



so stella

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To whom it may concern,

I make this submission in relation to the application lodged with the ACCC by the Homeworker Code committee Incorporated (HCCI) for ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) on 7th of March 2013. Homeworker Code Committee Incorporated - Revocation & Substitution - A91354 - A91357

My name is Michelle Kent. I am the Owner/Designer of So Stella, a small boutique women's fashion label based in Orange, New South Wales. I currently design, pattern-make and sew all So Stella garments myself and all work is completed 'In-house' from my home in my studio/ showroom.

I have local clients visiting me at my studio on a daily basis to view my collections and to have So Stella garments 'Tailor Made' especially for them. I also run an online shop that sells So Stella and all orders are cut and sewn in the studio as the order is placed.

I'm extremely passionate about the 'Craft' of fashion and the skill involved in producing high quality garments. I'm also very passionate about 'Australian Made' and Ethical manufacturing and the fair treatment of others. My label 'So Stella' was born from a desire to create a fashion label with a conscience. It has been through my experiences in the fashion industry that have made me want to design and produce a label that represents a new era in the fashion industry, where there is more of a focus on how garments are made.

I decided to stand up for what I believe in and contacted Ethical Clothing Australia (ECA) in 2012 to see if I was able to have my label So Stella Ethically Accredited. I found the process to have So Stella Ethically Accredited easy and painless. I had a lot of support from my advisor who thoroughly explained the process and helped me complete all necessary paperwork. I recently went through the process again to have So Stella re-accredited and it was even simpler than my initial accreditation. At no point did I find the process too difficult.

Becoming accredited and being a part of Ethical Clothing Australia has had an extremely positive influence on my business. Having their labels attached to all my garments makes me extremely proud but it has also created a talking point for customers about ethical manufacturing in Australia. Consumers don't generally know what is going on in the Australia fashion industry, how garments are being produced and how poorly homeworkers are treated and paid. I'm on a mission to educate my customers so they are able to make better decisions when purchasing fashion items,

which will hopefully start to put pressure on the rest of the industry to start to change their un-ethical/ unacceptable ways. Being associated with Ethical Clothing Australia gives credibility to me and my label, and allows me to get that message across as well as educate my clients on why they are paying more for my handmade designs.

Ethical Clothing Australia has also created a lot of opportunities since my initial accreditation to promote So Stella and other Ethically Accredited labels. All accredited labels can be found on Ethical Clothing Australia's website and have a link back to my website. This has brought a lot of traffic to my website. ECA recently had a stall at the Sustainable living festival in Melbourne and requested 3 of my garments to display in their stand to help promote what they do, which also promoted my label. Ethical Clothing Australia also share my Facebook posts on their Facebook page to help promote the label.

I did not become accredited with Ethical Clothing Australia in the expectation to increase sales and make more money. I simply wanted to be a part of a fantastic organization, that are extremely dedicated and passionate about the protection of outworkers/homeworkers.

Due to my label being produced from home I am continually approached by customers whom just expect me to hand-make a garment from scratch for next to nothing because that is just what is accepted. As I'm a highly skilled patternmaker and sewer, who has worked very hard for years to develop my skills to start my label, this attitude and labeling is insulting. There is a great deal of skill needed to make a garment from scratch and homeworkers/outworkers are highly skilled individuals, so their pay and conditions needs to match their talent. Ethical Clothing Australia are pioneers in the Industry and are changing this attitude. As a young designer and a consumer I can see the efforts of their work and this is exciting.

I intend to grow my business by engaging local homeworkers within the next two years. When I do so, I will seek ECA and the TCFUA's assistance to ensure that when arrangements are made to manufacture 'So Stella' garments, those arrangements also meet the TCFAI award and legal obligations, and all workers in my supply chain receive minimum award conditions including appropriate rates of pay, leave entitlements and hours of work.

I do not consider that complying with the TCFI Award and going through Ethical Clothing's re-accreditation process a significant administrative burden for my business. In the same way that my business is required to comply with tax and other laws in Australia, I am prepared to comply with the TCFAI Award and Ethical clothing Australia to ensure workers receive fair pay and conditions as I know I will receive the necessary support from both Ethical Clothing Australia and TCFUA.

I recently spoke to a representative from the TCFUA about my plans to engage with local homeworkers and they are prepared to travel out to Orange and sit down with me when the time comes to go through the necessary steps I need to comply. Which proves that the ECA and TCFUA are organizations that will work with you not against you.

Ethical Clothing Australia has a huge job to do and do an amazing job at it. Change is not always easy, especially for an industry that has been dusting a lot under the rug for so many years, but I believe Ethical Clothing Australia are working very hard towards a better industry for all parties involved. No longer should factory workers and homeworkers be exploited and have unfair working conditions so that fashion houses

and labels can make ridiculous amounts of money. These unethical businesses undercut genuinely ethical business like mine. Ethical Clothing Australia supports makers like me, so I support them.

Yours sincerely

Michelle Kent
Owner/Designer
'So Stella'