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# CLOTHES SWAP TOOLKIT

**ACTIONAID AUSTRALIA**



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## WHAT IS A CLOTHES SWAP?

A clothes swap is a great opportunity to discuss the workers' rights issues in the global fashion industry. It allows people to question where their clothes come from, to learn about the working conditions experienced by garment workers in countries, and to consider the impacts that COVID-19 has had on the women that make our clothes. It also enables our community to learn about how the policies and practices of international brands directly impact on the wages and working conditions for garment workers in their supply chains.

It is also a fun way to promote ethical and sustainable fashion. People simply bring in their preloved clothes (that are in good condition) and swap clothes between each other! At a clothes swap, people traditionally are given a ticket depending on how many clothes they have donated. They are then allowed to take as many clothes from the room as they have themselves donated. However, depending on the size and scale of the event the organisers are able to take liberties with this arrangement.

## WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A VENUE

There are a few key things to keep in mind when choosing a suitable venue to host your clothes swap.

### 1. Accessibility

- a. Make sure that your venue is in an area that is central for the people you will be inviting and try to find somewhere that is easily reachable by public transport. Check if the venue is accessible for people who might have a disability. Ensure that you include the venue's accessibility when you are advertising for the event, including the name of the closest bus or train stop.

### 2. Cost of the venue

A general rule of thumb to go by is to look out for community halls. Usually, community halls offer a subsidised rate for NGOs like ActionAid and as a bonus they usually have equipment available such as projectors, tables, chairs etc. This would be really helpful if you also plan to present about why you are organising a clothes swap and linking it to the current campaign #SheWearstheCost.

# HOW TO GET A GOOD TURNOUT

Promoting your event is essential in getting a good turnout for your Clothes Swap event. It's a good idea to plan out how you'll be advertising your event to ensure that people know about it. In saying this, you also want to make sure you give people sufficient notice so that they can book this date into their calendar!

## Social Media

Social media is one of the easiest ways to get the word out about your event to a large number of people in a short amount of time. Creating a Facebook event is one great way to do this, particularly when it is created through the ActionAid Australia account, which can reach thousands of people.

To get an event put up online, please fill out the Facebook Event Template in the Activist Toolkit on the ActionAid website, and then send it to the Community Organiser. Please make sure to allow up to five days for your event template to be processed in the office. We recommend having the Facebook event online at least two to four weeks before the planned time to ensure enough time for promotion.

Once the event is live, make sure to invite as many people as possible and encourage them to click attending and invite their friends so that more and more people see the event. It's helpful to also post in the relevant local ActionAid Facebook group, and to do some research to find any other pages and groups whose followers might have similar values and interests. For example, search for economic justice groups, sustainable and ethical groups, environmental groups, women's collectives or feminist groups. A lot of these pages will have supporters who might also be interested in your event, and often these pages are more than willing to promote an event if you reach out to them.

Another awesome social media platform is Instagram! Don't be shy about promoting the event on Instagram or even messaging a contact who is passionate about sustainable and ethical living who can post it on their Instagram profile. Insert the link to the Facebook event into your Instagram post and explain a little bit about what the Clothes Swap is and why it is important. Friends will then begin to share that post and hopefully, it'll reach out to more people as well.

## Call on your connections

Don't underestimate the power of your personal connections! Inviting friends and family and encouraging them to spread the word through their networks about your event is one of the most effective ways of getting numbers through the door.

Having conversations and personally inviting people – from your best friend to someone you’ve only spoken to twice in class- is a great way to make people feel more connected to your event and more likely to want to go. Personal contacts are a great support network for you as well!

## Media

Why stop there? Another great way to help boost the promotion of your Clothes Swap event is by reaching out to the local media. This can vary between your local radio station and media channels like WIN TV (Channel 10), University student magazines, etc. **Make sure that an ActionAid staff member first approves all contact with media!** For this part, you will need the assistance of your ActionAid Media and Communications Manager as well, so ensure you’re giving yourself sufficient time for everything to be approved. The Media and Communications Manager will also assist you in the way you can deliver your content if you are feeling a bit nervous and want to practice.

*A good example of this was the ActionAid Wollongong Clothes Swap event see the case study at the end of the document for more ideas!*

## CLOTHES SWAP CHECKLIST

Depending on the size and turnout of the event, it is important to be prepared and to know what to have. We’ve attached a sample checklist below as a guide on what to bring to the event (AAA can help provide materials such as flyers, banners, QR codes):

- Check the ActionAid Toolkit during your preparation to find necessary templates to get office approval:
  - <https://actionaid.org.au/home/take-action/activist-network/activist-toolkit/>
- Clothes Racks
- Clothes Hangers
- Tables (to lay out some clothes as well, usually provided at venue)
- Projector (usually provided at venue but double check)
- Petitions/QR codes
- Stationary
- Speaker/music
- Seats
- Tape/String (for hanging up ActionAid banners - if any available)

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- Flyers/Information packs
- Changing Area (optional – however, the bathrooms are always another alternative)
- Maybe a Mirror (optional)
- Some of **your own clothes to swap** that you don't mind parting ways with
- **Reusable bags** for any left-over clothes to be donated to a Vinnie's or Salvo's afterward

## TALKING POINTS - PRESENTING #SHEWEARSTHECOST

A clothes swap is a great opportunity to gather like-minded people and raise awareness about the #SheWearstheCost campaign and the steps Australian brands must take to ensure workers' rights are upheld in their supply chains. . If you're hosting the swap in a venue with Audio-Visual equipment it would be great to put together some slides to assist with a brief introductory presentation before everyone starts swapping. If there is no access to AV equipment here are some talking points that might help you start off a quick discussion and welcome. You can always ask one of the ActionAid staff members to give you some more guidance with this.

### 1.Introduction

- a. Thank everyone for coming, introduce yourself and your teammates.
- b. Start with an **Acknowledgement of Country** – make sure you have found out in advance who the traditional landowners of the space that you will gather on are and acknowledge this before commencing.

### 2.Give ActionAid a brief introduction:

- a. ActionAid is a global women's rights organisation
- b. We use a feminist approach to analyse and tackle the root causes of poverty and inequality.
- c. We support women living in poverty and exclusion around the world.
- d. ActionAid works in solidarity with women around the globe and acknowledges the disproportionate effects of poverty and injustice that women endure.

### 3. What does ActionAid do?

- a. **In Australia:** We stand in solidarity with women by campaigning and fundraising for the resources they need to empower themselves and reclaim their rights. We have an activist network of groups all around the country, with a community of volunteers working to help ActionAid succeed in its goals.
- b. **Around the world:** ActionAid partners with local women's rights organisations in 45 countries across the globe, to support women in their various pursuits to reclaim their rights. ActionAid currently has women's rights programs running in 14 countries in which women are living in poverty, supporting them to demand justice.

### 4. Introduce the Global Campaign #SheWearstheCost

- a. The campaign was launched on the anniversary of the Rana Plaza collapse, on April 24th 2013.
- b. Many garment workers were already living in poverty before the pandemic began, because the wages they receive are not enough to cover basic living costs for themselves and their families.
- c. Now while big fashion brands like Nike and the Just Group's Jay Jays, Just Jeans and Dotti are continuing to make huge profits, garment workers are left wearing the cost of COVID-19 as they are hit by job losses and salary cuts.

### 5. Describe the links between #SheWearstheCost and this clothes swap event

- a. Right now garment workers in Bangladesh and Cambodia are being pushed into poverty and hunger because international brands are more concerned about profit than the women who make their clothes
- b. If we come together as consumers we can put the pressure on Australian and international brands to ensure that the garment workers making their clothes are paid fair wages and have safe and secure working conditions.
- c. Garment workers in Bangladesh and Cambodia who are speaking out about their exploitative working conditions. You can stand with them by supporting ActionAid's #SheWearstheCost campaign!
  - i. Use the QR code to sign our petitions calling on Nike and the Just Group to support the women making their clothes during the pandemic
  - ii. Speak to one of our activists (in the red shirts) about getting more involved in the activist group

# CASE STUDY - WOLLONGONG CLOTHES SWAP

On the 28th April 2019 during the middle of Fashion Revolution Week, ActionAid's Wollongong group hosted a clothes swap. The event was organised by activists Emma and Jessie to commemorate the lives lost during the collapse of the Rana Plaza Building and to introduce ActionAid's Global campaign "**Transform Trade for Women.**"

The event sought to raise awareness about the negative effects free trade agreements have on the rights of women workers, especially in the garment sector, around the world. The event was a huge success due to the organizational skills and passion of Emma and Jessie. They started by finding a suitable venue - **The Community Centre and Library in Thirroul**. This was a perfect venue as often community centres have a discounted hire rate for non-profit organisations; they also have an open space and access to furniture and AV equipment. The next step was to fill in the event template on the ActionAid website under the activist toolkit section. Organiser Emma said *"Once the event was approved & online we shared it like there was no tomorrow, local community Facebook groups were fantastic in getting the word out there about the event."*



Emma and Jessie then got the clothes swap on the map by speaking to ActionAid's Communications Manager about organising a media release that they sent out to the local newspaper, radio and magazine outlets. They reached out to media outlets such as ABC Illawarra (radio and online), UOW Student magazine *The Tertangala*, WIN TV, and another local radio station to name a few. This Clothes Swap event in particular gained so much media traction it helped a lot in also bringing the 'Transform Trade for Women' campaign to light within their community.



On the day, they arrived early at midday before the 1pm kick off time to set up.

They had arranged a pre-drop for the clothes so the public could come and leave their clothes with the organizers to lay out and return at 1pm to enjoy the swap. Emma and Jessie also prepared a slideshow presentation with important facts about the global campaign and how this clothes swap event was relevant to the campaign's cause. They shared information about the upcoming RCEP free trade negotiations and the relevance of a clothes swap in sharing rather than consuming. There were around 50-60 people that showed up to swap clothes, find some new wardrobe gems or just learn more about ActionAid, fast fashion and free trade. All in all, everyone had a lot of fun swapping clothes, Emma and Jessie found new local activists to grow their Wollongong group and many people signed the petition to help the global campaign against free trade.

