

# Wool accolade for gun shearer

By **MAL GILL**

SHEARER, shearer trainer, former contractor and Australian Shearing Hall of Fame inductee Kevin Gellatly is the third Western Australian to be presented with the Australian Wool Industry Medal.

The prestigious medal is awarded by Wool Industries Australia for ‘an exceptional and sustained contribution to the Australian wool industry’.

It is normally presented at the national Wool Week industry dinner in Victoria, but COVID-19 restrictions prevented that last year, so Mr Gellatly, 72, was presented with his medal and a certificate on Saturday at the Western Australian Shearing Industry Association (WASIA) annual meeting in Perth.

WA’s two other recipients of the Australian Wool Industry Medal – WASIA president and Lake Grace shearing contractor Darren Spencer who received his in 2019 and former Narrogin shearing contractor now wool classing lecturer Rob Carter who was one of 11 industry identities to receive the inaugural medal in 2017 – made the presentation.

Mr Spencer said Mr Gellatly had been part of the WA shearing industry for 56 years, starting as a shearer, then shearing contractor and now shearer and wool handling trainer.

For 24 years he had offered training and employment opportunities for young indigenous men while he was a shearing contractor.

“He has introduced

hundreds of young people into the wool industry as a shearer and wool handling

trainer for 17 years,” Mr Spencer said.

“Kevin’s greatest strength is his ability to successfully communicate with all people and to improve their self-esteem.”

Mr Spencer said Mr Gellatly had also worked for shearing equipment manufacturers Heiniger Australia in a research and development role covering WA, Tasmania and the South Island of New Zealand, in which he advocated for woolshed improvements and better equipment maintenance.

Mr Spencer pointed out being awarded the medal involved much more than simply being nominated.

“A lot of people had input into the citation,” he said.

Accepting the honour Mr Gellatly, who works as a shearer trainer for Australian Wool Innovation (AWI),

admitted to being “pretty emotional”.

He said this was partly because his AWI training partner who teaches wool handling, Amanda Davis, had been rushed to hospital the night before.

“She nominated me (for the medal) and filled out all the paperwork without me knowing, but she can’t be here today,” Mr Gellatly said.

“I don’t do things to get accolades, I do it because I think it’s the right thing to do to give something back and I really try to help young people get into the industry.

“I surround myself with good people and a lot of those people are sitting here

right now, who have been with me on my journey – shearing with them or teaching them to be better shearers – and I’d like to

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thank them all very much.”

Mr Gellatly said his “journey with Heiniger” had given him “a huge amount of product knowledge” which made him a better teacher because he could pass on how to correctly grind cutters and how to pull down handpieces for maintenance so they worked more efficiently and made the job of shearing easier.

A son of a shearer, Mr Gellatly grew up on the family farm at Perenjori and was taught to shear when he was 16 at a shearing school run by Bert Dwyer on a local property.

“I still pass on today some of those tips that I was told by the old fellas when I was learning,” Mr Gellatly said after the medal presentation.

“The way they taught you, you were learning about the animal before you learned how to shear it.”

Mr Gellatly worked for Peter and Val Hobson for three years on their North West run, travelling on trucks to the Gascoyne region to shear big flocks on pastoral stations north of Carnarvon.

He then joined older brother Lyn contracting out of Perenjori through the northern Wheatbelt and on Murchison pastoral stations.

Mr Gellatly moved to Perth in the mid 1980s for his son and daughter’s educations and shore for 10 years with close friend, industry legend and long-time Shackleton-based shearing contractor Brian ‘Bero’ Beresford who died last July after a suspected stroke.

With the move to Perth, at nearly 40, Mr Gellatly became a late starter

on the competition shearing circuit and was recognised in 1997 as a master shearer, having won 15 shows.

He has a long association with the WA Competition Shearing

Association and the Perth Royal Show where he was president of the shearers' representatives panel and a member of the committee organising the show's shearing competitions for a number of years.

Mr Gellatly has competed in the veterans' division shearing at the show since it was introduced in 2013.

For about 10 years he also shored the rams for the show's champion fleece competitions.

In 1995 Mr Gellatly joined Heiniger and travelled all over Australia and to New Zealand, holding grinding and handpiece maintenance workshops, trialling new products and producing an instruction video on grinding combs and cutters.

His role with Heiniger allowed him to take up teaching shearing with the WA Shearing Industry Training Association, starting at Albany TAFE and then including some of the agricultural colleges and Rylington Park, Mayanup.

Mr Gellatly was employed by AWI to teach young indigenous novice shearers and others at four hub camps run by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development in conjunction with WASIA last year.

He also taught at a subsequent improvers training school.

In Perth Mr Gellatly has also branched out into shearing alpacas, developing a technique of tying the long-legged, long-necked feisty animals down to minimise handler requirements and a shearing pattern to get the best return from the fibre.

He produced a commercial DVD on shearing alpacas and for about 14 years took his expertise to the United States, shearing and training alpaca shearers there for several months each year.

Mr Gellatly was inducted into the Australian Shearers Hall of Fame in 2015.



□ Kevin Gellatly (centre), who has been part of the WA wool industry for 56 years, is presented with his Australian Wool Industry Medal by the only other WA recipients of the medal, former shearing contractor and wool classing lecturer Rob Carter (left) and WA Shearing Industry Association president and Lake Grace contractor Darren Spencer.