

# TextileR Summer/Autumn 2025 Newsletter



Darcy Pownall  
Research Assistant

*TextileR Summer/Autumn 2025*

## Welcome to the Summer/Autumn 2025 TextileR Newsletter

This edition brings together a series of thoughtful reflections, case studies, and field notes that speak to the complexity of transitioning toward more just and sustainable fashion systems.

From the polyester paradox and the ethics of local manufacturing, to the circular economies emerging from handloom traditions and landfill interventions, each contribution offers a grounded perspective on the forces shaping contemporary textile cultures. We're proud to highlight the leadership and collaboration of TextileR members in both international and local contexts—from Sri Lanka to São Paulo, Far North Queensland to inner-city studios.

The diverse range of work featured here also reminds us of the importance of relationships: between researchers and communities,

materials and makers, pedagogy and practice. We hope these stories offer inspiration, insight, and solidarity as we continue to weave together research and practice.

*Kathleen Horton, Madeline Taylor, and Tiziana Ferrero-Regis*



## Fashion Graveyard to Green: The Story of a White Linen Boyfriend Shirt

*"It concluded that we break up. I ended up in a trash bin. Moved, discarded in a graveyard. My lushness faded. No one heard. I was craving to be back." — White linen boyfriend shirt*

Sustainable fashion is often framed as being "designed to disappear," but the reality of post-consumer apparel in Sri Lanka tells a more complex story. Vast quantities of clothing are discarded, largely destined for landfills, with minimal efforts toward renewal or reuse.

The *Fashion Graveyard* project, led by Members of TextileR, Dr. Sumith Gopura with Dr. Ayesha Wickramasinghe and Mr. Kavindu Dharmakeerthi (Research Assistant) at the Department of Textile and Apparel Engineering, University of Moratuwa, explores the reincarnation of

garments. With support from the Waste Management Authority and funded by the University of Moratuwa Senate Research Committee Grant, the project investigates the lifecycle of apparel discards and maps Sri Lanka's post-consumer apparel ecosystem.

The research traces pathways of discarded garments—those that end up in landfills, get repurposed informally, or flow into second-hand markets. By understanding these routes, the team aims to identify sustainable interventions and promote circular solutions.

Crucially, the project explores how to rethink aging apparel through innovative design thinking—extending garment lifespans and reshaping attitudes around clothing disposal. It is a call to reimagine waste as potential.

Just like the white linen shirt resurrected from the landfill, *Fashion Graveyard* seeks to give discarded clothing a new life—where fashion never truly dies but evolves. Stay updated on the study via [sumith@uom.lk](mailto:sumith@uom.lk)

**Sumith Gopura**

## The polyester paradox: Fashion's favourite fabric faces growing scrutiny

Polyester is the most used artificial fibre in the fashion industry. Affordable, versatile, and durable, this synthetic fabric has been a cornerstone of mass-produced clothing for decades, shaping modern fashion consumption. Even high fashion houses such as [Dior](#), [Chanel](#), [Balenciaga](#), [Valentino](#) and [Givenchy](#) started using synthetic fibres, nylon and polyester, since the 1950s. From fast fashion and luxury brands to high performance activewear, polyester is everywhere: woven into our workout leggings, stitched into our party dresses, and lining our winter coats. Its popularity is unmatched, accounting for [57% of global fibre production](#), and it is increasing.

Ironically, the life cycle of natural fibres such as cotton, [wool](#) and silk has been scrutinised for two decades to ensure that they are traceable and responsible throughout all phases of manufacturing: from raw material, to processing, material production, and assembly and finished product. For example, wool production and manufacturing have been under scrutiny since 2004, especially in relation to [animal welfare](#). In 2016,

[Textile Exchange](#), the global non-profit organisation for sustainable textiles, launched the Responsible Wool Standards (RWS) to promote wool traceability along its supply chain, promoting animal welfare, and social and environmental practices.

On the contrary, polyester has enjoyed decades of unquestioned consumers' acceptance and is surprisingly understudied. As the fashion industry grapples with calls for sustainability, polyester's once unquestioned dominance is now under [scrutiny](#).

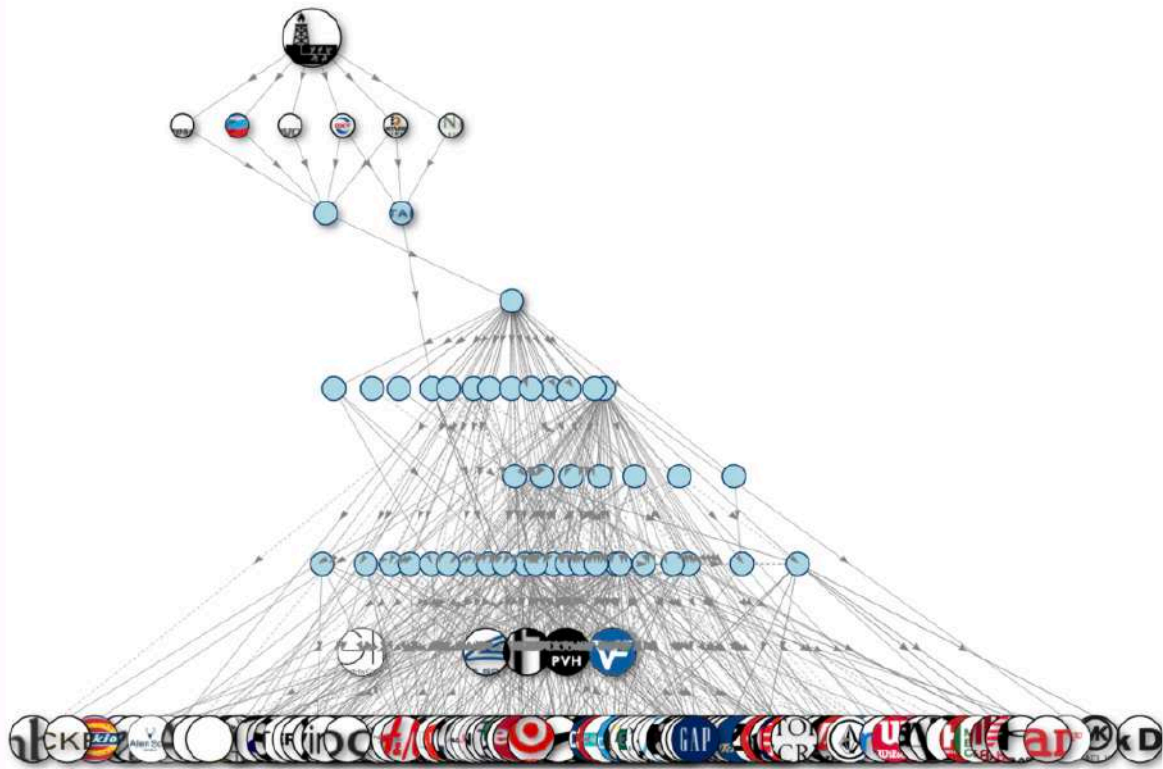
A recent report by [STAND.earth Research Group](#) (SRG) has traced the supply chain of more than 100 global brands and has found that these brands source their fabrics from fracked oil and gas from the Permian Basin in Texas. Their interactive [SRG Map](#) shows polyester's supply chain from the source of crude oil, from oil fields in the Permian Basin, through to the Indian company [Reliance Industries](#), which transforms refined oil into textiles, down to the brands.

Given the dependence of the apparel industry on polyester, which is projected to grow, the question is: Can this fabric adapt to the demands of an eco-conscious future, or will it become a symbol of an unsustainable past?

Companies are stalling and resisting change – notably [Shein accounts for 82%](#) polyester of their fibre portfolio, overtaking Inditex (Zara) and H&M – and distracting consumers with greenwashing. Apart from consumers' advocacy and education on polyester's origins, brands must phase out virgin polyester with reuse of existing synthetic fibres, slowing down the consumption of virgin resources. Investment in true circularity, transparency, accountability and support of legislation on the industry's sustainability and transparency are the necessary steps to begin to eliminate polyester.

***Tiziana Ferrero-Regis***





STAND.Earth <https://stand.earth/resources/fracked-fashion/>

## Stitching a future: Ethical labour and growth in the Queensland fashion and clothing industry.

In 2024, TextileR conducted a project that explored the challenges and opportunities surrounding ethical accreditation in South-East Queensland's 9SEQ) textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) manufacturing sector. In Australia, ethical accreditation is voluntary, and this study focussed on understanding the barriers and enablers of implementing ethical standards among small businesses in SEQ.

Ethical standards and accreditation are fundamental pillars in sustainable governance in small businesses. Led by Associate Professor [Tiziana Ferrero-Regis](#) and [Dr Zoe Mellick](#), the report's findings reveal a complex landscape where businesses are aware of the benefits of ethical accreditation but faces significant challenges, including knowledge gaps, the costs and time associated with the accreditation process, and resistance to external audits.

The report is available at:

[Ferrero-Regis, Tiziana, Mellick, Zoe, & Coneybeer, Justine \(2024\) Stitching a future: Ethical labour and growth in the Queensland fashion](#)

# Stitching a future:

## Ethical labour and growth in the Queensland fashion and clothing industry



November 2024



Centre  
for Justice

Stitching a future: Ethical labour and growth in the Queensland fashion and clothing industry

## Hope Vale x QUT

A group of QUT fashion students recently travelled to [Hopevale Arts and Cultural Centre](#) in Far North Queensland—marking a new milestone in this long-standing collaboration. Led by designer and School of Design lecturer Lydia Pearson, Icaro Ibanez Arricivita the trip was made possible

through support from QUT's Pro Vice-Chancellor (Entrepreneurship and Regional Innovation) Professor Rowena Barrett, alongside the newly established Regional University Study Hub in Cooktown. While students have been responding to Hopevale's distinctive hand-printed textiles for many years, this was the first time they were able to work directly with the artists and community on Country.

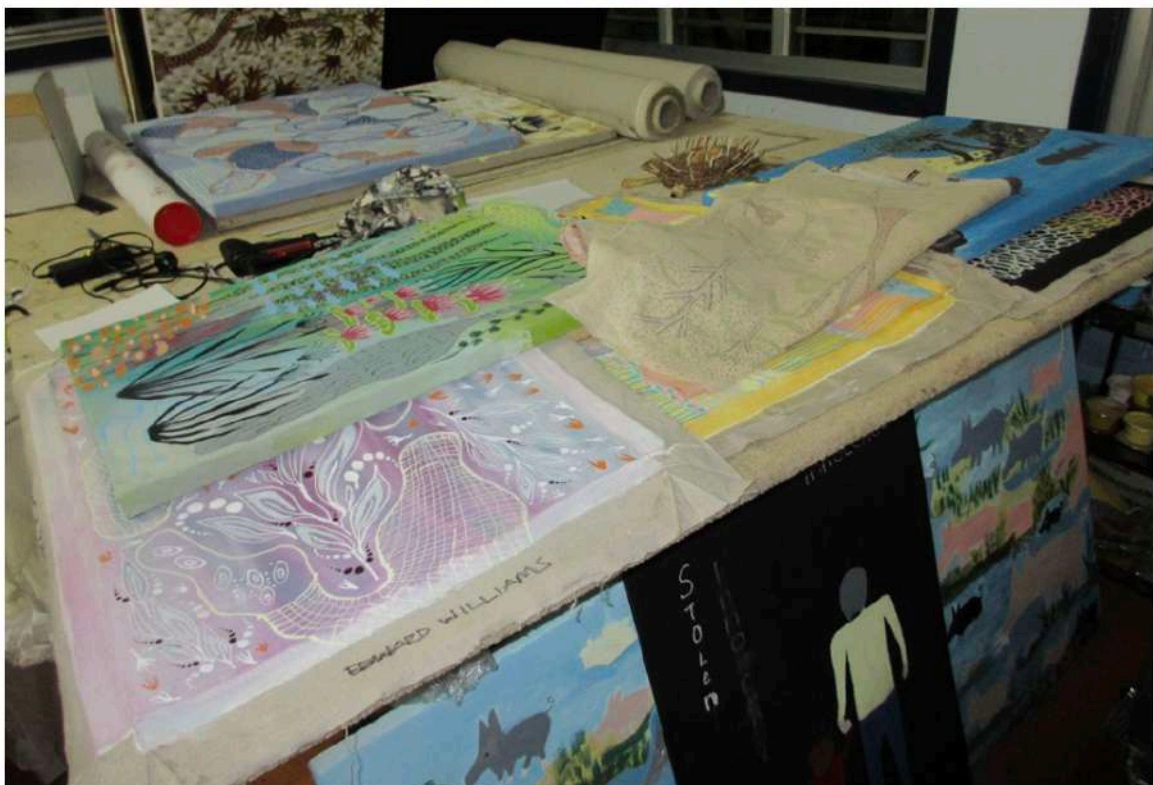
Over several days, students worked alongside Hopevale artists, spending time in the studio, around the table, and out in the community. Together, they prepared a runway event featuring garments inspired by the Centre's hand-printed textiles. After some foraging and a community fitting session, the fashion show came to life. The show was open to all, young people, elders, friends, and family each person bringing their own energy and story to the clothes they wore.

What unfolded went beyond aesthetic response. It invited rich conversations about what it means to make, to learn, and to imagine fashion futures from outside urban centres. These encounters also reflect the generative space where teaching and research meet—where students and communities exchange knowledge in ways that are grounded, and often transformative. Lydia, Icaro and Rowena hope to build on this community based fashion practice in collaboration with Hope Vale. Please reach out to Lydia to learn more.

[lydia.pearson@qut.edu.au](mailto:lydia.pearson@qut.edu.au)

*Lydia Pearson & Icaro Ibanez-Arricivita*





## Valuing the handmade: Investigating a Place-Based and Regenerative approach to circular fashion and textile economies

This project investigates to what extent the culture of place contributes to the establishment of place-based capacity and valuing of the



handmade in circular textiles economies. The study frames the practices of the handmade as encompassing the materials (the things, technologies), the competences (skills, know-how), and the meanings (the symbolic ideas) of the handmade, as making, repairing or remaking of clothing and textiles for sufficiency and wellbeing. Under the method of sustainable value creation, the research will test how the craft ecosystem forms the basis for value creation through the handmade for a circular economy.

The project expects to generate new knowledge in circular economy by making visible local economies of small businesses and craft communities of making, reuse and remaking that are typically excluded from the industrial view of a circular economy. The project is funded by the Australian Research Council, Discovery Project, 2025-2028, and led by Associate Professor [Tiziana Ferrero-Regis](#), Dr [Zoe Mellick](#), in partnership with Professor [Alice Payne](#), RMIT.

## Around The World



### Aesthetic Enhancement of Sri Lankan Handloom Textiles through Natural Yarn

Sri Lankan handloom weaving is a symbol of cultural heritage and artisanal excellence, sustaining traditional techniques and supporting rural livelihoods—particularly for women. A research initiative by two members of TextileR, Dr. Ayesha Wickramasinghe, Dr. Sumith Gopura, and Ms. Amali Robise (Research Assistant) from the University of

Moratuwa explores how sustainability and aesthetics can converge to elevate Sri Lankan handloom textiles.

This study introduces natural yarns and eco-friendly dyeing techniques to enhance both the visual and environmental value of handloom products. Using a practice-based approach, the team investigates how materials such as linen, modal, viscose, bamboo, organic cotton, kapok, jute, hemp, and banana fibers can enrich texture and color, offering new dimensions to traditional fabrics.

To further promote sustainability, natural dyeing methods are used to color cotton yarns with plant-based sources like turmeric, venival, butterfly pea, neem, adhatoda, aralu, and indigo. These dyes yield earthy, vibrant hues that reflect Sri Lanka's biodiversity and revive age-old coloring practices.

Drawing inspiration from the island's wet and dry climatic zones, the research embeds geographic narratives into textile design. Close collaboration with artisans ensures that tradition meets innovation, crafting expressive handloom fabrics that speak of place, heritage, and ecological awareness.

By merging natural materials, sustainable dyeing, and innovative design thinking, this initiative aims to reposition Sri Lankan handlooms on the global stage—as ethical, beautiful, and culturally grounded textile innovations. Stay connected with [ayesha@uom.lk](mailto:ayesha@uom.lk) for updates on this study.

*Ayesha Wickramasinghe*

## **IFFTI Conference Showcases Australian Research on Digital Fashion Education**

The recent [International Foundation of Fashion Technology Institutes \(IFFTI\) conference hosted by London College of Fashion](#), University of the Arts London, provided a platform for robust discussions on the future of fashion education. Australian researchers Dr Madeline Taylor and Dr Donna Sgro presented their collaborative paper "Digital Fashion: Reflections on Pedagogy from Key Australian Fashion Institutions," co-authored with Dr Angela Finn and Dr Zoe Mellick.

This research examined the integration of digital pattern-making technologies like CLO3D into Australian fashion education programs,

highlighting the establishment of [Digital Fashion Australia](#) (DFA) – a collective of educators sharing pedagogical approaches across institutions. The Australian researchers showcased how collaborative reflection on teaching and learning across institutions can address these challenges through shared resources and knowledge. Their findings revealed both benefits and challenges of integrating digital pattern-making into fashion education. While CLO3D offers advantages in terms of sustainability, efficiency and expanded design possibilities, educators noted concerns about maintaining tactile skills and ensuring digital processes don't compromise fundamental fashion knowledge.

The presentation was one of many sparking rich conversations around ethical considerations of digital tech that have yet to be fully addressed by the fashion system. Key questions were the responsible and culturally sensitive digitisation of cultural heritage, the appropriate handling of biometric data by institutions and designers, and concerns that efficiency gains from digital processes might accelerate consumption cycles rather than support sustainability. Another significant theme throughout the conference was the tension educational institutions face in preparing students for the industry as it exists today versus the more sustainable industry needed for the future, and the need for more sustained and cohesive advocacy at a policy-making level for systems change that takes into account the idiosyncrasies of fashion systems.

The research, partly supported by Horizon Europe funding through Dr Taylor's Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship which enabled her to travel to the event, represents an important contribution to the international dialogue on fashion education's digital transformation, with the packed room and depth of audience engagement suggesting Australian institutions at the forefront of pedagogical innovation in this space.

*Dr Madeline Taylor*





Madeline Taylor (QUT/Aalto) and Donna Sgro (UTS) celebrating their successful presentation - Co-authored by Dr Zoe Mellick (QUT) and Dr Angela Finn (RMIT)

## Reflections on SUSTEXMODA: IV Congress of the Fashion & Textile Sustainability Institute

In November 2024, Paige Street and I had the privilege of participating in the IV *Congresso Internacional de Sustentabilidade em Têxtil Moda* (IV SUSTEXMODA), hosted by the School of Arts, Sciences and Humanities (EACH) at the University of São Paulo (USP).

Organised by the Fashion and Textile Sustainability Institute (SUSTEXMODA), this congress is a cornerstone event in the sustainable fashion calendar. SUSTEXMODA is a socio-environmental impact organisation dedicated to implementing real-world solutions at the intersection of society, the environment, and the economy within the fashion and textile industries.

The 2024 congress—titled ESG in the Fashion Universe—centred on the importance of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles in shaping a more ethical and transparent fashion sector. It brought together researchers and practitioners from across Brazil and South America, as well as Europe—and Australia!—and created a rich platform for dialogue and knowledge exchange between emerging and established voices in sustainable fashion.

Paige and I were invited to contribute to a roundtable on governance in the fashion industry, where we presented an overview of Australia's Seamless clothing stewardship scheme. Our panel also featured Professor Annick Schramme from Antwerp Management School and Edmundo Lima, Executive Director of ABVTEX (the Brazilian Textile Retail Association).

One of the striking insights we gained during our visit was the contrast between the Brazilian and Australian fashion industries. In Brazil, an estimated 97% of textile and fashion production occurs onshore—an almost inverse scenario to Australia. And yet, many of the same ethical and sustainability challenges persist, spanning both SMEs and large-scale businesses. We were particularly inspired by the work of SUSTEXMODA's founder, Professor Dr. Francisca Dantas Mendes, and her colleague Professor Margô, Maria Goreti Isaac. Their initiatives—such as partnerships with the Instituto Becei to reduce textile waste and promote upcycling—demonstrate a powerful model of sustainability that is deeply rooted in social justice and economic empowerment. These projects directly support vulnerable communities while addressing broader environmental concerns.

Paige and I left São Paulo feeling energised by the passion and generosity of our Brazilian colleagues. Their warmth, openness, and commitment to sustainable transformation were deeply moving. We



encourage anyone interested in global sustainable fashion initiatives to consider submitting a paper for the next congress.

To learn more about SUSTEXMODA and its ongoing initiatives, visit: <https://www.sustexmoda.org>

*Kathleen Horton*





## Until next time

Thank you for being an integral part of the TextileR community.

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