

INTERCEPT Fabric Rescue

WHANGAREI



OUR MISSION STATEMENT

To save as much valuable fabric as is practical from going to landfill, to assist in setting up other fabric rescue operations and to spread the message about avoiding fabric waste.

Contents

INTRODUCTION.....	3
DID YOU KNOW?	3
COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP	4
HOW DO I START A FABRIC RESCUE IN MY COMMUNITY?.....	4
HOW DOES INTERCEPT WORK?	5
WHY WE USE MAINLY NATURAL FIBRES.....	7
POINT OF DIFFERENCE	8
PRICING:.....	8
ON LINE SALES:.....	10
OVER 40 INTERCEPT PRODUCTS:	11
THE INTERCEPT BRAND STYLE:.....	12
HOW WE SET UP OUR INTERCEPT SHOP:	13
DONATIONS:	14
RECIPROCITY	16
WHERE CAN WE SEND OUR EXCESS RESCUED CLOTHING AND OTHER TEXTILES?	16
HOW DO I FIND VOLUNTEERS?.....	16
MANAGING VOLUNTEERS.....	16
THE UPCYCLER’S WORKROOM:	17
WHY ARE ITEMS UNSALEABLE IN THE MAIN STORE?	18
HOW TO TELL IF A GARMENT IS QUALITY:.....	19
SIZING:.....	20
WHAT DO I GET OUT OF IT?	21
HAVE QUESTIONS?.....	21

Glossary:

SA = Salvation Army.

Store = the main SA Family Store.

Shop = our INTERCEPT boutique.

INTRODUCTION

INTERCEPT is a volunteer, not-for-profit, fabric rescue operation that partners with the Whangarei Salvation Army Family Store to meet local community needs and divert surplus donated fabric and clothing from ending up in landfill. Beautiful and valuable natural textiles are saved to create a line of upcycled products which are sold in our INTERCEPT shop. Funds are thereby raised for Salvation Army community programs. As well, still wearable clothes and man-made fabrics are donated free to various community groups. INTERCEPT began operating in September 2019 and opened its boutique in March 2020.



The INTERCEPT Team with SA manager Nick at our 1st birthday party September 2020.

DID YOU KNOW?

By 2029, secondhand clothing sales will have completely overtaken fast fashion new clothing sales.. Westpac reports that secondhand clothing sales grew by 38% in Jan 22 compared to the year before.

There is a real revolution going on and the world is starting to wake up to slow fashion and its many benefits.

There is enough clothing in existence right now to clothe the next 4 generations such is the scale of overproduction.

Only 20-30% of clothing and fabric donated to charities is sellable. At the Salvation Army Whangarei, they take the unusable excess and gift it to organisations like INTERCEPT. This equates to approx. 24 tonnes annually being diverted from landfill.

Less fabric to the landfill = substantial reduction in dumping fees and damage to the environment

More donations resold = funds for local programs and promotion of repurposing

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP

The Whangarei Salvation Army Family Store (SA) provides INTERCEPT with

- window space and a prime “boutique” location within the store
- sales (INTERCEPT handles no cash at all)
- record keeping. Monthly sales figures are available on request.
- donated fabric, linen, haberdashery and clothes
- space to store, sort and work with fabric
- funding for set up costs like printing and label making, plus any running costs.

HOW DO I START A FABRIC RESCUE IN MY COMMUNITY?

Key components:

- The first and most important starting point is to **find an op shop manager** who is willing and able to work with you to develop a fabric rescue operation, and who shares your vision. The op shop must have enough space to create a separate boutique inside it.
- Find people with a passion for textiles and for the planet.
- Volunteers, some with sewing skills and some knowledge of fabric. Training may be needed to distinguish between synthetic and natural fibres.
- Creative vision to develop a brand look and boutique ambience.
- Organization skills. It is very easy to become overwhelmed by the sheer volume of stuff coming your way. By getting organised with what you want to save, for what product or purpose, and having bins for each of your needs, is extremely important at the beginning. For example, we have separate bins for denim, wool, silk, summer clothes, winter items, knitting wool etc etc.
- Communication and empathy to manage volunteers. Finding out why they want to help is key to keeping them happy.
- Community connections to redistribute surplus product where it is needed.
- Community partners – fabric artists to source, store, sort, rework and resell fabric, always keeping it local if possible.
- Good communication skills to promote the brand and ethos via social media, and face to face with the community.



TO SET UP YOUR OWN FABRIC RESCUE, YOU WILL NEED:

- You can start small and develop your own operation as you go. We are finding now that the five operations in Northland are all different and best suit the resources available to each of them.
- Your own brand name. (INTERCEPT has decided we need to protect our own distinct brand).
- Your own Facebook page
- Your own website (optional)
- A retail space big enough to create your own boutique within.
- A large sorting space with storage, shelving, clothing racks, large boxes or bins.
- Skills around shop display and merchandising
- A large pool of volunteers and supporters but like us you can start with just a dedicated few and build your team from a sound foundation.
- A team who are all on the same page re mission, values and principles.
- Artwork around your brand for a swing tag and sewn in label funded by the op shop.

HOW DOES INTERCEPT WORK?

EXECUTIVES, SORTERS AND MAKERS

The Executive team includes three organizers:

- Jenny manages the boutique and drives the creative look of INTERCEPT brand products which she promotes mainly on Facebook. In June 2023 we were nudging 2k members.
- Anne manages Sorter and Maker volunteers. She also manages our website and blog.
- Carmen liaises with community groups to channel donations of clothes and bedding which INTERCEPT cannot use.

Sorters go through bales of clothing, bed linen and fabrics (previously sorted for us by the SA staff to remove gross rubbish and contaminants) to first identify those pieces suitable for INTERCEPT products. These go to a separate area for makers to find resources for their work. The rest goes into either a large bale to go to a local group (where another team will sort and distribute to the communities of Northland) or into labelled boxes according to current needs and requests from the community.

Because INTERCEPT only works with natural fibres, we find we need to home good quality synthetics. These go to other shops and community groups who can use them for their own special purposes.



Sorters with labelled boxes

Makers work with *natural fibres*, such as linen, cotton, silk, wool and rayon/viscose, to create INTERCEPT brand products. Makers may work at the INTERCEPT space, but most prefer to create at home. They often come up with new product ideas themselves and enjoy the artistic aspect of upcycling fabric.

Most items in the INTERCEPT shop have a swing tag attached and a sewn-on label when we have put our own embellishment onto the garment.

On the tag under “product” is a description of the work done:

“**Refreshed**” means the piece is great as it is and only needed to be washed and ironed. Sometimes it is soaked to remove stains and always examined carefully to make sure it is as perfect as possible. If there is still a small imperfection, we will write it next to the price eg \$15 (small mark on back shoulder).

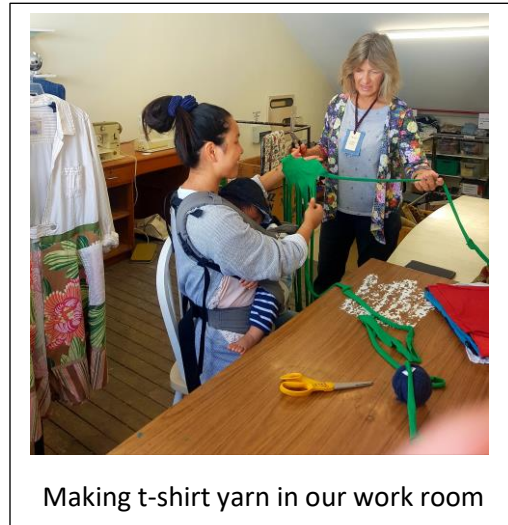
“**Repaired**” means resewing seams, hems, replacing buttons, zips etc.

“**Reworked**” means changing the structure of the piece, like removing or adding sleeves, extending or shortening hems etc.

“**Repurposed**” means taking one product and turning it into a completely different product, such as taking a quilted duvet and turning it into girls’ coats, or a towel into kitchen wipes. Another word for this is “upcycled”.

“**Embellished**” is used when we add decoration to a piece usually to cover a stain or hole or just to lift the piece and make it unique.

Using these techniques, we turn a garment seen by many as rubbish into a premium INTERCEPT product which we are proud to sell for a higher price than the other goods in the Family Store. Our loyal customers are happy to pay extra, knowing our products have been worked on carefully before they go into our shop, ready for a new and hopefully long life. Our average price is \$18 while in the main store it is around \$4.

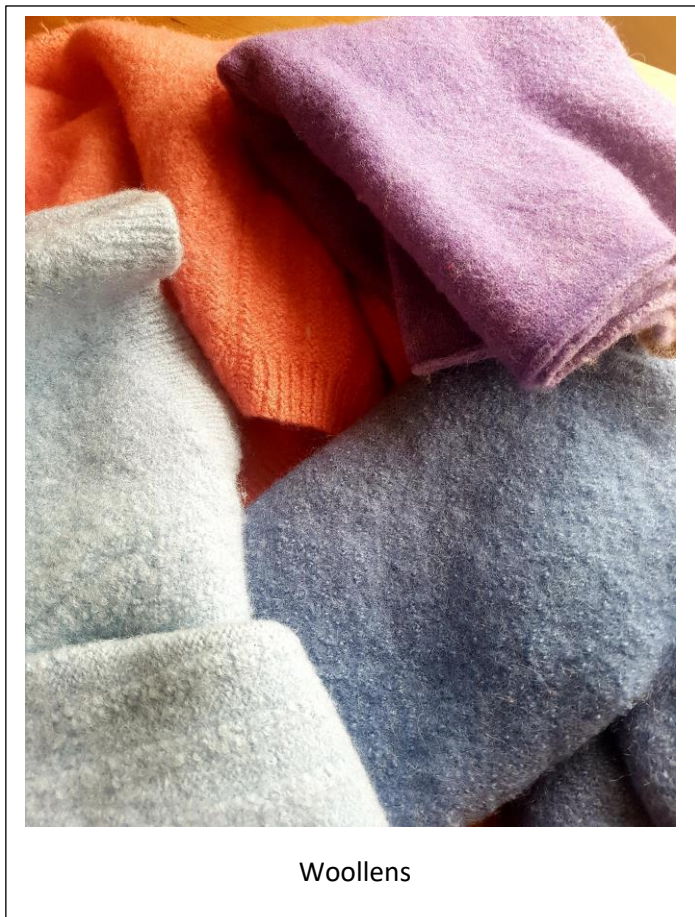


WHY WE USE MAINLY NATURAL FIBRES.

We use predominantly natural fibres for our INTERCEPT range because they breathe, they are biodegradable, and they age well.

Cotton, linen, silk, wool, bamboo and hemp are all natural fibres. We also use viscose/rayon which is made from wood cellulose.

Man-made Materials: Acrylic, polyester and nylon are made from petroleum. They will pill and rub and often look worn out very quickly. They do not breathe or get softer with age like pure cotton and linen. Every wash releases micro particles into the environment. They do not biodegrade over time like natural fibres.



Some vintage synthetic items are well made and we do include them because of their inherent value and quality. We also sometimes use synthetics for our gift wrap and produce bags.

POINT OF DIFFERENCE

When we set up our boutique, we wanted our products to stand out as different from the products in the main store, so we looked for ways to achieve this. One was to not have any plastic in our shop, so the racks and shelves are all made from recycled wood. Hangers too needed to look different so we sourced vintage hand knitted hangers. Having different hangers means we can see how many garments have sold that week by the number of hangers in our special INTERCEPT basket behind the main counter. It also alerts the counter staff that they are dealing with an INTERCEPT product which is entered into their system under its own key.



PRICING:

How to price the products in our shop has always been a thorny problem. Too low a price and the product is undervalued by the customer; too high a price and, unless it is a spectacular piece, it just sits there.

We adjust pricing as we go. If we have a lot of stock to move, prices go down a bit, likewise, if we haven't enough stock prices go up to slow down sales.

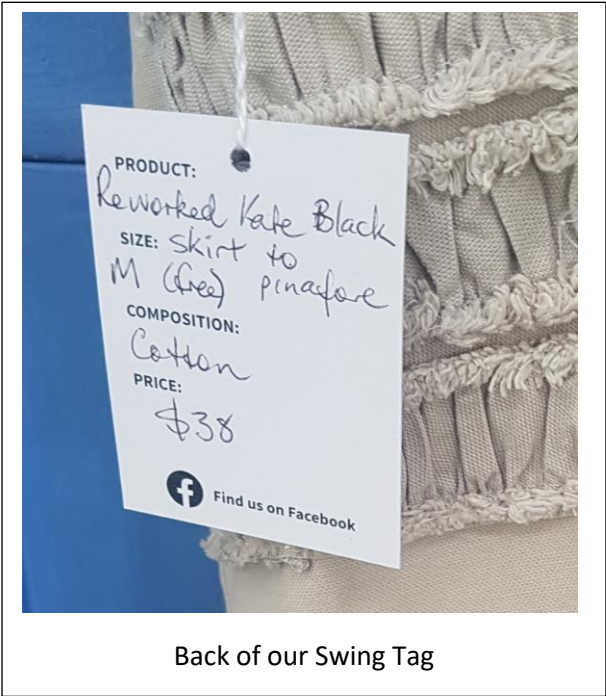
Finding that "sweet spot" is an ongoing challenge. Garments are by far our best sellers and for some reason people are happy to pay a bit more for them than household items like mats or cushions. Most of our refreshed and repaired garments are around \$18 and a fully embellished jacket is \$38. Sometimes we look online to see what others are selling a similar product for and then we halve that price.

Pricing too is aligned with the different economic regions of New Zealand. Whangarei is in a lower socio-economic zone so our prices need to reflect that. We are building a loyal customer base from other more affluent regions like Mangawhai and Auckland because our prices are very reasonable compared to similar products in these areas.

Seasonal and Boxing Day sales have had limited success, which suggests that price is not the first consideration for our customers. Our prices are already comparatively low. If the fabric is beautiful, especially vintage, silk or linen, the garment will sell quickly regardless of price.

At INTERCEPT, for consistency, we have one person, our shop manager, doing all the pricing and writing on the swing tags. The other makers leave their work on a table in our work space set aside as the pricing table. Once a week, these items are priced and put in the shop. Smaller items like the dog toys

and wipes have just a small swing tag not the larger INTERCEPT tag. These can be hand made or purchased in large amounts.

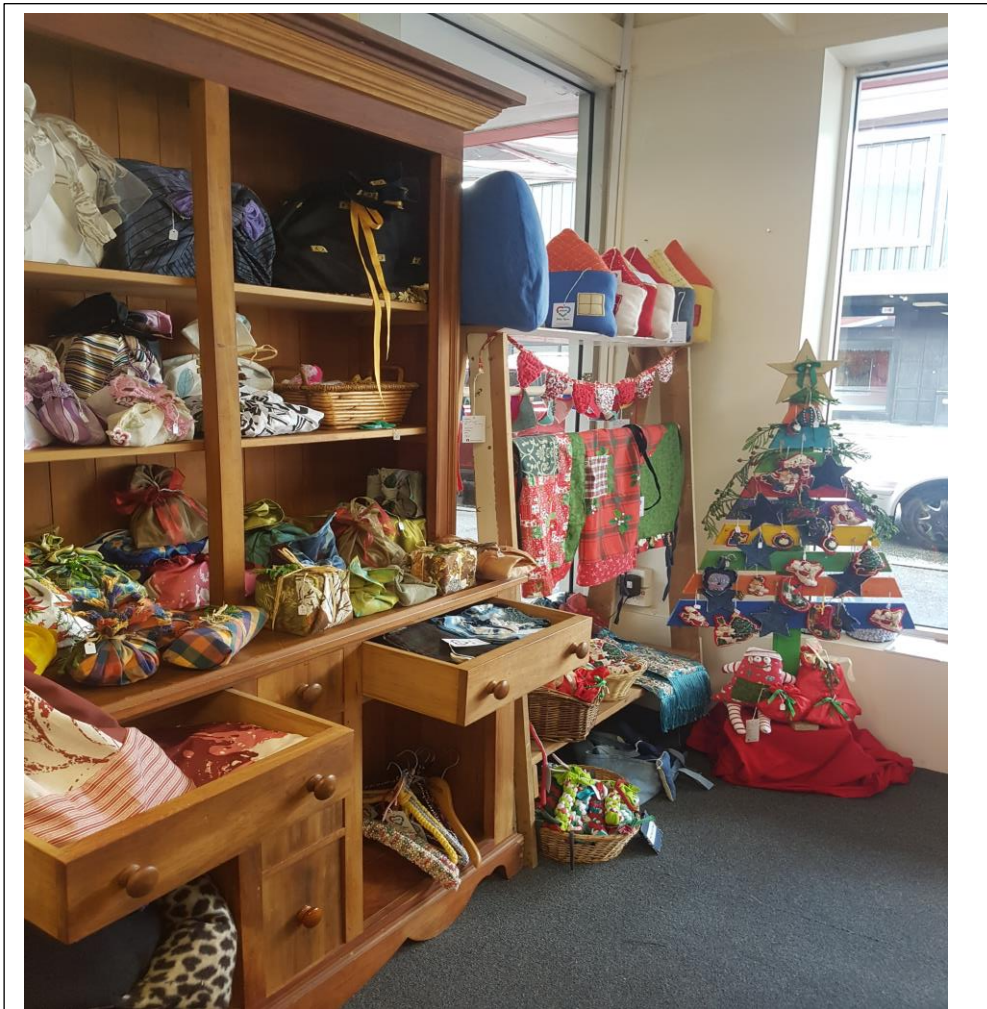


Back of our Swing Tag

ON LINE SALES:

When we promote our products via our Facebook page, we often get requests from out of towners wanting to purchase on-line. The SA has a “till only” system, so we advise these potential customers to either come up to Whangarei or find a friend up here to pop into the shop and purchase for them. Likewise, there is a “no exchange” policy so, if something did not fit, exchanging it would be a problem.

At first when we were growing our customer base, we would post a selection of garments and products on our Facebook page each week. But this got to be quite time consuming with out of towners wanting to buy on line or put products aside for them. So we have now moved to fewer posts concentrating especially on telling great upcycling stories. Sales are picking up all the time and don't seem to be affected by this move.



An old dresser is used for display and to create our boutique space

OVER 40 INTERCEPT PRODUCTS:

- Men's, women's, teen's and children's natural fibre clothing.
- Vintage clothing, which is sometimes man-made fibre, but is valuable because of the age of the garment.
- Hats, knitted and crochet wool and sewn cotton all ages
- Hot water bottle covers
- Knitted slippers
- Gloves
- Bunting
- Cushions and pillows
- Tablecloths and table runners
- Bags: Book, beach, yoga mat, messenger, tote, shoulder, shoppers: all sizes
- Aprons all sizes
- Peg Bags hanging
- T-shirt yarn products: bags, dog toys, by the ball
- Gift wrap and gift bags
- Toys: dolls, patch work balls
- Baby's bibs
- Quilts all sizes usually patchwork
- Wipes: kitchen, bathroom, scrubbers, baby, makeup. Crochet cotton and cotton fabrics.
- Produce bags
- Scarves cotton, silk, wool
- Pet beds, toys and dog coats
- Seasonal items eg. Christmas decorations and stocking fillers
- Felted wool mending kits
- Damaged linen for upcyclers and creatives
- Draught stoppers



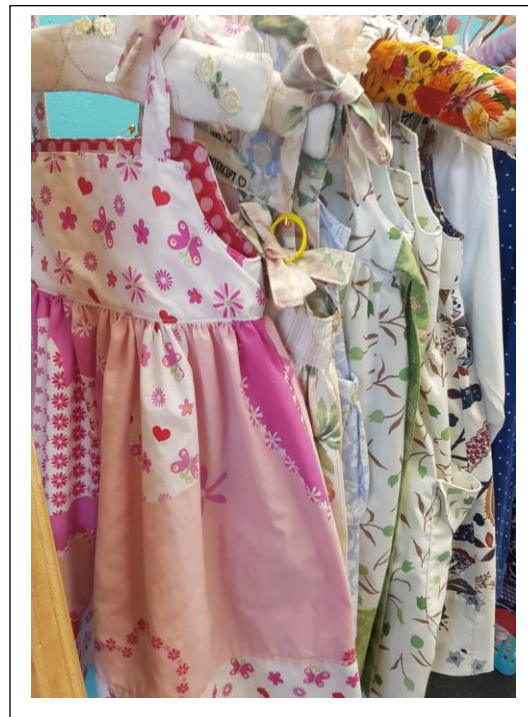
THE INTERCEPT BRAND STYLE:

We would imagine that every fabric rescue operation would have its own look, depending on the makers involved. Ours is firmly tied to quality fabrics and classic designs which will stand the test of time. Our vintage line has been very popular for this reason as these pieces still look great after many decades.

Some of our other popular garment styles are overalls, patchwork dresses often made from men's shirts, girls hooded jackets from quilted duvets and anything denim especially denim jackets embellished with cool cut outs often from t-shirts.

Some of the other INTERCEPT products which have proved popular are aprons made from quality designer fabric swatches, denim skirts into shoulder bags lined with cute fabric, dog toys made from plaiting the bottoms of t-shirts, teddy bears made from kiwi blankets, kitchen wipes from towelling and cute fabric and draught stoppers made from tough fabric like denim, stuffed with the sewing waste from our workrooms. We are proudly zero waste!

We can't emphasize enough the value of beautiful print design and quality fabric in selling a product. Great fabric, particularly vintage, will lift that product above the others and therefore it is extremely important to train sorters to spot great fabric when they see it in a bale.



HOW WE SET UP OUR INTERCEPT SHOP:

The SA generously gave us a lovely space right in one of their front windows close to the till so staff could keep an eye on our products which they describe as “premium”. We moved an old hutch/dresser into the space to help enclose the area. We painted one wall turquoise and placed our hand made patchwork and applique banner on it. This can be seen from anywhere in the shop.

We had 4 racks and 2 shelving units made from recycled wood. The biggest rack holds the womens clothes, another is for teenage at one end and men’s at the other. A third smaller rack is for our vintage range.

The childrens rack has a shelving unit attached for cot quilts, bibs and wipes, toys and hats etc.

Another shelving unit holds mats, quilts, cushions, hats and ottomans. A whole wall has pegs or hooks for holding all our bags, aprons and peg bags etc. The dresser is useful for our gift wrap ideas, baskets to hold smaller things like dog’s toys and kitchen wipes and its drawers are good for packs of bunting and cutlery sets.

The ends of each rack are good for display from both the street view and inside the shop. We try to put our newest and most interesting items on these prime spots and then try to make them look good together by colour matching where possible.



DONATIONS:

From our experience the donations space is dynamic and changes regularly as there are excessive amounts of fabric available and the system has times of excess, then shortage depending on inflow and output.

The key to donations is clarifying exactly what a person/group wants and the quantity they can use, then having a system to communicate this to the sorters. We have a sorters chat group on Messenger for this. We also label all boxes for collection with specific requests. The goal is when people collect their items, they are only receiving what they can use.



Every 6 months or so we hold a fabric rummage sale to offer our local sewists all the fabric not suitable for our INTERCEPT products. This has become so popular that there is a queue outside the store on that Saturday morning before opening. Its all you can carry for \$2.

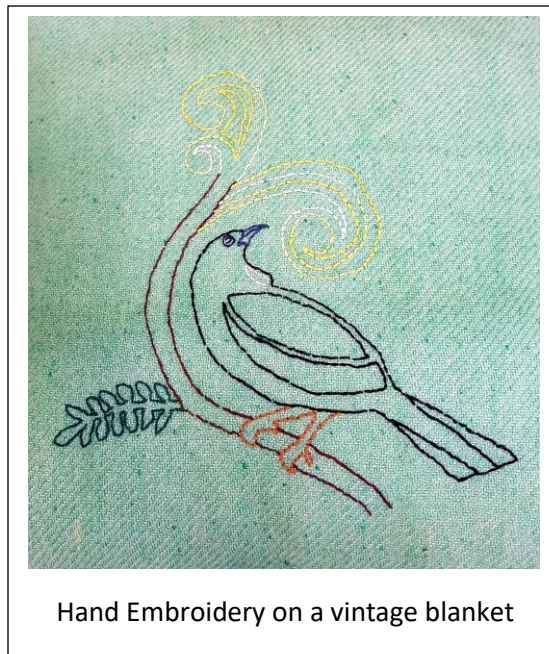
Some examples of sharing fabric which is not suitable for INTERCEPT products:

- Costumes and fancy dress for theatre groups and kindergartens.
- Local artists – communicate their specific needs e.g. White cotton sheets go to a local artist, damaged bed linen with interesting prints go to local upcycle artists to make into their own range of products.
- Old woollen underlays, blankets, quilts and unwearable clothing goes to the SPCA and Pound.
- Local school requested items that have small marks or stains as emergency clothing for students that they are not required to return.

- Giveaway stalls at local fair and community days – e.g. a craft market has a free stall of fabric remnants, knits and offcuts that could be used by crafters, clothing and linen at a free Children’s Day hosted by social service agencies.
- We have trialled short term free clothing racks in public places.
- Professional fabric artists may send work to showcase at INTERCEPT in exchange for materials.
- As a perk of the job, volunteers are free to use donated fabric and clothes for their own purposes, within reason.

As part of our mission, we also share messages with groups about responsible donating to charity shops (e.g. please wash items, do not donate things that cannot be sold).

We also now have people donating directly to INTERCEPT as they are aware of our work. These people donate fabric and clothing that suits our brand, but is not suitable for a charity shop, due to small stains or repairs needed. By donating directly to INTERCEPT time and double handling are saved as well as ensuring something of excellent quality doesn’t risk ending up in landfill.



RECIPROCITY

Look for “win-win” arrangements with volunteers and community contacts. These relationships will last longer and be more productive if everyone benefits. For example, INTERCEPT works with a local eco dyer for whom we collect items which we know would take dye well especially silk and she gives back some of her branded items to sell in our shop.

WHERE CAN WE SEND OUR EXCESS RESCUED CLOTHING AND OTHER TEXTILES?

Other charity shops, social workers, churches, schools, artists, animal shelters, local industry (marine, construction, cleaning, maintenance). Explore your community to find where there are needs for clothing and textiles.

HOW DO I FIND VOLUNTEERS?

Your Facebook page will be your best way of contacting like minded people. But after that:

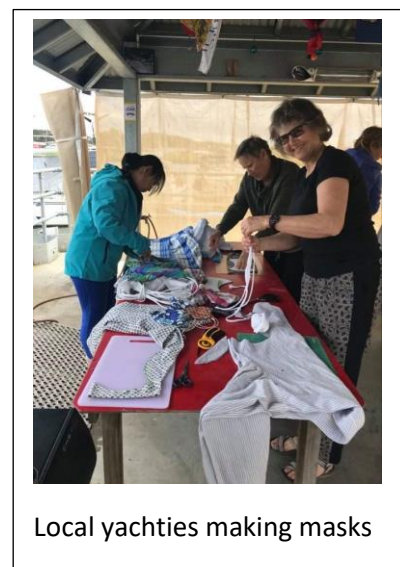
- Local Volunteer Agency
- Timebank
- Craft and sewing groups
- Newspaper, community adverts
- Personal and community connections

MANAGING VOLUNTEERS

Sorting: some volunteers will have experience and a feeling for fabric, while others will need initial guidance sorting synthetics and various natural fibres. We now have a system with the SA sorters of 2 bales: one for stuff they can sell in their store and another for everything else. These bales come directly to the INTERCEPT sorting area where our sorters go through everything firstly looking for cherished pieces for our INTERCEPT brand, then all the other ways we can donate.

Roster: Keep a current contact list of volunteers. INTERCEPT schedules 1-3 sorters to work at a time. Some prefer to work alone, while others may like company and guidance. Each shift is 3 hours or less.

Makers are welcome to sew in the Salvation Army INTERCEPT workspace. Most take the materials home and create products for the INTERCEPT boutique. Occasionally, they may use some fabric for themselves.



Local yachties making masks

THE UPCYCLER'S WORKROOM:

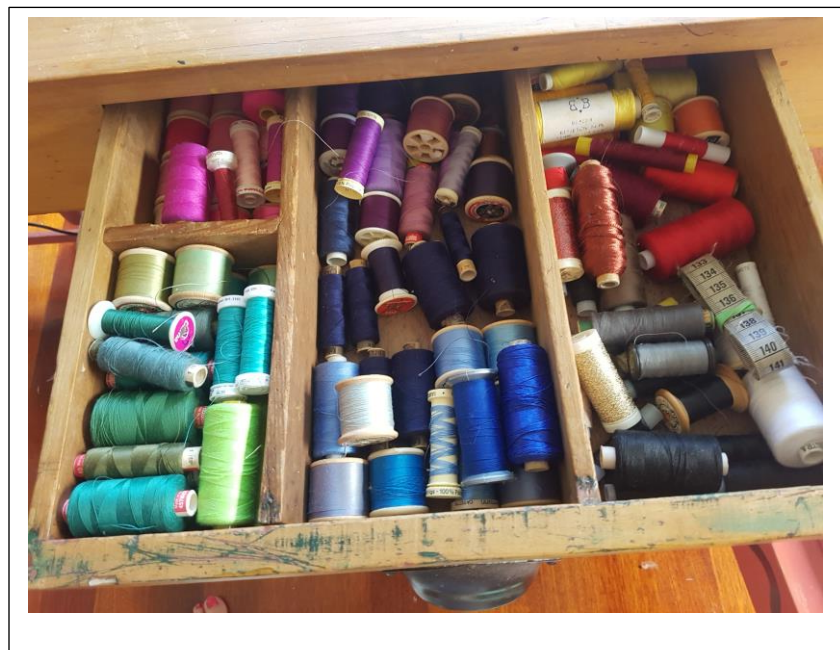
Once a maker starts an upcycling workroom it soon becomes apparent that some organisation is needed for the myriad of fabrics and haberdashery which is needed to create unique pieces. Big plastic bins work very well for the different fabrics like denim, cottons, silks, rayons, wool and linens. Smaller containers are needed for embroidery pieces, braids and laces, ties and belts, buttons and threads.

A note on threads: test all thread with a good tug to see if it is still strong and serviceable. Discard fragile thread.

A clear file is great for keeping decals and other graphics to go on garments. Dividing them into 3 different folders works well too: childrens, womens and boys/men. Then when you wish to embellish a garment, you can go to the relevant folder and flip through until you find something that will look good.

Buttons are very important and can lift a garment immediately. As this is one of the main reasons garments cannot be sold in the SA Store, replacing missing buttons is a great way of repairing and giving a piece a new life. A change of buttons to vintage for instance can really give a garment like a cardigan a unique look and make it more desirable.

Embroidery, particularly vintage, is also cherished by the upcycle artist. All that hand work is valued and unique and represents an era when garments were treasured.



WHY ARE ITEMS UNSALEABLE IN THE MAIN STORE?

The Salvation Army Family Store receive a virtual avalanche of donations and in order to not be buried under it, their sorters have to be very picky. They simply do not have time to mend, replace a button, iron a shirt or soak a stain. That's where we come in. Here are some of the reasons items come to us:

Fault	Remedy
Missing or broken buttons	Replace sometimes just one matched or all of them. Need a good supply of buttons
Faulty zips and other fastenings	Replace (tricky), repair (good hard knock with hammer) or devise another way to fasten like ties or buttons.
Split or pulled seams	Resew damaged seam or all seams if pulled
Loose threads and unravelling of knits.	Tidy up by cutting threads or if knitted pull thread to the back and tie off.
Worn and stained collars.	Cut off to make Chinese collar
Underarm pilling and staining.	Repurpose garment into top, girls dress or skirt etc.
Missing belts.	Make new one, find another or cut off belt loops.
Hems coming undone.	Resew hem
Badly done home repairs.	Unpick and repair properly
Half finished home sewing.	Finish the job
Too old fashioned.	Update by shortening etc.
Stains.	Soak in stain remover or if in good place on garment cover with embellishment.
Holes particularly in merino.	Darn using exactly the same colour thread. Need good supply of threads. If in good place cover darn with embellishment.
Fading particularly on shoulders	Over dye or recut.
The shop already has too many of this item.	By using one of our methods we can present it again in a unique way and make it saleable.
The item has not sold for some reason after going through many stages in the store sales process.	Repurpose, update, repair etc.

*Please note with the above, only quality items are worked on. If a piece is cheaply made from poor quality fabric it is just not worthwhile spending time on it.



HOW TO TELL IF A GARMENT IS QUALITY:

The general look, style and feel of the garment will give you a great first impression ...or not.

Check the label. If you don't know the brand name, the quality of the label will sometimes indicate the quality of the garment. A cheaply made label usually indicates a cheaply made, mass produced garment.

Check the composition of the fabric. Most linens, some viscose, most pure cottons, all silks, most pure wools are worth working on unless damaged beyond repair. Synthetic blends not so much.

Sometimes we have to take a few threads of fabric and burn them to see if they are synthetic or natural. If synthetic a hard black plastic will form and, if natural, fine ash.



SIZING:

Larger sizes are always in big demand but we can only work with what we get, unless making from scratch, but even then the amount of fabric we have to play with will often dictate what size the end product will be.

As clothes come from all over the world, often the size stated inside the garment will not reflect our NZ sizing. This is particularly true for Asian clothing. A size conversion chart is a handy tool. If there is no size indicated in a garment, an approximate size is put on the swing tag eg. small to medium, medium to large, 4-6 year old.



WHAT DO I GET OUT OF IT?

Quotes from volunteers as to why they are involved with INTERCEPT.

“I love the freedom of being able to work with beautiful rescued fabrics knowing I do not have to put a price on my work or justify the time and effort I put into a project, because its already benefitting the planet and my community. It gives me great satisfaction to see these orphaned pieces start another life and not be wasted.” - Jenny

“This is a small way to give back to the community that has embraced sailors sheltering here through Covid-19” - Lisa

“I love seeing would-be waste fabrics and clothing repurposed. The environmental impact is huge, given that we lead by example. We’ve a great group of volunteers who have become friends. Then there is the benefit to our local community – it’s just win-win-win for me.” Anne

“I love helping at INTERCEPT as many “waste” items can have another use. However, it takes time, care, storage and connection to find these other uses. It is great to work with a group of likeminded people and it is heartwarming to connect with people delighted to be given items they have a use for, and saving those items from landfill” – Daniela.

HAVE QUESTIONS?

Contact us via our website <http://www.INTERCEPTfabricrescue.net>

You can also find us on [INTERCEPT Facebook page](#)

□

