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WHERE ARE MY PANTS?

Most people think sending their old jeans to an op shop is doing a good deed. But did they really make it to a shop floor and is anyone wearing those pants now?

DESIREE SAVAGE reports, INSIDE WEEKENDER

COVER STORY

weekender.

Weekending fashion designer Gina Dreyfus uses upcycled and altered fabrics, while extending waste by making it mean. **Picture: Robert Post**



FASHION, IT'S JUST RUBBISH

Think putting unwanted pants in a charity bin is a good deed? Few realise about 90 per cent of donations will never end up in an op shop. So where do you take your old clothes? **DESIREE SAVAGE reports.**

IF YOU'RE cleaning out your wardrobe and think your ripped and old jeans or sneakers taken over to charity bins, a charity bin or op-shop are probably not the best solution.

What most people don't realise, according to experts, is that a mere 10 per cent of donated clothing actually ends up for sale in a thrift shop or good store as ready for sale.

An Australian Bureau of Statistics report found about 900,000 tonnes of waste (textiles) or old clothes was discarded in the 2010-11 financial year, with just under 75 per cent sent directly to the tip. (Some figures also) include the waste sent overseas.

So what do you do with old jeans or a faded t-shirt or a shirt stored at the back of the wardrobe? The Mercury spoke with three experts on what happens to your

jeans, where your pants were sent up and if anyone is actually wearing your pants. "A lot of people donate to charity thinking it's a good thing to do and it's good, but more people donate than will buy as there's a supply and demand difference," said Gina Dreyfus, general manager, at the Habitat.

The social enterprise only has "one full op shop" but were trying their best to do an op shop twice a year from landfill with a lot of their discarded clothing sent overseas, but sadly some donations are still going to landfill.

Ms Dreyfus said not all clothing items were equal and donated as A Grade (cheap woollen) B Grade (sent to a company who sorts them with most ending up in overseas second hand markets) or C Grade (sent to the tip).



Habitat accept old clothing when you get sorted for reuse and recycling. **Picture: Robert Post**

"Some things just don't move, so they could be in great condition but we can't reuse it - we can't hold stock because there's

just too much of it," she said. "We're one of the top two in three countries in terms of how many kilos of clothes are brought every year and therefore have to go somewhere they don't disappear. Most of them are not compostable, so we're creating demands are complex."

Ms Dreyfus suggested for people to "start small" by only buying the clothes they think they desperately need or consent to having one second-hand item this week or the next.

Lois Eye is the Earth Syster, the chair of the path of educating and educating people on sustainable and ethical clothes after discussing the activities of the fashion industry when designing and releasing her first collection.

With the help of her husband (a Geographic Information Systems consultant), the Kombi Green enterprise is growing an online map directory of sustainable and ethical brands which can be searched by location or brand.

By talking to the list, Ms Eye goes through a checklist of whether the store is an ethical shop or a credible, what label

weekender.



The Earth Syster, Lois Eye, uses living wools for an occasion more sustainable than purchasing one that's only worn once. In the Dreyfus store the food from Blue Cow. **Picture: Robert Post**

Lisa Beazell is having fun sewing workshops every Tuesday at Willoughby City Library, teaching people to upcycle and mend old garments in fabric. **Picture: Anna West**

There's usually a bit of a haul at the end of the day, so just send it to the tip and be a bit thankful in what you buy. Says the Green Council's manager Kyla Patten. **Picture: Robert Post**



store, whether their supply chain is transparent and ethical, how they treat their waste at the end of the cycle with waste.

"I began researching brands and realising there are lots of brands that are sustainable," she said. "It made me think there's something going on here."

Ms Eye is now passionate about making people aware of the realities of fast fashion rather than contribute to the problem. "Buy vintage and pre-loved, go to your local op shop - and I urge people to go to shops on wheels," she said. "I also encourage people to buy less and buy quality, instead of buying five or six items you use and that one would last longer."

When educating clients, Ms Eye looks for garments that are ethically made but also have a lot of uses for them, such as work clothes and, and is a big supporter of shopping second-hand.

"We all have the power to create positive change for the industry, the consumer and the planet through the decisions we make in buying responsibly made clothes," Ms Eye said. "It's up to us as consumers but it's the government by introducing

laws and policies around how much waste is produced and what they're doing at the end of the cycle with waste."

In May 20 the federal government is launching a sustainable and ethical waste and long-term together the fashion industry, retailers, charities, those producers, researchers and waste management to stop dumping clothes in landfill.

Currently only a handful of Australian companies are recycling clothes as the process is cumbersome and expensive, but it is slowly making progress.

Habitat is trying to develop a chemical process to separate textile components to be reused in new materials. Habitat Regional Council recently ran a three events trial of taking old clothes for reuse and recycling, and this is a promising first, reusable school uniforms and production of cars.

Opposite is a company that take your unwanted pair of pants and either use wools for reuse or recycles them into knits, transforming them into things like kids' socks, shoes, homeware and accessories.

Habitat and Zero stores have clothing bins designed for unwanted clothes (organic

based on the condition) and will be sent into different categories to be re-worked, reused (like for clothing tags) or recycled into textile fibres.

The Changing Australia organisation also supports sustainable practices like clothes swapping with friends, donating clothes for a big event rather than purchase, or loans to clothes in landfill.

Local councils and community groups often hold workshops on how to fix things like the Tenkage at the Duxton Recreation and Recycling Centre, Katoomba Council is running a one-off mending workshop on June 3 to give women the skills to fix a zip on a fabric, while sustainable fashion designer Lisa Beazell is running a series of live "Fashion Flips" at Willoughby City Library for owners of old clothes to learn to mend or upcycle.

"I was joined in a family that used to upcycle everything from existing containers and, to redesigning our clothes," the Willoughby council said. "My aunt was a seamstress in London for almost 50 years and she used to teach women and young ladies how to sew and how to make garments,

The designer's collections are online and available in stores, contact on Instagram from experts, such as also seen national 100 and maintain the use of nylon and polyester, with a focus on quality."

"The fashion industry is one of the most harmful in terms of the world for the environment so we are trying to maximise the most production and bring a slow fashion brand," Ms Dreyfus said. "The first year of the business was not sold in a clothing store."

Fast Australian brands on average 13 kilos of clothes each year, or around a quarter of the weight of the world's total clothing production, and it's only a product that will get more unless people start thinking more about what they're wearing and what happens to an old pair of pants.

"People often get overwhelmed when they understand some of the problems we're facing when it comes to sustainability and it's hard to know where to start," Ms Dreyfus said. "Make sure you wash and clean when you're ready make another small change, and it gets easier with each step. It doesn't matter where you start as all leading to the right direction."

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