

Building a higher-value fashion and textiles industry

Fashion & Textiles New Zealand

Fashion & Textiles New Zealand is the industry body uniting New Zealand's fashion and textiles ecosystem to champion a thriving future for the industry.

We represent over 120 business members across the breadth of the sector, from designers and brands to performance apparel, manufacturing, textile production, education, technology and circular innovation. Our role is to connect industry, government, researchers, educators and innovators to help shape long-term industry success.

We advocate for the industry's economic, cultural, social and environmental value, helping strengthen national recognition of the sector. Our policy priorities build on our growing body of industry research and action, including the [2024 Threads of Tomorrow report](#), and the forthcoming **Future of Fibre Aotearoa** report and **New Zealand Fashion & Textiles Industry Manufacturing Strategy**.

The opportunity for New Zealand

The sector contributed **\$7.8 billion to New Zealand's economy in 2023**, supported **76,000 workers** and paid **\$4.4 billion in wages**. It also contributes to our creativity, identity and international reputation. Yet its scale and potential remain under-recognised, meaning opportunities to grow jobs, capability and economic value in New Zealand remain unrealised.

The industry is at an important point of transition. Manufacturing capability and specialist skills are under pressure, international competition is intensifying and global market requirements are changing. But this transition also creates a significant opportunity for New Zealand: to build higher-value manufacturing, turn our natural fibres and materials into more valuable products, commercialise innovation, grow circular businesses and strengthen the competitiveness of New Zealand businesses at home and in high-value global markets.

New Zealand already has significant strengths. The opportunity is to connect them, build on them, and create and retain more value here.

OUR INDUSTRY

\$7.8b contribution to the economy

76,000 workers

\$4.4b paid in wages

78% of the workforce is female

OUR PRIORITIES

- Connected and recognised sector
- Future-ready manufacturing and skills
- Business growth and stronger market access
- Higher value fibre and textile products
- Circular and resilient textile systems

Opportunities for the sector

New Zealand has the foundations to build a stronger, higher-value and more resilient fashion and textiles industry. Realising that potential will require industry leadership, alongside the right policy settings, investment environment and government partnership.

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- 1. Build a more connected and strategically recognised sector** Strengthen coordination across fashion, textiles, fibre, manufacturing, innovation and circular systems so the sector can act with greater scale and influence.
- 2. Build future-ready manufacturing and skills** Strengthen specialist manufacturing, technical capability and workforce pathways so New Zealand businesses can innovate, respond and compete.
- 3. Turn New Zealand capability into business growth** Turn New Zealand's strengths in materials, manufacturing, design and innovation into stronger businesses, scalable products and growth in domestic and international markets.
- 4. Create more value from New Zealand fibre** Strengthen the connections, capability and pathways that enable New Zealand fibre to move from raw material into higher-value products and markets.
- 5. Accelerate a circular and resilient textile system** Build the systems, infrastructure and business models that enable textile stewardship, reuse, repair, recovery and new circular economic activity.

Our policy priorities

1. Build a more connected and strategically recognised sector

Fashion and textiles intersect with economic development, manufacturing, primary industries, trade, skills, innovation, waste and the creative economy, but responsibility across government remains fragmented.

Government role:

- recognise fashion and textiles as an interconnected and strategically important industry;
- establish a clear point of coordination within government for the sector;
- engage FTNZ and businesses from across the value chain in policy and investment decisions affecting the sector; and
- work with industry on a practical, long-term pathway to increase productivity, resilience and value creation.

2. Build future-ready manufacturing and skills

New Zealand has valuable specialist textile and apparel manufacturing capability, with strengths in quality, responsiveness and technical expertise. The opportunity is to build on that base through technology, skills and investment, strengthening the capability that supports product development, innovation, resilient supply chains and commercialisation.

FTNZ will bring forward the *New Zealand Fashion & Textiles Industry Manufacturing Strategy* in early 2027, providing a roadmap for a future-ready sector that competes through quality, flexibility, technology, innovation and New Zealand strengths rather than commodity scale. We look forward to engaging with the next Government on its findings and priorities for action.

Industry + Government:

- progress the New Zealand Fashion & Textiles Industry Manufacturing Strategy, to be launched in early 2027, and identify the priority actions needed to strengthen future-ready manufacturing;

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- identify the settings needed for advanced, specialist manufacturing and technology adoption;
- align training and workforce pathways with industry skill needs, including through relevant Industry Skills Boards and education providers; and
- explore how government procurement can be used appropriately to strengthen local capability where competitive New Zealand production and manufacturing exists.

3. Turn New Zealand capability into business growth

New Zealand businesses are competing in increasingly global markets, including against high-volume offshore platforms. At the same time, New Zealand has distinctive strengths across materials, manufacturing, design, research, technology and innovation. The opportunity is to create a fair competitive environment and turn more of that capability into commercial success, stronger businesses and growth in domestic and international markets.

This builds on the **2024 Threads of Tomorrow** report, which identified stronger local capability and international market access as priorities for the sector. Subsequent FTNZ work has reinforced the importance of commercialisation, business capability and market access. [Read Threads of Tomorrow.](#)

Industry + Government:

- identify the barriers to commercialising New Zealand design, product, materials, technology and manufacturing innovation, and the settings needed to improve those pathways;
- strengthen business capability, investment readiness, export readiness, and market access;
- improve access to market intelligence, buyer networks and strategic industry connections;
- create clearer pathways for businesses to scale and meet international market requirements around traceability, environmental data, standards and responsible production.

4. Create more value from New Zealand fibre

New Zealand produces high-quality natural fibres and has strengths across fibre production, science, design, innovation, provenance and place-based knowledge. The opportunity is to connect the ecosystem more effectively and strengthen the capability that transforms raw fibre into higher-value materials and products.

Our [Future of Fibre Aotearoa](#) work has identified strengths across natural fibre production, design and innovation, alongside gaps in coordination, processing, specialist skills and product-development capability. FTNZ will publish the foundational report in November 2026, providing a clearer view of the opportunities and priorities for action.

We look forward to engaging with government on the findings and what they mean for New Zealand's fibre, materials and manufacturing system.

Industry + Government:

- strengthen coordination and connections across New Zealand's fibre value chains;
- identify and address critical gaps in data, technology, processing, product development and specialist fibre capability; and
- strengthen knowledge transfer and connections between growers, researchers, processors, manufacturers, designers, brands, investors and markets.

5. Accelerate a circular and resilient textile system

New Zealand has limited textile reuse and recovery infrastructure, while growing volumes of low-value, short-lived products create waste and wider system costs. FTNZ supports exploring an

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ambitious but practical, industry-designed product stewardship model that protects SMEs from disproportionate burdens.

Done well, circularity can strengthen resilience and create value and jobs across repair, reuse, recycling, reprocessing and innovation. Eunomia analysis estimates potential **net benefits of \$98 million to \$602 million**, depending on the ambition of the model.

FTNZ's position on textile product stewardship builds on the recommendations of *Threads of Tomorrow* and subsequent industry work.

Government + Industry:

- establish a clear process and timeline, with industry, to determine what an effective New Zealand textile product stewardship model could look like;
- ensure any future scheme is practical, co-designed with industry and creates a level playing field, reflecting the realities of the sector;
- ensure any scheme design is underpinned by credible data, avoids disproportionate compliance burdens for SMEs, and considers how scheme revenue could build shared collection, sorting, recovery and reprocessing capability and economic value;
- identify the settings needed to strengthen repair, reuse, collection, sorting, recycling and reprocessing capability, alongside circular design and business model innovation; and
- explore whether consumer, advertising and online market settings appropriately address high-volume, low-value textile business models and support a level playing field for responsible New Zealand businesses.

Industry action underway

FTNZ is building the evidence base and roadmap needed to progress these priorities. We will:

- publish the foundational **Future of Fibre Aotearoa** report in November 2026;
- bring forward the **New Zealand Fashion & Textiles Industry Manufacturing Strategy** in early 2027;
- continue industry work on **circular economy transition**; and
- use this work to inform ongoing engagement with government on future policy and investment settings.

We invite the next Government to engage with us as this work advances, so industry evidence can inform future decisions.

Our vision for the next decade

Fashion & Textiles New Zealand wants to see a thriving, connected and innovative fashion and textiles industry that creates enduring value for Aotearoa New Zealand.

That means successful New Zealand businesses, skilled jobs and future-ready manufacturing; more value from our fibre, materials and creativity; innovation reaching market; stronger international opportunities; and products and materials kept in use for longer.

New Zealand does not need to replicate the scale of global textile economies.

Our opportunity is to build a distinctive New Zealand industry around quality, creativity, provenance, innovation and the capability to turn our ideas and resources into greater value.

Fashion & Textiles New Zealand is ready to work with all political parties, government agencies and industry partners to make that happen