

Slow clothing culture

Jane Milburn

*This article is an adaptation of an extract from Jane Milburn's self-published book, **Slow Clothing: Finding Meaning in What We Wear**, available on her website <textilebeat.com>. Jane is a sustainability consultant and the founder of Textile Beat. She upcycled a career in agricultural science and communications to champion slow clothing as a creative and ethical way of dressing that engages hands, heads and hearts. Jane loves natural fibres and being in nature, which drives her to speak out about ways to protect the planet for future generations.*

Introducing slow clothing

Connecting to what we wear

Slow clothing is the antithesis of fast fashion. It is a way of thinking about, choosing and wearing clothes so we have a meaningful connection to them.

Today we are subjected to incessant marketing that creates a mindset that we must have the newest/brightest/best to compete with others and to appear successful. Often we are left feeling insecure and unfulfilled by this consumer cycle, not to mention impoverished! As society evolves into post-consumerism, now is the time for bricolage—the practice of creating something from natural resources on hand as a way of living lightly while gaining attachment to things that bring meaning to our lives.

Slow clothing is about individual expression and personal connection to what we wear. We stitch to make our own mark on things and to be mindfully engaged and productive. In return, we are satisfied and liberated from conspicuous consumption and an endless search for meaning through buying more things. We have finite resources on our earth and we need to make everyday choices that show careful and considered use of those resources if we are to sustain our individual and collective futures.

Dressing is an everyday practice that defines us and reflects our values. We are naturally attached to clothes on a physical, emotional and even on a spiritual level. We are particular about what we wear because we want to look good, to feel comfortable, to reflect a certain image and to have a sense of belonging to the groups of which we are members. Yet almost all our garments are now designed for us and we simply choose from ready-made options based on our age,

shape and size, stage of life, work participation, socioeconomic status and spending capacity. Unless we deliberately decide to step off the fast-fashion treadmill, we are trapped in a vortex with little thought beyond the next new outfit—without consideration for how we could engage our own creative expression, energy and skills in what is already around us.

The environment

The global fashion industry now produces 100 billion garments annually (Remy, Speelman & Swartz, 2016). This production may accelerate with automation as SEWBOTS™ (sewing robots) begin to produce one T-shirt every 22 seconds (Innovation in Textiles, 2017). Two-thirds of new clothing is made from synthetic fibres derived from petroleum—these garments are effectively plastic and they may never break down. Research has shown that they shed microplastic particles into the ecosystem with every wash (Browne et al., 2011). Other research has found that microplastic appears in 80 per cent of drinking water, with the likely source being everyday abrasion of synthetic clothing, upholstery and carpets (Tyree & Morrison, 2017).

The trillion-dollar fashion industry, it has been said, is the second-most polluting after the oil industry, although the source of that assertion is unknown. The electricity, food and transport industries would also rate highly as polluters. However, a recent report, *Pulse of the Fashion Industry 2017*, did make fashion's status on sustainability abundantly clear—rating it only 32 out of 100—with much room to improve its social and environmental performance (Global Fashion Agenda and The Boston Consulting Group, 2017).

Slow clothing is a holistic approach to the clothing choices we make each and every day about what

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we wear and how those choices may impact our health and the health of the ecosystem in which we live. It is about self-empowerment through thinking resourcefully and acting individually.

Clothing or fashion?

For some time I have pondered the difference between clothing and fashion. Is ‘fashion’ clothing or is ‘clothing’ fashion? When is fashion no longer ‘in fashion’? If we wear things that are old, must they be ‘clothing’ because they can’t be ‘fashion’? Various we have slow fashion, ethical fashion, eco fashion and sustainable fashion. Yet fashion, by definition, is ever changing, so how can it be slow or sustainable? The word fashion is also used to describe the latest style of hair, decoration or behaviour. From this perspective, I have arrived at the concept of slow clothing as a philosophy—a way of thinking about and choosing clothes to ensure they bring meaning, value and joy to every day.

Slow clothing is about thoughtful, ethical, creative and sustainable ways to enjoy clothes while minimising our material footprint. Slow clothing manifests through ten simple actions—be thoughtful, treasure natural, buy quality, support local, have few, care, make, revive, adapt and salvage.

With the risk of dangerous climate change acknowledged by nations worldwide through the United Nations’ Paris accord, and the Sustainable Development Goals in place, we can all contribute by living lightly and engaging sustainable skills and strategies. Activities such as growing, caring, sharing, recycling, making, saving, upcycling and reusing may take a little more effort and commitment but the amalgamation of individual choices to slow consumption can make a real difference in our world.

In *Clothing Poverty: The Hidden World of Fast Fashion and Second-Hand Clothes*, Andrew Brooks (2015) said:

From an environmental perspective the individually responsible decision is to choose to shop less often, wear clothes until they are worn out, and then repair or recycle them within the household or replace them with locally produced goods. Slowing the rate of clothing consumption by buying fewer higher-quality clothes is a far more environmentally friendly approach than continuing to buy fast fashion and donating excess clothes (p. 231).

Clothing in or out of fashion

Returning to those earlier thoughts about fashion versus clothing, Professor Kate Fletcher from the University of the Arts London’s Centre for Sustainable Fashion offers the following interpretation. While clothing meets our material needs, fashion emerged to satisfy non-material needs for participation, identity and freedom, and to signal wealth and social status. In her book, *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*, Fletcher (2014) said:

While the ostensible function of all clothing is material, to protect our modesty and keep us warm, this function is supplemented—and often eclipsed—for fashion pieces, which are ‘consumed’ for their symbolic functions rather than their material ones; as a practice of identity formation, where we signal who and what we are to others and negotiate our place in social structure; of individual agency; and also simply to please ourselves (p. 144).

Do we need to follow contemporary mores when we know that having more does *not* translate into living better? Why attempt to keep up with ever-changing trends when we know that this results in huge consumption and waste of resources? In the same way that most manufactured food in supermarkets is unhealthy, cheap fast fashion is unhealthy too—just not for our immediate health. As we learnt to understand the value of slow food, we are learning the value of slow clothing.

Conscious consumers are now looking beyond visual appearances and understanding that planetary health is at stake here—our clothing choices don’t just affect our own health; they affect the health of others and the health of our planet. While we cannot easily influence the way our clothing is made (unless we make it ourselves), we can become more informed and change the way we buy, use and discard it.



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I stepped into this arena in 2012 as part of an active search for meaning. Through independent research and experiential learning, I sought to understand our clothing story in a context broader than fashion—a lifestyle context that includes everyday practice and individual creativity. I love natural fibres and noticed that their presence in shops and on people was dwindling, while the overall volume of clothing was increasing, with little of it being locally made. I went looking for information, made observations and considered the landscape. In thinking creatively and seeking agency, I embraced a slow-clothing philosophy.

As we have gained somewhat by having cheap fast fashion on tap, we have also lost the mindful, creative, resourceful benefits of doing things for ourselves. That is one of the reasons I undertook a social-change project in 2014 aimed at shifting thinking about the way clothing and textiles are consumed. The 365-day Sew it Again project (Sew it Again, n.d.) demonstrated creative ways to upcycle clothing and empower individuals to tap into the ‘greenest’ clothing of all, that already existing in people’s wardrobes and in op shops. It highlighted the value of sewing skills, encouraged a culture of thrift and showed heartfelt concern. In 2016 I followed up with The Slow Clothing Project (Textile Beat, n.d.) engaging like-minded makers across Australia.

Until recently, the thought of making do as stoic Brits and others did during earlier tough times was stigmatised. In a world readily accepting waste in pursuit of everyday perfection, repair was interpreted as representing thrift or even poverty. We are now recalibrating that assessment—wearing clothing with visible mends is being seen as a confident, creative statement about sustainable values, rather than a sign of being impoverished.

So to ‘slow clothing’

What we wear impacts planetary health in ways that we are only beginning to understand. We are exposed to marketing that attempts to convince us that we need more to be fulfilled. Yet in the rush to own things for reasons of status and looks, we lose the opportunity to be mindful, resourceful and creative. Until we make something for ourselves to wear, we cannot fully appreciate the resources, time and skills that go into manufacturing the clothes we buy.

We *can* step off the treadmill of constant and conspicuous consumption. People with a few hand-stitching skills can enjoy the independence of being able to make, upcycle, mend and adapt garments. We can gain a sense of achievement and emotional attachment to our original work, while wearing garments that flatter our body shape. Financial, social and psychological benefits flow from making sustainable and ethical clothing choices. Perhaps most importantly, we know that no-one was exploited in the process.

In *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*, Naomi Klein (2014) says all living things must take from nature to survive but that this should be done responsibly, with caretaking and a commitment to renewal and regeneration:

Living nonextractively means relying overwhelmingly on resources that can be continuously regenerated: deriving our food from farming methods that protect soil fertility; our energy from methods that harness the ever-renewing strength of the sun, wind and waves; our metals from recycled and reused sources (p. 447).

In *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*, Fletcher (2014) argued most of us have a fairly lifeless and disappointing relationship with our clothes:

This lack of engagement starts as we go shopping for clothes and continues as we wear these garments ... products on sale on the high street are becoming homogenous and this lack of choice erodes our individuality and dulls our imagination, limiting our confidence about what clothes can be (pp. 222–223).

It is assumed that we, the wearers, will follow prescribed trends and accept being increasingly distanced from the creative process. Fletcher (2014) said:

Ready-made garments appear to offer us the promise of something better than we could make ourselves. Although when we go down the route of buying into this perceived perfection, we end up forgoing an opportunity to learn how to make things and become more skilled. As deskilled individuals, we play into the hands of consumerist fashion (p. 223).

This is what slow clothing is about. We are not passive. We are reclaiming our power to make choices for ourselves. We are resisting the fashion system’s influence by asserting our individuality, originality and creativity. We are reskilling, gaining confidence to dress in

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an individual style rather than in a manner determined and limited by others. We want to live in a sustainable world that does not waste or exploit resources and people. Slow clothing is a pathway to living simply and fairly, by dressing creatively and authentically.

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Avoid going to places where you might be tempted to buy things you don't need

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It is only in the past 100 years or so that abundance has created high-consumption lifestyles with a multitude of contrived and perceived needs that foster feelings of dissatisfaction with the status quo.

If we reflect on our intangible health needs as outlined in Stephen Boyden's, *The Biology of Civilisation* (2004), we understand that including opportunities for creative behaviour and learning manual skills are important for our wellbeing. They bring a sense of personal involvement and purpose. This is worth remembering at a time when many of our needs are ready-made for us to just consume.

I am grateful to have found a way to meet these intangible needs through upcycling and this slow-clothing work, wrapped up in love and care for family, friendships and the natural world. This brings meaning and purpose to my life.

Just as reconnecting to the source of our food by learning to grow and cook it can help us make healthier eating choices, so can an understanding of how clothes are made and learning mending skills empower us to make 'healthier' clothing choices.

Living sustainably, based on the principles of permaculture and sufficiency, incorporates knowing how to grow and cook—AND—how to make and mend. I know this because I live

it. I write this article as a new grandmother, in the hope that my grandchildren and their children's children can continue to live well into the future. A homespun philosophy of valuing the old may be at odds with the contemporary culture of forever more new, yet I pursue it in the belief that a circular approach will eventually bring these two perspectives together.

By developing self-awareness, we can create an independent style that reflects our uniqueness, our *kansei*¹. We can cherry-pick ideas from what we see around us but we need not be beholden to them.

Slow clothing values personal connection to garments through the stories and memories they hold. It considers the ethics and sustainability of our garments, their comfort and longevity, and our desire to be more engaged with the making process.

The Slow Clothing Manifesto

The Slow Clothing Manifesto is a framework of ten simple actions we can take to prompt us to think about how we can survive and thrive in a material world, and become more conscious of what we are wearing. This is not rocket science. Once, these actions or activities—ways of life, really—might have been learned at school or passed on from one generation to the next.

The ten actions are: be thoughtful, treasure natural, buy quality, support local, have few, care, make, revive, adapt and salvage. The first five are about switching on, while the second five get you more hands-on with this philosophy when you can make time.

Switching on Be thoughtful

Reflect on the role clothes play in your life. Inform yourself about ethical certification and fair trade. Don't be seduced into buying things just because they are on sale. Find more interesting things than shopping for recreation. Avoid going to places where you might be tempted to buy things you don't need.

Before you open your moneybag let questions like these pass through your mind:

- Do I need it?
- Do I already have something like it?
- How often will I wear it?
- Will I wear it at least 30 times? (Siegle, n.d.) #30wears

SLOW CLOTHING manifesto

think
natural
quality
local
few
care
make
revive
adapt
salvage

- make thoughtful, ethical, informed choices
- treasure fibres from nature and limit synthetics
- buy well once, quality remains after price is forgotten
- support local makers, those with good stories and fair trade
- live with less, have a signature style, minimal wardrobe, unfollow
- mend, patch, sort, sponge, wash less, use cold water, line dry
- learn how to sew as a life skill, value DIY and handmade
- enjoy vintage, exchange, pre-loved, and swapping
- upcycle, refashion, eco-dye, create new from old
- donate, pass on, rag, weave, recycle or compost



1. A Japanese word that covers the meanings of sensitivity, sensibility and intuition in English.

- Is it well made? Will it last 30 wears?
- Is it easy to care for?
- Does it need dry-cleaning?
- Where was it made and what is it made from?
- Is it a responsible purchase?

Consider supporting social-enterprise brands that produce clothes with social justice in mind. Select styles that have multiple uses and fastenings that are flexible for changing figures.

Treasure natural

My personal preference is to limit wearing synthetics to products that require them, like swimwear and waterproof gear. Synthetic fibres are derived from petroleum and are a type of plastic. They don't breathe and research shows they are more likely to harbour bacteria and odour than natural fibres are (Callewaert et al., 2014). Synthetics also gather static electricity and may cling to your body in uncomfortable and embarrassing ways.

Reconstituted cellulose fibres—such as viscose, rayon, bamboo, lyocell (trade name TENCEL)—while man-made, are derived from plants and wood and are, therefore, more natural than synthetic fibres. They have design advantages, are comfortable to wear and easy to care for. But there are concerns about the chemicals used in their production. Check before you buy using resources such as the Good on You app <<https://goodonyou.eco/app/>> (Robertson, 2017).

Natural fibres tend to be more expensive and water-intensive to produce, therefore, we should treasure them until they literally wear out! Cotton is the dominant natural fibre. Seek out sustainable and organic cotton for preference. Linen is one of the greenest fibres—just machine wash it, shake it, hang it out to dry and wear it as it is. I haven't ironed linen for years—which saves energy and effort (although a short tumble-dry gives linen garments a nice crinkle). Hemp is less readily available but is as green as linen, if not more so. Animal fibres like wool, alpaca, cashmere and silk are expensive and need a little extra care but will last a long time and wear well between washes.

While natural-fibre manufacturing is limited in Australia there are groups keen to change that. Queensland-based Full Circle Fibres, for example, is generating products made from local cotton.

Buy quality

Buy for the long term. As the old saying goes, quality remains long after the price has been forgotten. Choose classic styles that will serve you well over time rather than fashion fads. Buy the best you can afford. Buy things you love 100 per cent and wear them for a lifetime.

Do your due diligence before handing over your cash or card. Look inside to check seams, finishes, fastenings and fabric composition. Brand names can come with inflated prices; so make sure your new purchase represents real quality rather than just giving the illusion of it. Seek out accredited companies that have stood the test of time, or use ethical-fashion guides to inform your choices. Use department stores that have ethical-sourcing policies, or online options that aggregate brands they trust. Choose brands that have a transparent environmental ethos, which encourages recycling and reduced consumption by creating products designed to last a long time.

Support local

Since the 2013 Rana Plaza tragedy revealed the globalisation race to the bottom on price, ethics and social justice, we have seen a desire to return to localisation. 'Buy local' is a mantra ringing in Australia, in Britain and in America—not just for our clothing but for our food and other aspects of life too.

While only a fraction of the clothing bought in developed nations is made onshore, there is growing interest in locally made clothing and footwear. We can foster local industry by spending a little more on items made by companies that pay fair wages, and in turn support other local businesses. In Australia, for example, Merino Country has set up its own supply chain to source wool from farms in New South Wales, which is processed and made into garments at its factory in Queensland. Similarly, Rant Clothing uses locally sourced fabric and all clothing production occurs within a 30-km radius of its Brisbane studio. In the United States, Alabama Chanin has created local organic-cotton fabric specifically for its



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bespoke clothing range and kits. Many small makers and upcyclers selling at local markets and online benefit from a commitment to buy local. You might also like to support Fairtrade-registered local companies that make overseas but ensure that they know their supply chains.

Have few

Australians have the largest homes in the world, followed by United States and Canada: I'm sure this equates to having the biggest wardrobes too! According to Lindsay Wilson from Shrink That Footprint (n.d.), the average new home in Australia is 214 m². Compare this to the countries with smallest homes: Hong Kong (45 m²), Russia (57 m²) and the United Kingdom (76 m²).

Minimalists confirm that tiny homes and small wardrobes have a lot to recommend them. A portable or capsule wardrobe simplifies our life and choices. Project 333—dressing with 33 things or less for three months—launched by Be More with Less (Carver, n.d.) has become a global movement. On an individual scale, my friend Pam Greet (2016) pared her wardrobe down to 50 items (including underwear) in 2016. Pam maintains that minimising her wardrobe maximised her life.

We can simplify our lives by choosing a signature style and wearing it as a uniform—perhaps just one style of T-shirt, or one style of dress. Or we may choose just one colour and stick with that.

Hands-on

The next five activities for surviving and thriving in a material world require more engagement. Are you ready to be hands-on and to make time to be creative?

Care

Get more life out of what you already own by paying attention and doing running repairs. If you feel a thread snap or notice a seam unravelling, attend to it immediately. As the old saying goes: *A stitch in time saves nine!*

Revaluing mending skills not only extends the life of our clothing, it empowers us to create something uniquely individual. Mended garments carry a story of care. They reflect the triumph of imperfection over pretension, while the act of mending itself brings transformation in both the mender and the mended. By embracing repair as a valid and useful act, we—the menders—are stitching new life energy into something others may have thrown away.

When we pause and add a mark of care to our clothes, we extend their life and bring additional meaning to our own.

It is commonly accepted that up to 25 per cent of the environmental footprint of garments comes from the way we care for them. We can reduce that footprint by caring for our clothes in ways that also save us time and money.

Sewing and stitching
are life skills, just like
cooking and baking.

Life skills enable us
to provide for ourselves.

– Jane Milburn

Make

Until we make something for ourselves to wear, we cannot appreciate the resources, time and skill that go into creating the clothes we buy. The fashion industry has conditioned us to be passive consumers. Everyone with the requisite cash or credit can buy clothes, yet few know the satisfaction of making something to wear for themselves.

Sewing—or learning to sew—enables us to create something uniquely ours; that reflects our style and personality, our independence and creativity. Yet just because we *can* sew, doesn't mean that we do. At group presentations, I usually ask who is wearing something handmade. More often than not, no one raises a hand.

Yet making things makes us feel good. It may even have measurable benefits for our mental health, if the applause for baking (Thomson, 2017) and knitting (Brown, 2016) is an indication. Working with our hands, head and heart can:

- relieve stress, anxiety and symptoms of depression
- generate a sense of pride and productivity
- enable autonomy and creative choices
- boost brain power through concentrating and problem-solving
- slow cognitive decline
- improve motor function.

I'm not advocating that we sew *all* our clothes, rather that sewing clothes becomes part of a growing 'maker culture' (think brewing, baking, preserving etc.) because of the satisfaction of doing things for ourselves. A student friend of my daughter was thrilled to tell me she was wearing a skirt she made with her mother, who is a surgeon. I was equally thrilled about her discovery of how meaningful she had found it to make a garment with her hands, energy and time—in the hope that more young people may likewise be open to this 'other' way of dressing.

Revive

Clothing has always been borrowed, exchanged and swapped, through both formal and informal networks. In a climate-changed world, we now have even more reason to embrace clothing revival as a winning strategy.

There is no use-by date on simple, natural-fibre, well-made clothes. We can wear them until they wear out. Garments can have second, third, fourth and fifth lifetimes if we keep them in circulation. Landfill is a place of last resort.

Second-hand is the new organic. When we buy preloved clothes, we do not add chemicals or production stress to the environment—everything else is just various shades of greenwashing². An additional benefit of wearing preloved clothes is reduced stress. You don't have to worry so much about damaging your clothes since you haven't invested a fortune in them.

Let's put fresh thinking into why it pays to op shop:

- The garments you purchase have inherent ethical and sustainable values, regardless of their origin. You don't extract virgin resources from our planet and you become part of the solution by reusing existing resources.
- It is a great way to experiment with your style by trying colours and shapes not available in new clothing.
- You never feel under pressure to make a purchase and can inspect garments at your leisure.
- Older garments are often better made than new ones and chemical residues have already been washed out of them.
- The money you save by not buying new can be redeployed for holidays or supporting those in need.
- Spending money in local op shops supports the good work of charities in our communities.



Adapt

The most creative and playful way to survive and thrive in a material world is to adapt existing clothing to suit yourself—to upcycle garments already in circulation and to create something new from old.

At a time when the availability of poor-quality throwaway clothing is at its zenith, redesign and refashion are the ultimate expressions of slow clothing. Taking time to slice and dice unworn garments, then collage and stitch them together into a new form creates something unique in the world.

Upcycling appeals on many levels because it is useful, resourceful and playful. Most people get the message about overconsumption, yet few personally invest their energy and time in turning the tide against it. When we do, the results reflect our true selves and provide significant satisfaction.

Upcycling is a way to revive home sewing in the 21st century. Sewing becomes empowering and ethical. Instead of sewing from scratch, you can recreate existing resources to suit yourself and reduce waste. Anything old can be new again when we have the skills and willingness to invest the time. Indeed, think of fibre and clothing as material resources and focus on refreshing, reusing and recycling, doing good for ourselves and the environment in the process.

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2. Greenwashing is the use of marketing to appear environmentally friendly.

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Conversations about
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and styles

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Salvage

There are endless opportunities to repurpose cloth when we turn our minds to it. The list below presents just a few options to get you thinking:

- *Cleaning cloths*
There's something quite lovely about seeing a favourite old sheet or garment turn up in your cleaning rags. Memories resurface of what that piece of cloth used to be used for. Resourceful people turn worn-out clothing into cleaning rags.
- *Compost*
When natural-fibre garments wear out, they effectively biodegrade and return organic matter to the soil. Be aware the thread in the seams will generally be polyester, so you may want to cut this away before adding natural-fibre cloth to the compost or using it as groundcover under bark mulch.
- *Handmade eco-products*
The eco-statement of imperfect-yet-handmade upcycled products means they should be valued for their authenticity and sincerity, rather than for following the latest design aesthetic. Old clothes and linen can be upcycled into an endless array of accessories and homewares, including quilts, rag rugs and wall hangings. I recently turned my children's long-outgrown hand-painted T-shirts into soft and personal hankies (knit fabric doesn't fray, so hemming was not required). T-shirts can become eco-shopping bags, eco-jewellery or knitting yarn. Shirts can become cushion covers or frills on a skirt. Robust denim from jeans has extraordinary upcycling potential, including for bags, bunting, carriers and containers.

Useful fabric remnants are also being repurposed into replacements for plastic shopping bags through Boomerang Bags' community initiative (Boomerang Bags, n.d.).

Threads of change

Change takes time. We needn't feel any pressure to adopt all these actions into our busy lives. Just start out easy and do *something*. Learning to stitch is enough!

Slow clothing is an evolutionary concept, a journey of discovery stepping back from the high-consumption treadmill. It is about creating and wearing your own style and ensuring that it doesn't cost the earth. Have fun being bold and creative as you learn to survive and thrive in a material world.

It is empowering to become more self-sufficient and independent. Before buying anything new, revisit what you already have available and see what you can do to make it work better for you.

Embrace imperfection. Being perfect is impossible to maintain. Dysfunctional or discarded clothes provide opportunities for experimentation and learning new skills in ways that cost little. The potential for upcycling is endless, limited only by your imagination, skills and time. Remember that slow clothing is about individual expression and personal connection to what we wear. We stitch to make a mark and to be mindful. We are original, natural and resourceful.

This rethinking of clothing culture is grounded in everyday practice. We are now having conversations about the substance of clothing in the context of sustainability and lifestyle—alongside local food, soul craft and composting—instead of only in the context of fashionable looks and styles.

Slow clothing is part of emergent thinking around revaluing material things, as articulated by economist Richard Denniss (2017) in, *Curing Affluenza: How to Buy Less Stuff and Save the World*. Similarly, it taps into the return to a culture of making and repairing as documented by Katherine Wilson (2017) in, *Tinkering: Australians Reinvent DIY Culture*.

I've shared with many the simple pleasure of tinkering with our clothes to make them last longer and negate the need for buying more. This tinkering develops our curiosity and creativity as it builds resilience and independence from the earn-more-to-spend-more consumer cycle. Many people and groups have provided input and opportunities to share these engaged ways of dressing. Some of their feedback appears in my book, *Slow Clothing: Finding Meaning in What We Wear* (Milburn, 2017). For me it has been personally satisfying to see the uptake of upcycling as a conscious practice and how many young people are interested in its potential for customising their clothes.

Going forward, we need to bring creative reuse into sustainability teaching and to nurture local natural-fibre production systems. We also need to support the re-emerging maker culture and, as a minimum, reskill ourselves and future generations for doing running repairs to our clothing.

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