



BOWER
REUSE & REPAIR CENTRES

2020 Annual Report



Recycled Art Kids workshop – September 2019

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The Auditor's Financial Report can be downloaded from The Bower website via the listed documents for this year's AGM: <https://bower.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/The-Bower-2020-Financial-Report-signed.pdf>

1. The Bower Board of Directors

1.1 Chairperson's Report

Ready for New Challenges

Over the past year the Bower has shown resilience, leadership and grown on many levels. We go into 2021 with a diversified income, a strong set of reserves, a stable energetic board, a new senior management team, and the ongoing good work of our staff, teachers, volunteers, supporters, and the many people who together make up what we do as the Bower.

We are now at a period of both stability and growth, readying for the move from the Marrickville premises where we first began 22 years ago. During the COVID restrictions we have adapted to be online both through sales and through online courses, videos, and outreaching to those we have not been able to see face to face but also increasing our reach beyond the Inner West of Sydney. This has meant we go into the year ahead stronger than where we began the year and with a diverse range of programs.

The Bower as an influencer is not to be underestimated. We are a good example that public or government representatives look to when cutting down on landfill and greenhouse gas emissions, and minimising waste. The House to Home program continues to allow people in need to reuse items such as furniture or kitchen wares that they otherwise could not attain; and we have spotlighted our "Right to Repair" pushing back to stem the tide of a throwaway society.



We are now working on our next strategic plan for 2021-25, through workshops with Bower staff and volunteers to plan and to look forward. We are looking at two stages - the next 18 months for our transition to new premises; and then our growth period from 2023-25. The new move will bring opportunities for us as we will have the space to expand on many levels. Some of the key issues we will be addressing include: diversification into new fields such as building materials and clothing; expanding educational work; better marketing our ideas such as on waste reduction and reuse; working with green companies; increasing our funds so as can do more; and to get large-scale change through government and industry initiatives to reduce waste in the first instance.

Thank you to the Bower board who has met monthly throughout the year to help navigate our course through the turbulent year that we as a society have had. We have set up board committees on relocation, fundraising, legal issues, strategic planning, and for emergency response. These committees enable us to use the skills of our board members ranging from fundraising to legal to strategic planning.

Michelle Sheather - Board Chair.

1.2 Treasurer's Report 2019-2020

This last financial year has been like no other. With the landlord and lockout challenge of 2018 behind us, no one anticipated another year of turmoil like the COVID-19 crisis. However, for The Bower, this global pandemic brought with it unexpectedly positive news.

While our slightly lower sales revenue of \$520,924 (compared with \$544,255 in 2019 & \$528,416 in 2018) was justified given the closure of the Parramatta store and the impact of the Pandemic on workshops, we have seen a positive shift since the ease of lockdown restrictions. In the second half of 2019, The Bower's daily sales rate has increased and averages more than the 2019 daily sales rate, reducing the sales reduction



to only a little more than 4% on prior year. This figure incorporates both online and instore sales and is despite the Marrickville refurbishment which has required the demolition of some storage areas.

Overall our Income has increased despite the sales disposition; our Revenue of \$1,148,837 is up approximately 10% on our budget for the year and marks an increase of 24% on the prior years' revenue (2019 \$927,284 & 2018 \$877,485). This is a result of the Government's

Cash Boost & Job Keeper incentive, plus some larger donations to offset the reduction in grants including "Work for the Dole" (WFD) program and a loss of Workshop fees due to the social distancing rules.

Operating Expenditure of \$1,029,245 (2019 \$907,019 & 2018 \$925,563) is slightly higher than previous years and is driven by incremental payments required to be made under the Job Keeper scheme as well as a change in the accounting standards for leases (AASB16).

Tough decisions were made by the Bower management during these uncertain times as they moved quickly to implement several cost constraints.

A Net Profit or Surplus for the year of **\$119,592** was recorded, +590% on prior year (2019 \$20,265 & 2018 deficit of \$48,078) based on an originally approved breakeven budget. This surplus strengthens our modest reserves by \$206,504 (2019 \$86,912 & 2018 \$66,647) and improves the resilience and future of The Bower.

I'd like to acknowledge in this extremely tough and unprecedented year The Bower's external accountant, David, for his tireless diligence and consistency, especially in a year with many legislative changes. I'd also like to acknowledge my fellow director's past and present, for volunteering their personal time and the way they have managed and collaborated with The Bower's management. Guido and Louise also deserve special mention for their agility, enthusiasm, passion, resilience and vision in leading The Bower during these unprecedented times and, at not least, the Bower volunteers and employees for their dedication.

Director and Treasurer.

Tony Turri

2. Co-operative Manager's Report

2.1 The Circular Economy; We are ready. Bring it on

If the year 2019-20 has proven anything beyond any doubt for Bower Reuse and Repair Centers, it is that we are a resilient organization with a healthy financial and organisational structure. It has also proved that we are able to swiftly respond and adapt to new or unexpected realities and opportunities.

20 years of consistent growth and expansion has prepared us for this critical juncture; it is time for The Bower to consolidate its reputation as a leader in reuse and repair in what's now commonly referred to as The Circular Economy.

The year 2019-20 started with Bower staff and local volunteers organizing food collections for victims of the bush fires and making bird boxes for injured animals. It has ended with the entire organisation successfully adapting and reorganizing our core activities in response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite COVID 19 The Bower has been able to pull off a few high profile events such as the



Bower's Social Impact Report	FY 19-20
Kgs diverted from landfill	172040
Residents receiving free goods	3588
Residents consulting database	16273
Electronic items repaired	2169
Furniture repaired	106
Bikes repaired	141
Workshops organised	160
Workshop Participants	1280
Repair Cafes organised	102
Repair Café visitors	750
Sales transactions	22266
Permanent Jobs created	18
Casual jobs/consignors	29
Regular Volunteers	38
Regular CSO, WFD and NDIS staff	34

Annual Auction of our Tiny House and the Art from Trash Exhibition.

We changed our brand and logo and we introduced a new website in combination with a set of new online services. We invested further in our educational programs and we adjusted our communication style with the objective to become mainstream.

We have recruited a number of highly qualified and motivated people at all levels of the organization; from the sales team through to senior management and the Board, we now have the capacity to capitalize on all of the skills and expertise gained over the last 20 years.

We have been promoted the principles of the circular economy since The Bower's inception, and our 2020 Social Impact Report proves our efforts to be effective.

The number of electronic goods we repair and return to the community - despite ongoing efforts from the industry to design irreparable appliances (planned obsolescence) – continues to grow. Our furniture restoration and bespoke furniture services continues to expand; we see more and more members of the community turning to us for assistance.

Our educational work which is driven by the idea that each of us, individually, is just a drop in the ocean, but as an educated and active community we can have a much bigger impact, continues to thrive and create awareness about the importance, the benefits and the practical applications to reuse and repair of household items and building materials. Our flagship Tiny House building course remains a popular program and is a demonstration of putting sustainability and the circular economy into practice.

We recently had a major breakthrough with our Right to Repair Campaign when Treasurer Josh Frydenberg asked the Australian Productivity Commission to investigate our demands to introduce a Right to Repair in Australia. The Australian Association of Environmental Educators also acknowledged our role as community educators, awarding The Bower the honour of taking out the NSW Environmental Community Educator of the year award; a huge acknowledgement of our enduring work as community educators. Last but not least we are invited to join the taskforce from the NSW Government Circular Economy Innovation Network.

So yes bring on the Circular Economy. We are ready.

I would like to thank the Board, staff, members, volunteers, councils, customers and workshop participants for their support and ongoing commitment to the Bower's objectives.

Guido Verbist - Co-operative Manager

2.2 Board members

The Bower Board of Directors is elected by the membership to oversee the direction of Bower Reuse & Repair Centres. The board is comprised of five member directors and two independent non-member directors, with each director normally serving a two-year term.

Directors are unpaid for their board attendance and participation. They give their time and effort throughout their elected term because they wish to contribute their skills to the development and governance of the organisation. Thanks to all board members for their ongoing work and support.

In FY 2019-20 the Bower held 9 board meetings.

Director	Status	Office
Linda O'Malley	Independent	
Tony Turri	Independent	Treasurer
Helen Cooper	Member	
Margy Vary	Member	Secretary
Michelle Sheather	Member	Chairperson
Suzan Campbell	Member	
Chris Lisha	Member	



2.3 Membership

We had 57 Active members for the 2019-20 financial year.

Membership is recognised through loyalty cards and access to our consignor program.

2.4 Staff

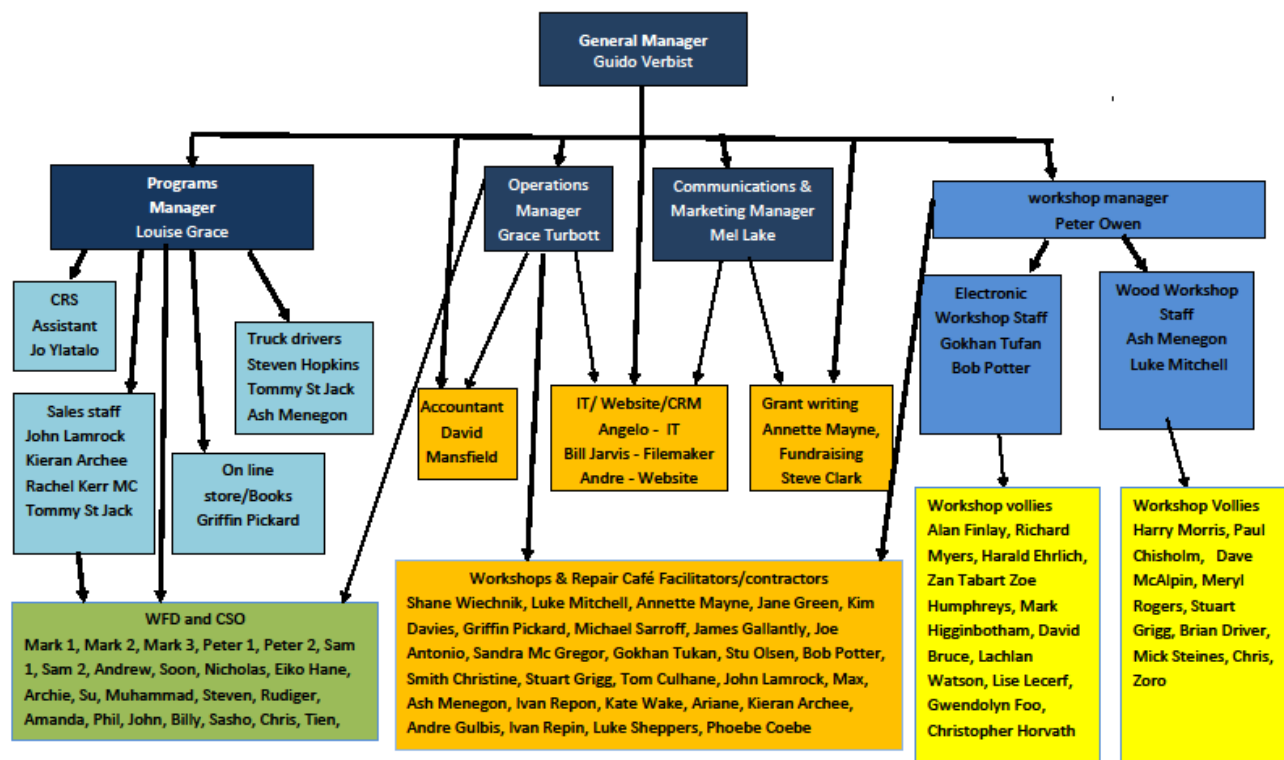
The Bower management and Board would like to thank the staff and volunteers for their commitment and ongoing interest in and pursuit of its aims and objectives. Many new faces joined the organisation this year. We welcomed Grace, Mel, Pete, Tommy, Jo, Luke S and Haider. We also farewelled Alan, Shane and Luke.



We now have 18 staff working on a permanent basis as well as a pool of 25 workshop and repair café facilitators. But without an additional contingent of contractors for grant writing, bookkeeping and IT upgrading (10), as well as 25 volunteers to assist with the Board, online store, website and software development and 34 people working with us in a CSO (Corrective Service Order), NDIS (National Disability Insurance Scheme and WFD (Work For the Dole) program, we would not be able to survive.

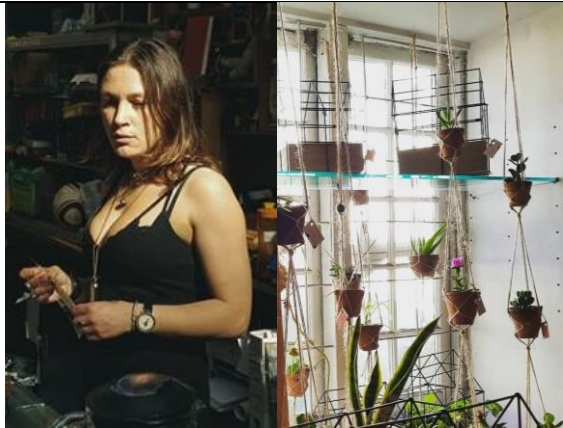
This brings the total headcount to an astonishing 120 people who participate on weekly basis in the

delivery of the Bowers wide ranging programs.



2.5 The Bowerbirds

The Bowerbirds are the creative capital of The Bower. Through our consignment, Men's Shed and workshop programs programs, we try to cater for their interests and provide a forum for them to share their expertise with us.



Bowerbird Heidi is besides a long term sales person who is also handy with fabric, making puppets, folding book art and making macramé plant hangers .



Bowerbird Andre is the developer of our new website and an electronic geek who has been vital in the setting up and running of our online repair cafes



Bowerbird Stu is our very talented bike repairer. He is an expert in using second hand parts to get you and your bike safely on the road.



Bowerbird Jo is the creative brain behind our successful Instagram page. And it doesn't stop there... she is also a handy bike repairer and furniture restorer.



Bowerbird Ash runs our wood workshop repairs department. He is also a talented architect who designs furniture and houses using reclaimed building materials.

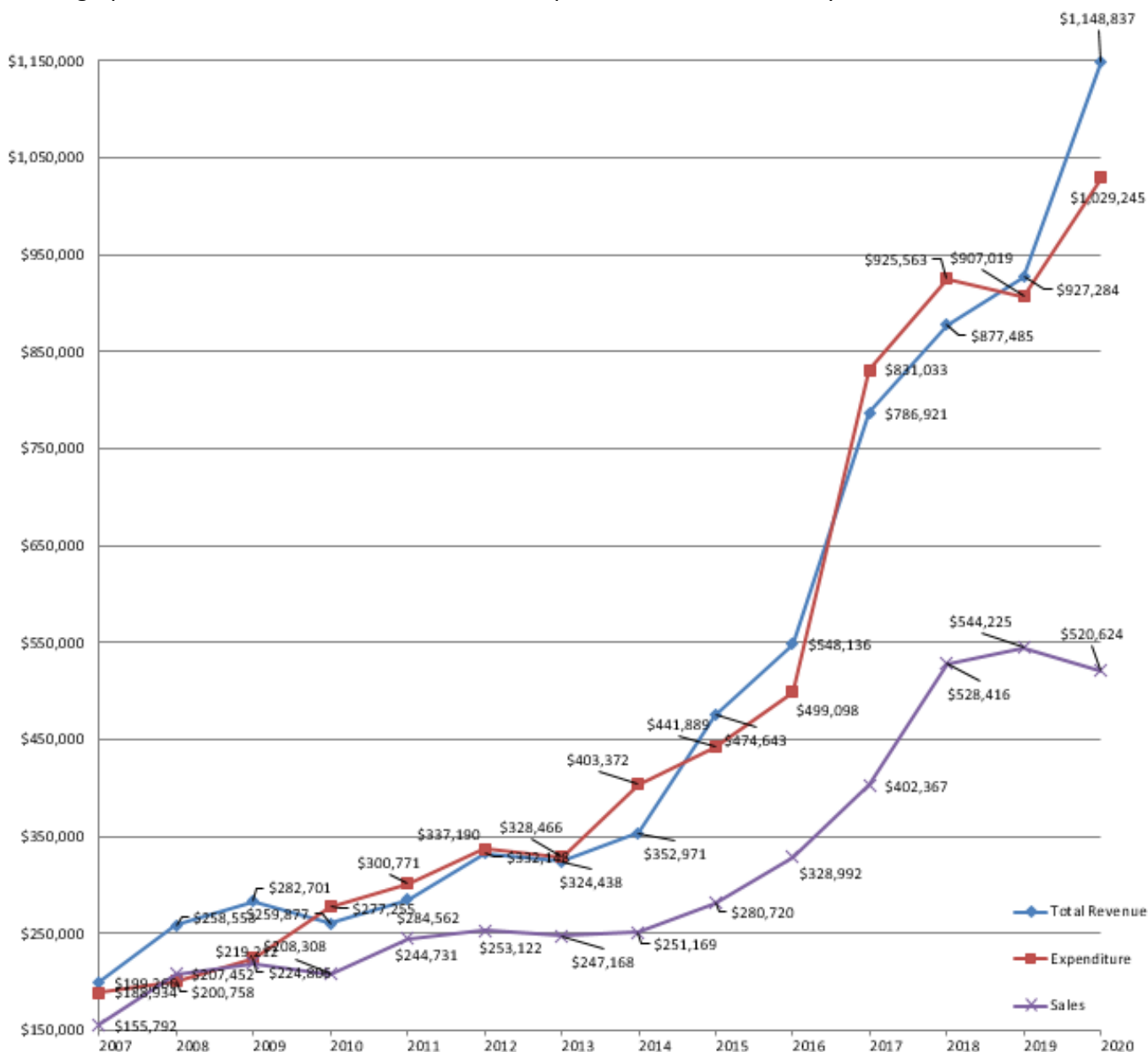


Bowerbird Gokhan is our electronic appliances guru. He will find a way to get your broken items repaired whether it's a phone, computer, heater, microwave... he will crack it.

2.6 Sales

Although The Bower's total revenue continued increased substantially (up 23.8%), total sales have declined -4.3% due to adjustments made in the face of COVID-19. When the global pandemic hit, we workshops on hold and closed our Parramatta store. Online sales and sales in our Marrickville shopfront have largely compensated for this. Expenditure increased by 13.4%; half of the revenue that contributed to a surplus totalling \$119,592.

The graphic below shows Sales, Revenue and Expenditure trends for the years 2007-2020.



The revenue streams continue to diversify and to be less dependent on sales. Grants, donations and workshops continue to play bigger roles, while council support has been declining.

Revenue streams	FY19-20	FY 18-19	FY 17-18	FY 16-17	FY 15-16	FY 14-15	FY 13-14
Sales	56.8%	58.7%	60.2%	51.1%	60%	59.1%	71.1%
Grants	13.1%	16.7%	13%	16%	7.2%	15.4%	6.2%
Service to councils	8.1%	7.8%	12.1%	12.9%	11.3%	10%	11.2%
Workshops	1.8%	5.1%	4%	6%	4.6%	5.3%	1.2%
Donations	8.7%	3.8%	3.2%	0.6%	3%	0.5%	0.5%
Other	11.3%	7.9%	7.5%	13.4%	13.9%	9.7%	9.8%

2.7 The Collection and Rehoming Service

Our Collection and Rehoming Service remains one of the 3 Pillars, alongside education and sales, of our business model. Since its inception, the number of councils joining the service has gradually expanded. We currently partner with 21 Councils and serve 1 million dwellings and 2.5m residents.

The Collection and Rehoming Service reported to Councils for FY 2019-20 shows a total of 172,040 kg being diverted from landfill. 3588 residents used our Collection and Rehoming Service.

Now that the referral service is replaced by free access to our online reuse database we can only report the number of people consulting the database and the categories of goods they are searching under.

During the second year of offering the community free access to our online reuse database, we have noted an increase from 11820 to 13341 community members consulting the database for information. This equates to 1,111 monthly users and 36 daily users.

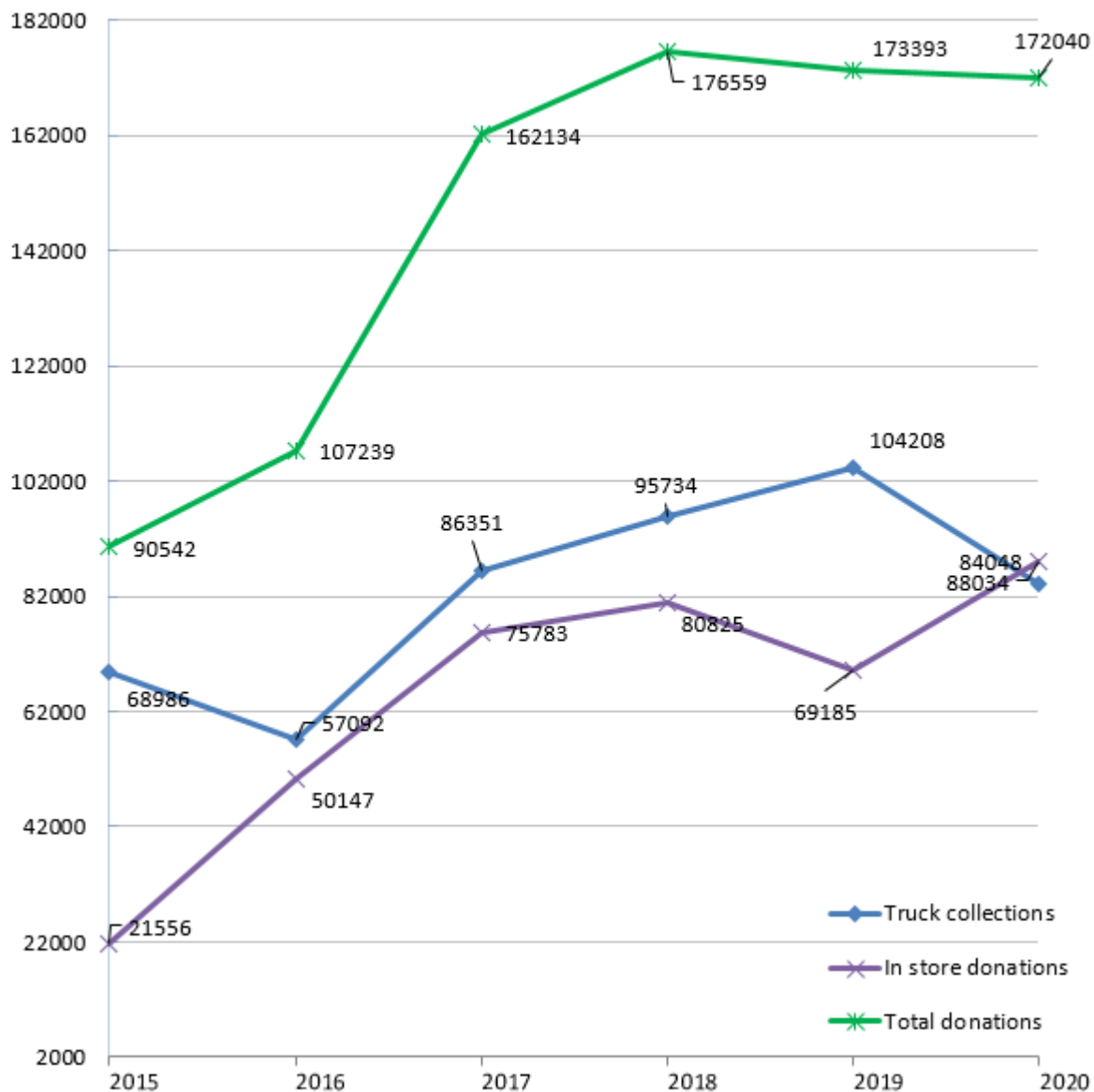
Furniture remains by far the most popular category, followed by electrical goods, mattresses, white goods, building materials and books and records

The below table shows the quarterly results including the truck collections and in store donations.

Consultation of online Reuse Database 1/7/2019 - 30/6/2020	
Category	Total 13341
Furniture	4560
Electrical Goods	1310
Mattresses	1063
Whitegoods	755
Building Materials	666
Books and Records	651
Bikes and Bike Parts	430
Clothing	396
Computers	377
Homewares	376
Other	371
Textile, Fabric and Carpet	306
Nursery, Toys and kids	305
Office Furniture	286
Metals, Ferrous and non-Ferrous	245
Audio and Video games	235
Musical Instruments	204
Hardware	178
Sports and Leisure Goods	134
Charitable Organisation	129
Waste service	123
Paper and Cardboard	121
Removals and Vehicles for removal	75

Quarter	Truck Collections		In-Store Donations		Total	
	Household	kg	Individuals	kg	Residents	kg
01 Jul – 30 Sep 2019	195	22,794.00	716	18,784.00	911	41,578.00
01 Oct – 31 Dec 2019	155	18,109.80	677	24,705.20	831	42,775.82
01 Jan – 31 Mar 2020	165	17,529.00	654	20,404.00	819	37,933.00
01 Apr – 30 Jun 2020	208	25,616.00	819	24,141.10	1027	49,754.10
ANNUAL TOTAL	723	84,048.80	2866	88,034.30	3588	172,040.92

The below table provides a breakdown of total Kgs of goods diverted from landfill from 2015 till 2019 either via collection with our truck or in store donations. 2018-19 is the first year we have seen a levelling



2.8 House to Home

Our flagship 'House To Home' program furnishes homes for refugees and asylum seekers as well as survivors of domestic violence. The program works in accordance with individual needs and preferences to rehome household goods, furniture and appliances that can help turn a 'house' into a 'home'.

The Bower partners with humanitarian service organisations to identify the needs of refugees and survivors of domestic violence for household items. Caseworkers from these organisations refer asylum seekers and survivors of domestic violence to the Bower stores with a "gift certificate". These individuals are able to select and collect at no cost the items that suit their needs and preferences.

Since its inception in September 2016, and thanks to financial support from foundations and our supporters, the Bower has been able to help 440 families and has given away goods to the value of \$110,000. This translates to an average saving of \$250 per participating family group.

The Bower has established partnerships with the following organisations:



The House to Home program is a win for the environment, a win for the community and a cost saving for the Government.

The Bower can furnish an entire house for a family of 4 (2 adults/2children) for \$1,000



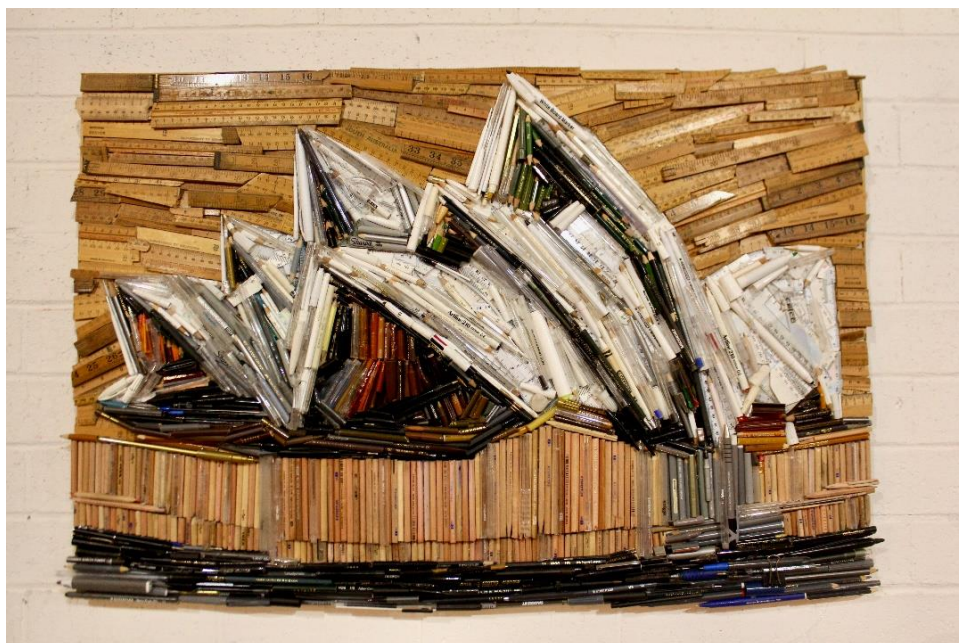
2.9 Art from Trash

ART FROM TRASH is a registered trademark of the [Resource Work Cooperative](#) in Hobart. It has become an iconic and much loved exposé of creativity and thought-provoking artworks. The exhibition encourages the reuse of discarded materials in the production of amazing visual art. Our motivation in running this event is to demonstrate the potential value of what we throw away within an artistic context



Bower's 2020 ART FROM TRASH exhibition built on last year's inaugural event:

- The exhibition was held in two locations over a month long time frame;
- 33 artists exhibited 67 artworks;
- 500 people visited the live exhibition and 1000 visited the online exhibition;
- 20% of the artworks were sold;
- 406 people participated in the voting for the People's Choice Award.



People's Choice Award Winner: 'Sydney Opera House' by Annette Innis







Judge's Award Winner: 'Message On A Bottle' by PluckFastic.

2.10 Community Initiatives

Community work always has been and will continue to be an essential part of our organizational and business model.

The below overview provides a snapshot of the types of community projects we supported last year

<h3>2.10.1 Bush Fires</h3>	<h3>2.1 Food pantry</h3>
	
<p>In response to the Bush Fires The Bower collected food and camping gear and sent two trucks to people impacted by bush fires. We also made birds boxes for rescued animals.</p>	<p>In response to COVID-19 and people having limited access to food The Bower built and provided food pantries to members of the community</p>
<h3>2.10.3 Men's Shed</h3>	<h3>2.10.4 Women's Shed</h3>
	
<p>The Mensheddies in their workshop in Marrickville. In early 2019 they moved their activities to our Redfern wood workshop where they help with refurbishing and repairing donated furniture.</p>	<p>Womensheddies enjoying a workshop session to build a crate with reclaimed timber. The Women's Shed participants meet monthly in our Parramatta workshop.</p>

2.11 Bespoke furniture and electronic repairs

After many years of investment and developing in-house expertise in the repair of electronic goods and furniture, The Bower has established highly regarded and trustworthy services. The Bower is now equipped to build bespoke furniture using reclaimed materials and to refurbish vintage pieces also. The Bower is also the place to come to have your electronic goods repaired.

In the coming years The Bower will build on its positive reputation and further expand this service.

Custom made Table from reclaimed building material



Bar build with reclaimed building material



Chopping board and spice rack made from reclaimed material



Antique storage box restored to its former glory with lock and handles included



Vintage mixer repaired



Vintage piece of furniture before and after being refurbished



Repaired microwave



2.12 Right to Repair



The Bower is currently actively engaged in an advocacy campaign demanding that the federal government initiate legislative changes to make the repair of goods affordable and achievable. Similar initiatives in Europe and the US have resulted in making it mandatory for manufacturers to provide

spare parts for new products and to provide tax breaks for repairs.

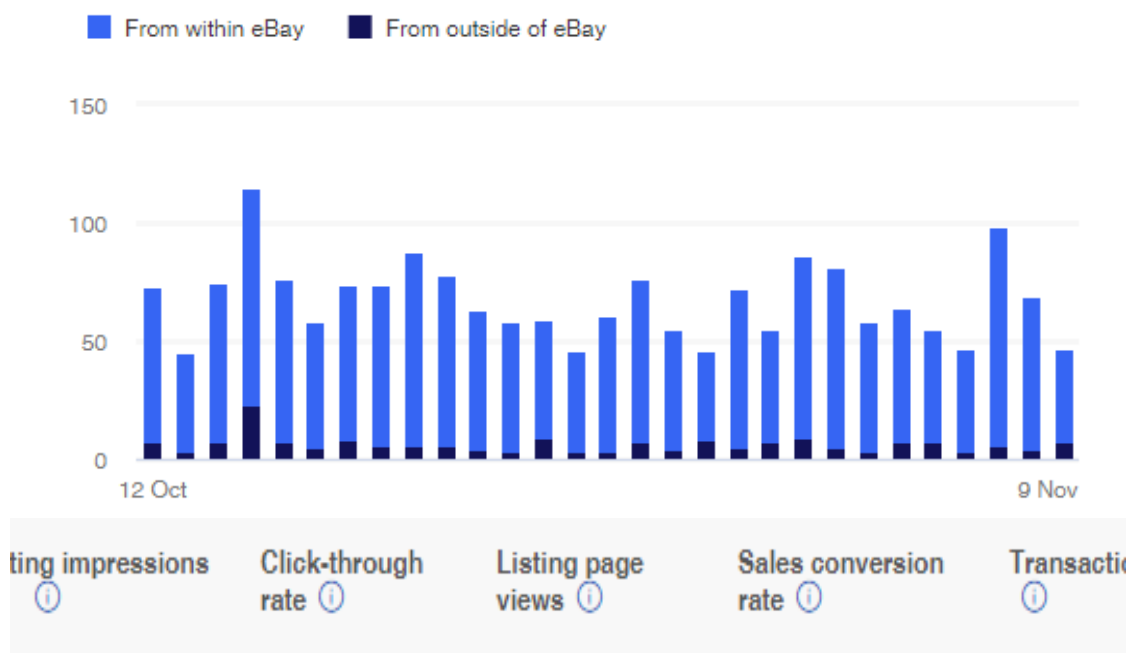
Since we launched our campaign, we have received positive feedback from politicians and media including an address by MP Julie Owens in Federal Parliament as well as interviews on Sky News, Channel 10, the 7 network and the ABC.

2.13 On Line Store

The Bower launched its Online Store in May 2017 with the financial support of SSROC. It primarily sells vintage electronic items, books and hardware. Average income amounts to \$1500 per month.

Our current sales conversion is 1% which suggest that there is still room for growth as the current eBay average is 5%.

The below data gives an idea of impressions, clicks, conversations and transactions in 30 days



2.14 Fundraising

AUCTION

In financial year 2018-19 the Bower has successfully stepped up its fundraising efforts.

Our annual auction generated an income of \$40,385 thanks to the auctioning of two Tiny Houses and some unique vintage and art deco items we had collected throughout the year.

We will continue to develop the annual fundraiser combining selling goods with entertainment .

CROWDFUNDING

We also invested further resources into our crowdfunding efforts. This resulted in an income increase of 111% to \$68K.

This increase was driven by an increase in the number of gifts (up by 27%) and the number of people who donated (up by 12%). Even more significantly it was driven by the increase in the amount of the average gift (65%), and average in total gifts per donor (88%) in 2020.

In 2020, factors fueling this 111% growth in donations were (in decreasing order of significance):

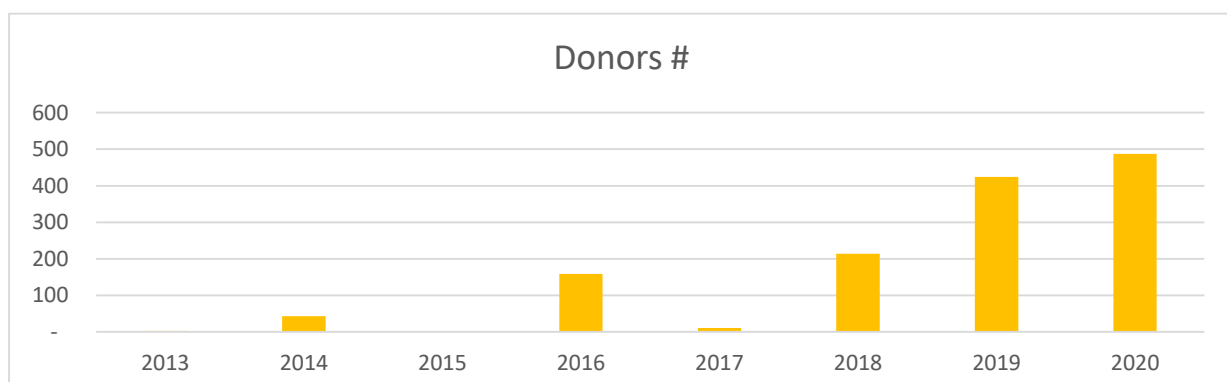
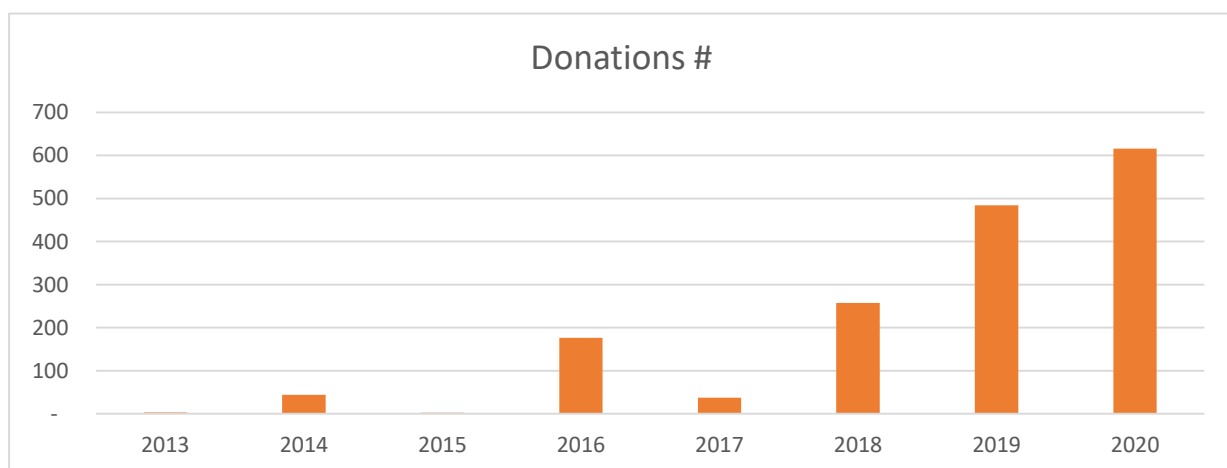
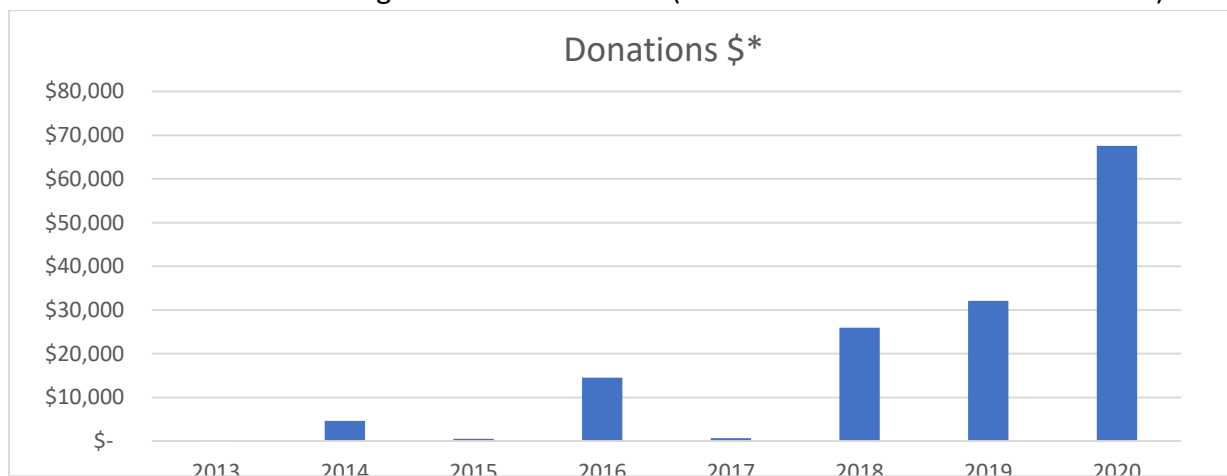
The average amount given per donor was \$142 (an increase of 88% from \$76 in 2019)

The average donation was \$110 (an increase of 65% from \$66 in 2019)

The number of donations received was 616 (an increase of 27% from 484 in 2019)

The average number of gifts per donor was 1.3 (an increase of 14% from 1.1 in 2019)

The number of donors who gave was 475 (an increase of 12% from 424 in 2019)



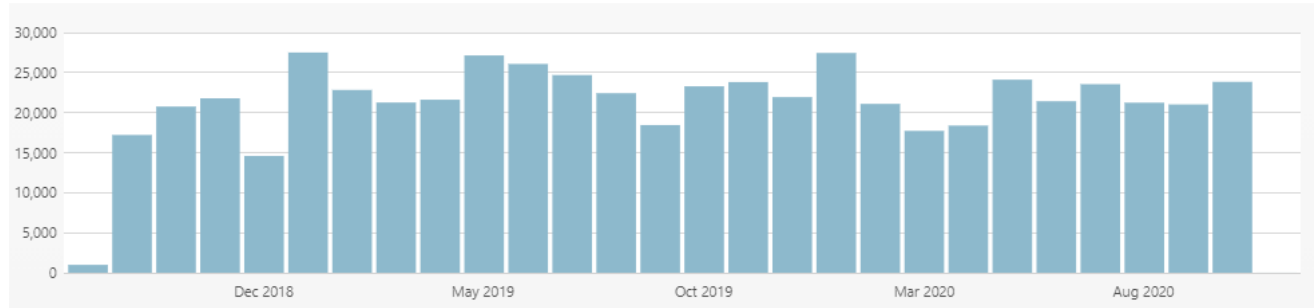
2.15 Communication

The benefit of introducing a Marketing and Communication function to our organisation has been instrumental in achieving further growth and promoting our services to the broader community.

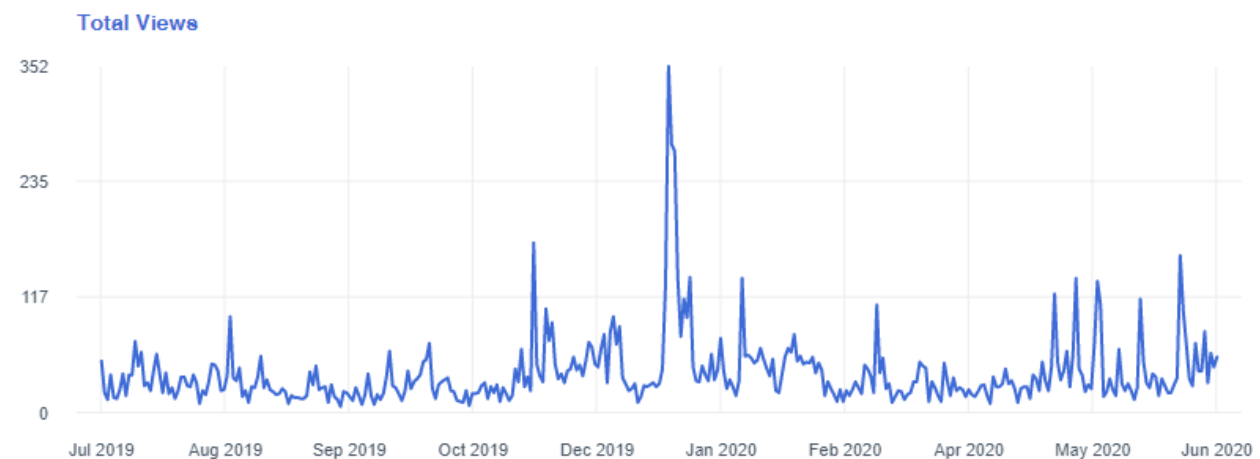
Besides a steady increase of our Newsletter receivers to 12,000 we saw significant growth in the number of visitors to our website and social media followers.

15,187 Facebook fans
3320 Instagram followers
12,000 Newsletter subscribers
27.2% open rate & 3.2% click rate
771 daily website visitors

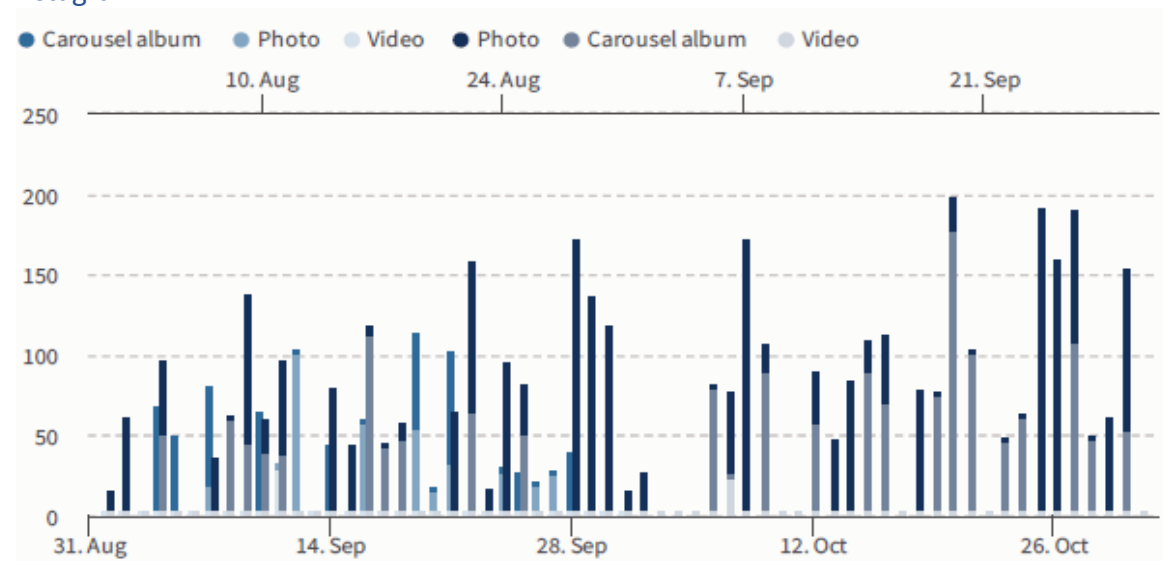
Website



Facebook



Instagram



2.16 Bower Locations

The Bower currently operates from four Reuse & Repair Centres. Each has its own distinct role and dynamics; together they provide a good overview of all the services The Bower provides.



Marrickville

This remains the HQ for the administration and operates as our flagship store.



Wood Workshop in Redfern

All Bower activities related to **woodwork** (repair, manufacture, education) take place here.



Parramatta

Has recently been converted to an exclusive sales point for our House to Home program and operates as a 2nd wood and electronics workshop for the Parramatta community.



Electronics Workshop in Zetland - Green Square

All Bower activities related to **electronics** (repair, manufacture, education) take place here.

2.17 Educational programs

As one of The Bower's 3 primary pillars, education continues to play a major role in our organisation. It is all about sharing skills and expertise in the reuse and repair of goods with members of the community to achieve the ultimate objective: to divert items away from landfill.

This process starts with the youngest for whom we run workshops (in recycled art, mosaics and the creation of music instruments), all with the objective to introduce ideas, concepts, skills and the experiences around reuse and repair.



It continues with a wide range of wood and furniture related workshops run by The Bower in partnership with **Sydney Community College**.



Home DIY course



Basic carpentry course



Native Bird Box workshop



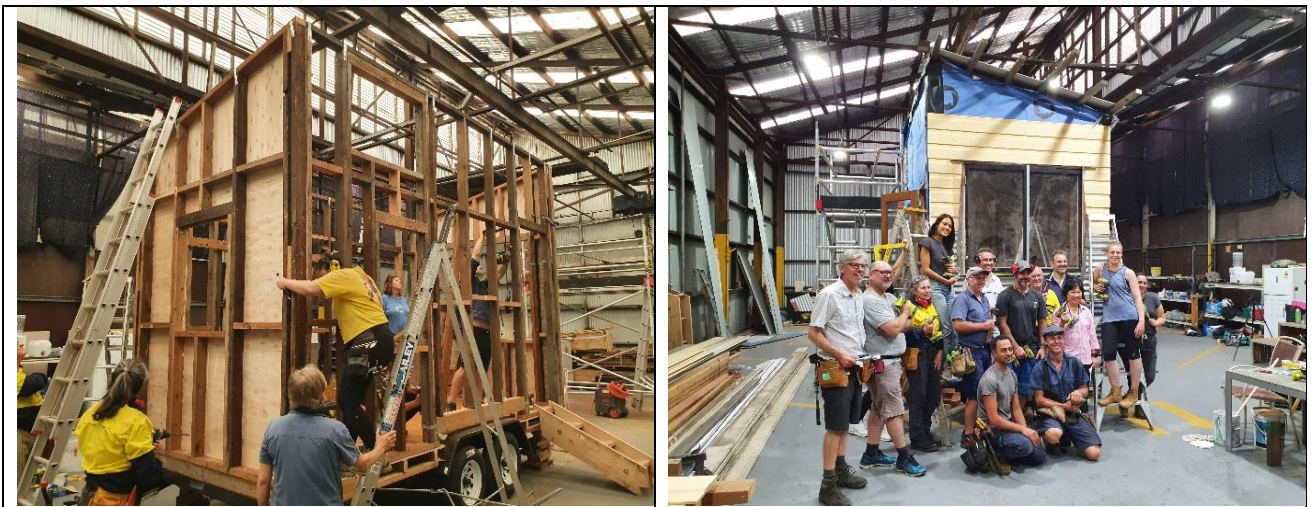
Stool workshop

Tiny House workshop

We will also continue to offer our Tiny House Course.

We've been promoting the benefits of Tiny Houses since 2014 and offer the only intensive hands-on tiny house building course in Australia that uses recycled and reclaimed materials. The course covers theory and design principles and includes the necessary practical skills people need to build their very own tiny house,

We build tiny houses to lock up stage. This allows the purchasers to finish the interior as per their own preferences and interests. The tiny houses are completely secure, insulated and water proof. The space and design allows for a loft. Our Tiny Houses are built on a 3-tonne car trailer allowing their owners to take them to a destination of their choice.



Repair Café

Repair Cafés remain one of our most popular programs. Till COVID-19 hit us we were running an average 4 repair cafes per week or 200 per year.

Due to the social distance rules, introduced in response to COVID-19, we had to suspend our face to face repair cafes and move to an online version. The latter has proven to be a winner and a demonstration of Bower's residence to adapt to new situations. We can now proudly say that we master the production of clips, online presentations and one on one consultation sessions. All with the objective to share skills with individuals who shown an interest in learning how to repair and/or make items. We developed a series of online sessions which we run weekly for a couple of councils

