

FROM WOMENSWEAR TO PPE

## Fashion label helps battle virus

'It's a fantastic feeling to be able to make a difference to the medical professionals on the front line, and help protect them by wearing suitable clothing'.

By **PETER KOHN**

May 25, 2020, 12:00 pm



From left: Sharon, Fella and David Hamilton.

WITH delays of several weeks in the arrival of imported masks, surgical gowns and scrubs to manage COVID-19, an Australian garment label founded by a Holocaust survivor has stepped up, converting its facilities to manufacture

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) wearables.

The Fella Hamilton company has responded to an Australian government call for factories to retool to make products that help the fight against COVID-19.

Sharon Hamilton, CEO, and her husband David, son of founder Fella Hamilton, decided to take action, switching fashion wear production at their Melbourne factory to PPE products.

“It’s a fantastic feeling to be able to make a difference to the medical professionals on the front line, and help protect them by wearing suitable clothing when we know there was a huge shortage due to big delays of PPE coming from abroad,” Sharon told *The AJN*. “At the same time, we were able to re-engage all our factory workers.”

The company’s gowns and scrubs have been approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration as “a non-sterile, low-risk, class-1 medical device”, she noted.

Sharon said Jewish doctors have helped the company design isolation gowns now in use at Cabrini Health Australia and other private hospitals in Melbourne, and a WA aged-care provider. The company is directly delivering its gowns and scrubs to Melbourne clinics to reduce delays. “We feel very proud and privileged that we can produce the protection and to also adapt and make changes that the various doctors, dentists and other healthcare workers have requested.”

Dr Jack Green, president of the Australasian Jewish Medical Federation, told *The AJN* his organisation has helped the company design and develop its scrubs and surgical gowns and arrange for medical professionals to inspect them to ensure they meet required standards. He said several Jewish-owned companies are now supplying various products to battle COVID-19.

Born in Romania in 1925, Fella was taken to the free city of Danzig in 1935, and just four weeks before WWII broke out, Quakers were able to place her on a kindertransport to the UK. She arrived in Australia in 1953 and became involved in the fashion industry.

“I am very happy and proud with the children that they have show resilience to survive as a business,” Fella told *The AJN*, “and to do something for the community, turning the business around from standstill to do something else very meaningful.”