

JAMES DUNLOP TEXTILES

# YARN

JOURNAL



## Adapting and innovating through isolation - The new reality for businesses

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN YOUR BUSINESS AND THE LIVES OF YOUR TEAM ARE NEGATIVELY IMPACTED BY COVID-19? YOU ADJUST QUICKLY AND UTILISE YOUR SPECIALIST SKILLS AND TOOLS TO CREATE A MUCH NEEDED PRODUCT.

This is exactly what Auckland based soft furnishing manufacturer, Uren Barsal are undertaking with their reusable fabric facemasks. A long-time client of James Dunlop Textiles, the Avondale business has taken the opportunity to pivot its production to assist in a time of need.

Learning early-on that there would be a significant demand for disposable face masks for workers in frontline roles, Chris Larcombe, Managing Director of Uren Barsal, started exploring the idea of making quality reusable masks. "If I could sell them to local businesses we might be able keep our team of eight busy during some tough times" he says.

"Uren Barsal's core business is making beautifully crafted soft furnishings, that last – and we wanted to instil these values in the face masks too."

With a focus on using materials and skills from within the business, hundreds of prototypes, days of wash testing, spray testing the barrier effectiveness, trying different elastic positioning and tensioning options they settled on a final design.

Developed and tested in-house over a 10 day period, with overwhelmingly positive feedback, Chris has decided this will be a core part of his business going forward and has launched a new website under the brand name Kind Face™®. "We truly believe in the face masks and the future of them as an item New Zealander's will use when they are not feeling well and are conscious not to spread germs".



As highly skilled and experienced specialist crafts people, Chris ensured the business was approved as an Essential Service under the MBIE 'Fast-Moving Consumer Good' category. Daily production capacity is now around 300 and with over 1200 masks sold since late March, with the new Kind Face™ website and social media investment expected to increase demand.

Two distributors Chris had pre-existing relationships with, have been selling the masks to their essential service customers such as supermarkets, food manufacturing and the accommodation industry. Trade Me has been a strong channel, but recent Medsafe rulings put a stop to this, which has inspired Chris to apply for registration of the Kind Face™ mask as a medical device.

Another great outcome arising from this story is that when demand for the masks grew, Chris thought there must be an opportunity to outsource product to another commercial sewing business (who might have had to shut their doors). Starfish Interiors was approached and when they learned that they could supply much needed face masks and keep their workforce employed, they jumped at the opportunity. All paperwork and signage drafted by Chris for Ministry of Health protocols were shared, and not only could they add to the daily production, their automated cutting technology enabled 20-times the daily capacity.

**"Helping other businesses has been a real bonus. It has helped me keep motivated throughout the lockdown, along with knowing our own business and staff are in a better position" says Chris.**



#### ABOUT KINDFACE MASKS:

The comfortable, washable, reusable face masks have a triple layer design consisting of a breathable 100% linen outer, a polypropylene non-woven barrier core and a 100% white cotton lining. Elastic straps fit behind the head, so you can comfortably wear the mask for extended periods.

The reuse factor reduces the volume of single-use masks ending up in New Zealand landfills. Treat it like another item of clothing, which you wash at the end of the day, and have ready for the next time you need it.

Creative agency Tenfold, acted fast on promoting the Kind Face brand. Inspiration for the name came from the current environment and needing to 'be kind', while keeping small New Zealand businesses afloat i.e. being kind.

Equally the supporting messages of being kind to those around you by not spreading germs; being kind to your skin and lungs through the use of natural materials and being kind to the environment.

[www.kindface.co.nz](http://www.kindface.co.nz)

