

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Ethical Clothing Australia**  
**[ethicalclothingaustralia.org.au](http://ethicalclothingaustralia.org.au)**

### **Peek behind the seams to witness 25 years of impact during Ethical Clothing Australia Week**

The nation's leading accreditation body for the textile, clothing and footwear (TCF) industry is celebrating a quarter century of protecting and advocating for garment workers with an exhibition focusing on their lived experiences.

*Working Behind the Seams* is one of several events being held during Ethical Clothing Australia Week. It will be showcased at Melbourne's Immigration Museum and provide a peek into these workers' lives, the majority of whom come from migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds.

There will also be an opportunity to hear directly from workers and outworkers at a storytelling event where they will share their personal journeys and genuine love for sewing, in their own words.

National Manager Rachel Reilly says the exhibition will showcase the impact and significant achievements the organisation has delivered in its 25-year history through a carefully curated selection of documentary footage, interviews, personal narratives and archival materials.

"We exist to protect and uphold the rights of Australian garment workers and this has been possible because of advocacy efforts that led to our establishment in the year 2000 and the authorisation of the Homeworker Code of Practice by the ACCC in the same year," she says.

"Further advocacy led to securing federal funding to expand our accreditation and compliance program in 2008 and we then saw Outworkers classified as employees under the Textile, Clothing, Footwear and Associated Industries Award 2010 (TCF Award 2010), creating the legislative framework to protect them.

"We were bolstered by further funding from the Victorian Government in 2017 which continues to this day."

Reilly says these achievements would not have been possible if it weren't for the unique but necessary collaboration between the TCF Union and the TCF industry to establish Ethical Clothing Australia as a multistakeholder initiative.

"There are now over 100 businesses that have received accreditation, protecting thousands of workers," she says.

"It is critical that we are working collaboratively with businesses so we can prevent exploitation taking place and ensure the future of the industry."

ECA warns that there is still much work to be done and despite Australia's workplace laws, many workers remain at risk of exploitation, ranging from minor breaches to instances of modern slavery.

"We know that this vulnerability stems from factors such as complex supply chains, isolated working conditions, limited awareness of rights, and barriers to seeking support," she says

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“Our recent YouGov poll showed us that 84% of Australians believe worker exploitation exists in the global textile, clothing and footwear industry while only 45% believe it exists in Australia.”

“It is a powerful reminder that we cannot forget about the exploitation happening right here in Australia and we are committed to continuing to advocate for the lives impacted.”

**ENDS**

Working Behind the Seams will be on display at the Immigration Museum from Friday 3 October to Sunday 5 October.

Voices Behind the Seams will take place on Friday 3 October at the Immigration Museum from 6pm – 9pm.

Visit Ethical Clothing Australia’s website to find out more about all events taking place during Ethical Clothing Australia Week. <https://ethicalclothingaustralia.org.au/events/>

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**About Ethical Clothing Australia:**

Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) is an accreditation body that works collaboratively with businesses to protect the rights of Australian textile, clothing and footwear workers. ECA’s voluntary accreditation program maps a business’s local supply chain and ensures that Australian TCF workers are being paid appropriately and receiving their legal entitlements.