





Designed for Myrtleford

Danni Townsend-O'Neil talks with PENNY SHOWERS on her decision to relocate her family and the successful design / manufacturing fashion business she and sister Nic own, to the Ovens Valley.

As you approach this nondescript double fronted shop in Myrtleford, there is little, if any, indication of what lies behind the scant display in the windows. The window dressing is intriguing, it features a few vintage wooden boxes with a large fashion poster of a model hanging from the wall. It has all been styled carefully, minimal to be sure, by Danni Townsend-O'Neil, Creative Director and Head Designer of the fashion label, Eva's Sunday.

The quiet country street in the township of Myrtleford is instantly left behind when you enter the building. Inside is a bustling design studio with polished concrete floors, repurposed and recycled furniture pieces, and row upon row of colourful and patterned clothing. It is as though you have walked into a back alley off Flinders Lane in Melbourne, on the eve of Fashion Week. It is both surprising and delightful to have uncovered a top-notch fashion label operating quietly out of Myrtleford that is selling its product throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Danni has always been creative and has plied her skills in a variety of ways over the years. After her children Josh and Owen were born, Danni painted and held exhibitions. She also started and ran several creative based businesses. "I have always created, it is essential to my being, to my mental health and spirit," she says.

The initial attraction for Danni to north-east Victoria was the outdoors. "It's the lifestyle and the community feel of the town that appealed to me," said Danni. The thought of moving to the country also appealed to Danni's husband, Dave O'Neil, and her two motorbike crazy sons. "We all felt it was the right place for us," she explained. ▶

Danni in the design studio.

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With the decision to move north unanimous, the family put their home in Melbourne on the market and, as luck would have it, sold it instantly.

The universe, it seemed, needed Danni up in the north-east and as soon as possible. In 2011 they made the move. Danni's parents, Des and Terell Townsend, were living at that time in Bright and they have since moved, and are now living next door to Danni and her family in Myrtleford.

“Since moving to the area my family has never looked back,” said Danni. The boys are in Year 8 and Year 12 at Marion College, Myrtleford. “It’s a great place to bring up our boys,” says Danni.

Once Danni had settled in to the new life in Myrtleford, she opened a retail fashion store in town called the Vintage Goat. Danni has a love for goats and has been known to venture out to the stock sale yards, to collect newly born orphaned kids and bring them home and raise them. Presently she has fifteen

goats and two sheep, but sadly no time to rescue any more at the moment.

Having her own shop front gave Danni's creative needs another outlet and she started her own fashion label. The store was predominately a gift store but as the fashion side took off, the store became purely fashion with the new label, Eva's Sunday. “I realised that ultimately, this is what I wanted to do,” said Danni, “so she closed down the store and focused solely on the clothing label.”

Danni is the imaginative driving force behind this fast-growing fashion label. She is the designer and its vital and dynamic heartbeat. Enabling Danni to focus on the design aspects of the business is her sister, Nic MacIsaac, who owns the business. Nic is based in Melbourne where a terrace house doubles as both a store stocking their fashion label, and the office, the brains of the business. “Nic visits Myrtleford regularly and as sisters we have ▶



Paula Miotto, Danni's personal assistant

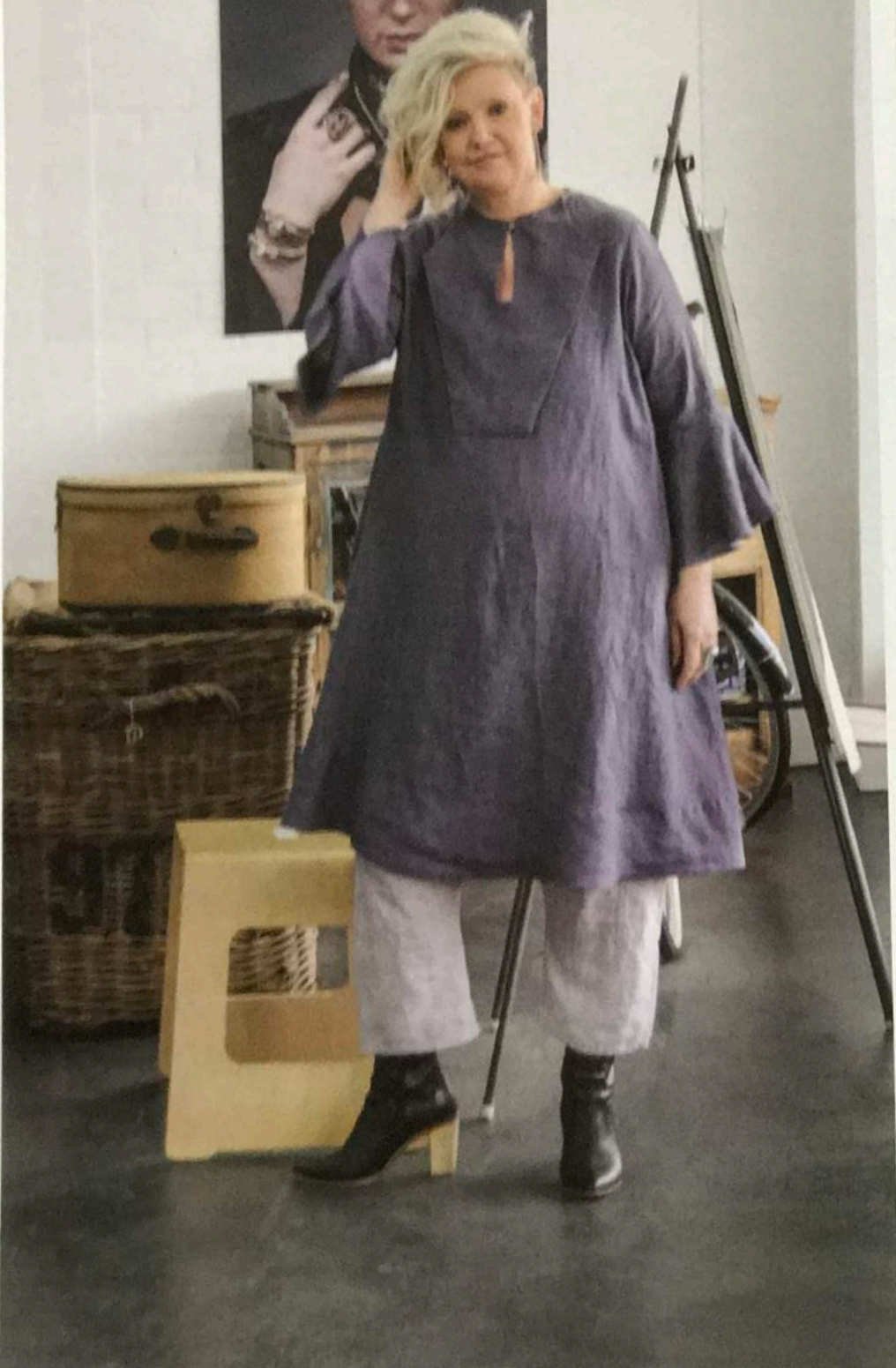


Sally Ann David, sample pattern maker



Emma Todd, garment technician.





Danni forming part of the window display with a poster of Abbey, the accessories model, behind her.



Ella Giovanni, the model. Picture taken from Eva's Sunday's website.

been a lifeline to each other as well as collaborators, partners and supporters," said Danni.

The family connections do not stop there. Their father works as the foreman at the design studio and Danni's sons help pack and ship out orders from the design studio in Myrtleford. Danni and Nic's cousin Brooke Murphy, runs human resources for the business out of Sydney.

Over the past two years Danni and her design team have created twenty-four collections, and according to Danni, online sales are massive and the label currently distributes to one hundred stores. "We have two retail stores as well, one in the beautifully renovated terrace house in Brunswick Street, Melbourne and one in Beechworth," said Danni. The business also has agents in Queensland, Victoria, Sydney, Adelaide and New Zealand. "The past two years have been a whirlwind," says Danni.

At the design studio there are an array of employees apart from family. They include Danni's personal assistant, Paula Miotto from Myrtleford, Emma Todd the garment technician, from Myrtleford, and the sample pattern maker, Sally Ann David, you guessed it, from Myrtleford. "Our full-time model for the range,

“...we are about making garments of longevity...”

Ella Giovanni, who is also a local girl,” said Danni. “Our accessories model is Ella’s cousin, Abbey Zamperoni.” Abbey is the model in the poster hanging in the window.

Enforcing the local connections, the latest collection was photographed in the beautiful buildings and grounds of Mayday Hills in Beechworth.

The team is large, and a big employer for the town of Myrtleford. “Everything is done locally, except the milling of the fabric,” said Danni. “It is done out of a small factory in China which I visit a few times a year. I hope that even the milling of the linen will be done eventually in Myrtleford.”

It is her love of the town and its people which encouraged Danni to join a group of locals to organise to feed forty families a week, for a whole school term in May this year. A workplace dispute at Carter Holt Harvey wood mill in Myrtleford which caused two hundred workers to be shut out from work.

As for the future, be assured that Danni will keep on designing and creating and enjoying being a part of Myrtleford. Forward planning is essential to the business, which means that Danni must ensure that she creates ten new designs every month, and across six fabrics. “Currently I am designing the July 2018 range as we like to stay ahead of the game,” explains Danni.

A section of the Ethos on Eva’s Sunday’s website sums up Danni. ‘At Eva’s Sunday, we are about making garments of longevity versus the “in one minute out the next” nature of a lot of fashion available today. Fast and disposable is not our thing. We are committed to quality and integrity at every stage of the process...’ **NNE**