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NSW Launches First-Ever Fashion Sector Strategy

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The New South Wales Government has unveiled the state’s first comprehensive fashion strategy, aiming to strengthen the industry’s economic and cultural impact. Developed in partnership with leaders from the NSW fashion sector, the strategy highlights the role of designers as central to Australia’s multi-billion-dollar fashion economy.

NSW designers contribute \$7.2 billion annually in export revenue, representing 1.7 percent of all Australian exports. State officials say the strategy focuses on six priorities: skills and training review, establishment of an Australian fashion hub, creation of a fashion and clothing smart factory, promotion of Australian Fashion Week, international exposure for designers, and connecting audiences with Australian fashion.

Three funding programs are included to support emerging talent. The initiatives provide \$250,000 to help designers expand into export markets through international trade shows. An additional \$300,000 will support NSW First Nations designers at Australian Fashion Week, and \$200,000 in quick-response grants will assist designers in purchasing essential equipment.

The strategy is overseen by a working group co-chaired by Alex Schuman, CEO of Carla Zampatti, and Edwina McCann, former Vogue Australia editor-in-chief and current News Corp editorial director. The group includes six industry representatives: Marc Freeman, creative director at Camilla and Marc; Lisa Havilah, CEO of the Powerhouse Museum; fashion designer Alix Higgins; First Nations designer Grace Lillian Lee; Anna Plunkett, co-founder of Romance Was Born; Elizabeth Mossop, UTS Professor of Landscape Architecture; and Jaana Quaintance-James, CEO of the Australian Fashion Council.

Minister for the Arts, Music and Night-Time Economy John Graham highlighted Sydney's global reputation in fashion. "Generations of groundbreaking Sydney designers are sought after internationally," he said. "This strategy is the first time a government has formally recognized the sector's economic and cultural importance while planning for growth."

The fashion industry contributes \$9.7 billion to the NSW economy and employs more than 174,000 people. Minister for Tourism and Jobs Steve Kamper described the sector as a complex ecosystem, spanning design, textiles, manufacturing, retail, and education. "Sydney remains the home of Australian Fashion Week, offering a world-class platform for local designers against the city's iconic backdrop," Kamper said.

Co-chairs Schuman and McCann emphasized that the strategy addresses critical business areas, including innovation, workforce development, sustainability, and market access. "It is designed to ensure NSW fashion remains globally competitive while supporting local talent in a rapidly evolving industry," they said.

Sydney Lord Mayor Clover Moore added that the city's cultural and economic strategies recognize creative professionals as key contributors to both the economy and Sydney's identity as a global city. "We are pleased to partner with the NSW Government, UTS, and the fashion industry to ensure creative communities remain a core pillar of Sydney's future," Moore said.

The NSW Fashion Sector Strategy represents the state's first coordinated effort to advance its designers, promote innovation, and increase international visibility, reinforcing Sydney's position as Australia's fashion capital.