

All eyes on the Show



Rain threatened to drown the Show's spirit.

Photo: Kate Elmes

The Royal Adelaide Show has fought for success this year, battling blackouts, torrential rain and mysterious cases of sore eyes.

This week at least 30 people were treated at the show's first-aid area for painful eyes after visiting the dairy cattle judging marquee.

Show CEO John Rothwell said the rain could be a factor.

"The thing that is a factor I'm sure is the extent of rains we had before the show and even during the show," he said. "That's the only ingredient that's different than setting up for any other year on the dairy cattle lawn."

"I guess it's feasible that it's a combination of humidity, moisture, urine and so on. We're also investigating sawdust or woodchip that's been down on the floor. But

Melissa Mack

really we don't have very much to go on."

SA Health said it was looking into the cause of sore eyes, but there was no ongoing public health risk.

Mr Rothwell took on a different challenge yesterday at the celebrity milk-off. His team - including state Opposition Leader Isobel Redmond, Jane Reilly and Mark Aiston - swapped microphones for udders to attempt to win the challenge against teams from SAFM, 891 and Channel 7.

But the celebrity challenges didn't stop there, with bulky, axe-wielding men welcoming challengers including Ms Redmond into the woodcutting arena.

Agriculture Minister Michael O'Brien was a more low-key participant during the week, handing out Riverland oranges at the Citrus Industry Board display and launching two new lentil varieties, as well as awarding blue ribbons to Border Leicester sheep.

The Show businesses were kept to task, too, with the Fair Work Ombudsman catching six employers underpaying workers.

The Metropolitan Fire Service won the Community Organisation Award for its educational stand.

"Children of all ages have been enjoying the fun; dressing up as firefighters, sitting in a mini fire engine, taking a journey down Livelonga Lane and having a turn at Stop, Cover, Drop and Roll," MFS district officer of community safety Allan Foster said.

Traders happy after Rundle Street makeover

One company has single-handedly changed the face of Rundle Street East but a broad range of traders have benefitted from the transformation.

The Maras Group has created a high-end fashion precinct which has pushed up rents in the area. Despite

this, businesses such as cafes and restaurants are positive about the move.

"Everyone is pretty happy about it," said Julie Wrobel, of the East End Co-ordination Group. "Our view is we would like to see it retained as a

Farrin Foster

mixed-use precinct and keep the restaurants and the dining alongside the fashion."

The southern side of Rundle Street between Union Street and East Terrace is now mostly occupied by designer Australian fashion labels. They were lured to the street by the Maras Group after what managing director Steve Maras calls "stagnation" in the area.

"When you have a strip and there isn't some wholesale changes over a decade or more, the place can get a bit stale. The excitement of coming to a strip where there's new things to do isn't there," he said. "We wanted something that was very unique."

Fashion names on the street include Allannah Hill, Jack London, Mimco, Sass and Bide and Zimmerman. However, Mr Maras agreed it was important to keep a balance.

"My other operators are valued tremendously," he said. Places like Endota, Bauhaus, Mary Martin Bookshop and Bimbo keep Rundle Street balanced."

Street-level stores, cafes and restaurants alongside the high-fashion labels are most affected by rent increases, but Sally Neville, CEO of Restaurant and Catering SA, said the higher overheads were compensated by more consumers coming into the area.

"To create a mix of retail and dining is the dream, really, because it offers the dining venue

the opportunity to catch walk-by traffic," she said.

Smaller businesses on the street have closed recently, including the Cold Rock ice-cream store and B-Sharp records.

Mr Maras said there was space for independent local operators on the upper levels and on the fringes of Rundle Street.

Adam Johnson, who operates ad agency Xtra Shiny from a first-floor Rundle Street office, said the street was well balanced at the moment.

"But if it went any further towards fashion, we would have the wrong kind of consumers coming into the area. Any more would be overkill," he said.

■ Is Adelaide the new couture capital? Page 29.

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The two faces of Rundle Street: the old dining precinct is turning towards designer fashion.

Photo: Kate Elmes

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• Publisher: Solstice Media Pty Ltd • Managing Editor: Hendrik Gout, hgout@solsticemedia.com.au • Deputy Editor: Suzie Keen, skeen@solsticemedia.com.au • Food: Ann Oliver • Wine: Phillip White • Columnist: Tom Richardson • Sport: Harry Thring, hthring@solsticemedia.com.au • Photographer: Kate Elmes • Cartoonist: George Aldridge • Designer: Tom Pascale • Business: Farrin Foster • Editorial and Online: Melissa Mack, Farrin Foster editorial@independentweekly.com.au • Advertising: Margaret Cronin, mcronin@solsticemedia.com.au • Circulation and Distribution: Peter Jarrett, circulation@solsticemedia.com.au • Finance: Wendy Skinner accountant@solsticemedia.com.au