



Being the Change

Meet the makers, producers and educators who dare to tackle the big problems by harnessing the power of individual choices.

By Kara Hurry

FROM TOP: BRODIE NEILL, "RECOIL" TABLE, 2021, @BRODIE NEILL, PHOTO BY ANGELA MOORE, COURTESY OF KELLY MCJANNETT, OPPOSITE: BRODIE NEILL, "GYRO" TABLE, 2016, @BRODIE NEILL, PHOTO BY ANGELA MOORE

AS EACH YEAR draws to a close, we have an opportunity to reflect on the strides forward we've taken and the challenges we've faced in the previous 12 months, and to formulate a plan for the coming year. This year, it has been my privilege to connect with passionate Australians who are building great "greenprints": setting the foundation for sustainable, environmentally conscious and socially friendly art, design, products and businesses. These humble yet very special individuals are not only addressing the environmental and social challenges of our time, but are helping to create a cultural shift — their stories and words remind us that the future is ours to shape and that each of us can contribute in our own way. Here, a few of those who are determined to make a lasting impact.

Brodie Neill

Artist and designer

This Tasmanian-born, London-based designer combines art and sustainability, using reclaimed ocean plastics and timbers to produce functional, meaningful works. "I grew up in Tasmania with few resources, so I had to be resourceful," he says. A walk along Bruny Island's coastline, which was littered with plastic waste, cemented Neill's commitment to a career in sustainable art. His most well-known works, such as the Gyro table, which is made from recycled ocean plastic, embody a philosophy of circular design. "I aspire to make objects of hope," Neill says of his ethos of using reclaimed materials in his pieces.

Neill's art inspires audiences to see waste as raw material, laden with untapped potential. "I define sustainability by designing with positive effect," Neill says, "by having a less impactful process than the norm while redefining standards for both myself and the wider industry as a whole." Over the course of 2024, Brodie continued to push the boundaries of sustainable design, combining his artistic vision with positive environmental impact. "We've made several significant



Above: Brodie Neill's "ReCoil" dining table. Below: the Food Ladder co-founder Kelly McJannett. Opposite: the furniture designer Brodie Neill with an inversion of his "Gyro" table, which is made from recycled plastic.

advancements in the processing of ocean plastics," he says. One of his latest innovations involves transforming discarded nylon fishing nets into striking teal weaves, now being developed into furniture pieces. Through his "Woodstrokes" series, Neill has also diverted specialty timber offcuts from incineration, creating works that blur the line between furniture and art. His ReCoil table, crafted from Hydrowood sustainably sourced from a lake created by a Tasmanian dam project, was showcased at the NGV Triennial in Melbourne. Neill's championing of circular design reached global platforms this year, via speaking engagements from East Arnhem Land to UNESCO's headquarters in Paris.

When thinking about the journey of other artists and designers, Neill has some potentially pivotal advice: "You've got to sweat the small stuff to make a big difference," he says. "From the way we run our design studio to the way we source material, the processes we adopt in making something to the by-products involved, to the so-called 'disposable' packaging, to the end-of-life consideration of each piece, every fork in the road is a conscious decision with long-lasting ramifications." brodieneill.com

Kelly McJannett

Co-founder, Food Ladder

Food Ladder is a business that is transforming food security in Australia by combining agricultural technology with education. From greenhouse installations to state-of-the-art hydroponics without soil, its projects are being implemented at schools across the country with the goal of enduring social change.

Kelly McJannett's mission began after she witnessed firsthand severe food scarcity in remote areas, an experience that sparked her drive to address the issue. "Sustainability is a mindset," she says. "It's about living today for the future." McJannett adds that we must collectively "operate with a sustainability mindset if we are to be good custodians of the earth". Food Ladder's approach is holistic, integrating nutrition and sustainability into school curriculums. Children learn not only to grow food but also understand its value. "Children who grow their own food are less likely to waste food," McJannett says — small shifts, she notes, can have lifelong impacts.

McJannett has advice for those looking to incorporate sustainability into a business ethos. "It's important to understand the unique point of difference your business can make and integrate action into the culture, asking, 'What kind of business/place to work would we be if we were authentic and committed to our ESG [environmental, social and governance] portfolio?'" Her vision is ambitious: "My hope is to have Food Ladder in 1,000-plus schools by 2030." foodladder.org



Alison Greer

Founder, GoKinda

GoKinda is on a mission to redefine sustainable travel, curating a collection of stylish hotels with serious eco-credentials for travellers around the world. Founder Alison Greer's "aha" moment came when she was congratulated for being among Australia's most frequent flyers. "I realised that flying so often was no longer something I felt proud of," she says.

Through GoKinda, Greer makes the case that travel doesn't have to come at the expense of the planet. She speaks with humility about her journey, acknowledging that "true sustainable travel is still a way off". Yet she believes small conscious choices inspire more.

In 2024, GoKinda joined forces with the climate action platform One Tribe, a Certified B Corporation. "We've helped protect 1,675 trees," Greer says of the partnership to date. "We love what One Tribe does — instead of planting trees, they protect them in the rainforest, actively reducing deforestation and keeping carbon safely stored in these ecosystems. Preserving these trees also means protecting the animals that call these rainforests home".

Greer's message is clear:

"Start where you are and don't be put off by those who are all-in. I believe there is a middle ground available to everyone."
gokinda.com.au

Andy Miller

Co-founder and CEO, Heaps Normal

The alcohol-free beer company Heaps Normal is at the forefront of changing Australia's drinking culture. "Sustainability in an industry like ours is about working to minimise our environmental impact," co-founder Andy Miller says. In 2024, Heaps Normal committed to donating more than \$700,000 to climate action and social causes, yet Miller remains humble. "Sustainable business practices should be normal, not noble," he says.

Miller's pragmatism and insight into Australian culture have set the Heaps Normal team up for success, but also apply to others looking to build a sustainable brand. "Australians have a habit of cutting any tall poppies down to size," Miller says. "Sadly, I've also seen this in the for-purpose space. We're all naturally going to be at different points on the sustainability spectrum, and I think we need to hold space for businesses and individuals to acknowledge we



From top: Heaps Normal co-founders Ben Holdstock (left) and Andy Miller; the Oceanfront Studio at Potato Head in Bali, a member of GoKinda's travel portfolio. Opposite: Sam Elsom of Sea Forest.

will fall short of perfection and to commit to continuous improvement." Miller concedes that not everyone can reach the "epic" standard set by organisations including the global sustainable outdoor apparel brand Patagonia. "But I don't want that to stop us from getting started and striving to be better," he says.

Miller's philosophy of "imperfect progress" resonates deeply, and Heaps Normal's breakout success illustrates how meaningful change can come from a commitment to continuous improvement.
heapsnormal.com

Sam Elsom

CEO, Sea Forest

Sea Forest taps nature's potential to reduce methane emissions in livestock using the Australian seaweed *Asparagopsis*. CEO Sam Elsom is a longtime devotee to sustainability, influenced by his upbringing in Noosa, Queensland, his love for nature and his children. The devastating 2019–20 bushfires sharpened his resolve, reminding him "why we need to persevere in building new green industries".



CHRIS SEARL, OPPOSITE, FROM TOP: YEAH PAD, MARTIN WESTLAKE

Sea Forest's positive impact is immense. Its livestock feed supplement, SeaFeed, reduces harmful emissions by up to 80 per cent. "Methane is one of the most potent greenhouse gases," Elsom reminds us. "Our supplement could make a real difference in agriculture's carbon footprint." Elsom's approach to sustainability is holistic, which is essential for the business's success. "Sustainability for Sea Forest, as it is for many industries, encompasses all aspects of the environment: air, water and land, plus people, both employees and local communities, and the long-term viability of the business model," he says.

In 2024, Sea Forest made significant strides in sustainability, completing a pilot project with an international fashion brand to trace and verify emissions reductions from farm to garment through the use of Sea Forest's supplements for

livestock. This project demonstrated both scalability and cost-effectiveness, marking a potential

breakthrough for the industry. Additionally, Sea Forest partnered with Tasmania's Ashgrove dairy to launch Eco-Milk, the world's first commercially available low-emissions milk from cows fed SeaFeed (in addition to grazing), which has been widely embraced in Tasmania. Another milestone was achieved with Sea Forest's first international supply agreement, with the UK supermarket chain Morrisons, paving the way to collaboration with UK farmers starting in 2025.

"Never underestimate the collective power of individual actions," Elsom says. He cites some simple actions we can all take: "Composting household and workplace waste, considering the food miles when shopping for groceries, supporting brands making credible efforts in sustainability and considering where your superannuation savings are invested."
seaforest.com.au

