

CASE STUDY: TEXTILES

Wastebusters Slow Fashion Month

Prepared by the Zero Waste Network

The Wastebusters recycling centre and reuse shop in Wānaka opened in 2000. Have you been there? If you haven't, you must go! The energy and joy of the place surrounds you. Of course, it has been successfully diverting thousands of tonnes of useful resources from landfill, and for creating fulfilling local employment for 50+ people. But for more than 20 years, it has been doing so much more by creating change and impact throughout the community by shifting people's behaviour and values.

How does it do it?

Wastebusters engages its community in behaviour change education through:

- Public and customer service information
- Awareness building campaigns
- Behaviour change initiatives

CELEBRATING SLOW FASHION TO CHANGE BEHAVIOUR

Wastebusters hosts an amazing series of events that aim to shift people's understanding of textile waste and shape their behaviour towards "slow fashion".

What is slow fashion?

Slow fashion is a movement that advocates for environmental and social justice in the fashion industry. Its defining point is that it zeroes in on the problem of overproduction and overconsumption. Slow fashion came on the heels of the "slow food" movement.

Why slow fashion?

Textile waste is one of New Zealand's fastest growing waste streams with more than 220,000 tonnes ending up in landfills each year—a gross waste of a high value, carbon intensive resource. The microfibres from clothing are so prevalent they are now a common contaminant in our drinking water and food sources. The uncontrolled export of our waste clothing has decimated local textile industries resulting in significant social impacts through the closure of local industries, the loss of skilled jobs and produced negative environmental effects from the dumping of unwanted clothing. (From [Usefully Textile Reuse Programme](#))



PHOTO: DAMIAN FOSTER

“ It's all about celebrating the clothes we love for longer, and saying no to fast fashion - the excessive, poor quality and overproduced items that end up in landfill all too quickly. ”

— *Slow Fashion Report, 2022*

ENGAGING REGULARS AND THE WIDER COMMUNITY

Wastebusters' slow fashion project incorporates a number of elements to draw in both its existing supporters and the wider community in the months leading up to the Slow Fashion Show in March



People can create whatever style they like with a "moodboard". Image from Facebook

1 Creating 'moodboards': Shop customers are invited to create a moodboard with pictures (from magazines, drawings, etc) showcasing the style they want to be outfitted in, along with the info about their clothing size and shoe size. Wastebusters then distribute these moodboards to their awesome shop team, who collate an outfit for the person to wear at the fashion show.

2 Call out to local fashion designers: Wastebusters seeks out local designers who want to engage with donated materials to create new items that are then showcased at the fashion show.

3 Cohosting a Slow Fashion Show: Building community connections is a critical part of behaviour change. Wastebusters work with the Wānaka Community Workshop and Fabricate, a fully equipped textile workshop, aimed at re-energising the art of make and mend, to host the Fashion Show thereby expanding the audience and engagement in the ideas and beliefs that underpin slow fashion. They are also collaborating with Wao Aotearoa to host a green drinks evening, based on Slow Fashion, followed by a clothes swap.

4 Surveying the community: In 2022, Wastebusters conducted an online survey about slow fashion, asking people to share their stories of slow fashion and why it was important to them. The survey revealed the, "community's passion for caring, sharing and repairing their clothes, and their desire for more mindful shopping." The survey itself is a great tool for collecting stories that are super useful for inspiring and engaging others.

5 Using media and social media: Wastebusters are experts in connecting with their community through the media and their own social media channels. Regular 'calls to action' for people to participate in the Slow Fashion month are posted on their facebook page. For example, every Wednesday throughout March, they encourage the community to put on their favourite Wastebuster's find, and tag them in their social media stories to enter to win some vouchers. They also use mainstream media such as the Otago Daily Times to connect with a wider audience.

“ Ooooooh this could be exactly what I need for the festival-wedding I'm attending in March!

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— Atta Morden, commenting on Wastebusters Facebook page

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE OUTCOMES & IMPACTS

The reuse culture of second hand shopping and donating reflects Wastebusters presence in Wānaka and Alexandra for over two decades. The combination of reuse shops and zero waste education has resulted in reuse becoming part of the social norm, which was highlighted by Wastebusters' reuse shop winning "Best Clothing Store" in the Locals' Choice Wānaka 20/21 awards. (Slow Fashion Report, p8)

Building relationships with local zero waste entrepreneurs further embeds slow fashion as a concept

Building an ecosystem of zero waste institutions encourages slow fashion: care, reuse and repair

Collecting and telling stories through media and social media engages and educates the wider community about zero waste concepts



“

We are just one small social enterprise, but we are encouraging people to rethink their fashion choices to be sustainable for the planet and for the workers who make them, as well as for our wallets.

”

— Gina Dempster,
Wānaka Wastebusters

FIND OUT MORE

Wānaka Wastebusters [Slow Fashion Report 2022](#).

[“Wear the love lasts longer”](#) *Otago Daily Times*, 7 March 2022.

[Usefully Textile Reuse Programme](#) is developing product stewardship for textile production in Aotearoa New Zealand with the involvement of stakeholders from across the sector.



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waste
NETWORK