

Fashion trash affects planet

“Be eco-friendly and stylish at the same time”

In a society where shopping is a national pastime, even encouraged by government stimulus packages, our wardrobes are full to overflowing.

Australians are spending at least \$10.5 billion per year on wasteful consumption, \$4.7 million spent on clothing and accessories alone.

But with all this excess consumption what effects are our purchases making on the environment?

In the UK it is estimated that around 1.2 million tons of clothing is sent to landfill. Of that it's estimated that 95 per cent could have been recycled.

In response to these figures there has been a wave of action in the UK to highlight the issue. Even Marks and Spencer are in on the act, joining together with Oxfam in 2008 to encourage people to recycle their clothes to raise money for Oxfam's work and reduce the amount of clothing waste.

In Australia we are still coming to grips with our insatiable consumption and the effect of clothing waste. A recent discussion paper by the Australian Technical Textiles & Non Woven Association outlined the lack of specific waste statistics and identified a need to address the problem and develop solutions to excess waste in the fashion and textile industry.

RMIT fashion and sustainability lecturer Sue Thomas, says that in Australia "although we are aware of green issues we're not very proactive". Australia is "extremely high in (the) waste league".

This wastefulness has been fuelled by 'fast fashion', a term that is now being used by the sustainability movement to refer to cheaply made, generic, chain store clothing. Take a look in your own wardrobe for example, how many times have you actually worn that \$20 dress you bought in the bargain bin sale? Or the \$10 'Made in China' t-shirt that's about to be tossed into the rubbish?

Fast fashion has become the enemy and there is a groundswell of fashionistas who are injecting life back into second hand, recycled clothing.

You can be eco-friendly and stylish at the same time:

- Visit the vintage stores before the new stores
- Repair things when there's a hole in a sock or a zip broken in the dress and if you can't be bothered, pay someone or bribe your grandma with short bread
- Take care of your clothes, hand wash and go easy so they last
- Buy things that last – no more Supre – instead buy one beautiful piece that you'll love and wear until threadbare
- Assess your wardrobe – take out what you're not wearing and pass it on to someone else
- Don't buy things on sale just because they're on sale ☺

Olivia Blackburn and Kate Macpherson



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