

MEDIA RELEASE (with photo and caption)  
From Doug Laing, media officer, Shearing Sports New Zealand,  
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#### Caption

Joel Henare (right) in action with hero and now-late multiple World, Golden Shears and New Zealand champion Joanne Kumeroa, winning the World teams title in Masterton in 2012.  
PHOTO/SSNZ

#### Woolhandling champ plots retirement and family time

World champion woolhandler Joel Henare is signalling a retirement from top competition as he prepares for yet another transtasman campaign in Australia this weekend.

One of the World's top woolhandlers for more than a decade despite not turning 27 until next month, and in West Australia with the New Zealand team for Sunday's transtasman woolhandling and machine and blade shearing tests at the Royal Perth Show, he said it's time to give more time to sons Keanu, 5, Hikurangi, 4, and Lee, 3.

From Gisborne, but grown-up in the woolsheds of Central Otago and now living in Motueka at the top of the south, Henare will however spend some time in the summer trying to win the right to defend his World title at the 2019 World championships in France in a likely swansong next July.

"This will be my last time in a New Zealand transtasman test team," he said. "I have new commitments with my boys so I would like to make it a good one."

It's been a stellar career for Henare who had his first Open-class woolhandling win at the age of 15, and whose record of now over 100 wins includes four World titles - World championships individual and teams titles in 2012 and 2017.

It also includes a record six consecutive Golden Shears Open titles, and four wins in the New Zealand Championships Open final. He's also had eight wins in the Otago Shears' New Zealand Woolhandler of the Year final, the first five in a row before he'd turned 21.

"I've met a lot of great people in my short," he said, oblivious to the fact that, after all, he has been competing, "hard-out" as the saying goes, for more than 14 years, since the 2004-2005 season when he won a New Zealand Junior title at the age of 13. "They've all helped me to be the person I am today and I thank them all 100 percent."

The odds are heavily in favour of a win in his last test in Australia where he partners with 2008 World champion and eight-times New Zealand Shears Open champion Sheree Alabaster, of Taihape.

New Zealand has won all 12 transtasman tests in which he's competed dating back to his first at Hay in New South Wales in 2008.

The black-shirts will be going for a sixth win in a row in the annual home-and-away tests, Australia having last won in Masterton in 2015. Australia will be represented for the fourth test in a row by 2017 World championships pairing of Sophie Huff and Mel Morris.

Canterbury shearers Tony Dobbs and Allen Gemmell will be favourites to clip their way to New Zealand's 10<sup>th</sup> blades shearing test win in a row, up against regular Australian pair Johnathon Dalla and Ken French. Australia is yet to win in the blades tests since regular matches began in 2010.

It will be a different story in the machine shearing test where possibly New Zealand's strongest-ever transtasman team, comprising 2017 World teams champions John Kirkpatrick and Nathan Stratford and 2014 World champion Rowland Smith will be out to stop merino shearing guru Shannon Warnest from leading Australia to a third win in a row.

Australia have won 20 of the 31 tests since the South Australian shearer first took part in 2000, have now won 33 of the 63 tests since regular transtasman machine shearing contests started in 1974, and Warnest and teammates Daniel McIntyre and Jason Wingfield won at Bendigo last November and in Masterton last March.

The New Zealand team is managed by shearing judge Peter McCabe, of Tauranga, and the woolhandling judge is Linda Tarrant, of Taumarunui.

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