

MEDIA RELEASE

Associate Professor Karen Webster, Program Director Fashion, RMIT University to address Third International Conference of Fashion Incubators 2011

The Third International Conference of Fashion Incubators will be held at the Parmelia Hilton in Perth from the 11th until the 13th of September 2011. Associate Professor Karen Webster, Program Director Fashion, RMIT University and Festival Director of L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival (2005 -2010) will be addressing the conference on 'Nurturing the future - How events and industry collide'.

In 1996 a group of visionaries gathered together to discuss the status of the Australian fashion industry struggling within a recessed economy, which was consequently creating a mood of anxiety, frustration and culpability. An idea sprang forth to develop a festival that celebrated the greatness inherent in the local fashion industry, in an attempt to shift focus from the negative impacts to the positive case studies. The Melbourne Fashion Festival was born, a consumer orientated event that was to invigorate demand for fashion and assist the local industry in strengthening its bottom line. Fast-track fifteen years and the Melbourne Fashion Festival is now purported to be the largest public fashion event globally and in 2010 attracted over 420,000 participants, included over 300 participating designers and brands, generated \$48 million in national and international media coverage and contributed over \$70 million to the Australian economy.

Karen's presentation at the Third International Conference of Fashion Incubators will address the impact of major fashion events on the local industry and how they can be used as incubators for all involved from graduates, emerging designers and established brands.

The conference is being hosted by community organisations Textile Clothing Footwear Resource Centre of WA (TCFWA), designedge Fashion Incubator, TCF Global and the Belmont BEC. These organisations provide those in the fashion, TCF creative industries access to business workshops, online mentoring, forums, industry cluster networks, and national and global linkages to other small businesses operating in the textile, clothing, footwear & leather industry across Australia and around the globe.

The Third International Conference of Fashion Incubators will offer new opportunities for fashion business educators and fashion trade events from around the globe to network, discuss best practice and expand global designer marketing and promotional opportunities. The Conference will aim to build on past successful conferences of International Fashion Incubators held in UK and USA. It will assist the growth and development of fashion industry business educators and those that nurture and support emerging designers, as well as elevating Perth on the international fashion stage.

The event will present challenging speakers at the forefront of the industry as well as a range of practitioners willing to share their experiences and expertise, exhibitors and great opportunities for global networking. The Conference will also announce the establishment of an International Fashion Incubator Organisation.

Conference Convenor, Carol Hanlon said "Karen has been actively engaged as an advocate and leader in the Australian Fashion Industry for the past 30 years. From 2005 to 2010 through an industry secondment from her University position at RMIT, Karen was appointed Festival Director of the L'Oréal Melbourne Fashion Festival. For fourteen years prior Karen headed up the fashion programs at RMIT University where she nurtured the fashion industry's future talent"

During her tenure at RMIT University, Karen was the Australian representative for Paris based trend forecasting group; Studio Edelkoort. Karen was also a founding Board member of the Melbourne Fashion Festival, a position she held for nine years. She currently sits on the Boards of Melbourne Spring Fashion Week and Balletlab. She has also served as a Board member on the Australian Fashion Foundation, the Government committee for India Australia Education in the TCF industries and The Industry Development Board – Wool for the South

Australian Government. More recently she has been on the Advisory Boards for State of Design Festival, the Design Research Institute and the Media Code of Conduct Working Group on Body Image for the Victorian State Government.

Karen worked as a fashion designer for over ten years in London, Melbourne and Sydney prior to working in academia. She still currently works as a strategic and design consultant within the fashion industry, and returned to the role of Program Director of Fashion at RMIT University in June 2010.

A list of other speakers for the International Conference of Fashion Incubators can be seen at <http://www.fashionincubators.com/program>

Sponsorship opportunities are still available for the event.

For up to date information on the Conference, please visit www.fashionincubators.com, or email conference@tcfglobal.com

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