

BOWER

REUSE & REPAIR CENTRES



Business Plan 2024-27



Organisational Structure & Identity

The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre is a Co-operative Limited

Registered with NSW Fair Trading since 4 May 1998 Registration Number NSWCO5363

ABN: 51412061029 from 12 June 2000

GST Concession from 1 July 2005.

FBT Rebate from 1 July 2005.

Income Tax Exempt from 1 July 2000.

Not for Profit Social Enterprise registered as a Charity with ACNC Public Fund approved by Register of Environmental Organisations Deductible Gift Recipient status from 1 July 2000

Charitable Fundraising Authority Registration number CFN/20440

Registered with NSW Trade & Investment Office of Liquor, Gaming and Racing.

Location and Contact details

Location: 34/142 Addison Road, Marrickville, NSW 2204

Opening hours Store:

Monday – Friday: 10.00 am – 5.00 pm; Saturday
- Sunday: 10.00 am – 3.00 pm.

Opening hours Collection and Rehoming Service:

Monday – Friday: 10.00 am – 5.00 pm.

Business hours phone number: 02 9568 6280

Location 2: Buildings 2-3, 7 Prospect Road, Summer Hill NSW 2130

Location 3: 107 Workshop, 107 Redfern Street, Redfern NSW 2016

Website: <http://www.bower.org.au>

Cooperative Manager; Nathan Smith gm@bower.org.au

Governance

Board 7 Directors (5 Member directors and 2 Independent Directors) - 2-year terms up to 9 Directors can be on the board.

Michelle Sheather- Chair and Member Director

Henry McKenna Treasurer Member Director

Shwetha Prem - Secretary and Member Director

Paul Wade - Member Director

Christine Simmons - Member Director

Marcelle Psaila - Independent Director

Kirk Simmons - Independent Director

Governance rules are adapted from the model rules based on the Co-operatives Act 2012 and approved on 23 September 2015

Annual membership is \$20 and \$12 for concession card holders.

Insurances

Public & Product Liability \$20,000,000 Policy number MFC T0677

Voluntary workers Personal Accident: Death & Capital benefits \$30,000
Weekly Benefits \$600

General Insurance for Building, theft and business interruption

Association Liability Professional Indemnity \$1,000,000
Directors & Officers \$1,000,000 Association
Reimbursement \$1,000,000

Workers Compensation Policy Number: WC295605157

Truck Insurance: Allianz Commercial Motor Policy Number 171A010552VSD

A. Business description

1. Business Type and Structure

The Bower is a Co-operative and registered environmental charity with the dual purpose of:

- Benefiting members (meeting their common needs and aspirations), and members of the public
- Benefiting the natural environment (e.g., by reducing waste, and saving resources).

1(a) A Co-operative

The Bower Reuse & Repair Centre Co-operative Ltd ('The Bower') is a member-based community organisation, formally structured as a 'non share trading' Co-operative, registered under the NSW Co-operatives Act.

At the Annual General Meeting (AGM) the members elect member directors (nominated by the membership) and independent directors (nominated by the Board) to the Bower's Board of Directors.

Directors volunteer their time and expertise to oversee the governance, mission and broad strategic direction of the organisation on behalf of members. The board may set up strategic committees as required.

The board engages the Co-operative Manager (General Manager) and is broadly responsible for 'operationalising' The Bower's mission via long-term planning, and day-to-day management. The Board provides the Co-operative Manager with a range of 'delegated authorities' for this purpose.

Under this structure, the future of the organisation is secured beyond the commitment of any single person.

All profits remain in the organisation and are reinvested in improving and expanding services to the community and members.

1(b) A Registered Environmental Charity

The Bower is one of approx. 600 registered environmental charities included on the Commonwealth Government's 'Register of Environmental Organisations'.

The Register lists environmental organisations eligible to receive tax deductible donations. The Bower maintains a public fund entitled 'The Bower Fund' for this purpose. Donations to this fund are tax deductible.

As a registered environmental organisation, the Bower has been endorsed by the ATO as an income tax exempt charity and has a range of GST concessions available.

As a registered environmental organisation, the Bower's principal purpose must be:

- “(a) the protection and enhancement of the natural environment or of a significant aspect of the natural environment; or
(b) the provision of information or education, or the carrying on of research, about the natural environment or a significant aspect of the natural environment

2. Organisation Objectives and Mission

The objectives of The Bower as stated in our Rules are:

(a) To protect and enhance the natural environment, particularly aspects of the environment affected by waste generation and landfill by:

- Avoiding and reducing the amount of 'hard waste' going to landfill.
- Raising awareness of the value of waste avoidance and reduction through resource recovery, reuse, repair and recycling.
- Generating employment opportunities and skills training in the community.
- Providing affordable goods sourced from the waste stream to low-income earners and other disadvantaged groups in the community.
- Encouraging community awareness of environmentally responsible design and manufacture.
- Advocating for long-life design, repairable products and the use of sustainable, recyclable materials for appliances and furnishings.
- Providing benefits to the community via these objectives.
- Involving the community in the development and achievement of these objectives.

(b) Establishment of the Public Fund:

To maintain a public fund to be called the Bower Fund for the specific purpose of supporting the environmental objects/purposes of The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre Co-operative Limited.

The Bower's Mission is threefold:

- Environment: to reduce the amount of waste entering landfill by reclaiming household items for repair, reuse and resale.
- Creativity: to encourage reuse via repair and upcycle workshops; and
- Community: to provide affordable goods to low-income earners and other disadvantaged groups and to generate local employment.

3. Business / Organisation History

The Bower was created (registered) in 1998 on the initiative of five Sydneysiders appalled by all the waste going to landfill every year. They decided to act at a small scale and to create a Reuse and Repair Centre with the aim of recovering those resources for reuse.

The founders secured money to design and construct a sustainable building ('the barn') that would showcase reuse and repair. This was constructed at the Addison Road Community Centre (ARCC) in Marrickville, originally the site of an old army barracks. Re-using such a utilitarian site had great appeal to the founders of the Bower, as did the presence of Reverse Garbage, a like-minded reuse centre focused on industrial waste..

Built from straw bales, all architectural components from the doors to the roof were salvaged from the streets of Sydney. The Bower handed over ownership of the building to the ARCC for long-term community benefit and as an investment to improve the services of the ARCC.

The Bower shop opened its doors and commenced trading on 15th March 1999.

Since its inception the Centre has continued to develop and grow, now into three Centres,

increasing the number of resources we recover from landfill for reuse or repair:

- The Marrickville backyard was terraced and more sections are now paved and shelved to better store greater amounts of salvaged building, plumbing and gardening supplies.
- A mezzanine level was built to house an office space, and in 2009 a second mezzanine level was unveiled as our 'Eco-Library' – this area was recently reorganised to house books and kitchenware for sale, creating additional ground floor space for furniture.
- A staffroom/kitchen was built behind the sales counter so that it could be used by employees as a rest and a storage space;
- In 2010 The Bower installed a wheelchair access ramp at Marrickville. All of our centres are wheelchair accessible.
- In 2013 a covered area was constructed in the backyard behind the kitchen.
- In July 2013, The Bower signed a licence agreement to operate a second premises (primarily as workshop space and men's shed) at 107 Redfern St, Redfern; here a woodwork workshop was established.
- In 2023 the Bower opened a facility at the Inner West Sustainability Centre in Summer Hill. This enabled the Bower to consolidate resources from workshop spaces at Zetland and Parramatta and establish new workshops for woodworking, bicycle repairs, tiny house construction, a second retail outlet, and an improved office space.

4. Business Location, Service area and Facilities

Marrickville - Addison Road Community Centre:

The Bower's original location comprises a shop and yard (which includes building materials, sports equipment, paints) located within the Addison Road Community Centre (ARCC) in Marrickville.

The ARCC is easily accessible by public transport, cycling, walking, and vehicles for those wishing to donate and/or purchase goods. The Bower store at Marrickville is for many the main interface between the Bower and public and has a strong reputation and brand recognition with the local community.

Redfern - 107 Redfern Street:

The Bower utilises a fitted workshop space at an artists' hub at 107 Redfern Street, courtesy of a City of Sydney accommodation grant. In late 2024, the City of Sydney took over running 107 Redfern Street from the previous managers, 107 Projects.

Our facilities here are currently focused on conducting workshops for people interested in learning techniques to repair and upcycle pre-loved goods. These include DIY, upholstery, and carpentry courses at this site in cooperation with the Sydney Community College (SCC). Individuals can also rent workspaces to design and build their own projects, and a Men's Shed operates there every Thursday.

107 Redfern Street is also the location of our highly successful Festival of Repair, which has been running for the last two years.

Summer Hill - Inner West Sustainability Hub, 7 Prospect Road:

The Bower has increased its geographical coverage, particularly towards Sydney's West, with the opening of its facility at the Inner West Sustainability Hub. Supported by Inner West Council (IWC), the Bower began operating there in 2023 with a boutique retail store and flexible workshop spaces, hosting woodworking, repair cafes, bicycle repair services, and tiny house construction courses.

This facility has enabled us to adapt and expand our workshop programs to meet changing demand, host tiny house courses on our own premises, store and test more and larger electrical appliances for our House to Home program, and safely park the Bower truck.

5. The 3-pillar Organisational-Business Model

The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre's organisational model is inherent in its name ("Reuse and Repair") and reflects the 3 pillars on which the Bower is built. and Council partnerships.

The organisational model aims to establish the Bower as a credible business that provides quality services in response to market needs while fulfilling social and environmental benefits.

a) Creating a Sustainable Economy

By collecting and selling pre-loved goods we not only create a local economy that provides both affordable goods, employment and training opportunities, we also help build sustainable communities and protect the environment. Our revenue feeds back to support our sustainability-focused training and educational programs maximising our impact in creating positive, long-term environmental change.

We go well beyond the traditional 3Rs of Reduce, Reuse, and Recycle through our ongoing commitment to repair and upcycling of goods. This is exemplified by our electrical and furniture repair workshops, and our recently established in-house upcycling and production lines. These initiatives allow us to divert significantly more goods from landfill, reduce waste, save resources, and be a leading example in Australia's circular economy.

b) Community Education

The Bower invests in community education via workshops, training programs, support for social enterprises, and consignment programs, through inspirational initiatives such as the Repair Cafés, Tiny House building courses, and partnering with training institutions such as Sydney Community College and organisations such as Youth Off The Streets..

Through 2025 the Bower will continue with its successful woodworking and repair courses, building and expanding its bicycle repair, textiles, and tiny house courses. We will continue to expand our ground-breaking repair cafes; successful special events like the Festival of Repair; showcasing reuse and repair initiatives; discussing global trends; and platforming local ecological entrepreneurs. We aim to expand our workshops in both locality and the range of courses we offer as a future area of growth.

c) Council Partnerships

The Bower has developed a unique Collection and Rehoming Service (CRS) which we offer to Councils across Metropolitan Sydney. This initiative diverts high-quality reusable items from landfill that can be supplied to those in need through our House to Home program or sold through our retail shops. We report quarterly to partnering Councils on the number of goods collected in their local government area (LGA).

If The Bower cannot accept specific goods, our website provides access to a Reuse Database so residents can send their items to one of over 1,000 recycling organisations across Sydney. It is also available as a resource to Councils.

The Bower's relationship with Councils is critical to our success, and a key focus is to continue improving our services, systems, and engagement to strengthen the Bower's contribution to each Council's waste management goals, including Southern Regional Councils.

The above areas and all of our areas of work utilise the triple bottom line as the chosen framework for The Bower to measure its organisational success in the promotion of sustainable communities – this includes our social impact (House to Home program, Community Repair cafes and workshops), environmental (reducing waste and saving resources), and economic performance (being a sustainable circular economy business). Environmental, social and financial sustainability is the standard and best way to present, report and evaluate The Bower’s work and success.

6. WH&S and Waste Management

The Bower has an extensive set of policies which are available to all members and staff. The following overview is a summary of relevant WH&S and Waste Management policies.

a) WH&S

Safety procedures and policies are in place for all staff working on the Bower premises:

- Policy and Procedure Handbook in place and available for staff and volunteers.
- Use of Personal Protection Equipment is mandatory.
- Chemical products are limited but stored safely and MSDS (Material Safety Data Sheets) available.
- Fire extinguishers, fire blankets and emergency and exit lighting were installed and were updated in 2023.
- Risk management plans and evacuation procedures are in place and were updated in 2023.
- Map with exits and fire extinguishers displayed at different places in the building.
- First Aid kits present at all locations.
- Annual fire safety and evacuation drills.
- First Aid training provided biannually.
- Safe lifting & handling of goods training provided and signs to remind staff displayed.
- Incident reporting and grievance policy in place.
- Risk assessment conducted for specific events.
- A police check and working with children-check is mandatory for anyone working with children. The Bower’s Working with Children Policy was updated in 2023.
- Program in place to test and tag all electronic items used and sold.
- Wheelchair access ramp and safety railing in place at all venues.
- All job descriptions and Bower employment policies reviewed by external HR consultants and updated as required.

b) Waste Management

Less than 5% of all incoming goods go to landfill thanks to a thorough in-house resource recovery comprising the following steps:

- Waste Triage of high value materials, e.g. untreated timber, for resale or use at Bower workshop facilities.
- Paper, cardboard, glass, plastic, and metals are separated and recycled.
- E-waste (computers and electronic appliances) separated and picked up biweekly by ACE Recycling <http://www.acerecycling.net.au/>
- Remainder to landfill – estimated at less than 5% of incoming goods.

B. The Bower's Products and Services

I. Reuse Centres

Reuse of pre-loved goods and selling them in our secondhand and online stores represents a core revenue stream of The Bower but is also a key objective of The Bower in response to the culture of disposal, over consumption, and waste production.

Historically, The Bower strives to use revenue generated from the store to further expand its geographical reach across Sydney and address waste management problems at a higher level and through education. The Bower's presence at two Centres and Workshop at Redfern are hubs for sustainable living and as such provide a wide range of diverse services to the community.

1. Retail Outlets

The retail shop at Marrickville has been and remains a key revenue stream, or 'core business'. In October 2023, a second smaller boutique store was opened at Summer Hill. The main source for stocking the Bower's retail outlets is from goods donated by Sydney residents or salvaged from city streets. Obtaining stock for free ensures that we are dealing directly with the symptoms of our disposable society, collecting goods that would otherwise end in landfill. Depending on their saleability, goods remain in the store between 1 day and 6 months, with the preloved stock finding a new home.

Funds raised through the repair and sale of second-hand goods combined with workshops and repair cafes are our main revenue streams, supplemented by fundraising activities, events, and a grant writing program.

One of the aims of The Bower is to provide affordable goods to low-income earners and other disadvantaged groups in the community. To encourage quick turnover of pre-loved goods in the shop, the prices on the floor are revised after three weeks. Items collected predominantly fall into the following categories (including some examples):

2. On-Line Shop

The Bower introduced an on-line shop in September 2015 to supplement and add value to our core business by:

- Reducing our shop footprint, i.e. the need to collect and display goods as they can be sold directly online and shipped out.
- Attracting new clientele who may not be local.
- Enabling the sale of unique or high-end goods that are harder to sell in the store.

Customers can pay on-line via Square or come in the store to pay for and collect the goods. We courier the goods through Australia Post.

The bulk of the items are sold via our website (<http://bower.org.au/buy-goods/>) and Facebook Marketplace, with more artistic and creative items sold via eBay. Facebook and Instagram provide the other media platforms to promote sales and interaction with the community followers. We also have an email subscribers list of over 16,000.

3. Consignment Service

In addition to second-hand donations and salvaged goods, The Bower also supports members working under the ethos of Reuse and Repair through our Consignment Section.

Under our Consignment Policy and Agreement, members can sell in the Bower's store any item they repaired or restored themselves, with The Bower retaining 30% of the sales price as standard commission.

Consignment objects are as varied as in the rest of The Bower, with armchairs, bikes, desks, tables, cases and machinery all featuring at one time or another. The sale of consignment items accounts for only a small portion of total revenue.

4. Community Work

Working with local communities and supporting local initiatives has always been high on The Bower's agenda. Not only is it a Bower objective to provide access to affordable goods, training and home DIY opportunities, but it is also our way to inform and engage the public in our main objective of reducing waste including from landfill, saving resources, and subsequently Greenhouse Gas emissions.

The Bower is itself a social enterprise providing employment and educational opportunities to the community. The Bower has established partnerships with organisations such as the Asylum Seeker Centre in Newtown and 13 frontline agencies for our House to Home Program. The Bower provides a training venue and materials for Sydney Community College, and for organisations such as Youth Off the Streets, and Trades Women Australia.

II. Repair Centres

Promoting the repair of pre-loved goods is a key mission of the Bower. The primary objective of promoting repairs is to counter our throwaway culture and its consequent environmental impact, stimulated and driven by consumerism.

The Bower's in-house repair services provide extensive expertise in repairing a range of goods such as electronic appliances, computers, bikes and furniture. A good entry point for enabling local community members on their repair and upcycling journey is through our Repair Cafés. These programs continue to grow and adapt in response to community demand and commercial context.

1. Electrical Goods and Repairs

As increasing the e-waste capacity in Sydney becomes more and more critical each year, The Bower is committed to diverting as many electrical appliances as possible from landfill. The Bower's in-house certified repair staff, with the assistance of volunteers under their supervision, are able to test and repair approximately **50%** of all electrical goods received as donations.

All electrical appliances we sell are tested and tagged so that customers know the condition of the item: an 'OK' tag means that the item was tested safe and is working; an 'AS IS' tag indicates that the item is partially usable, sold for parts, or requires servicing.

Around 25% of accepted electrical goods have low to no reuse value, such as old TVs, phones or VCR recorders. These are all provided to professional recyclers resulting in 100% diversion

from landfill of all accepted electrical goods.

2. Furniture Repairs

From its inception The Bower has engaged in furniture repair. The amount of good quality furniture that is thrown away because people have no interest, knowledge or time to repair them is astonishing and contributes significantly to Sydney's waste problem. In 2024 furniture repairs will be relocated to Summer Hill, and related courses and services will be reviewed and re-launched through 2025.

The Bower has hosted the weekly Marrickville Men's Shed at its workshop at 107 Redfern Street since 2011. The Men's shed repairs some of the furniture donated to The Bower and more recently has assisted with other programs, such as collaborating with Gunawirra Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander organisation, based in Rozelle, to build cultural boxes including items such as clapping sticks, boomerangs, and Australian animal stencils as an educational tool for pre-school and primary school children.

3. Bike Repairs

Winning the Southern Sydney Regional of Councils (SSROC) tender for bicycle repairs and maintenance workshops has generated renewed interest and significant growth in The Bower's bike repair and building services. We currently have a devoted team repairing and assembling bikes for sale and running maintenance and repair workshops at Summer Hill and other Council locations across Sydney. This area is seen as an area of growth going forward.

4. Paid Repair Service

We have expanded our fee-based repair services at Summer Hill for customers to bring in their broken goods which they would like to hold on to but lack the skill or time to repair themselves. We take bookings for repair of electronic appliances, bikes, and furniture and commissioned projects, and restore each item using primarily reclaimed materials and parts. Services offered vary based on the skills and availability of staff and volunteers, and availability of workshop space.

These services will continue to evolve and grow through 2025-27.

5. Community Repair Cafés

Repair Cafés are free meeting places for local communities. Repair Cafes are all about learning the art of repair in a collaborative setting and fostering a culture of creativity, repair and reuse.

The Repair Café concept originates from Europe and the Bower was the first to introduce it in Australia. Thanks to a successful crowdfunding campaign we were able to open our first Repair Café in May 2014.

A Repair Café is an event with complementary objectives to those of The Bower Reuse and Repair Centre:

- 1) Repair items, extending their usable life. This in turn avoids the need for disposal and saves landfill and associated CO₂ emissions (from disposal and replacement products).
- 2) Re-learning the art of repair. Developing skills that have been in decline for several generations, empowering people to fix things and take pride in their new-found practical abilities.
- 3) Encouraging people to join in with community events with like-minded others, by providing the opportunity to fix household items.

The Bower's Repair Café is open every Wednesday afternoon from 2-5pm at Summer Hill where the general public can drop in with their broken items. Safety of staff and customers is a priority, and all attendees must read and sign a disclaimer which stipulates that they are expected to comply with the safety standards communicated at the start of each Repair Café session.

Repair Cafés for electrical and non-electrical repairs are also provided as a mobile service. In-house Repair Cafés are normally funded through grants, with mobile events paid for by local organisers, such as councils, businesses, or community groups.

6. Workshops

An essential aspect of The Bower is to provide opportunities to learn skills in reuse, upcycling and new trades, which in turn will help the community to support the Bower's objectives and ultimately create employment in the recycling sector. With financial support from Councils and Foundation grants, The Bower has been able to fine-tune its workshop program and establish best practice in terms of content, service and organisation.

The Bower has a double objective with its workshops, including Repair Cafés:

- To provide basic skills and techniques for the repair and upcycling of pre-loved goods; and
- To engage in a conversation with participants about the importance of diverting waste from landfill, what it means in practice and how the Bower can help them.

Workshops, including those run for some third parties, are delivered from our Redfern workshop space and our new space at Summer Hill. Councils outside these areas that commission workshops will generally provide a location suitable for their local residents to attend.

Tools used during the workshops are tested and comply with all safety standards. The Bower carefully selects and introduces its workshop facilitators. The following selection criteria apply:

- Knowledge of and compliance with WH&S standards.
- Support for and familiarity with using salvaged material.
- Support for and familiarity with The Bower's mission and programs.
- Experience teaching and training people.
-

In addition, there is a police check for facilitators working with children.

General content

- Introduce thinking around reusing 2nd hand materials.
- Discuss the environmental benefit of diverting waste from landfill.
- Highlight which goods are salvageable and which are not.
- Stress the benefits for the community by donating, repairing, and upcycling goods.

Workshop Specific content

Each course program is designed uniquely for each of our courses in collaboration with our specialised facilitators and overseen by our Workshop Manager.

Tiny House course

Over six days participants learn all the basic skills for building in our unique course using reclaimed materials:

- Laying a floor
- Construction of walls
- Inlay of windows and doors
- Fitting a roof
- Building of stairs
- Building a loft with a bed
- Insulation
- Use of a range of power tools.
- A new interior outfit course introduced in 2025 includes electrics, cladding and insulation of walls, and outfitting to specific design needs.

Upholstery

- Learn the basics of reupholstering a chair with your preferred fabric
- Familiarise yourself with the hand tools required for upholstery
- Learn how to upholster your own chair
- We will be running an intermediate upholstery course from 2025

Basic Carpentry

- Learn how to safely use basic hand and power tools
- Learn how to plan a carpentry project such as a bird box or stool or crate
- Finish a construction project of choice such as tool, storage, possum or bird boxes
- Take home your own project

DIY (Do It Yourself)

Over two days on consecutive weekends learn the basics in home repairs including plumbing, use of power tools, carpentry, and how to fix the items you wish you knew how from a wobbly bookshelf to the leaking tap.

Furniture Repairs and Restoration

- Learn how to repair joints and broken pieces of furniture
- Learn how to replace worn out or missing parts
- Bring your own medium-sized pieces of furniture
- Repair and take home your own restored piece of furniture

III. The Bower's Service program for Councils

I. Historical context

In 2006, in anticipation of the growing interest and need to reduce waste and divert waste from landfill, The Bower introduced The Reuse and Referral Service for councils which included:

- Free pick up of donated goods by the Bower's truck.
- Free advice on reuse/recycling potential by the Bower's Customer Liaison Officer.
- Access to our database with approx. 1000 organisations, charities and private enterprises working in reuse, repair and resale.
- At least 3 referrals to enterprises who can accept goods from callers if we cannot.
- Reporting to councils on resident engagement and the volume of household goods per LGA diverted from landfill.

The number of councils which joined this service currently includes around 20 Councils from SSROC, WSROC and NSROC (Regional Organisation of Councils). The fees charged to Councils through each agreement supplement but do not fully pay for the Bower's truck and collection services.

In 2015, The Bower introduced in partnership with SSROC, a new service program for councils which shifted from a voluntary funding agreement to a service agreement.

CRS
<u>Collection and rehoming service</u> Free and exclusive reuse and referral hotline and collection service for unwanted household goods.
<u>Quarterly reporting</u> Overview of number of callers/ donors, goods diverted in tonnage. and referral organisations located in LGA.
Options for repair cafes and workshops at special events such as Festivals or Fairs and/or regular sessions.

II. The Collection and Rehoming Service for Councils

1. On-call service for reuse and referral hotline

We encourage residents to use our online booking tool or to drop items during opening hours only to our Marrickville store. Once items are selected:

- Details of every donor and the goods they want to donate are discussed and recorded on our database.
- Agreement is made on which goods The Bower can accept and/or repair and a collection will be scheduled if the donor is unable to drop off these goods.
- Depending on the region, a collection will be scheduled approx... 2 weeks ahead of time.
- The Bower is unable to accept items that have low or no reuse value, are unhygienic or have WH&S restrictions, i.e., items damaged or beyond repair, chipboard and MDF, flat packs with pieces missing, safety equipment, toys, clothes and mattresses. It may simply be that The Bower lacks space for particular items. We will refer these two organisation/s who may accept them. The vast majority of these organisations don't charge for drop off, but they might not have a pick-up service.
- The reason why we can't accept certain items is discussed and the donor will be encouraged to go through the extra step to contact the referral organisation and thereby still attempt to divert their pre-loved goods from landfill.
- Each conversation, which on average lasts 3 to 5 minutes, is followed up by an email to the caller either to confirm the date for the collection or to provide contact details of the identified referral organisations for the items we cannot accept.
- We have an online reuse database for referral.

2. Collection of Goods

All agreed collections of goods from people residing in participating Council areas are free and happen on weekdays. Each day is allocated to a specific area to limit our ecological footprint and avoid crisscrossing the region.

- Truck driver running sheets are printed with a detailed list of locations and goods agreed to be picked up.
- The running sheets also specify how the truck driver can access the goods.
 - No goods can be left on the curbside due to the risk that they will be gone before the truck arrives.
 - Goods are to be kept on the ground floor and protected from the weather.
 - There is no need for the donor to be at home. Lifting is done by the driver and offsider.
 - If a donor wants to be informed of the exact collection time, we will call on the agreed day once the truck driver has planned his itinerary.
- Upon arrival at the collection location, the truck driver inspects the quality and accessibility of the goods. The truck driver is familiar with The Bower's quality and standards criteria and of the type of goods we can accept and/or repair. The driver can refuse to accept the goods if they don't meet the agreed condition but can also accept more goods than agreed if they meet our criteria.
- The collected goods are brought to either our Marrickville or Summer Hill Centre to be either sold in the store or put aside for repair or tested and sorted before sale.
- Depending on their sale ability, goods remain in the store from between 1 day and 6.

months but in the end approx. 95% find a new home. Hence our new name 'Collection and Rehoming Service'.

3. Reporting to Councils

Participating Councils receive a quarterly report as well as an annual report with an overview of:

- The number of calls from local residents
- The number of goods diverted from landfill either through collection by the Bower or by referring the caller to another organisation
- The number of referral organisations in the LGA

III. The Educational Workshop Services for Councils

Our experience tells us that workshop participants who are learning a practical skill and receive concrete advice on how to repair their personal items are more receptive to broader conversations about diverting goods from landfill. We see an increased number of calls from residents from Councils who participate in our educational workshop program.

For this purpose, we recommend that Councils enable their residents to participate in the re-use economy such as utilising educational workshops commissioned on a fee-for-service basis.

Tools used during the workshops are tested and comply with all safety standards.

The Bower carefully selects its workshop facilitators based on the following criteria:

- Knowledge and compliance with WH&S standards.
- Support for and familiarity with using salvaged material.
- Support for and familiarity with The Bower's mission and programs.
- Experience in teaching and training people.
- Police check for facilitators working with children.

IV. The Multi-Unit Dwelling Collection Service for Councils

The Bower truck and two staff members will arrive at an agreed time to the location where residents from a MUD have stored their goods for a Council collection. The Bower staff will assess which goods to take in the truck to return to our store and workshops.



C. Market Analysis

Workshop participants and customer feedback combined with surveys, reports and strategies helped The Bower outline its market analysis and define its future growth path:

Our main conclusions were:

1. The Bower caters for a wide range of customers in terms of age, financial means, background and interests.
2. Sydneysiders' main motivation for involvement in reuse is not financial but helping the environment and the local and broader community.
3. The inability to transport large or heavy items and distance/time to any physical location are the two main barriers for residents expressing a desire to reuse and recycle close to their home or work.
4. Most residents are keen to reuse and repurpose items and to follow up with our reuse online database for items that the Bower cannot repair or sell.
5. There are our community expectations on Councils and charities to be positive role models when it comes to reuse practices and to set targets for waste reduction.
6. The NSW EPA Waste Avoidance and Resource Recovery strategy is based on:
 - Education is crucial to drive behaviour change.
 - Working with the communities and councils.

- Prioritising waste avoidance and reuse waste.
 - Timing to roll out the program.
7. The NSW EPA provides resources for organisations who work towards their market objectives and targets which were:
- Increase recycling of municipal solid waste from 52% (in 2010–11) to 70%.
 - Increase waste diverted from landfill from 63% (in 2010–11) to 75%.
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1. The Bower Marketing Strategy

Given that The Bower is a not-for-profit organisation with a low budget, our marketing initiatives and promotions are limited. However, this has not stopped The Bower in our tracks.

We have identified the following methods as the most effective ways to promote and market our business and services:

- **Media Platforms**
 - The Bower's website provides information on a wide range of topics from governance to useful resources for repair and reuse.
 - The Bower uses Facebook and Instagram to provide updates and insights into the Bower's activities, interesting goods received, and promoting services and courses. Facebook Marketplace, Instagram and eBay are used for selling stocked items
 - The monthly online newsletter keeps members and supporters up to date on new initiatives.
- **Flyers**

Promotional DL flyers, highlighting the range of services we offer, have been produced and are available in store and online for special events, such as the Festival of Repair.
- **Word of mouth**

By showing leadership and by providing reliable, high-quality services and products at good prices, The Bower maintains a strong reputation as a respected organisation in the local community and across Sydney.
- **Creativity, innovation and inspiration**

The local Federal Member for Grayndler and current Prime Minister, the Hon Anthony Albanese MP, has previously acknowledged that The Bower is well known for its ability to combine sustainability with innovation. The Bower has indeed established a positive reputation whereby innovation and sustainability go hand in hand with initiatives such as:

 - Our consignment program
 - Our reuse and referral service
 - Our repair and upcycled services
 - Australia's first Repair Café
 - The first auction organised by a recycling centre
 - The first Tiny House built using 100% recycled material
 - The first Festival of Repair in the Southern hemisphere

These events and innovations continue to generate media, online and community

interest that helps to maintain the Bower as a thought and practice leader in the circular economy.

- **Working with Councils**

The shared goal of diverting waste from landfill provides Councils and The Bower with the opportunity to develop strong collaborative partnerships. This includes Councils promoting the Bower to residents through their newsletters, magazines and websites. The Bower reuse, repair and referral services are highly valued by Councils and residents, and will be a strong focus for the Bower in 2025 and beyond.

- **Working with Community groups**

Engagement and education are the building blocks towards The Bower’s objective to support and promote sustainable communities. We support community groups and the general public not only by offering goods at affordable prices, but also by creating opportunities for community participation in our reuse and repair programs.

- **Educational workshops**

The Bower’s workshops, including ‘Rent a Bench’, build valuable reuse and upcycling skills and capabilities in the community. They are also an ideal platform to communicate the objectives of diverting waste from landfill and to promote the Bower’s other services and programs.

- **Fundraising**

Ultimately, the goal of our marketing and communications plan is to increase The Bower’s income via shop sales, workshop bookings, on-line sales, crowdfunding, grants and sponsorship programs. This will be another key area of focus in late 2024 and throughout 2025.

Priority will be given to fundraising activities marketing the primary income generating streams, including The Bower shops, workshops, events, and repair initiatives.

The following overview provides an insight into the current status and recommendations for The Bower’s future communications and marketing strategy.

Marketing Plan Summary

Product	Strategy	Action	Timing
Audience feedback	Survey	Workshop questionnaires regularly.	Ongoing
Messaging	Uphold reputation of innovation and sustainability	Promote: Environment, Creativity, Community.	Ongoing
Stills and footage	update images	Commission new images.	Ongoing
Website	More user friendly	Maintain and Update.	New website lin 2022; ongoing

Social Media	Main communication tools	Facebook and Instagram.	Ongoing
Media relations	Establish long term media relations	Research and introduce appropriate media on-line and off-line.	Ongoing
Newsletter	Monthly e-news	Grow email address database.	Ongoing
Membership	Grow membership	Research and grow our membership	Ongoing
Community groups	Engage with more community groups	Source two groups per year for combined activities.	Ongoing
Working with Councils	Promote Collection & Rehoming Service	Review content for promotion. Meet representatives. Promote positive stories.	Ongoing
Fundraising	Promote primary objectives	Review hierarchy of fundraising activities. Perform cost/benefit analysis.	Have a calendar of fundraising and revenue raising events Review bi-annually

D. Managing to Grow

The main challenge for The Bower's growth path will be in reshaping its activities while retaining focus on its broader goals. Critical to this will be improving integration between and systems that support collections, retail, and House to Home activities, which will involve both technical and business improvements as well as updating how we interact with and service our key partners.

1. Creating a Sustainable Economy

Strategic priority: Refining and Growing Collections, Sales, and Rehoming

There is increasing need for more and improved collection and rehoming services, and this presents opportunities for the Bower. Several constraints have prevented growth in this area, including the level of integration, the suitability of business systems, availability of space to repair, upcycle, and store goods, and a downturn in retail activity post-Covid.

This has been partly resolved by securing additional space at Summer Hill, with the following actions being a focus for 2025:

- Exploring cloud-based systems to improve collections, inventory management, and interaction with councils and front-line community groups.
- Increasing on-line sales through improved marketing and more targeted use of the eBay store and Facebook Marketplace

- New programs currently being tested and tried to be rolled out on a larger scale, including paid repair services, and new workshops for bicycle repairs, construction, and textiles.
- We continue to build up workshops for disadvantaged and youth and women as key areas for training in practical skills

SWOT Analysis

Strength – internal	Weaknesses - internal
Supporting 20+ Councils and selectively growing Growing our House to Home and Collections program Stable governance, management, organisation Experience in sales, repairs, collections and rehoming, communications Free access to goods/software to sell in store Capacity to adapt business model	Recruit and train new staff and workshop facilitators Limited promotional and fundraising budget Limited communications staff and budget Downturn in retail sales post-Covid We do not have the capacity to answer all of the collection requests
Opportunity – external	Threat – external
Growing interest from Councils in our workshops and repair cafes Growing consumer interest in 2 nd hand & upcycle Consumers prefer a local presence Strong brand - reputation and history More space allowing for accepting more goods, conducting more repairs and workshops	High expectations i.e. one stop shop solution Educating & informing local residents takes time – especially at our new Summer Hill Centre Ideal locations beyond our financial means Reliant on Community Service Volunteers for support tasks Reliant on external financial support from grants and fundraising initiatives.

2. Community Education

Strategic priority: Expanding our Community Work

Working with and educating local communities has been essential for the growth and ongoing establishment of the Bower. Community embedding and social inclusion is a vital building block of our organisation that we need to further expand on to new groups.

It is The Bower’s intention to widen the range of programs and broadening the number of people that have access to them, by delivering the following priorities:

- Reviewing our communications approach to ensure we’re engaging our audience with contemporary tools, including media platforms, web presence, news distribution.
- Engaging with and building our pool of instructors, including to deliver updated and new courses.
- Greater promotion of the Bower at the Summer Hill Inner West Sustainability Hub to community groups, volunteers, and residents to increase donations and attendance at repair cafes and courses.

- Continue to promote consignment to encourage greater community participation.
- Expand our relationship with companies for in-kind and financial donations. Similarly, seek out opportunities to set up partnerships with companies to offer our workshops as team-building exercises as well as supporting specific initiatives.

3. Partnering with Councils, Businesses, and Organisations

Strategic priority: Consolidate and strengthen our relationships

Long-term arrangements with Councils provide us with ongoing access to household goods, a consistent revenue stream, and the confidence to invest in further expansion of our services.

Councils are working to implement more circular economy initiatives and waste reduction targets, some are driven by the NSW Government. The Bower is adapting to ensure it can play a role in the success of those initiatives, identify and fill the remaining gaps, and continue to push for the government to do even better.

Our system and business improvements will go some way to meet these challenges, including improved performance reporting to Council clients. In addition to these, the Bower's focus will include:

- Continuing to work with Councils on service and environmental education outreach programs for their residents, mainly via workshops and coordinated communications.
- Actively seeking new opportunities by canvassing current and potential partners to identify where the Bower can meaningfully contribute to their sustainability goals.
- Review potential to expand and refine the range of goods we collect through our CRS program, to improve support for House to Home services, store sales, and taking advantage of the additional storage space at Summer Hill.
- Further develop and promote workshops specifically for businesses and community organisations including our bespoke courses and specialised projects.
- Expand engagement with community organisations, building on existing partnerships such as Youth Off the Streets and Austrade Women.



Key Council Performance Indicators

Council obligations are negotiated and accepted as part of the Collection and Rehoming Service Packages.

Council Obligation	
a.	Each Council allocates at least one officer to liaise with the Bower staff. If the officer is changed the Bower needs to be notified in advance.
b.	Promote The Bower's Collection and Rehoming Service amongst its residents via its website, newsletters and magazines
c.	Display The Bower's Collection and Rehoming Service flyer at local public spaces
d.	Brief reception staff to advise residents to contact The Bower's Collection and Rehoming Service with reusable items, and to use council clean-up services as a last resort
e.	Review quarterly report and analyse data with The Bower's Collection and Rehoming Service
f.	Pay the CRS fee within 30 days of signing the contract

4. Risk Assessment

The Risk Management Matrix identifies risks for The Bower's further growth until 2027. A risk is any problem that may occur if no mitigation measures are put in place.

Likelihood	Impacts				
	Insignificant 1	Minor 2	Moderate 3	Major 4	Catastrophic 5
A. Almost Certain	High	High Lack of continuity in rental agreements	Extreme	Extreme Lack of promotions of new site at Summer Hill	Extreme
B. Likely	Moderate	High Continued downturn in retail sector	High Renegotiate of 107 workshop space at Redfern	Extreme	Extreme
C. Possible	Low	Moderate Not able to take on the necessary staff due to budget constraints	High Too high expectations for the size of the organisation and deliverables	Extreme	Extreme
D. Unlikely	Low	Low Customer/member dissatisfaction	Moderate Sales below expectations	High Councils decrease CRS support	Extreme Financial support lessens
E. Rare	Low	Low	Moderate Reduced staffing due to economic downturn	High Lack of Volunteers and CSO Volunteers (as during Covid)	High Lack of grants, and donations

Legend - Reference Aust. Standard AS/NZS 4360:1999 Risk Management

Qualitative measures of Risk Level	
Level	Description
Low	Do something by routine procedures
Moderate	Do something as soon as possible
High	Attention needed

Qualitative measures of Likelihood		
Level	Description	Detailed description
A	Almost Certain	Is expected to occur
B	Likely	Will probably occur
C	Possible	Might occur at some time

Extreme	Immediate action required
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D	Unlikely	Could occur at some time
E	Rare	May occur in exceptional circumstances

Qualitative measures of Impact		
Level	Description	Detailed description
1	Insignificant	No financial or reputational impact, little disruption
2	Minor	Minor financial or reputational impact, requiring some action to correct problem
3	Moderate	Limited financial or reputational impact, creating inconvenience for organisation
4	Major	Major financial or reputational impact, requiring thorough review and action
5	Catastrophic	Catastrophic financial or reputational impact, requiring crisis management

Summary

The Bower Reuse and Repair Centres have continued to be a key organisation in Australia for promoting and living the Circular Economy. We uniquely intersect the social, social enterprise, and environmental fields without a program of work including our workshops, community repair cafes, retail and online outlets, collection services for pre-loved goods, unique building courses, and festivals and special events. The Bower is a small Charity that has a huge outreach, beyond our size to organisations, the community, business, foundations, and government. We thank all of our staff, volunteers, board members, workshop facilitators and volunteers for making this happen every day.

