

Flax & Fleece

I've had a love for sewing since childhood. I can remember absolutely begging my mum to teach me how to cross-stitch. In my head I would imagine the pattern of the needle going through the fabric, exactly where I thought each stitch should go. The first time I sat at a sewing machine I can remember feeling so grown up and very smug! I started with Barbie clothes and accessories (I even remember making Barbie a swag for her camping adventures) and eventually started making clothes for myself as I got closer to high school. Textiles was my favorite subject at school and I couldn't see myself doing anything else at university.

I went on to study a diploma in Costume Construction at the West Australian Academy of Performing Arts. A brilliant course that gave me a huge variety of skills from screen printing and dyeing, to Millinery, Corsetry, Tailoring, Pattern making and more. By the end though, I knew that the theatre industry wasn't for me and, after a year of working in Perth, moving to Yuin Station in WA's Murchison region seemed like the right idea.

After a year of living on the station I started my own small clothing label called Flax & Fleece. I didn't want to lose all the brilliant skills I'd developed at uni and I wanted to challenge myself, to continue to learn and to keep my brain active! In the early days I started by cutting out my garments on the floor in a tiny spare room in our house. After not too long I was squeezed out of that space by a cot, change table and new baby. I now have 2 children and a much bigger studio separate to the house, which has become a bit of a haven of solace for me. It is certainly challenging finding the time in my day to sew with two young children. I mostly do it in small snippets and during nap times. I certainly couldn't do it without the help from my extended family, who provide a second home to our children.

As you might imagine there are many challenges associated with running a clothing label from a remote(ish) sheep station. I have to purchase a lot of my fabric online without being able to see samples in person (colours and textures can look quite different!) and often I pay high postage costs to get it to me. Models and photographers are always hard to find and even harder to organise, so getting professional images to use for my social media is quite difficult. Another issue is that our mail is delivered once a week and this is also my main opportunity to post orders. With the way online shopping is these days most people expect to receive their purchases quite quickly, which is not an easy feat for

me. Despite these challenges it's definitely not enough to make me want to live anywhere else.

Flax & Fleece is a vital and necessary creative outlet for me. To stay happy, fulfilled and balanced I need to be thinking about, planning and creating things. I'm a maker at heart and that's my path for life; I know it. I love the freedom that my little label gives me too- playing with beautiful fabrics and simply making and designing clothes that I love and want to wear is great fun.



It's hard to say what the future holds for my business. The biggest thing holding me back at the moment is time. To design, make patterns and then cut and sew everything myself is incredibly time consuming and it's only something I do on the side. Accepting this and simply doing what I can is a constant internal battle for me. My family is more important and I don't want to miss this special phase in my children's lives. So, who knows what the future holds for Flax & Fleece! I'll just keep making and see where it takes me.

Julia Davis

Instagram: @flaxandfleecestudio

Facebook: Flax&Fleece

Shop: <https://www.etsy.com/au/shop/FlaxandFleeceStudio>

Julia's gorgeous model is her sister in law Fran Foulkes-Taylor