

2021

The year '2021' is rendered in a bold, dark grey sans-serif font. The second zero is stylized as a target with a dark grey bullseye and a white outer ring. A red arrow with a white shaft points from the upper right towards the center of the bullseye. A red curved shape, resembling a segment of a pie chart, is positioned between the arrow and the bullseye.

**consumer.**  
Annual Report

# From the chair.

As the cost of living increases, the need for, and value of, initiatives such as Built to Last, Right to Repair and our Powerswitch price comparison site are more important than ever. And the ongoing campaign to lower supermarket prices will hopefully lead to keeping more money in consumers' pockets. Consumer NZ continues to fight for your consumer rights, your need for independent advice and for reliable information.

*- Robert Aitken*



# From the CEO.

2021 was a year of investment in our people, capacity and infrastructure. We bedded in structural changes and new ways of working to grow and use our modest resources in the most effective way we can to empower New Zealand consumers.

Our campaign work is funded exclusively through the support our members provide us, either through subscription fees or the generous donations they make. I would like to take this opportunity to thank our supporters and acknowledge the hard work, long hours and dedication to the cause of all the staff at Consumer NZ.

*- Jon Duffy*



# Advocacy.



We conducted advocacy research to gain a wider understanding of how consumers engage with campaigning, talking to our counterparts in Australia (Choice) and the United Kingdom (Which?). Based on our findings, we began working towards enhancing our advocacy web presence. This includes petition functionality on consumer.org, as well as a new look and feel for our campaign web pages. We closed off our Built to Last campaign and are sharpening our focus towards a Right to Repair campaign, which will debut in 2022. We launched our first ever crowdfunding for our sunscreen campaign, which raised more than \$50k. New laws that make it illegal to ignore a 'do not knock' sticker were announced off the back of pressure from us. We were actively involved in the supermarket consultation process during the Commerce Commission's inquiry into the grocery sector, and we also wrote to 14 companies about unfair gift card expiry dates. During 2021, our advocacy supporters more than doubled.

# utua atu

by consumer.



Utua atu, meaning 'pay it forward', lets people and businesses donate Consumer NZ memberships to those who couldn't otherwise access our services. We want to help all consumers become informed consumers. That means growing their knowledge and confidence about their rights, helping them choose the best purchases for their budgets, and standing with them if companies treat them badly. A donated membership provides a full year of access to our Consumer Advice Line, and online and print resources (including *Consumer* magazine). We've partnered with community organisations to identify people who would most benefit from a Consumer membership. A key part of the initiative is the insights Consumer gathers from Utua atu members and the community organisations we work with. These insights inform the topics Consumer researches and investigates, from individual matters to broader, systemic issues that affect many people.



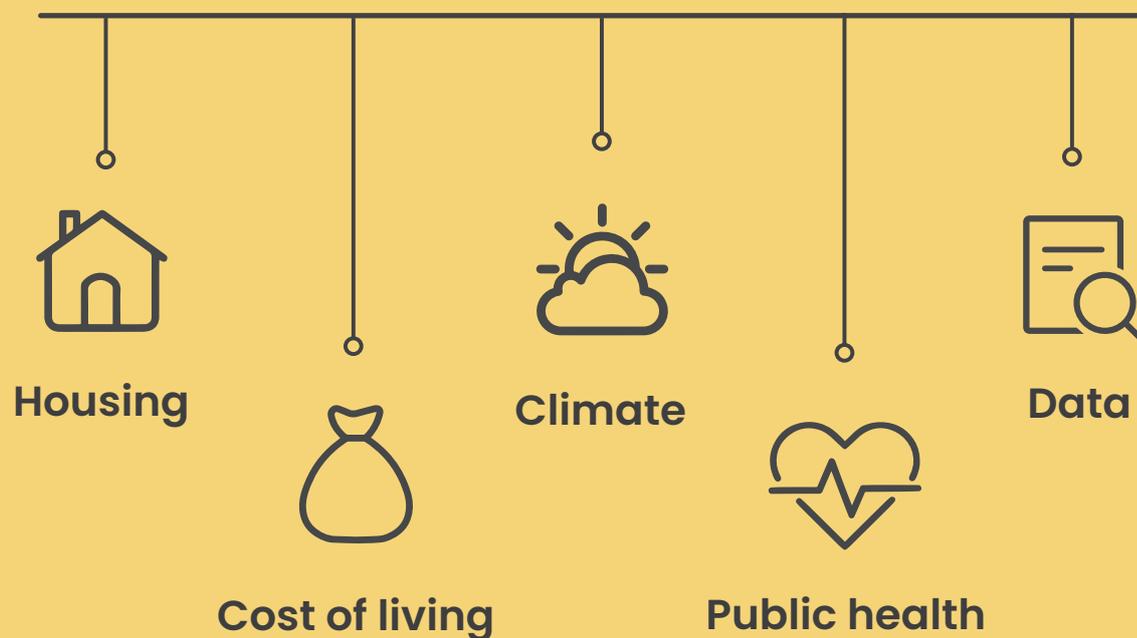
# Sunscreens.

New Zealanders got behind our 'sunscreens you can trust' campaign, with 1177 donors contributing to our crowdfunding campaign. We raised more than \$55k, which means we tested 11 more sunscreens – 21 in total. As in previous years, the results were disappointing. Only eight sunscreens met SPF and broad-spectrum protection labelling claims. In March, the Sunscreen (Product Safety Standard) Act was passed into law, making it mandatory for sunscreens to comply with the Australian and New Zealand standard under the Fair Trading Act. But there's still work to be done to ensure consumers can trust sunscreen labels. We'll be campaigning for regular testing requirements (which the standard doesn't require) and for sunscreens to be regulated as a therapeutic product.

# Campaign umbrellas.

In 2021, we worked to establish five areas of focus for our investigations and wider campaign efforts.

**These content pillars are:**



There are many consumer issues of concern, but we determined that these were the best areas to focus our primary efforts. Our decision was based on nationally representative research from our quarterly Sentiment Tracker, member feedback and investigations and campaigns already undertaken. We also took note of environmental factors such as the global pandemic, the rising cost of living and the impacts of climate change and New Zealand's inflated housing market.

# POWERSWITCH

by consumer.

Last year was a bumper one for Powerswitch. We undertook site development, rebranding and our first ever Powerswitch marketing campaign. Although Consumer NZ has been running Powerswitch for 20 years, 2021 was the first year Consumer ran a dedicated marketing campaign for it. This was enabled by the financial support of the Electricity Authority, which now provides funding for the operation, development and marketing of Powerswitch, and support from the Gas Industry Company. Our efforts have paid off. We achieved a 33% increase in site usage over the previous year and a 43% increase in the number of users who switched to a cheaper provider through our site.



**\$340**  
a year  
saved

# Consume This

podcast

Consume This launched in September 2021. Our goal was to attract a younger audience and develop an additional content delivery platform. This has been successful. The listener base skews much younger than our general membership. We have also had success converting these listeners to Consumer NZ members. The editorial direction is to cover consumer issues through a human lens. Episodes range from Consumer staples (sunscreens and supermarkets) to less well-trodden but equally important areas like housing, sex and scams. These resonated well with our audience, resulting in positive reviews and a 4.7★ (out of 5★) rating on Apple podcasts.

## Top 5 episodes by # of listens:

- 1 My House Earns More Than Me
- 2 Scammed: How I Lost \$100k On A Dating App
- 3 Should You Stop Eating Red Meat?
- 4 Can You Buy Sustainable Fast Fashion?
- 5 An Attempt At Intimacy

# Most popular.

## Most popular social posts:

- Sustainable clothing investigation
- How to stay warm for less
- Sunscreen test results
- Wash your disposable masks
- Don't share screenshots of your vaccine pass
- Egg salmonella scare
- Bed, Bath and Beyond 'bamboo' pillow investigation
- New law will make ignoring 'do not knock' stickers illegal
- Bernard – Built to Last video
- Say goodbye to misleading country-of-origin claims



## Most popular new articles:

- How to add your vaccine pass to your phone home screen
- My Vaccine Pass: why you should keep your Covid certificate in a digital wallet
- The best masks for the Omicron outbreak
- Wash your disposable masks, experts say
- Pet food: are 'premium' brands worth the money?
- Budget vs premium carpet washers
- Four ways to cool your home in summer
- Eyelash serums: the downside of longer lashes
- New salmonella bug makes runny yolks a no-no
- Dentist fees: What you can expect to pay



**Our  
tests.**



## **Lifetime scoring**

In the biggest change in our product testing since the 1960s, we started to report a lifetime performance score to help shoppers buy appliances they know will last. It's no longer good enough for products to just perform well when they're new. Our testing shows many modern appliances work well when they're new, but some of them aren't built to last. We still assess 'as-new' performance, but we're now including measures of reliability, owner satisfaction and repairability. Since December 2021, we have added lifetime scoring to washing machines, vacuum cleaners, clothes dryers, fridges, ovens and cooktops. We will roll it out to other appliances, while also developing capability to assess product durability and repairability.

# Our services.

Our contact centre and consumer rights advisers:



Received more than

**14,303**

emails



Posted more than

**99,000**

magazines



Answered more than

**11,639**

phone inquiries





## In-house testing: electric bikes

A core part of our strategy is to increase the relevance of our test content. In 2017 we identified the significant potential for electric bike (e-bike) testing and we're now the leading source of e-bike reviews for New Zealand consumers. We developed our own test methodology and we have published test results for more than 50 e-bikes. The content is one of our top five most popular tests, gathering more than 50,000 unique user sessions each year. It has also generated Consumer Recommended and Top Brand endorsement revenue. For 2022, we made a significant improvement in our test to respond to the maturing local e-bike market. Our e-bike test goes from strength to strength and shows what we can achieve with well-planned, in-house product testing.

# Some stats.



**148,575**

Members and  
supporters

**40%**



**55,301**

Social media  
followers

**↑ 20,000**



In 2021 there were

**5,323,419**

sessions on **consumer.org.nz**

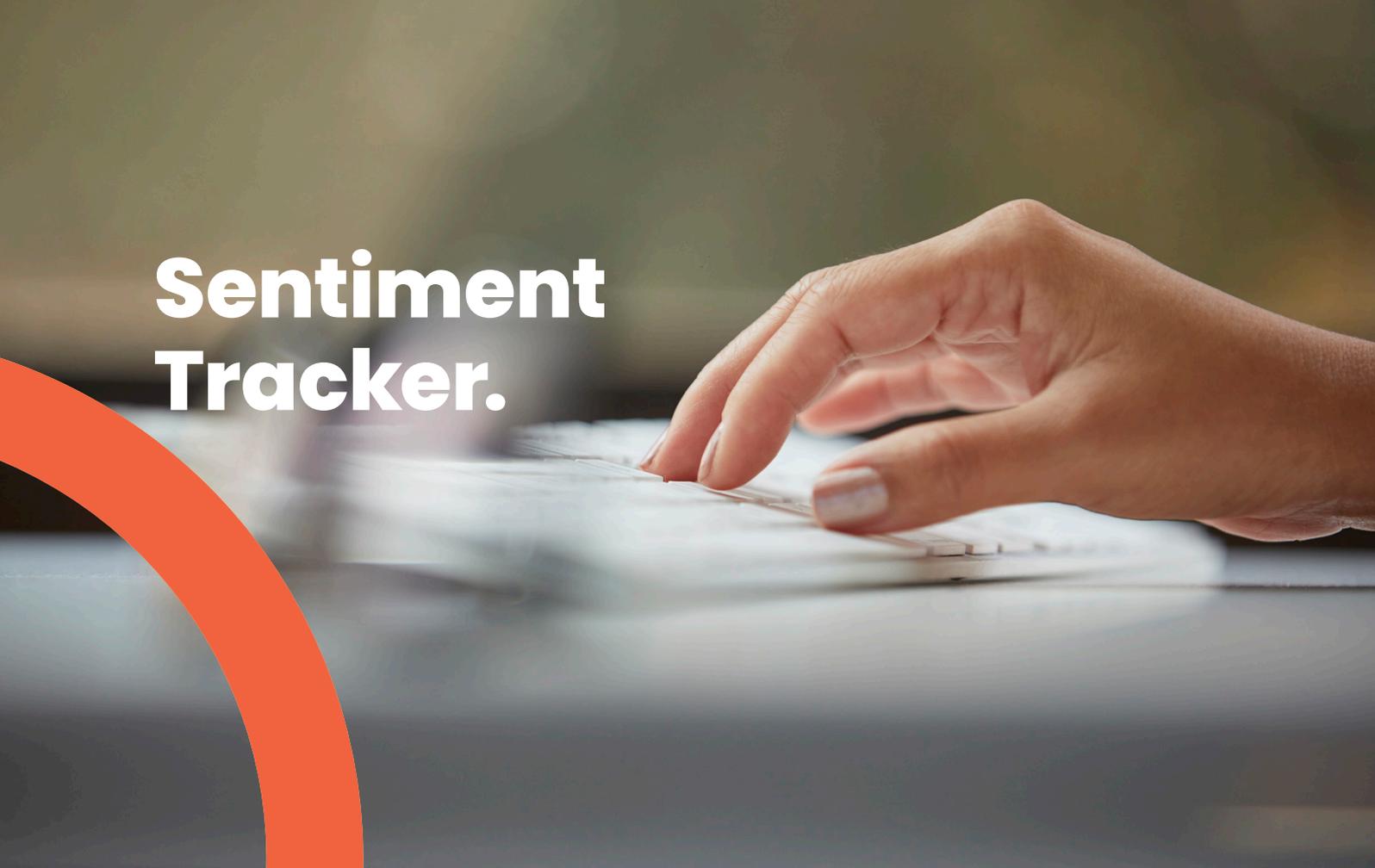
**↑ 10%**

# Licence programme.



While Covid lockdowns impacted meetings and celebrations, 2021 has been another successful year for the business programmes, with five businesses achieving their five-year milestone – across the Consumer Trusted accreditation, Top Brand and People's Choice awards. In July, Springfree Trampolines completed the Consumer Trusted accreditation, and joined the other businesses in the Consumer Trusted group, which have continued to go through the review process and maintain their accreditation status.





# Sentiment Tracker.

We launched the Consumer NZ Sentiment Tracker, a quarterly, nationally representative survey that asks New Zealanders the big questions. Tracking everything from environmental awareness and purchasing considerations to financial sentiment, the tracker is designed to provide a holistic understanding of how New Zealanders feel about a range of issues. Also it enables us to make informed decisions about what we investigate and where we choose to campaign. The Sentiment Tracker will also provide long-term data about how New Zealanders' attitudes are changing, particularly in reaction to timely external factors such as the Covid-19 pandemic, rising inflation and an overheated housing market.

# Our research.

From sustainable fashion claims to monitoring prices at big-box retailers and keeping banks honest, the research team reads the fine print so you don't have to. The fine print of retirement village contracts also came under our radar. While some villages are marketed like hotel resorts, our research found the terms in retirement village contracts are no holiday.

## **Our research found terms that:**

- Make residents responsible for maintenance of, and repairs to, the village's chattels, including the appliances in the unit.
- Deny residents the opportunity to benefit from any capital gain when their occupation licence is sold.
- Give the village wide-ranging discretion to decide what residents can and can't do.

Moving into a retirement village is a major financial decision. It's vital contracts are fair, but based on our review, many don't measure up.

