

TURNING AN UNWANTED PEST INTO HIGH FASHION, ROTORUA AS YOU HAVE NEVER SEEN IT BEFORE, AND A NEW DEVICE TO HELP WITH ONE OF MODERN LIFE'S WORST SIDE EFFECTS. BY **MATT PHILLIPS**

DETAILS

# hello possums

Possum fur has always been associated with the tourism trade rather than high fashion, but that's about to change. In August, local designer Maree MacLean showcased pieces at New Zealand Fashion Week made from Perino, a yarn that combines cashmere and possum fur. An innovation of Wellington-based Woolyarns New Zealand, Perino was developed several years ago as a merino-possum blend, but couldn't crack the high-fashion market at the time due to issues of colouring and coarseness. Re-engineered using cashmere

rather than merino and further refined, the yarn now turning heads as a warmer, lighter and cheaper alternative to pure cashmere. In fact, it has been demonstrated to be 35 percent warmer than cashmere and 55 percent warmer than wool, according to Woolyarns marketing manager Jimad Khan, who says the company is targeting next year's big annual international yarn industry event in Florence to show Perino to the fashion world. Known as the Pitti Immagine Filati, the expo draws some of the biggest names among international buyers and designers. "It's going to be great to align ourselves with some of those brands," he says. "But just to be there exhibiting alongside some of the best yarn spinners in the world will be exciting." [woolyarns.co.nz](http://woolyarns.co.nz)



## indoor/ outdoor flow

Think of Rotorua, and hot pools and pine trees come to mind. Now you can add alfresco dining to the list. Eat Street is the result of a \$2.4 million exercise to turn Rotorua's previously underwhelming hospitality precinct into a must-visit eating and drinking destination – a "hot spot" in the steaming city. After a trial period of closing the road to traffic, the council invested in a major upgrade to transform the space into a full pedestrian mall, complete with underfloor thermal heating, enhanced lighting and a retractable roof to allow for all-weather outdoor dining. Part of a wider revitalisation of the inner city, the development is built around a central timber structure that showcases Rotorua's bona fides as a forestry and wood-processing hub. Paul Croucher of craft-beer pub Brew, one of the most popular of the street's dozen-odd cafes, restaurants and bars, says the new surroundings have been a boon for business. "It's colourful, vibrant and comfortable. You can't really compare it to some of the squares of Europe, because it's so modern, but it does provide a similar lovely hospitality focal point for the city. We're big fans." [rotoruanz.com/eatstreet](http://rotoruanz.com/eatstreet)



## STRIKE A POSE

Hours spent hunched over a tablet can play havoc with your posture. Cue the Backpod, a spinal therapy device that stretches out a stiffened back. Made of a polycarbonate core inside rubber cushioning, the Backpod is the brainchild of Dunedin firm Bodystance, founded by veteran physiotherapist and inventor Steve August, design strategist Nick Laird and industrial designer Andrew Wallace. Recently it won bronze at the prestigious German Design Council Awards, adding to an honourable

mention at the Red Dot international design awards in 2013. It's a gratifying validation of a product that puts equal emphasis on form and function, says Wallace. "It had to be both functional and attractive. Aesthetic value is critical for people to use these products." The company is focused on cracking the European market to add to its push into Australasia. Given that 60 million Europeans suffer from some acute form of upper back and neck pain, there's clearly plenty of scope for growth.

[bodystance.co.nz](http://bodystance.co.nz)

