



📷 Adele Sinclair is the founder of re.a recycled fashion. Credit: Justin Benson-Cooper/The West Australian

North Fremantle label re.a cleans up the oceans with new wardrobe staples

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“Pursue the things you love doing and then do them so well that people can’t take their eyes off of you.”

American poet Maya Angelou said this of how one can become truly accomplished at something.

And spending 12 months just to develop a new fabric that saves waste from polluting the world should be considered a real accomplishment.

While the use of recycled fabrics is not new in the sartorial space – for example, Melbourne-based Elle Evans uses nylon waste in its swimwear and activewear, while American brand Patagonia spruiks recycled wool and down in its cold climate ranges – Adele Sinclair’s North Fremantle-based fashion label re.a is straightforward in its ethos: to help preserve the natural beauty of WA’s coastline.

“Having worked in some form of the fashion industry for around 15 years, my mind is always ticking over and looking for new ways to champion innovation and challenge the norm within the industry,” she says.

“It would have been around 18 months ago that I started to read about the impact that the fashion industry is having on our environment – the fashion industry is thought to be around the second or third largest polluter of our oceans globally.

“That really strikes a chord with me. Growing up and living in WA, we only have to look as far as Rottnest to see how incredible our own backyard is.

“I felt compelled to research how we could change the way we produce clothing in order to actually remove rubbish from our oceans and landfill and re-purpose it, rather than adding to it with more virgin products.”

If the Sinclair name is familiar, Adele is also behind pet accessories brand Mog + Bone, which she developed under the watchful eye of her parents, who ran a wholesale fashion agency and are established names in Perth's rag trade.

Her sartorial pedigree helps, but it was all Adele who "learnt almost enough to write a whole book" during the development of her half-recycled polyester, half-recycled cotton collection of wardrobe staples.

The result? A range of eight basics, from T-shirts and tank tops to winter-ready trackies in four coastal-inspired hues, with a unisex T-shirt from re.a. repurposing 7.5 PET bottles and 150g of recycled cotton waste, and a hoodie reusing 18 plastic bottles and 350g of cotton.

"We've chosen to make our garments from a combination of post-consumer recycled cotton and post-consumer recycled plastic – both components are integral to our ability to make a meaningful difference to our environment," Adele explains.

"We were especially fastidious about how the fabric would feel and look when worn. We wanted fabrics that were substantial, quality driven and able to adapt to the shape of a woman or a man.

"Our fabrics are reasonably heavy in weight and they look and feel substantial. However, the touch is very organic, leaning more towards what you might expect 100 per cent cotton to feel like.

"The fleece is amazing. Heavyweight, super soft, moves with you and makes you feel like you're wrapped up in a warm blanket. WFH heaven you might say."





Taking plastic out of the ocean is an obvious move – more than 8 million tonnes of plastic end up in the sea every year – but Adele says it is just as important to reduce our reliance on virgin cotton because the seeding and harvesting processes involved in its production are extremely water intensive.

“Reusing cotton that is already in existence allows us to make the resources required to produce the original cotton stretch further and extends the life and productivity of cotton that would otherwise be discarded,” she says.

“The World Wildlife Fund reports cotton takes up 2.4 per cent of arable land globally, with cotton requiring 24 per cent of all pesticides and 11 per cent of all water used in the world’s agricultural industries.

“It is estimated by WWF that over 700 gallons of water is used to create one cotton shirt.”

As for the recycling of plastics, Adele believes re.a’s methods assist in creating a circular economy that produces a commercial demand for the use of recycled PET yarn.

Unsurprisingly, plans to expand the re.a range are already on Adele’s mind, with accessories such as beach bags, school backpacks and towels on the list.

“One big category that we’re determined to crack into is workwear and PPE,” she says.

“Consider how many hi-vis shirts and pants end up back in landfill after they become too dirty to wear again.

“Being able to produce these items using repurposed waste would be quite the game changer for an industry that churns through an incredible volume of clothing month to month.

“We’ve already developed some samples of what the PPE could look like made from recycled materials, so that is another category firmly on the 2022 hit list.”

Visit rearecycledapparel.com for more.

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