

WELLBEING

Counting Shleep



By [Kelly Green](#)
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Founded by former New York advertising exec turned entrepreneur Indi McCullough, Shleep is a luxury bedding, sleep products and lifestyle brand with health and wellness at its heart – after all, how can you live your best waking life without a good night's sleep? This week, Shleep's luxury and eco-conscious bedding and sleep products launch in Lane Crawford – Asia's iconic luxury department store – with a series of sleep and wellness focused events to coincide with World Sleep Day. Ahead of the launch, we spoke to Shleep's founder and CEO about her inspiration behind the brand, and why Australian merino wool is the most superior fabric for sleeping in.

If you've ever experienced a restless night, one where you lay awake, counting sheep and willing yourself to drop off, then you'll know the importance of a good night's sleep for making the most of the next day. This is the ethos behind health and wellness company [Shleep](#), which uses Australian Merino wool to create luxury bedding and sleep products that are not only good for the planet, but also help to promote a great night's sleep. How? By utilising the magic ingredient for good sleep - wool.

The focus of many recent studies, sleeping in or under wool has been proven to help get you to sleep 25% faster and fosters a longer and deeper sleep than other fibres thanks to its natural temperature regulating properties. In Australia, it's a cultural norm to sleep surrounded by wool, but in New York, where Indi - a Canadian-born advertising exec - was based, this was unheard of. It wasn't until Indi met her Australian husband and moved to Australia that she uncovered the secret powers of this natural fibre. Knowing very little about wool, Indi's perception was that it is an itchy, scratchy, not contemporary and un-luxurious fabric. "I couldn't believe it when I felt something as smooth as silk, as luxurious as cashmere, as light as gossamer, and my husband said "that's wool. Australian Merino."

"And the kicker is that it doesn't just feel amazing. It works unlike anything else too. It breathes, it removes moisture from our skin, it's non-allergenic."



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Indi's relocation to Australia coincided with a new media focus on sleep as a core pillar of wellbeing. Having spent years working in strategic marketing and branding, sleep was something that had previously passed Indi by. "I used to live by the silly creed of 'no rest for the weary,'" confesses Indi. "I was a hard-driving executive in America, and for twenty years, I teetered on the edge of workaholism and sleep deprivation."

"Like everyone I worked with, or competed against, I was a victim to the falsehood of "no sleep cool" that turned me into a less insightful, peppy, creative and decisive version of myself."

Having learnt the secret of Merino wool and developed an interest in importance of quality sleep, Indi was inspired to found Shleep, teaming up with Head of Design Jonathan Ward. In July 2018 the brand launched with a collection of bedding, sleep accessories and sleep products for newborns to adults.

Working with a natural, biodegradable, renewable base resource like wool, sustainability and the planet are at the heart of Shleep's business (which is why it's one of our earliest recipients of the [Eco-Age brandmark](#).) Moving forward, running the business sustainably will continue to be a big focus and is a continuous work in progress. "My intention is, where I can, to track all the way back from the farm," says Indi. "My South Korean manufacturer is amazing - it's a family-run business that genuinely care about their employees and customers health and happiness. And we have a collective desire not to use synthetic fabrics and to contribute to the wellbeing of the planet and of people in general."



Innovating with materials is also central to Shleep's future ambitions. "We're really trying to push through innovation and explore new fabrics and materials," explains Indi. "We have two exclusive fabrics so far- the fleece that you see in the pictures is actually our ShleepSkin™ and it's a woven 20 micron super soft fabric, it's not sheepskin. It is made with our patented "yarn knit" technology, a method that uses a fabric backing that's perforated for super breathability and extra thermal and moisture regulation."

The second innovation is Shleep Tight™ Merino - a machine-washable ultra-soft fabric from 100% 18.5 micron Merino wool, which is woven to amplify Merino's already impressive breathability, thermal and moisture regulation properties to deliver a stain and UV protected fabric, with added water and wind resistance.

Indi credits her passion for nature to her father - Dr Jagmohan Maini, who moved to Canada from India to study for his Ph.D and embarked on a long and successful career as a professor, researcher, and chief negotiator on forests with the Canadian government. Not only did he help shape the intergovernmental forest policy dialogue, as co-head of the UNFF Secretariat, he also played an instrumental role in organising the first Rio de Janeiro Earth Summit in 1992. Thanks to her father's teachings, from a young age Indi developed an appreciation for nature and a passion for seeking more sustainable ways.

"My father is so well respected and awarded as a major game-changer in the world of forestry, climate change and environment," Indi says. "His purpose was about changing the world and influencing the younger generations to do the same. So it's fair to say that my love for nature over synthetics is well and truly entrenched in my DNA. Perhaps that's one of the reasons I was attracted to my husband, who has taught me everything to know about wool, which is the fibre of choice for Shleep. Shleep was born out of a question my husband once asked: "Why are Americans not sleeping on and under wool?". It all made sense to me as my father was so influential in making the world a better place with sustainable ethos and way of thinking. It's my father who in end was the voice in my head to launch Shleep."

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This week Shleep launches in the Hong Kong and Shanghai windows of iconic Asian department store Lane Crawford, following an unexpectedly positive reaction from the Asia market. “What really surprised me is the reaction in Asia, that was unanticipated,” says Indi, who initially planned to focus marketing the Australian-made products to America. “The most exciting thing that’s happened to me is that Lane Crawford bought the entire range and even more importantly, completely understand and support our grander vision to be a leading wellness lifestyle brand. We launched in the window of their new flagship home store in Hong Kong followed by Shanghai.”

“Sleep is so important to wellness and people want to talk about it, so that’s been very positive,” says Indi of the reaction to the brand. Of course, launching a new business has been challenging too at times. Challenges include having to get creative with marketing due to limited budgets, and running a business from Australia that operates mainly in the US and Asia. “I’m basically running every aspect of running a business from scratch, so that’s a major challenge,” she admits.

“To be sustainable, responsible and to use natural fibres is expensive, and so your products will always be expensive. That is a challenge,” Indi adds. “You need to get to that consumer and tell them why it’s justifiable to spend four or five times as much because it’s better for them and it’s better for the planet.”

Nevertheless, Indi believes this is a really exciting space to be in right now. “This space is so exciting, across all different types of businesses. I’ve tapped into a lot of entrepreneurs all around the world and I’m really inspired by what they’ve done and learning from them - and there’s a lot out there. It’s exciting.”

What does Indi hope people take away when they encounter Shleep products?

“I want people to think our products are absolutely amazing. I want people to take away that they slept better and these are fantastic products using fantastic fibres in a really innovative way.” Who’s to argue with that?

Learn more about [Shleep](#).

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