

EDITORIAL

Everything old is new again

Virginia Gawler

JANE Milburn calls herself a material activist and she's doing for clothing what the slow food movement has been doing for cooking and eating.

In this age of fast fashion and instant purchasing without even trying on clothes, Jane is asking us to think before we buy for our own health, the health of the planet and future generations.

"We know food choices influence our health yet how often do we think about how clothing choices influence our health and wellbeing," Jane says in her book *Slow Clothing: Finding Meaning in What We Wear*.

"Two-thirds of new clothing is made from synthetic fibres derived from petroleum. These garments are effectively plastic and they may never break down," she says, adding that research has shown these types of garments shed microplastic particles into the ecosystem with every wash.

Jane believes it's time our society had a change of clothes – philosophically not literally.

"It's time to ignore incessant marketing that often leaves us feeling insecure and unfulfilled by a consumer cycle driven by fashion values rather than health and wellbeing," she says.

Jane who is based in Brisbane will give a free public presentation about her slow clothing philosophy at the Wagga Art Gallery on Friday 11 May from 6.00pm until 8.00pm. Titled *A Change of Clothes*, the presentation will be followed by a Q and A session. In addition she will run two free workshops on Saturday 12 May. They are *T-shirts reworked as eco-products* from 10.00am until noon and *upcycling garments to suit yourself* from 1.00pm until 3.00pm.

As an agricultural scientist, Jane did postgraduate research on textiles waste globally and is passionate about reducing it. "I am also a crafter and sewist and I

have always loved working with natural fibres, but I noticed their presence in shops and on people was dwindling. I was writing a food blog in 2011 when I began observing what was going on with clothing and fashion. It was all about the latest looks, colours and styles without any thought about our material footprint," Jane says.

The Slow Clothing philosophy is a holistic approach to the clothing choices we make every day in what we wear and what we buy. It is the antithesis of fast fashion.

As Jane explains in her *Slow Clothing* book: "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."

It's estimated the fashion industry produces 100 billion garments globally each year, which is expected to increase with automation as sewing robots begin producing one T-shirt every 22 seconds.

To counter this overproduction, overconsumption and overuse of natural resources Jane has developed the *Slow Clothing Manifesto*, a framework of 10 simple actions to prompt us to think about how to become more conscious of what we are wearing.

The 10 actions are:

- make thoughtful, informed, ethical choices,
- treasure natural fibres and limit synthetics,
- buy well once, quality outlasts price,
- support local makers and fair trade,
- live with less and have a minimal wardrobe,
- care for, mend and wash less,
- make it yourself and learn how to sew,
- revive and buy pre-loved clothing where possible,
- adapt and refashion or create new from old and salvage or recycle,
- pass on where possible, recycle or compost.

"Second-hand clothing is the new



Jane Milburn, right, helps to upcycle a garment at one of her workshops.

organic. When you buy pre-loved clothes you are not adding chemicals or production stress to the environment. You become part of the solution by reusing existing resources. Clothing that already exists in people's wardrobes or in op shops is really the greenest clothing of all," Jane says and advises limiting synthetics to products such as swimwear or waterproof apparel.

"Natural fibres such as cotton tend to be more expensive and water-intensive to produce, therefore we should wear cotton garments until they literally wear out. And preferably seek out organic cotton where possible. Wool is also very good because it is natural and biodegradable. However, we don't process much of our own wool in

Australia."

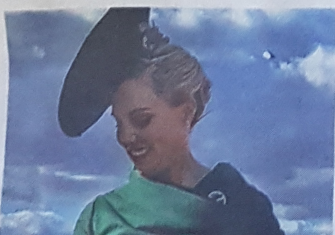
"Going forward we need to bring creative reuse into sustainability teaching and nurture local natural-fibre production systems.

"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," Jane says.

For more information or to book for Jane Milburn's talk and workshops contact the Wagga Art Gallery on 6926 9660 or email gallery@wagga.nsw.gov.au

For more information on Jane's Slow Clothing philosophy visit her website at www.textilebeat.com.

Pre-loved outfit is a third-time winner



THE strikingly beautiful ensemble worn by Kelly Rands to the Wagga Gold Cup meeting last Friday proved Jane Milburn's philosophy that pre-loved clothing is a winner.

Kelly's outfit, which took out the Lady of the Day title in the MTC Gold Cup Fashions on the Field contest, had two previous owners who also won Fashions on the Field contests at different race meetings.

Its first owner won the Fashions on the Field competition at Tamworth races. On its second outing, the outfit's next wearer won

Yarrow is an ancient cure

Jo Wilson; Essential Wisdom

THE herb of this week is Yarrow – its Latin botanical name is *Achillea millefolium* but other names include nosebleed, carpenter's woundwort and soldier's woundwort, all of which should give a good indication of what it can be used for.

Yarrow is an amazing herb with its feathery green leaves and white or yellow

to the compost pile hasten the breakdown of the ingredients.

Yarrow is perhaps best known for its wound healing properties. It has been used from the time of the Ancient Greeks until the First World War to treat wounds, resulting in its common name, soldiers' woundwort. Yarrow is also antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, astringent, and analgesic.