



RIGHT TO REPAIR SUBMISSION

On behalf of Bower Reuse and Repair Centres who represents an online community of 15500 Facebook, 3500 Instagram and 14500 Newsletter followers I'm submitting the below document with Bower Reuse and Repair Centres recommendations for the introduction of an Australian Reuse and Repair legislative framework.

1. Petition for legislative framework

You might have noticed that we have been running a petition for the last 12 months on our website <https://bower.org.au/support-us/right-to-repair-petition/> and have 3540 people who signed and support the below text.

We, the undersigned call on you to:

Implement a package of measures to facilitate consumers' rights for the repair of personal and household items, extend products life cycles, stimulate the 'circular' economy (repair and reuse), and reduce the amount of hard waste going to landfill.

Based on leading best practice consumer rights policies around the world, this would include:

- Introduce mandatory schemes for manufacturers of new products to provide spare parts and repair manuals for a mandated period of time, such as has been legislated in France and is being introduced across Europe and other jurisdictions*
- Tax breaks for repairs of personal and household items, such as has been legislated in Sweden and other jurisdictions, as a financial incentive to repair and reuse, rather than throw away and buy new.*
- Other best practice measures to boost the circular economy, lengthen product life, reduce landfill and protect the environment, such as including reusability and reparability standards in the Product Stewardship Act, as well as adding the 'right to repair' to the Productivity Commission's agenda for further examination and report back.*

By introducing these measures and making it easier for Australians to repair, and have repaired, their personal items, and for businesses to provide repair, reuse and associated services, you will be achieving strong social, economic (including job creation) and environmental outcomes across the country.

*Please support the right of Australians to repair everything we own.
Yours sincerely,*

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2. Recommendations based on Bower Reuse and Repair Centres experience

As you might know Bower Reuse and Repair centres has been offering repair services for the last 20 years to the local communities where we operate.

This has given us a wealth of experience in repair and reuse of materials and ample insight knowledge on how industries, communities and local governments look at these issues.

You can find more information about our repair services on our websites <https://bower.org.au/workshops-repairs/repairworks-online/>

We will focus in this chapter on topics which have not yet been covered by either our own petition or by other parties who provided submissions. We also contributed to the submission from World Wide Fund, Local Government NSW, Australian Local Government Association, Northern Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils.

The topics we will not cover in this submission but consider nevertheless vital for the introduction of an Australian Right to Repair framework are:

- Planned obsolesces by industries and in the first place the electronic industry
- Designing products which are durable and repairable
- Intellect property and access to data which makes it impossible for local and independent repair services to assist consumers with repairs
- State Government EPA departments providing real financial incentives rather than lip service to repair programs.

The topics we will focus on in our submission can be categorised as following:

- Education
- Tools
- Incentives

These topics are to be appreciated as being complementary to the introduction of legislative and industrial frameworks which we believe the government should establish.

Based on our experience we have come to realise that in order to roll out a successful Right to Repair program it is essential to not only introduce legislation but to also introduce mechanism which will help members of the communities and public at large to understand why it is important to repair items, to be able to engage in repair and to notice some direct positive benefits for themselves.

Education

When people understand the environmental benefits of repair and reusing of goods they will be more inclined to choose repair above throwing away and buying new.

The key aspect to focus on is the full life cycle of a products which includes the depletion of natural resources by overconsumption and the environmental impact of landfilling or burning products once they are no longer needed.

We recommend the following initiatives to meet the educational objectives:

- a. **Information campaigns** style “Don’t Dump Think Reuse” as the Bower has organised in the recent past <https://business.facebook.com/the-bower/posts/10159301673687658> should be rolled out on a large scale by the government via their traditional media channels. Also witness stories by celebrities who share their experiences about repair, style Jan Fran’s Garage Sale trail promo <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=279762243465031> will help spreading the word about the importance to choose repair over buying new.
- b. Establish an **online database/directory with available repair services** which can be consulted by the public and which gives at the same time the local and state government a clear picture of the available repair capacity or lack thereof. The UK directory can be used as a prototype <https://therestartproject.org/repairdirectory/> . The Bower has developed a local version for the Sydney Metropolitan Area which combines reuse and repair services <https://bower.org.au/collection-re-homing/reuse-database/> and can also be used as a prototype.
- c. The introduction of a nationwide **weighing protocol** is important to provide people relevant information about their contribution to diverting waste from landfill and CO2 savings. And once again thee data are equally important for the government to measure impact and to establish target for growth. The following two products are good references:
 - The UK Reuse Network introduce a weighing protocol which is now nationwide used as reference for all goods diverted from landfill. <https://reuse-network.org.uk/launch-of-licence-for-new-furniture-re-use-network-product-weight-protocol/>
 - The Bower also introduced a weighing protocol which we use to report to councils on the volume of goods we divert from landfill. This stand currently at 400 tons annually of which 200 tons is via our own collection and 200 tons via our rehoming database. – copy of report attached.

- d. A **carbon calculator** will inform the public about the environmental benefits and provides at the same time the local and state government relevant data about the environmental impact of the repair programs they support <https://frc.cfsd.org.uk/index.php/rc-carbon-calculator-standard/> .
- e. A **carbon calculator** could be established not only for goods who are repaired but for all goods that are reused and diverted from landfill. The European program would be in that regard an excellent prototype <http://reutiliza-yevitaco2.aeress.org/en/>

Tools

It isn't sufficient to inform people about the environmental benefits. It is equally important to provide the tools and the opportunities to engage in repair and reuse of goods.

Many people don't have the knowledge or the tools or the time or the budget to repair items themselves. Our programs and experience has demonstrated that anticipating upon this brings repair for many people within their reach and will help them considering repair as a real solution which they will then happily implement.

We recommend the following initiatives to implement this objective:

- a. **Repair Café.** Since Bower introduced the first repair café in Australia in 2014 this program has become a popular and widespread program with many local communities across Australia who have introduced a local repair café. In the Sydney Metropolitan Area Bower is offering this program to many councils who happily pay us a fee allowing them to provide this as a free service to their residents.
A nationwide program with mobile repair café units – converted vans equipped with tools and workbenches - would make it possible to give all Australian citizen both in urban and rural communities and councils access to this free repair services.
You can find more information about Bower Repair café program here <https://bower.org.au/workshops-repairs/repairs-at-the-bower/>
- b. **Tool libraries.** Tool libraries speak to the requirements of people who want to repair something but not necessarily want to invest in the required tools because it is a one off repair or because they have limited use for these tools. Renting these tools from a library would be for them a perfect solution both from a social and an environmental perspective.

You can find more information about Bower tool library here <https://bower.org.au/programs-services/tool-library/>

- c. **Leasing goods.** Leasing goods is amongst the most recent programs which tries to provide answers to the growing consumer interest for reparability and maintenance of goods.
The European based company MUD Jeans <https://mudjeans.eu/> is a perfect example of a business model which removes the consumer's responsibility to repair and reuse parts/materials and puts that responsibility squarely back with themselves as the manufacturer by leasing jeans for a monthly fee.

Incentives

In addition to being aware of the environmental benefits of repairing goods and having the tools or opportunity to repairing goods it is equally important to create incentives in the form of direct benefits for those who want to repair and reuse goods.

We recommend the following initiatives to implement this objective:

- a. **Repair quality label.** In the interest of being able to provide a quality repair service and being able to demonstrate to customers that this quality service has been applied to an item they purchase it would be good to introduce a nationwide repair quality label style the Scottish Revolve model <https://www.zerowastescotland.org.uk/content/revolve-certification>.
This gives customers a reassurance and incentive to indeed buy repaired and reused second-hand goods.
- b. **Extended Producer Responsibility.** Australia or more specifically NSW used to have a take back program for fridges.
A similar mandatory program for specific industries/producers for a range of products would put the responsibility to produce goods which can be reused and repaired squarely back with the producer.
This would have a triple benefit in the sense that consumers are no longer solely responsible for keeping preloved goods out of the waste stream, the local governments no longer have to cover the clean-up cost for these products and importantly it will work as an incentive for the producers to improve their products so that they last longer and are repairable.
- c. **\$1 for \$1 Contribution** Bower currently offers the popular Collection and Rehoming Service (CRS) <https://bower.org.au/collection-re-homing/about->

[collections/](#) to 21 councils and 2.5 million residents in the Sydney Metropolitan Area. This service involves the free collection, repairing and rehoming of preloved good from local residents. We provide quarterly reports on the amount and type of waste diverted from landfill

Despite that we have a KPMG study stipulating that councils had a ROI of 1.65 per invested dollar in our CRS councils are not willing to pay a fair fee for this service which is currently 0.065/dwelling. This make it very difficult for Bower to offer this service at the level it should be able to do so.

If state level EPA's would have a legal obligation to match this fee for all residents of participating councils, we would be able to substantially improve and expand our reuse and repair service for residents of participating councils.

- d. **House to Home** is a program which provides free households goods and repair services to refugees and victims of domestic violence once they are able to move into a new and permanent home. <https://bower.org.au/programs-services/house-to-home/>

This program is rightly seen as beneficial for both the environment and for the communities we serve. Unfortunately, none of the governmental agency who support refugees, homeless people and victims of domestic violence are able to direct funds to our House to Home service.

We would applaud a governmental directive to instruct those governmental agencies to allocate a budget for such a service. It would be a win for the environment and a win for the community as outlined in this article on the website of Settlement Services International – one of our partners for this program <https://www.ssi.org.au/news/ssi-news-blog/1510-house-to-home-program-provides-reclaimed-household-goods-to-new-arrivals>

Verbist Guido

Co-operative manager

The Bower Reuse and Repair centre