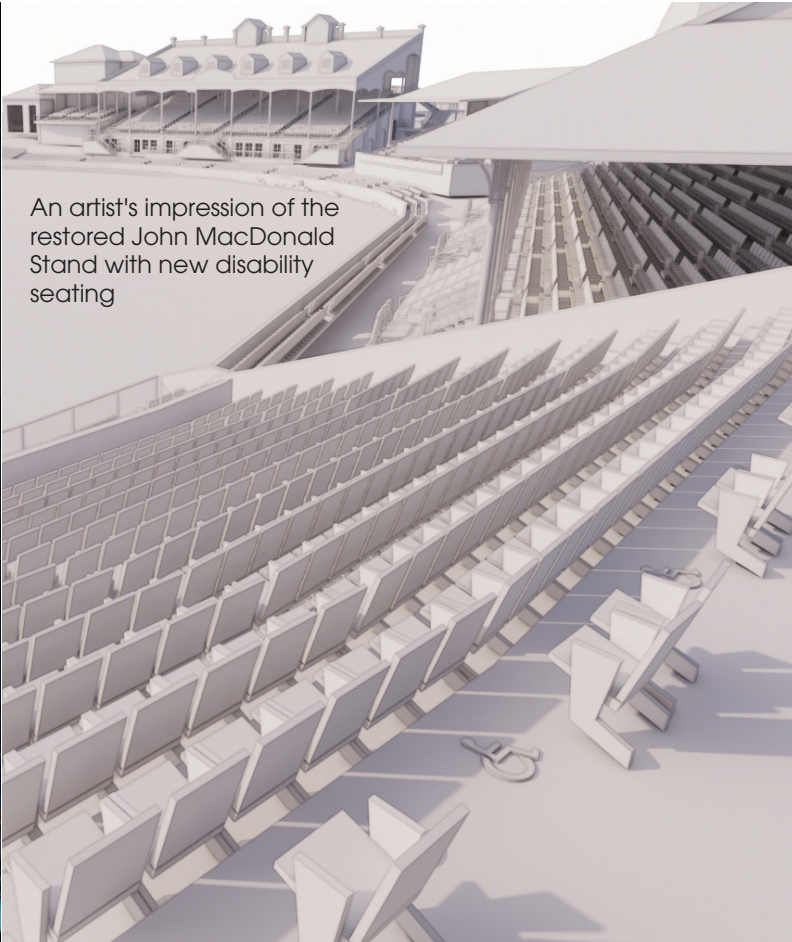
The RNA will continue to provide regular updates on the project's progress.

Sincerely

*David Thomas*

David Thomas  
**RNA PRESIDENT**





# EKKA

## HERE TO STAY

The Athletes Village project will help secure the future of the Ekka, ensuring it stays at its original birthplace at the Brisbane Showgrounds for another 150 years.

The much-needed upgrades will offer exhibitors and patrons more functional spaces and upgraded facilities, enhancing their Ekka experience.

Since 1876, the RNA has been bringing the country to the city to celebrate agriculture, and what makes this State great. The legacy outcome from the Athletes Village project for rural and regional Queensland is very significant, providing state-of-the-art facilities and opportunities for future Olympians and many regional competitors

who come to the Show each year.

Being part of the Games enables us to showcase the Showgrounds on the world stage, while providing new and upgraded accessible infrastructure.

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Four years ago, the RNA announced the Ekka would not operate in its usual capacity on grounds in 2032, and we will explore ways some competitions can continue offsite during the Olympic year.

# A

## LASTING

### LEGACY

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity that will redefine the future of the Brisbane Showgrounds, ensuring it remains a world-class destination long after the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

Sitting within 1.5km from Brisbane's CBD and close connection to public transport and major road arterials, the Showgrounds will be transformed to host the main Athletes Village for the Games.

The Athletes Village will house more than 10,000 athletes and team officials for the Games and more than 5,000 for the Paralympics.

The upgrades will enhance Brisbane's capacity to host major entertainment, sporting and business events, boosting the city's profile and ability to attract large-scale events in the future, supporting long-term growth in the state's visitor economy.

The project also enables the refurbishment and restoration of several heritage assets, which are part of Brisbane's cultural and historical identity.

New life will be breathed into the Brisbane Showgrounds for generations to enjoy for years to come.

LEGACY BENEFITS			
	<b>HISTORY, HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY:</b>		<b>CONTEMPORARY AND UNIQUE CULTURAL EVENT SPACE:</b>
	Revitalising the Main Arena and grandstands sustains its legacy as a cultural landmark, providing safe and inclusive event experiences, and positions the RNA to continue the celebration of Queensland's food and agriculture.		Quality, safe and accessible infrastructure and modern amenities at the Main Arena consolidates its standing as a unique community, cultural, entertainment and sporting event destination for Ekka, the Games and beyond.
	<b>LOCATION, PRECINCT AND CONNECTIVITY:</b>		<b>BRISBANE 2032 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES:</b>
	The central and convenient location of the Main Arena supports the successful delivery of events that are accessible, ensuring great pre and post event experiences and will lead to broader activation of the King Street Precinct and surrounds.		The redeveloped Main Arena and Athletes Village project will provide once-in-a-lifetime generational infrastructure upgrades and legacy benefits for not just Brisbane, but rural and regional Queensland.





Main Arena today



Artist impression of Main Arena upgrade



Current state of Machinery Hill

# TIME LINE

## TO THE BRISBANE 2032 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES

2026

CONSTRUCTION OF THE MAIN ARENA UPGRADE  
PLANNED TO COMMENCE FOLLOWING THE 2026 EKKA

THIS INVOLVES THE REMOVAL OF THE AGING  
MACHINERY HILL, WHICH IS NOT HERITAGE LISTED  
WITH A NEW MACHINERY HILL GRANDSTAND.

2027

CONSTRUCTION ON THE ATHLETES VILLAGE  
IS EXPECTED TO COMMENCE IN EARLY 2027  
PREDOMINANTLY ALONG BROOKES STREET, O'CONNELL  
TERRACE AND ALEXANDRIA STREET - ON LAND  
ALREADY ALLOCATED AS PART OF THE 2011 BRISBANE  
SHOWGROUNDS REDEVELOPMENT MASTERPLAN. THIS  
ENSURES NO ADDITIONAL LAND IS NEEDED WHILE  
PROVIDING THE MILLION VISITORS A YEAR TO THE  
PRECINCT WITH NEW AND UPGRADED ACCESSIBLE  
FACILITIES FOR GENERATIONS TO COME.

FOR THE 2027 EKKA THERE WILL BE A PARTIAL  
GRANDSTAND IN PLACE ON MACHINERY HILL, WHICH  
WILL BE SUPPLEMENTED BY  
TEMPORARY SEATING

2028

MAIN ARENA PROJECT WORKS ARE EXPECTED TO BE  
FINISHED, WITH ALL GRANDSTANDS PLANNED TO BE  
OPEN FOR THE 2028 EKKA

2032

THE EKKA WILL NOT OPERATE IN ITS USUAL CAPACITY  
ON GROUNDS, AND WE WILL EXPLORE WAYS SOME  
COMPETITIONS CAN CONTINUE OFFSITE DURING THE  
BRISBANE 2032 OLYMPIC AND PARALYMPIC GAMES YEAR

JULY 23 TO AUGUST 8 - BRISBANE SHOWGROUNDS  
ATHLETES VILLAGE TO HOST 10,000 ATHLETES FOR THE  
2032 GAMES.

AUGUST 24 - SEPTEMBER 5 - 5,000 PARALYMPIANS TO  
CALL BRISBANE SHOWGROUNDS ATHLETES HOME FOR  
THE GAMES.

# PROJECT

## AT A GLANCE

### MACHINERY HILL

A new Main Arena grandstand will replace Machinery Hill.

### ERNEST BAYNES AND JOHN MACDONALD GRANDSTANDS

The heritage listed grandstands will be restored, providing greatly improved and much needed disability seating and enhanced venue accessibility.

### MULTI-STOREY HORSE PAVILION

A multi-storey horse pavilion adjoining the new Machinery Hill grandstand will be built, providing competitors with direct access to the Main Arena, improving safety.

### HORSE STABLES

The heritage listed horse stables along Gregory Terrace will be restored.

### CATTLEMAN'S BAR AND STOCKMEN'S BAR AND GRILL

The project will enable the RNA to recreate and reimagine these two iconic bars. Cattleman's Bar has been closed since 2023 due to the aging Machinery Hill.



# LACHIE HART

## APPOINTED TO RNA COUNCIL



The RNA is pleased to welcome Lachie Hart to the Council, bringing with him more than 40 years of experience in the red meat supply chain.

Mr Hart is the Chair of the Stockyard Group, one of the nation's most successful and awarded beef producers who market the Stockyard brand both nationally and

internationally.

In addition to his role at Stockyard Group, Mr Hart serves as a Non-Executive Director on the Foundation Board of the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Australia – Queensland Section, a highly respected provider of primary healthcare and aeromedical services across the nation.

He also holds a Non-Executive Director position at Meat & Livestock Australia, which oversees the country's red meat and livestock industry.

Mr Hart has been appointed to the RNA's Beef Committee.

# LIZ ALLEN RETIRES

## AFTER A DECADE OF SERVICE

After a decade of dedicated service, Liz Allen has retired from the RNA Council.

A Steward and Honorary Council Steward in the Stud Beef section since 2002, Ms Allen was elected to the Council in 2014.

During her tenure, she served as Chair of the Quilts Committee and was an active member of the Beef Cattle and Meat Hall and Joint Stock Committees.

Ms Allen, alongside her family, operates

a large-scale stud and commercial Santa Gertrudis beef operation in Blackall.

She is also the current President of the Santa Gertrudis Breeders Association, further showcasing her leadership and commitment to the industry.

The RNA thanks Ms Allen for her invaluable service and looks forward to seeing her during Ekka Beef Week.



# REVAMPED

# WAGYU

## COMPETITION SET FOR RECORD SUCCESS



The Ekka's prestigious Paddock to Palate Wagyu Challenge presented by JBS Australia has undergone an exciting revamp, with new competition classes and double the prize money expected to attract record entries.

Entries for the 2026 competition opened in late March, with the Wagyu Challenge regarded as one of the world's most commercially relevant beef competitions, giving producers the chance to benchmark their cattle and gain valuable insights through industry-leading data collection.

The most significant change will see the competition feature two classes instead of one - Fullblood/Purebred (above 93% Wagyu genetics) and Crossbred (92% Wagyu content and below).

RNA Beef Committee Chair Gary Noller said the change was made to ensure a fairer competition between different genetic classifications.

"Crossbred Wagyu will always gain faster and feature in the weight gain phase,

while fullblood cattle perform better in carcass judging – so by splitting the Wagyu Challenge into two classes we make it a more even and fair competition," he said.

"This change also means the overall prize pool has doubled to \$18,000, providing more producers with the opportunity to share in the rewards."

Another key change will see JBS Australia purchase all competition entries as feeder steers, providing exhibitors with a competitive rate at the point of entry into the feedlot rather than at the close of the competition. This eliminates the risk associated with fluctuations in feed and grid prices, giving producers more financial certainty.

As part of the revamp, steers will also be fed at the JBS Beef City Feedlot west of Toowoomba for the first time, for a shorter period of 380 days, before being processed at the Beef City Plant.

RNA Beef Committee Chair Gary Noller said the changes, including the reduced

time on feed, were driven by shifts in the commercial environment and consumer expectations.

"This revamp is about aligning the competition with current industry standards and ensuring it continues to be relevant for producers and consumers," he said.

"The changes to the competition are all very positive, and as a result we're expecting to see an increase in the number of entries this year."

The competition features four phases which are weight gain, a carcass competition, carcass value and a beef taste off. The exhibitor who polls the highest aggregate score across all four phases will be awarded the overall prize at the Paddock to Palate Awards and Beef Industry Dinner during Ekka Beef Week in August 2026.

*Entries close Friday 2 May 2025. For more information or to enter, please click here.*





The prize pool for the Ekka's Country Music Showdown continues to grow, with an increased cash prize and more paid gigs being offered to this year's winners.

Entries are now open for the 2025 competition, which gives rising country music stars the chance to be discovered and to win a share of the massive prize pool which is valued at over \$70,000 this year.

The 2025 Country Music Showdown's overall cash prize has increased to \$3,000 and the Open Category winner will enjoy more paid performances than ever before with this year's introduction of a gig at the hugely popular Lefty's Music Hall in Brisbane, in addition to appearances at the

Gympie Music Muster and Ekka 2026.

Musicians aged 12 years and over will compete in the ultimate talent search, with finalists performing two songs to Ekka crowds and a panel of industry judges, on stage at the XXXX Stockmen's Bar and Grill on Sunday 17 August.

There are two categories in the Showdown: Junior (ages 12-17 years) and Open (18+ years) and the 2025 cash and prize pool includes the Troy Cassar-Daley Scholarship to the Academy of Country Music in Tamworth; music video and website production services; a photo shoot package; musical equipment; and interviews and airplay on Kix FM.

Head of Ekka Entertainment and Education

Tony Laffan said the Ekka was proud to be unearthing the next generation of country artists.

"We were delighted to see that the previous winner of both the Ekka Country Music Showdown's Junior and Open categories, Felicity Kircher, was recently named the 45th Star Maker at the 2025 Tamworth Country Music Festival – Australia's most prestigious country music competition," he said.

"Ekka is all about celebrating the best of Queensland and we've seen many talented artists emerge and start their careers off the back of this wonderful competition."

*Video applications can be submitted by clicking here.*



Australian distillers are invited to showcase their finest creations, with entries opening on Friday 4 April for the prestigious Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards supported by King Street.

Judging will commence in July, with newly appointed Chief Judge Dave Withers leading a diverse panel of industry experts to assess entries across whisky, gin, vodka, rum/cane spirit and more.

As the Master Distiller for Australia's most highly awarded distillery, Archie Rose Distilling Co, since 2016, Mr Withers brings a wealth of experience. He has been recognised as Gin Distiller of the Year at the Icons of Gin Awards and has twice been awarded Master Distiller of the Year at the Spirits Business Awards.

Mr Withers was a judge at last year's inaugural Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards and said he was honoured to be back in a new role.

"To be Chief Judge means a lot to me

- I understand the amount of work that producers put into each and every bottle of spirit, so to be entrusted with reviewing these spirits alongside my fellow judges is something I take seriously and am excited about," he said.

New this year is an Alternative Spirit class, for any distilled spirit that doesn't fit into existing classes, such as agave, schnapps, absinthe, bitters, vermouth and unaged whisky.

"One of the amazing opportunities we have in making spirits in Australia are flexible definitions and legislation that supports innovation," Mr Withers said.

"This new category really allows producers to put those fabulous but hard to define products up for judging.

"I have judged similar categories before and they can be really inspirational - distillers have so much creativity and this is a category that supports that freedom of expression."

Now in its second year, the Royal Queensland Distilled Spirit Awards continues to establish itself as a premier competition for Australian spirits.

Royal Queensland Distilled Spirits Advisory Group member Sarah Andrew said the competition would continue to set a high standard of judging.

"By bringing together both technical and stylistic judges from across the country, distillers can be reassured that judging covers all aspects of a spirit through to quality assessment," she said.

"Where appropriate, detailed feedback is provided to enable distillers to address any particular area of production or simply keep producing their highly awarded spirit."

*Entries close Friday 6 June 2025. For more information, please click here.*

## GET INVOLVED IN EKKA'S COMPETITIONS!

With more than 1,700 entries already received, the excitement is building as the Ekka's 2025 competitions continue to open for entry.

Whether you're a seasoned competitor or a first-timer, there's something for everyone. Now is the perfect time to join the fun and showcase your skills.

Here are the 2025 competitions that have opened for entry so far. Simply click on the competition names to visit their dedicated pages for more details and to submit your entry.

■ **AGRICULTURAL SCIENCES & STUDENT FERMENTED BEVERAGES**

■ **BUSH POETRY**

■ **CAKE DECORATING**

■ **COOKERY**

■ **CREATIVE ART & CRAFT**

■ **EDUCATION ON SHOW**

■ **EKKA CREATIVE CLIPS**

■ **HORTICULTURAL DISPLAYS**

■ **LED STEER**

■ **LITTLE SPROUTS**

■ **NATURAL FIBRES MAKE & MODEL**

■ **Paddock to Palate**

■ **PAINTING & DRAWING**

■ **PHOTOGRAPHY**

■ **QUILTS ACROSS QUEENSLAND**

■ **SCHOOL GARDEN**

■ **SCHOOL SCARECROW**

■ **SCULPTURE**

■ **STUD BEEF**

■ **STUDENT MADE CHEESE**

■ **WOODCHOP & SAWING**





# BRISBANE BREWERY WINS AUSTRALIA'S BEST BEER

A Brisbane brewery claimed the title of Australia's best beer at the Royal Queensland Awards Beer Competition supported by King Street at the Brisbane Showgrounds in late February.

Slipstream Brewing Company in Yeerongpilly won the Grand Champion Beer and The Star Entertainment Group Best Queensland Beer titles for the first time with their Classic Saison, along with a \$5,000 Lion bursary.

Judge Steve Henderson said it was rare to see a saison – a traditional beer originating from Belgium and Northern France - come out on top.

"Saison requires a delicate approach from the brewer to balance the spicy phenolics with the fruity esters and a nice dry finish, so to win Grand Champion with this style is phenomenal and shows just how skilled the Slipstream team is," he said.

"It's such a wonderful style of beer that's really underrepresented in the Australian

beer market."

This year marked the introduction of a champion trophy for the best Ginger Beer supported by Buderim Ginger, with Aether Brewing from Northgate, Brisbane, winning for their Ginger Beerd product.

"Ginger is a quintessential Australian agricultural ingredient and the fact we have a local Brisbane craft brewery producing a world-class ginger beer is fantastic," Mr Henderson said.

Brisbane's Felons Brewing Co also shared in the city's brewing success, with team member Ben Malt named The Star Brisbane Emerging Queensland Brewer. The rising brewer won the opportunity to have his beers sold at The Star Brisbane.

More than 530 entries from 67 Australian breweries were received in this year's competition, judged over two days by a panel of almost 50 industry experts.

Mr Henderson said the quality of the entries had continued to improve year on

year.

"This is the first commercial beer competition of the calendar year and brewing a good beer for the Royal Queensland Awards really sets those breweries who won a medal up for success for the rest of the year," he said.

"The beers have been phenomenal and the variety of styles being entered in the competition continues to grow.

"The standard of judging is incredibly high and every single entrant in this competition, whether they have taken home a medal or not, will receive valuable feedback to help refine their beers, which strengthens the industry as a whole."

The Royal Queensland Beer Awards celebrate and promote the country's top brewers, providing a platform for industry recognition and product benchmarking.

*To find out what beers you should be enjoying, view the results catalogue by [clicking here](#).*



Beer Judge Steven 'Hendo' Henderson with The Star Brisbane Emerging Queensland Brewer Ben Malt



John 'JC' Collins, Gavin Croft from Slipstream Brewing Co, and Sam O'Connor MP



Craft brewers from across Australia enjoyed the Royal Queensland Beer Awards



Lee McAlister-Smiley celebrates with his awards





# AUSTRALIAN WINEMAKERS

## TO SET THE STANDARD AT ROYAL QUEENSLAND AWARDS



Australian winemakers have their first chance to showcase their newly bottled wines, with entries open for the Royal Queensland Awards (RQA) supported by King Street.

Judging will commence in June, with new Chief Judge Julian Langworthy leading a diverse panel of 26 industry experts from across the country including winemakers, sommeliers, restaurateurs, retailers, journalists and educators.

Mr Langworthy said the Awards were an integral part of the capital city wine show circuit and an opportune time for winemakers to have their recently bottled 2024 wines assessed.

"The RQA has helped define and refine Australian winemaking and wine styles for 148 years and has a bright future in

continuing to do so," he said.

"In my first year as Chief Judge, I feel very humbled and honoured to play such an important role within this process."

Along with meaningful feedback from experienced judges, the RQA offers more than \$18,000 in prizes. There is a \$12,000 fellowship on offer for the Angelo Puglisi Grand Champion Wine of Show to further the winemaker's knowledge of the national and international wine industry, plus a \$5,000 bursary for the exhibitor of the Dr Bill Ryan Best Pinot Noir of Show.

Meanwhile the winner of the Emerging Queensland Winemaker of the Year presented by The Star will receive a \$1,500 bursary, have their top drops featured in The Star's outlets and become an RQA Associate Judge in 2026.

New in the competition this year is a trophy award for the Best Organic or Biodynamic Wine of Show, along with new Low Alcohol and De-Alcoholised classes.

"I am very hopeful of getting strong entries within the new Low Alcohol and De-alcoholised classes to help support and encourage excellence in this growing segment of the industry," Mr Langworthy said.

The RQA medal-winners will be showcased to consumers at the popular Grape Grazing by Night event at the Brisbane Showgrounds on Friday 11 July, which attracts around 900 attendees each year.

*Entries close Friday 30 May 2025. For more information or to enter now, please click [here](#).*

# AUSTRALIAN RED MEAT

## PRODUCERS CONTINUE TO RAISE THE STEAKS IN PRESTIGIOUS COMPETITION

Australian beef and lamb suppliers are invited to benchmark their branded products, with entries open for the Royal Queensland Branded Beef and Lamb Awards.

Judging to crown Australia's best will commence in late March, conducted by 19 food experts including award-winning chefs, premium butchers and industry leaders.

The competition will feature five classes in branded beef including grain-fed, grass-fed and Wagyu, along with three in branded lamb including one specifically for the

restaurant trade.

Chief Judge Elaine Millar said the quality of the entries received each year was exceptional.

"I am constantly overwhelmed by the resilience demonstrated by our agricultural community and the perseverance of its people through ongoing challenges including crippling drought, extreme floods, devastating fires and an unstable export market," she said.

"Considering this difficult landscape, even more extraordinary is how our beef and

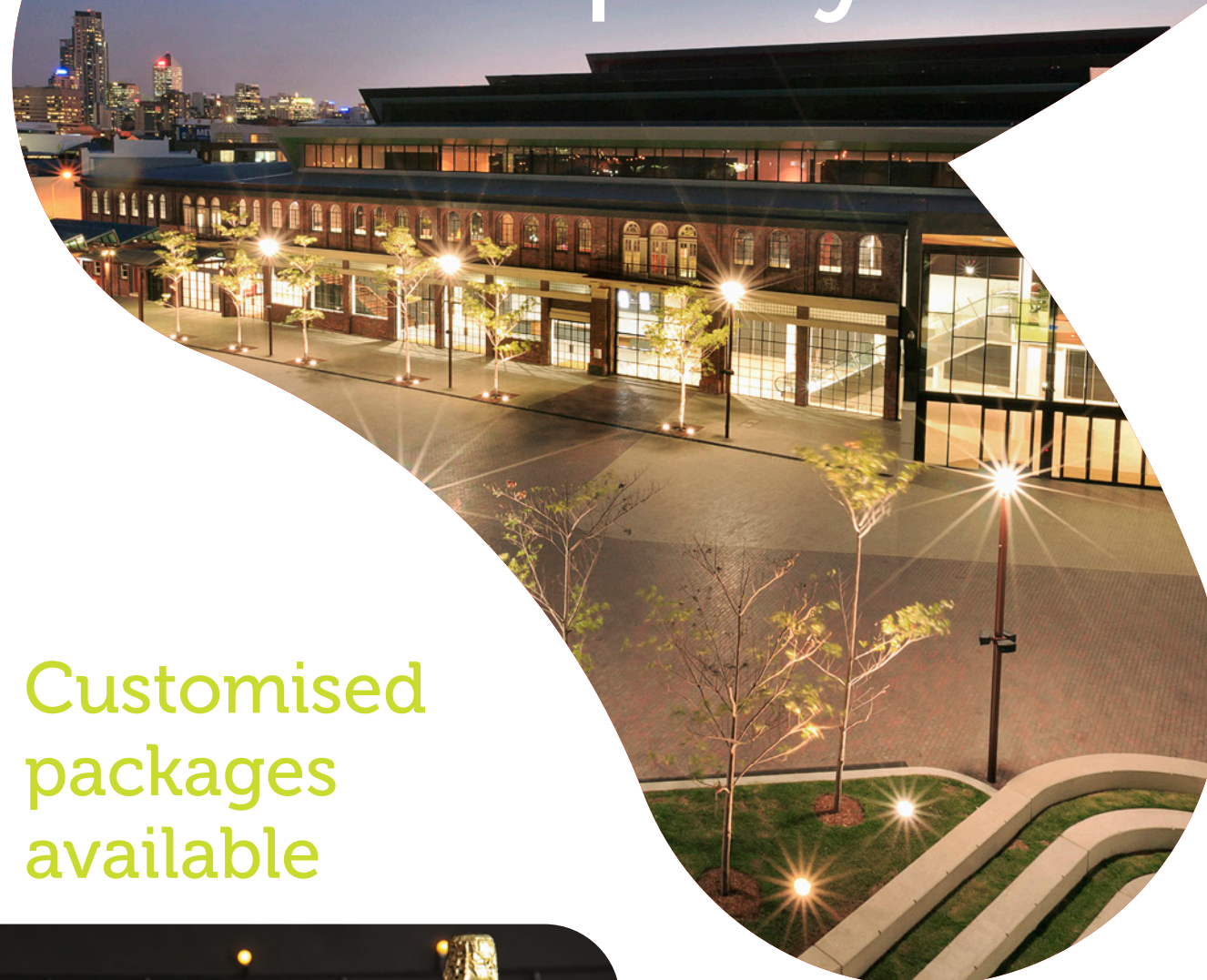
lamb exhibitors deliver unprecedented growth in quality, year on year, to arguably produce the best beef globally."

All entries will be prepared for judging by food scientists following Meat Standards Australia and Department of Agriculture and Fisheries guidelines to ensure consistency.

The meat will be judged based on its appearance (raw), tenderness, flavour, juiciness and overall liking.

*Entries close Friday 14 March 2025. For more information or to enter now, please click [here](#).*

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