

CASE STUDY: REPAIR

Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand

Prepared by the Zero Waste Network

Repair Cafés are free pop-up events where local people bring in their broken or damaged belongings and local volunteer experts do their best to repair them. The aim of Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand (RCANZ) is to foster a culture of repair in New Zealand.

How does it do it?

Repair Cafés engages its community in behaviour change education through:

- Behaviour change initiatives
- Awareness building campaigns
- Valuing and enhancing local capacity

WHY REPAIR?

Aotearoa NZ has a culture of DIY and repair, borne partly out of the ‘tyranny of distance’ that characterises our beloved islands’ relative physical isolation. The avalanche of cheap consumer goods and the destruction of the local manufacturing sector over the past 30+ years has caused a massive rise in landfilling of e-waste, clothing, toys and other items that in the past would have been produced locally, to a high quality standard and lasted a lifetime.

Repair is second-to-the-top of the waste hierarchy, meaning that the benefits of actions taken at this stage have an outsized impact in reducing emissions and ecological damage (from the new item not produced, and the existing item not landfilled). Encouraging a culture of repair is one of the best ways to change behaviour around waste. New Zealanders overwhelmingly already support it: a 2020/2021 Consumer NZ survey of 5000 New Zealanders found that 76% of participants would rather get products repaired than throw them out and buy new ones.



“ Our mission is that people buy wisely, are educated about the durability and repairability of each product and have an interest in taking care of their belongings, so repairing is part of our lifestyle again.

”

— Brigitte Sistig, RCANZ board member

1 Behaviour change initiatives & outcomes

Obviously the most important work of Repair Café is to fix things. These cafes are run on a voluntary, non-commercial basis. You come, register your item at the welcome desk, and then when a repairer is free, you work together to look, investigate and discuss the diagnosis, and then watch the repair, if it's safe enough. It's a collaborative do-it-together effort rather than a drop off repair service that's just done for you. These events **strengthen community networks** and **share skills across generations and cultures**, and they **stimulate social wellbeing**. Learning how to repair things ourselves builds community resilience in the face of our modern challenges.

In 2022, there were 199 repair cafe events held across the country from as far north as Kaitiāia down to Wānaka.

Repair cafes last on average 3 hours and aim to fix a huge range of items from clothing and textiles to electrical appliances and electronics, tools, software, ceramics and jewellery

Some Repair Cafes repaired in excess of 45 items, with most averaging between 15-45 items per event

2 Awareness building campaigns

Part of the aim of Repair Café is not simply to repair items for people, but to build awareness and support for the structural solutions to creating a culture of repair including the importance of durability and repairability when purchasing items.

Right to Repair Petition

In 2021, Repair Café Aotearoa NZ joined the international Right to Repair movement by launching the *Make it our Right to Repair* petition which was delivered to the Minister for the Environment with **12,901 signatures**. The petition asked for four things

PASS LAWS THAT REQUIRE PRODUCTS TO LAST LONGER AND BE EASIER TO REPAIR

TAKE ACTION TO MAKE REPAIR SERVICES ACCESSIBLE AND AFFORDABLE FOR EVERYONE

ENSURE CONSUMERS HAVE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ON PRODUCT REPAIRABILITY AND DURABILITY

REQUIRE PRODUCERS TO OFFER SPARE PARTS AND REPAIR SERVICES

International Repair Day

International Repair Day, October 30, celebrates the strength of community coming together and helping each other to fix small household items and prevent stuff going to landfill. It campaigns for the Right to Repair and the shift to a circular economy.



“With global warming, we have to stop throwing things away. We have to stop being profligate with resources, we have to reuse, which means reducing waste. Manufacturers can help with this by making repairable goods.”

— Retiree Steve Lang,
volunteer at the Ōtaki repair café



3 Valuing and Enhancing Local Capacity

Repair Café Aotearoa NZ values volunteers as the most treasured resource: Regular online network meetings and working groups offer opportunities to learn more about volunteer recruitment, retention and how to celebrate volunteers. It is critical that volunteers are well cared for because they become ambassadors for the project in their communities and are the best tool for recruiting more people.

Fundraising to equip local Repair Cafés: having the appropriate tools to fix common household items is critical to the success of the project. People want to come away with a successful “fix” and a positive experience

Creating Te Reo Māori glossaries and signage for common repair words: Cafes need to welcome and be a comfortable space for all people. Acknowledging Te Tiriti and te reo Māori is one small way that this can create a safe space.

“ As the chairperson of the Epsom Chinese Association, I try to encourage our members to join as volunteers ”

— Chinese community leader Susan Li Kwan organises a monthly sewing repair café in Epsom

FIND OUT MORE

Repair Café Aotearoa New Zealand:
<https://www.repaircafeaotearoa.co.nz>

International Repair Day: <https://openrepair.org/international-repair-day/>

Consumer New Zealand Right to Repair campaign: <https://campaigns.consumer.org.nz/right-to-repair>

