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## **Ethical Clothing Australia: “The sustainability movement is ignoring the people who make our clothes.”**

*National accreditation body calls for fashion industry to focus on local garment workers*

(Melbourne, Victoria – Tuesday 30 April 2024) Following the announcement of the schedule for Australian Fashion Week, not-for-profit organisation Ethical Clothing Australia has responded to the lack of ethical focus in the festival’s program with their own panel entitled **“Is there sustainable fashion without ethics?”**

Held in Sydney on Thursday 16 May (during AFW) and created in collaboration with The Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Fashion + Textiles, a partnership between UTS (University of Technology Sydney) and TAFE NSW, the panel will centre the rights of garment workers in the textile, clothing and footwear industry and bring together industry leaders including Dr Timo Risannen from UTS/Centre of Excellence in Sustainable Fashion & Textiles, James Dunlop from Be Slavery Free, Aldona Brangwin from Ethical Clothing Australia accredited brand Citizen Wolf and Jenny Kruschel, Textile, Clothing and Footwear National Secretary of the CFMEU Manufacturing Division.

Moderated by Ethical Clothing Australia’s National Manager, Rachel Reilly, the panel will explore the oftentimes-uncomfortable relationship between ethics and sustainability and the lack of conversation around who makes our clothes in Australia – something Ms Reilly says the fashion industry as a whole needs to confront.

“Too many of the current conversations about fashion revolve around sustainable materials or processes and that has completely overshadowed the experiences and rights of garment workers,” she said.

“The *most sustainable* garment is not sustainable at all if it still relies on the exploitation of a garment worker for any part of its production.”

“That’s why we need to have realistic conversations about the state of the industry and take actionable steps to protect garment workers in all supply chains.”

Ms Reilly says it is crucial that we have these conversations now.

“To create a truly sustainable fashion future in Australia we need discussions like this one – to bring together thought leaders, raise awareness and confront the fundamental flaws of the sustainability movement in Australia and globally,” she said

“The industry will not achieve the intended outcomes around sustainability while it continues to ignore the social and economic rights of the people who make our clothes.”

Launched over two decades ago, Ethical Clothing Australia is an accreditation body that works collaboratively with businesses to protect and uphold the social rights and working conditions of garment workers – many of whom are from migrant, refugee, or asylum-seeking backgrounds – in the local supply chain through a rigorous annual audit.

**“Is there sustainable fashion without ethics?”** will be held on Thursday 16 May at University of Technology Sydney (UTS).

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