



Liz Davenport arrives at the Polytechnic in Launceston for the Friends of Clifford Craig Mother's Day lunch on Thursday.

# Learning from the master

**I**NSIDE out, upside down, back to front, knotted this way, hooked that way — designer Liz Davenport's fashion range is all about variations on a theme.

More than 100 guests at a Friends of Clifford Craig Mother's Day lunch on Thursday were given a 45-minute lesson on cross co-ordinate dressing giving at least 100 outfit combinations to cover days to evenings, summer to winter and dressy to casual.

"My garments can take you across a dining room, take you across town for meetings, but maybe even more special, can take you around the world needing to pack only cabin luggage," says Davenport of her latest Miracle in a Suitcase range.

"A recent UK survey revealed most women pack 44 garments, but only wear 22. It is an exciting fact that 22 garments can fit into a cabin-sized bag, you just need to add a warm coat in the overhead locker."

With that, model Giselle Messer illustrated the simple magic of Davenport's signature label, which has earned her Australia's top fashion awards and an Order of Australia last year for her contribution to fashion and society.

What the Launceston audience got to see were velvet and jersey skirts, pants that could be worn on the reverse side thanks to gossamer-fine linings of contrasting colours and prints, and sheer flowing tops that could be free-flowing, knotted and tied around the body as an evening top, or knotted around the neck as a scoop-necked top.

Another tying trick turned a straight sheer-weight jacket into a draping top that camouflaged the top of the arm — a part of the body older women fear to reveal.

Plain-coloured long-line jackets in stretch fabrics helped pull all the looks together.

"I concentrate on stretch fabrics because they allow garments to move with the body," Davenport says.

Cutting fabrics on the bias is another secret to staying faithful to her F-word philosophy.

## Wardrobe secrets with Mary Machen

"Fit is the key to looking good in a garment — I learned the secret of the bias cut a long time ago — I choose soft fabrics, particularly jersey, and elastic, which allows my garments to fit across two sizes.

"These together overcome the fit issue."

As to colour, Davenport favours purple because "it's flattering to most people".

"I learned about colour from a football coach, who told me to only ever work with a palette of four colours and black."

While garments in plain colours — black, taupe, white and purple — form the basis of Davenport's travelling range, she also includes florals and occasional sequin creations that customers can mix and match to suit their own personalities.

Davenport sprung on to Australia's fashion scene thanks to her realising the "unmet want" of women for a pair of classic grey flannel slacks.

And she was among the first to see the allure of Lurex shirts, but it would be her slim-fitting black maxi skirt that shot her label into the couture stratosphere.

Over the past three decades she believes her success has come from offering women "clothes in quality



Model Giselle Messer looks chic in co-ordinates from Liz Davenport's Genius range, which offers secret printed linings to increase outfit possibilities.

fabrics, designed to offer extreme value and comfort".

"The fault with my clothes seems to be that they never wear out," she says.

"Changing your shoes and jewellery is what gives the garments a fresh look through the years."

While Davenport has her own stores across Australia, she is now favouring "road shows", where she tours her new season's ranges, setting up shop for two to four days in a plush hotel suite to offer customers exclusive attention.

"I've become bored with the concrete and glass shopping centres where customers see the same traders, the same garments," she says.

Listening and watching Davenport unpack her cabin luggage, you quickly learn that individuality is the key to looking good, and building innovative designs into mix-and-match sets are the clever way to achieve that.

Liz Davenport expects to release her autobiography, simply called Liz, in August.

For inquiries, visit [www.lizdavenport.com.au](http://www.lizdavenport.com.au)

