

Right to Repair
Productivity Commission
4 National Circuit Barton
ACT 2600,
Australia

Submission from South Australian Repair Cafe Coordinators
Regarding the
Productivity Commission Draft Report - Right to Repair (June 2021)

Our position on the Draft Report - Right to Repair

We are a group of 8 Repair Cafe coordinators in South Australia. We are passionate about reducing waste, improving repairability and repair services, sharing repair skills and connecting communities for long-term resilience.

Repair Cafes are at the coalface of non-commercial repair in Australia. Repair Cafes witness first-hand the negative environmental, social and economic effects of planned obsolescence, poor design and low-quality materials. We see on a hyper-regular basis the challenges that citizens have when their items break prematurely and/or are unable to be repaired, and the waste that this creates.

As per our original submission, we write in strong support of a Right to Repair law in Australia.

We commend you on the Draft Report which is comprehensive and support the recommendations for addressing the barriers to repairability.

Whilst there is a strong focus on advocating for consumer rights, access to repair supplies and improvements to product warranties, durability and repairability and management of e-waste, we feel the Draft Report lacks community empowerment elements.

We would like to see greater support for community-led repairing initiative such as Repair Cafes, Makerspaces and Tool Libraries in the form of:

- designated annual funding and grants programs at a national and state level
- support and incentives for local governments to enable allocation of resources (staff, community venues)
- support for volunteer run community umbrella bodies that provide these groups with insurance cover and financial frameworks (eg Sustainable Communities SA)
- affordable or free online certification options for community repairers

Through supporting and enabling communities to address repairability issues themselves we create more sustainable, resourceful and resilient communities.

Additionally, repairability is also about ensuring that products are designed so that faults can be identified. This is one of the major barriers to community-led repair initiatives.

Thank you for your consideration and for doing what is required to ensure circular economy, long term sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if further information is needed.

Yours sincerely,
SA Repair Cafe Coordinators

APPENDIX

Who are we?

We are a group of 8 Repair Cafe coordinators in South Australia. We are passionate about reducing waste, improving reparability and repair services, sharing repair skills and connecting communities for long-term resilience.

Each Repair Cafe has up to 40 volunteers each (including expert repairers and supporting volunteers) and is visited by hundreds of community members per year. Combined, we host 60-70 repair sessions annually across metropolitan Adelaide. Some Repair Cafes are connected with a local council, community centre or environment organisation, others are fully independent.

The following submission is given on behalf of all of the coordinators of these 8 Repair Cafes:

Ruby Wake and Rose Dunne
Unley Repair Café
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Andrea Ramirez
Payneham Repair café
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Matthew Taylor
City of Tea Tree Gully Repair Café
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The Hut Community Centre Repair Café
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Robert Hart
The Parks Repair Café
www.stemlibrary.space/parks-repair-cafe/

What is a repair cafe?

In short, Repair Cafes are free community meetings, where volunteers with repairing skills teach local people how to repair their own items.

The Repair Cafe concept first began in the Netherlands in 2009, but there are now more than 1,700 across the world. While Repair Cafes connect and support each other through local and international networks, they are all independent, volunteer-run and each operate slightly differently.

Regardless of the location or specific arrangement of a particular repair cafe, all Repair Cafes share a passion for sharing skills, reducing waste and connecting people. Other key commonalities include:

- A free, (although donations are often welcome) community event, open to all
- A group of volunteers with different repair and problem-solving skills, who bring their own tools and share their expertise, usually one-on-one with visitors
- The philosophy of teaching visitors how to understand and repair their own items rather than doing it for them

- Rejecting capitalist ideals of high production, fast and mindless consumption, planned obsolescence and unsustainable use of resources (including human resources)
- Offer other concurrent activities like produce swaps, tool shares, recycling initiatives and tea/coffee



Unley Repair Café:

- *Above - Volunteer Gordon, with an unrepaired (but diagnosed) Kenwood*
- *Right – in full swing, 2019*

Why repair cafes?

Repair Cafes exist for a large number of positive reasons, which can be explained simply across the 3 pillars of sustainability:

Environmental

- **Minimising waste** - repairing an item rather than throwing it away reduces the amount of broken items that end up as waste to landfill
- **Minimising resource needs** - by extending the life of an existing item and negating the need to purchase a new one, we reduce the demand on materials needed to fabricate said new item
- **Minimising carbon emissions** - repairing reduces transport miles needed to purchase an entire new item (parts likely to weigh less, have less material demand)
- **Encouraging environmental behaviours** - The existence of repair cafes helps to shift people's headspace around their consumption and purchase choices, encouraging them to think about the design, fabrication, materials and lifespan of items. This in turn encourages people to consider and often reduce their broader impact on the environment.

Social

- **Working together** - repair sessions connect diverse people over a common problem or interest - this helps build goodwill among facets of society that wouldn't otherwise link together

- **Community capacity-building** - helping visitors to understand, diagnose and repair their item builds skills, knowledge and confidence in the person to do so again, and to experiment with other making/repairing/problem-solving in the future
- **Rewarding experiences** - research has shown that volunteering (including at a repair cafe) improves mental and physical health, increases community goodwill and generosity
- **Local community bonding** - while Repair Cafes are usually not geographically bound, they tend to attract people from a local radius, allowing them to connect over local issues and support each other in different ways
- **Preserving endangered skills** - passing unique repair skills between communities and generations helps retain those skills for myriad benefits

Economic

- **Sharing economy** - a more sustainable use of resources and fostering goodwill, giving and honesty
- **Saving money on new items** - for the vast majority of the time, fixing an existing item is cheaper than buying a new item (save for the times when those items are designed in such a way to actively be expensive to repair, to discourage repairing)
- **Saving money on repair services** - fixing at a repair cafe with the help of volunteers is significantly cheaper (and therefore accessible to those on low/no income or other expenditure requirements) than visiting an official repair shop