



Keep your hat on

A bicycle ride around Christchurch led to a safety invention which has proved popular among construction workers.

When clothing manufacturer Greg Barrett was cycling round chilly Christchurch in winter mornings he wondered what he could do to help stay warm.

After chatting with a biking mate, Barrett decided to see if he could design some sort of cosy headwear that could be worn under the cycle helmet.

After a bit of head scratching he came up with a merino beanie that met all the requirements he desired, not least safety.

Barrett chose to work with merino wool as it had the benefits of being lightweight, sweat absorbent to allow for natural cooling, and – as he

discovered – created static to keep the helmet in place.

Even better, it did not itch.

Barrett then realised there could be another use for his bicycle beanie – in the construction sector where workers were outdoors in all weather including freezing winter days.

He learned that construction workers were generally instructed not to wear beanies under hard hats because it could make them slip off.

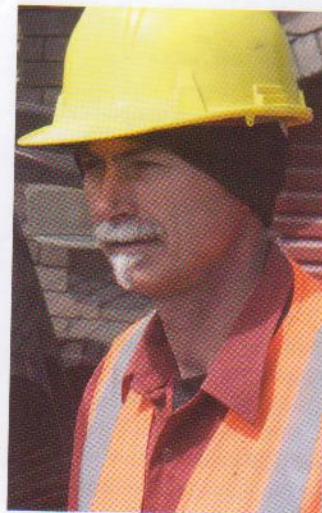
But the merino wool got round that problem though its static properties and hence the flat-seamed beanie was further recreated as a 'merinie',

specifically for hard hat use.

Barrett had the Department of Labour in Christchurch evaluate the merinie, and its use was approved as safe practice.

The merinie has subsequently proved popular with users, including the added benefits of being flame resistant, wind proof, and can be worn with ear muffs without breaking the sound seal.

Barrett's invention saw him gain a finalist placing in the 3M awards last year, and his lively presentation about the merinies created much interest at the NZOHNA/NZISM conference in New Plymouth – along with a few orders.



Greg Barrett with his 'merinie' beanie.



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