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K&L Gates' **Christine Danos** advises designers on grants and financial assistance.

**NEW AND EMERGING** fashion and textile designers will be pleased to learn that there are a range of grants, financial assistance and industry awards available to assist in the development of their businesses. Grants and awards can help kick-start new businesses and the publicity of winning an award can put emerging businesses on the map. Some of the grants and prizes that are available to designers in the Australian fashion industry are discussed in this article.

## Australian Government business grants

The Australian Government provides a range of grants and assistance to Australian businesses, including to fashion designers. These grants are aimed at supporting business development, innovation and technological development. Some of the grants and assistance programs available include:

Entrepreneurs' Infrastructure Programme – offers support to businesses in three phases:

- business management
- research connections and accelerating commercialisation of new products
- processes and services.

Research and development (R&D) tax incentive – assists businesses to offset some of the costs of doing R&D.

Small business assistance services – offers a support line available to Australian businesses providing start-up information, banking, finance, accounting and marketing, small business counselling and IT advice.

## Export Market Development Grants

Designers exporting goods can take advantage of the EMDG scheme which offers assistance to Australian businesses to develop export markets. The EMDG reimburses up to 50% of eligible export promotion expenses above AUD5,000 provided that designers have spent at least AUD15,000 on eligible expenses and have an annual income of less than AUD50 million.

Designers may claim expenses on export promotional activities undertaken during the previous financial year and, for their first grant, designers may claim expenses incurred in the past two financial years. Up to eight grants are allowed.

## VAMFF National Designer Award

Each year the Virgin Australia Melbourne Fashion Festival (VAMFF) accepts applications from emerging designers for its National Designer Award. The National Designer

Award acknowledges an up and coming designer in the first five years of business that demonstrates excellence in creative design, fashion innovation, high quality manufacturing standards and potential to contribute to the growth of the Australian fashion industry.

Past winners of the National Designer Award include Maticevski, Josh Goot, Dion Lee, Christopher Esber and Strateas.Carlucci.

Applicants are required to submit a capsule folio for review by the judging panel, which includes:

- a profile of the label and business plan
- a design statement
- sketches or images of the designer's latest collection
- photographs or a look book of the designer's past collections.

Applicants that are shortlisted are invited to participate in an interview with the judging panel and present key looks from the designer's latest collection. The winner of the National Designer Award is announced at a prize ceremony that takes place during the Melbourne Fashion Festival.

In the past, the prize pack has been valued at over AUD100,000 and has included return flights to New York, a retail opportunity with a major shopping centre, legal and financial advisory services, a cash payment and other components.

Applications for the 2015 National Designer Award have now closed but check the VAMFF website in late 2015 to download information and the regulations for submissions for the 2016 National Designer Award: [www.vamff.com.au](http://www.vamff.com.au).

## BT Emerging Fashion Designer Award

Founded in 2013, the BT Emerging Fashion Designer Award is a national award aimed at identifying aspiring fashion designers and providing financial support, advice and mentoring to launch their careers in the Australian fashion industry.

Designers must have produced at least three collections, been trading for no more than seven years and have an annual sales turnover of less than AUD2 million in order to be eligible. Five semi-finalists will be selected based on the designers' experience, style, business and marketing vision, and manufacturing quality. Past winners are Michael Lo Sordo and Christopher Esber.

The prize is valued at over AUD40,000 and includes a AUD10,000 cash grant by BT, financial advisory services for one year, return

flights to Los Angeles and two mentoring sessions with two fashion industry icons.

Applications for the 2015 Award are now closed but see [www.brunwayforsuccess.com.au](http://www.brunwayforsuccess.com.au) for details on when applications for the 2016 Award open.

## Good Design Award

The Good Design Award is presented by Good Design Australia and is one of the longest standing design awards in the world. Recognising a range of product categories, the Good Design Award has a Fashion and Accessories focused category that covers jewellery, eyewear, watches, fashion apparel and accessories, travel and leather goods.

Entries close on 20 March 2015. For more details, see [www.gooddesignaustralia.com/awards](http://www.gooddesignaustralia.com/awards).

For more information about any of the grants or awards mentioned in this article, please contact Christine Danos, Senior Associate at K&L Gates ([christine.danos@klgates.com](mailto:christine.danos@klgates.com)). This article is for informational purposes and does not contain or convey legal advice. The information herein should not be used or relied upon in regard to any particular facts or circumstances without first consulting a lawyer. ■

