

## **Welcome to No Sweat Fashions!**

Many of the individuals who come to make a new life in Australia come from countries where sewing and mending are very common skills. In some countries, there are many large factories with hundreds of workers who sew all types of clothing and textile items. Some of the people who come to live in Canberra have worked in these factories as machinists, cutters, pattern makers or quality inspectors. Others may even have worked as designers in their countries of origin.

In Australia, it is not uncommon to find people who cannot use a basic sewing machine or even do simple hand mending. In busy city life, it can be easier to pay someone to mend a garment rather than do it yourself. It is common to find sewing shops in shopping malls in Canberra where a simple hem or repair can cost \$40 or even \$60 dollars!

There are large factories that make clothes, but these are mostly in the large cities like Melbourne or Sydney. There are no large garment factories in Canberra. However, there are many people who design clothes and other interesting products who need skilled workers to make them.

This is why we have established No Sweat Fashions - to connect those with sewing skills to those who need them. No Sweat Fashions is a place where your important skills and experience will be valued and put to good use.

If you have any skills or experience working with garments and would like to use those skills gain real Australian workplace experience, meet new people and earn money, we would like to work with you.

There are 3 aspects to our program which will begin in August 2012.

### **Work Experience Pilot**

The purpose of the work experience program is to develop a fashion and accessories collection for launch in Winter 2013. No Sweat Fashions is experimenting with a process called Collaborative Fashion Design. We believe that bring together people from different cultures along with experienced fashion designers and artists will result in an highly desirable product that can command boutique fashion retail prices.

### **Contract Work**

While designing our own collection, we will also work with other design entrepreneurs to produce their garments, accessories and textile art. This work will also take place in our Design and Production Studio outside of the work experience program 'core hours' (see below). Sometimes designers will provide us with pre-cut pieces to sew. Sometimes we may need to cut pieces ourselves. Other designers might hire us to make necklaces or hair ties from fabric pieces. The work will be quite varied, especially in the first year as we become established.

### **Classes and Social Sewing**

Many adults and young people in Canberra are interested in learning about your skills. For those who are interested in teaching, we would like to offer classes and other events for the broader community. No Sweat Fashions is particularly interested in offering sessions for local multicultural youth and also students (and their families) who attend University of Canberra High School Kaleen.

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What kind of business is No Sweat Fashions?**

No Sweat Fashions is a social enterprise business. This means that, unlike other business, it has not been designed to make a profit for the business owners. It has been created specifically to create employment and work experience opportunities for individuals who come to Australia as humanitarian migrants or asylum seekers. Other migrants may be able participate in our activities, provided that they are from a Non-English Speaking Background, and as such face similar disadvantages with regard to accessing employment or opportunities for work experience in Australia.

#### **Where is No Sweat Fashions?**

No Sweat Fashions Design and Production Studio is located on the campus of the University of Canberra High School at Kaleen at 104 Baldwin Drive. UC High Kaleen is an ACT Government Public School for school years 7-10.

When you arrive, you will see students making their way to and from classes, and sometimes getting up to mischief in the corridors. There are regular bells and announcements which you will quickly become accustomed to. But, our participants are very welcome at the school, and you will soon get to know members of the school staff, as well as members of the No Sweat Fashions team. The school has many wonderful facilities that are also used by community organisations like ours including gardens, kitchen and other workshops.

In the early days of our program, our schedule will match the school schedule. This means, when the school is on holidays, we will also take a break in the Work Experience program. As we begin to do more commercial work, we will be extending the studio working hours accordingly.

Even though we use the school facilities, our work is completely independent. Of course, there will be some special procedures our safety and security and of the children who attend the school - the same as is required all other members of community organisations who may undertake some or all of their work at UC Kaleen High School, or indeed within any other school in Australia. However, please note that there will always be a No Sweat Fashions volunteer or a UC High Kaleen staff member who can explain these to you.

**Can I join if I do not speak and read English very well?**

Yes. We intend to cater to individuals at all levels of English. Sewing is a very visual language so we will use the tools of our trade—illustrations and fabric to communicate instructions. Our facilitators use simple and plain English for training, therefore, you may find easy to work with us. It is likely that other people in the studio will speak your language. If so, he or he or she may be able to help you for general communication.

**Will you teach me how to sew?**

No Sweat Fashions is a place for refugees and other migrants who already have some experience in the basic principles of garment construction and some sewing techniques and experience. At first, we will be giving you simple projects to produce or asking you to bring items that you have made. This will help us to understand what skills and experience you already have and what sort of contract work we can take in and also what sort of techniques we can use in the production of the No Sweat Fashions collection. Over time, as we work on our own in-house collection, we will develop different techniques and approaches from different people in order to have one consistent ‘No Sweat Fashions’ way of doing things.

If we recognise the need to provide some very specific training, for instance, in using computerised sewing machines or a specific finishing technique that we would like to incorporate in to our own collection, then we have broader resources available to us from the CIT and also members of the community who have training experience.

### **How will the work experience program work?**

The work experience program will commence on Thursday, 16 August for two days each week, Thursdays and Fridays from 9am to 4pm. Core hours will be in 3 hour sessions from 10am to 1pm. We will have guest designers in residence or special instructional talks during these core hours to make sure everyone - especially if you have school-aged children, can participate. No Sweat Fashions will provide you with all of the tools, materials, fabric and equipment necessary to complete any task we assign. Much of our equipment and materials has been donated and are for domestic or home use. We also have some industrial equipment in the studio.

Outside of core hours, you are not required to be at the studio, but are most welcome. You will be free to use the studio facilities for personal sewing or projects or to continue working on some assigned brief. Depending on your skills, you may also be interested in volunteering in other aspects of the No Sweat Fashions business such as managing our events, marketing, web site maintenance, fundraising or coordinating volunteers. Please let us know if you have skills like this that you would like to share.

### **Will I be paid?**

Unfortunately, we do not yet have the funds to pay for participation in the work experience program. However, participation in our program should make you eligible for Australian government training support such as help with childcare fees. For women undertaking work experience training for

the first time, you may be eligible for a small ACT Government Grant in the form of a one-off payment.

As No Sweat Fashions starts to take on more paying contract clients, it will be the work experience participants who will have the first options to do any available paid work. When contract projects become available, you will be engaged by No Sweat Fashions on a casual basis at or above the Australian Textile Clothing and Footwear (TCF) award wage level for your skills, which is the standard wage level for this kind of work set down in law in Australia. As the business becomes more established, we will move into a financial position to be able to offer on-going employment contracts at or above this TCF award rate.

Before any individuals move from the work experience program to paid employment, their work rights will be checked with the Department of Immigration and Citizenship. No Sweat Fashions will NEVER offer paid work to anyone who does not clearly have the right to work in Australia, as this puts the entire program at risk for everyone.

The No Sweat Fashions managers and others supervising the work in the Studio are all unpaid at this time. They are all committed to investing any available funds such as those given to us by the Government or members of the community in to making No Sweat Fashions a viable and sustainable business that can provide jobs and opportunities for refugees and migrants in Canberra for many years to come. Our goal is to have 1 full time



manager and 20 employees who work different shifts. This will not happen overnight, but we believe this is possible within 2 years.

**In my home country, I only did sewing. Do I have to be a designer as well to work with you?**

You do not need to have any prior experience with design; however, you must be open and interested in participating in a design process.

The design process is a very important part of the idea behind No Sweat Fashions. We believe that the process of collaborative fashion design - truly working together - can be a tool for social change! We believe that our design approach (which will need to overcome limited English ability) will increase refugees' opportunities for participation in social, economic and community life, including volunteering, build their capacity to understand their rights in the workplace, have a strong voice and further develop leadership skills, highlight the positive contribution of specific community groups and address the loneliness that can occur in some communities which in turn doesn't help to build social togetherness and peaceful relationships.

For those who would like to focus on production work, there will be plenty of sewing to do at No Sweat Fashions! However, any paying contract work that is available will first be offered to the individuals who are participating in the work experience design pilot.



# NOSWEAT

F A S H I O N S

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