

## **Undressing the Past: A Study of the Correlation between Waistcoat Design and Broad Sociocultural Trends of Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century Australia**

*Jessica Megan Boman*

BA(Hons), School of Social Science, The University of Queensland,  
October 2014

Clothing has been crucial to society and culture since its inception. Fashion changes quickly, and can be used to create cultural and social identities. This thesis aims to examine how changes in waistcoat design in nineteenth and early twentieth century Australia correlate to broader social and cultural trends. The thesis is based in agency and consumption theories, examining previous literature that discusses the link between material culture and sociocultural trends. The progress of Australia from a penal settlement to a thriving, independent country, through boom, bust, depression and success, is mapped. The changes in waistcoat designs demonstrate a constant change in fashion, from tight, restrictive and plain designs to ornate, loose and relaxed designs. Combining waistcoat designs and broad sociocultural trends highlights that Australia constantly attempted to develop its own identity, whilst still maintaining necessary links with Britain. Suggestions for future research into a more holistic look at Australian fashion and how it correlates to broad sociocultural trends are given.