

# The pleasures and perils of op shopping

In the second of her columns on sustainability in the world of fashion, **Elizabeth Bean** outlines the pros and cons of op shopping.

This year I'm not buying any new clothes. However, colder days means I have started obsessing about a new winter coat.

We have 13 op shops (also known as second-hand, charity or thrift shops) in Nelson City. A recent shopping expedition impressed me and the best part was that op-shopping is a sustainable way to buy clothes, usually at a fraction of the original cost. Our local op shops have lots of NZ designer labels, even a few Nelson designers, and plenty of winter coats.

When looking for my coat, I got side-tracked and purchased a gorgeous Cheryl Mackie dress that will be perfect for next summer. In my defence it looked unworn, was cotton, made locally and fitted perfectly. I am sure I will wear it at least 30 times as suggested by the #30wears campaign. This campaign encourages us buy less fast fashion and instead to purchase 'slow' pieces to wear over and over again.

Back to my winter coat and why I found plenty of choice at



Dianne Timbs  
at the  
Hospice Shop  
in Bridge St.  
ROB  
GREENAWAY

our op shops.

My daughter volunteered at the Hospice op shop last summer and often came home appalled by what some people wanted to donate, or just dumped on the shop's doorstep. Clothing that is dirty or ripped or badly pilled is not acceptable and is turned away. Or has to be dumped.

Rejected cotton items can be sold as rag for the likes of mechanics, but synthetics and mixed fibres become just expensive trash.

Op shops love your donations when they're in good condition. But let's not make these shops

into rubbish removal companies. If an op shop spends \$500 per week paying to dump textiles – and earlier this year some in Nelson were – this is money that can't be used for charity purposes. Your clothing donation has become a cost!

If I have inspired you to pass some items to your local op shop, please have a think about how you do this.

If you're Marie Kondo'ing your wardrobe, or just having a general clear out, ask yourself, "would I buy this if I saw it in an op shop?" Before donating an item, check:

Is it clean?

Does it smell fresh?

Has it got holes?

Is the fabric pilled, stretched or badly faded?

Once you've got good quality stuff to donate, make sure you drop it off during shop hours! If you leave items outside unattended, they may get wet or trashed by passers-by, and cannot be checked by staff.

As well as your donation being wasted, the charity will have to pay to dispose of it.

Currently, op shops are being swamped with used clothing. Fast fashion – and Marie Kondo

– means people are donating more and more. Our real challenge is to buy fewer items. This will help reduce the impact of fast fashion, with less textile waste and lower environmental costs.

When making a purchase, aim for fewer higher-quality items that are earth-friendly. You'll also be wallet-friendly in the long run.

Be proud of what you're wearing – and be happy to say that an item that you're seen wearing frequently – at least 30 times – is a real favourite. Even better if you found it in an op shop!

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