

STRATEGIC ACTION PLAN 2020-2023

INTERIM OUTCOMES REPORT

November 2020 - October 2022



AUSTRALIAN
CIRCULAR
ECONOMY
HUB
PLANETARK

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUPPORTERS

FUNDING PARTNER



Australian Government

This project received grant funding from the Australian Government.

FOUNDING PARTNER



ASSOCIATE SPONSORS



Planet Ark and the ACE Hub would like to thank our funding partners, the Australian Government, BINGO Industries, KeepCup and eleXsys, without whom none of the achievements in this report would have been possible.

Also a big thank you to the ACE Hub Advisory Board, Metrics Working Group, Procurement Working Group, Technical Supporters and Collaboration Partners.

ACE HUB TEAM CONTRIBUTIONS

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INTRODUCTION

Planet Ark has three decades of experience in developing circular economy solutions and actions, working collaboratively with businesses, governments, and communities. The launch of the Australian Circular Economy Hub (ACE Hub) in 2020 enabled a national and Asia Pacific focal point for the transition to a circular economy in the region. The ACE Hub set out to facilitate the transition to a circular economy by connecting networks of actors through a range of activities that focus on education, networking collaboration, leadership, data and research.

The Strategic Action Plan 2020-23 outlined activities the ACE Hub would undertake under four strategic pillars to achieve our targeted outcomes. This Interim Outcome Report examines what the ACE Hub has achieved in terms of those stated outcomes and outputs.

The launch of the ACE Hub in 2020 enabled a national and Asia Pacific focal point for the transition to a circular economy in the region.

The reporting period is from 23 November 2020 to 30 October 2022 unless stated otherwise.

1. INSPIRE & AMPLIFY

Drive awareness of CE, particularly in business and government.

2. EDUCATE & CONNECT

Build and share knowledge and enable collaboration.

4. SUPPORT & PROMOTE CHANGE

Identify and overcome barriers to create enabling conditions.

3. ENABLE ACTION

Lead, facilitate or contribute to high impact national initiatives.



OUTCOMES

2020–2023

1.

ACE Hub is recognised as one of the **top five resources** for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders (survey).

2.

Increased understanding of circular economy principles and practices by business based on yearly survey.

3.

ACE community platform is a **world-class ecosystem** of active participants.

4.

Circular procurement policies rated as important by over 50% of federal, state and local government representatives surveyed.

OUTPUTS

1.

Existing education programs (national/ international) relevant to the priority sectors/ materials/ value chains are referenced on the ACE Hub.

2.

A minimum of **100 circular economy case studies** have been referenced on the ACE Hub.

3.

A national **Circular Economy Marketplace** has been implemented.

4.

A number of **expert working groups** have been created to support the identified priority groups and high impact national programs eg. metrics & procurement.



OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

WHAT THE ACE HUB OFFERS

The ACE Hub offers the online Knowledge Hub for those beginning their circular economy journey to those needing to dive deep into some of the key topics around industry, policy, strategy, metrics and education. It inspires and celebrates the efforts of those working towards this vital transition via case studies. The ACE Hub delivers collaboration opportunities, groundbreaking research, the latest circular economy news and ambitious information sharing events.

The ACE Hub inspires and celebrates the efforts of those working towards [a circular economy].

TRUST

Trust in the ACE Hub is demonstrated through citations and references in academic journals and other research, for example:

- 'Australian SMEs' experience in transitioning to circular economy' in *Journal of Business Research*
- 'Circular Economy across Australia: Taking Stock of Progress and Lessons' in *Circular Economy and Sustainability*
- *Implementing the Circular Economy in Regional South Australia*, University of South Australia

ACHIEVEMENTS

Since launching in November 2020, the ACE Hub has achieved:



330
Learning resources

(e.g. articles, videos, tools) on the Knowledge Hub



71,000+
Website users



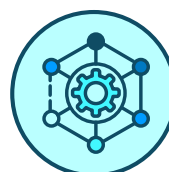
195,000+
Website pageviews



3,600+
Newsletter subscribers



2
Working groups
(Metrics and Procurement)



ACE Hub
Portal launch

An online circular economy community platform



OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

GOVERNMENT

The ACE Hub has been referenced publicly as a resource by various government bodies at all levels including:

International

- Asia-Pacific Economy Cooperation Secretariat

National

- DCCEEW
- Global Australia

State

- VIC – Sustainability Victoria's Circular Economy Business Innovation Centre
- NSW – Greater Cities Commission | NSW Procurement | Facilities Management

Local

- Australian Local Government Association
- Local Government Association of Queensland
- Municipal Association of Victoria
- Brisbane City Council
- City of Casey
- City of Sydney
- Singleton Council
- City of Greater Bendigo



Professor Jacqueline Cramer and Dr Nicole Garofano meeting with Queensland Minister for the Environment, the Hon. Meaghan Scanlon and other stakeholders.

INDUSTRY

Industry participated in ACE Hub events including a series of sessions with Professor Jacqueline Cramer (author, global circular economy expert and Chair of the Holland Circular Hotspot), a finance and investment roundtable, built environment and textiles workshops, and engaged in social media:



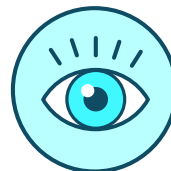
13,000+
Attendees to in-person and online events

9,500+ participants/delegates at events for ACE Hub presentations, and **3,500+** participants/views of ACE Hub hosted webinars since March 2021



33%
Webinar survey participants gave a 10/10 rating

(531 completed surveys for the webinar attended)



234,000+
Impressions

of Ace Hub LinkedIn posts



2,100+
New followers

in the last year on LinkedIn (33% increase)



OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

MARKETPLACE

CONTRIBUTING OUTPUT

A national **Circular Economy Marketplace** has been implemented.

The development of an Australian circular economy marketplace will enable circular material and products exchange.

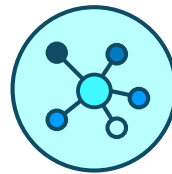
- Scoping study completed
- Catalysed collaboration between current marketplaces [ASPIRE](#) and [Excess Materials Exchange](#) to build and enhance world class features, such as track and trace, AI match-making and ability to transact - minimum viable product to be launched for beta testing shortly.

RESEARCH

8 research reports published or contributed to:

- [Circularity in Australian Business 2020](#)
- [Circularity in Australian Business 2021](#)
- [Gumtree's Trading in the Circular Economy 2021 Report](#)
- [Measuring the Circular Economy: An Australian Perspective](#) (2022)
- [The Health and Environmental Risks of PFAS: A Focus on Food Contact Packaging](#) (2022)
- [Gumtree's Trading in the Circular Economy 2022 Report](#)
- [Principles for Circular Economy Metrics – White Paper](#) (2022)
- [Victorian Circular Activator Circular Economy Integration Report](#) (2022)
- [State of Circularity in Australia – Perspectives from the Field](#) (2022)

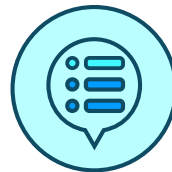
MEDIA (Nov 20 - Oct 22)



9,540,395
Potential cumulative reach



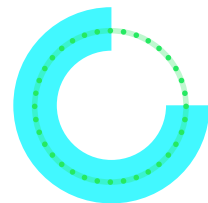
179
Media mentions



Highlights

Highlights include articles in the Australian Financial Review, Sydney Morning Herald, The Age, The Fifth Estate, Inside Waste and interviews on radio and podcasts via platforms such as PKN Packaging News, Mentored with Mark Bouris, ABC Life Matters, Making Money Easy with Gillian Bowen, Ticker TV, Channel 9 Adelaide News and [ABC Radio National](#).





OUTCOME 1

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ADVISORY BOARD

The ACE Hub's Advisory Board was launched in May 2021 with representatives from government and industry. The purpose of the Advisory Board is to provide advice and feedback for the development and ongoing success of the Australian Circular Economy Hub, facilitated by Planet Ark.

The responsibilities of the Advisory Board include:

- Recommending progressive improvements to the ACE Hub in line with the principles and values
- Recommending further research;
- Advising on any matters that may impact on the effectiveness and uptake of the ACE Hub;
- Approving the formation of Working Groups and potentially referring suitable Members; and
- Advising on any matters that may impact on Australia's transition to circularity.



Dr Scott Valentine
(Board Chair)
KPMG - Senior Circular
Economy Advisor



Maria Atkinson
Maria Atkinson Consultancy
Director



Jane Coram
CSIRO - Land and Water
Business Unit Director



Brooke Donnelly
Coles - General Manager,
Sustainability



Jan Gardberg
IKEA Australia/New Zealand
CEO & CSO



Paul Klymenko
Planet Ark Co-CEO and
Executive Director



Ross Lambie
Minerals Council of Australia -
Chief Economist



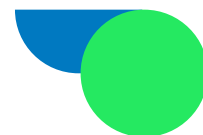
Ashleigh Morris
Coreo - CEO

Craig North
Indigenous Impact -
Managing Director



George Osborne
Hume City Council - Manager
Economic Development





OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

COLLABORATION PARTNERS & TECHNICAL SUPPORTERS

The ACE Hub has developed letters of agreement (LOA) and memorandums of understanding (MOU) with six Collaboration Partners and six Technical Supporters.

Collaboration Partners work with the ACE Hub under an MOU to pool their capabilities, expertise, networks, ideas and projects and to co-operate to identify and develop and/or work on new opportunities that will promote and further accelerate the transition to a circular economy in Australia.

Technical Supporters operate with the ACE Hub under an LOA. Technical Supporters agree to pool their capabilities, expertise, networks, ideas and projects and to co-operate to identify, develop and/or work on new opportunities that will promote and further accelerate the transition to a circular economy in Australia.

Technical Supporters contribute in reduced or pro-bono rates to support the transition.

Collaboration Partners:



Technical Supporters:





OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

CONTRIBUTING OUTPUT

A number of **expert working groups** have been created to support the identified priority groups and high impact national programs eg. metrics and procurement.

METRICS

The ACE Hub's Metrics Working Group was formed in March 2021. Projects completed or progressing include:



Review of existing circular metric frameworks and methodologies



Short review of circularity metrics for business



Publish the Principles for Circular Economy Metrics White Paper



Contribute to ACE Hub's State of Circularity in Australia report launching in Nov 2022



Publish specialist articles on topics and issues related to metrics



= Completed



= Progressing

METRICS WORKING GROUP



Dr Heinz Schandl

(Group Chair)
Senior Science Leader,
CSIRO



Dr David Alexander

Director, Waste Policy,
ACT Government



Jonas Bengtsson

Founder/CEO,
Edge Environment



Jodie Bricout

Adjunct Senior Lecturer and
PhD Candidate,
University of Adelaide



Dr Nick Florin

Research Director,
Institute of Sustainable
Futures, UTS



Marcus Geisler

CEO, Eastern Metropolitan
Regional Council



Kat Heinrich

Director, Rawtec



Ruth Lane

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Monash University



Oliver Maennicke

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Chief Executive,
Green Industries South
Australia



Joe Pickin

Director,
Blue Environment



Prof. Thomas Wiedmann

Professor,
University of NSW



Cate Turner

Data Insights and
Intelligence Manager,
Sustainability Victoria



Alyse Thompson

Director, Data and Analysis
Section, DCCEEW

Many thanks to previous members of the Metrics Working Group including: Dr Sean O'Malley, Jamos McAlester, Jordan Pye, Dr Kar Mei Tang, and Rachael Hannah.



OUTCOME 1

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

PROCUREMENT

The ACE Hub's Procurement Working Group was formed in September 2021 to evaluate existing circular procurement policies and opportunities in Australia. Projects progressing include:



Round Up – Collate and evaluate the maturity of circular procurement in Australia



Biome – Develop circular economy supply chain ecosystems across various sectors



Field Guide – Develop circular procurement toolkit/resources



= Completed



= Progressing

PROCUREMENT WORKING GROUP



Hayley Jarick

(Group Chair)
CEO, Supply Chain Sustainability School



Tony Aloisio

Director, Ecologi program, Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA)



Myla Bulaon

Head of Procurement Strategy and Policy, iCare NSW



Catherine Caldwell

Acting Director, Commonwealth Sustainable Procurement Advocacy and Resource Centre (C-SPARC)



Dr Nicole Garofano

Head of Circular Economy Development, ACE Hub



Carolyn Gibbs

Partnership Manager, Infrastructure Sustainability Council



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Debbie O'Byrne

Circular Economy Principal, Beca



Joan Prummel

International Circular Economy Advisor, Rijkswaterstaat



Guy Raithby-Veall

Senior Manager, Group Sustainability, Aristocrat



Fiona Sergi

Manager, Social Procurement, Victorian Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions (DJPR)



Inderjeet Viridi

Director/Secretary, Australasian Supply Chains Institute

Many thanks to previous members of the Procurement Working Group including: Laura Harkins-Small and Jean-Louis Haie.



OUTCOME 1

.....

The ACE Hub is recognised as one of the top five resources for circular economy development in Australia by the government and industry stakeholders.

.....

CONTRIBUTING OUTPUTS

- **Existing education programs** (national/international) relevant to the priority sectors/ materials/value chains are referenced on the ACE Hub
- A minimum of **100 circular economy case studies** have been referenced on the ACE Hub

EDUCATION PROGRAMS

.....

32 circular economy education programs (national and international) have been referenced on the ACE Hub.

CASE STUDIES

.....

78 case studies have been referenced on the ACE Hub so far. NB: The target has been revised to 100 in the current strategic plan period given the availability of potential case studies, particularly those reflecting higher value material practices such as reduce and reuse.

“Anyone who believes in indefinite growth on a physically finite planet is either mad, or an economist.”

- Sir David Attenborough





OUTCOME 2

The ACE community platform is a world-class ecosystem of active participants.

THE ACE HUB PORTAL

Transitioning to a circular economy calls for a system-wide redesign of the way we produce and consume products and materials. This will only be possible if every player in the system works together.

The ACE Hub Portal, powered by Hivebrite, was launched to the public on 6 April 2022, as the online community and networking platform to connect people, share ideas and take action.

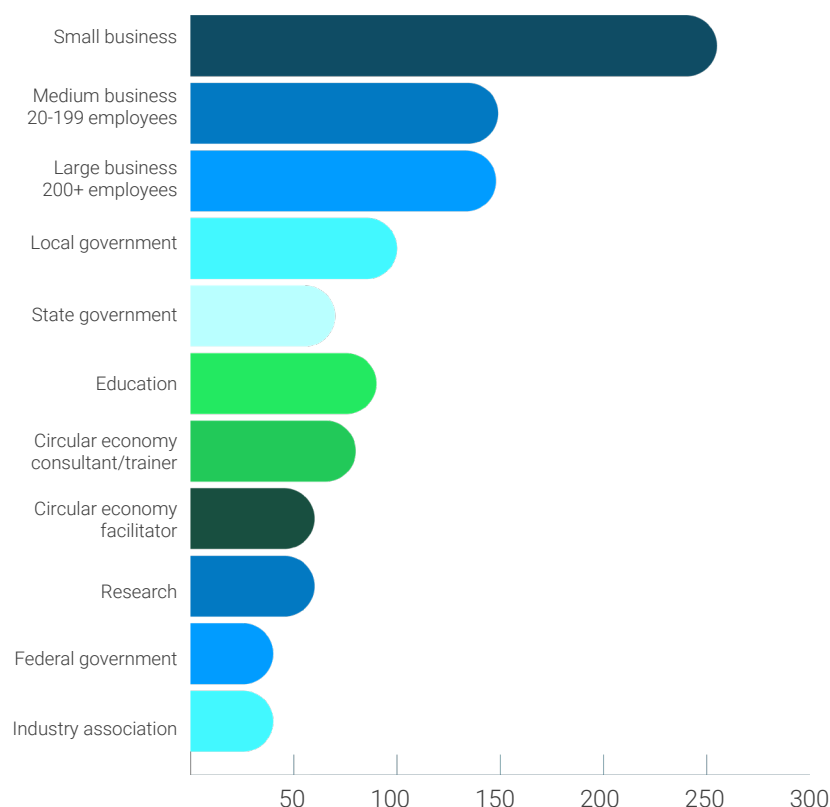
Hivebrite was chosen due to its reputation and ability to offer platforms for networking and is used globally in alumni, researcher,

entrepreneur, volunteer communities in over 45 countries. Hivebrite has a 4.5 out of 5 rating based on 48 user reviews in Capterra (a global leading software reviews and selection platform).

It is available online both via desktop and an app. In just a short time, it has made some great achievements:

- **1,100+** active members
- **15,600+** pageviews (July – October 2022)
- **2m 52s** average session duration
- **75%** of surveyed respondents* log in once a week or more (more than triple Hivebrite's industry standard)
- **40%** open rate of weekly email campaigns

ACE Hub Portal members by sector as at 31 October 2022



*Survey of 30 Portal members, August 2022



OUTCOME 2

The ACE community platform is a world-class ecosystem of active participants.

ACE HUB PORTAL TESTIMONIALS

“

It's awesome to have a national ecosystem coming together in one place - **I feel like the reach is far and wide.**

- Emma Forster,
Sustainability Victoria

“

It's really valuable to know there are so many people out there with similar interests, goals and visions... so much serendipity could come from it. **You're doing a great job so far!**

- Brendan Norris,
Fixable.co

“

Thanks for making a place for people who might not otherwise meet! **Well worth the time and very educational.**

- Susan Wallis,
Good360

“

What I like most about the ACE Hub Portal is its **emphasis on connecting people**. The fast responses to my post in the live feed kept my energy up.

- Amanda Reichelt-Brushett,
Southern Cross University

“

The ACE Hub Portal is an excellent way to **get connected** in the Circular Economy!

- George Osborne,
Hume City Council,
Manager Economic Development

“

Thanks to responses from ACE Hub Portal members to my question in the live feed, I am all set and in talks with someone who commented. **Way to go ACE Hub!**

- Cameron Kaufman,
Coreo Consultant



OUTCOME 3

Increased understanding of circular economy principles and practices by business based on yearly survey.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY UNDERSTANDING (2021 VS. 2020)

The ACE Hub's Circularity in Australian Business 2021: Awareness, Knowledge and Perceptions report highlighted a slight drop in confidence of circular economy knowledge, a lack of a commonly held definition of a circular economy and that the circular economy would be important to the future of businesses amongst decisions makers.

81% (vs. 86%) of business decision makers said they felt **knowledgeable about the concept of the circular economy.**

- The slight drop in confidence could be attributed to the Dunning Kruger effect - as knowledge grows, the more you realise there is much you don't know.
- The difference in sample size may have also played a role – 500 in 2021 vs 200 in 2020.

27% (vs. 34%) could **correctly identify** the definition of circular economy.

- This highlights that there is no commonly accepted definition of circular economy in business.

34% (vs. 21%) of business decision makers surveyed agreed the circular economy would be **extremely important to the future of their business.**

- 88% (86%) of business decision makers surveyed agreed the circular economy would be extremely, very or somewhat important to the future of their business.
- Percentage increases reflect escalating importance of circular economy to businesses

(Brackets denote 2020 results)

The Dunning Kruger effect - as knowledge grows, the more you realise there is much you don't know.



OUTCOME 4

Circular procurement policies rated as important by over 50% of federal, state and local government representatives surveyed.

ACTIVITIES

There is growing momentum in all levels of government when it comes to acknowledging the importance of circular procurement policies. Activities of the ACE Hub have supported this critical shift for the circular economy transition.

- The ACE Hub's Procurement Working Group has brought together experts to provide policy, guidance, and learning resources about circular procurement to government and business in collaboration with the ACE Hub Advisory Board and Secretariat.
- The ACE Hub offered learning sessions with international dignitary Joan Prummel, circular procurement expert from the Rijkswaterstaat (Ministry of Infrastructure and Water Management in the Netherlands).
- A survey conducted by MRA Consulting for the ACE Hub in 2022 found that 'Investigating circular procurement policies for Council' is the 4th (out of 11) ranked circular economy focus area that local governments would be open to exploring. Whilst this indicates that there is relative importance placed on procurement at local government level, currently only 10% of surveyed councils chose this as a priority. Interestingly, 76% of councils believed that 'state and/or federal policy requiring circular procurement policies' would 'likely' or 'very likely' encourage their local government to implement circular economy strategies/projects.

LEADING GOVERNMENT EXAMPLES

Government procurement guides embedding circular economy principles at various degrees include:

- Australian Government: [Sustainable Procurement Guide](#)
- NSW Government: [Procurement Policy Framework](#)
- VIC Government: [Social Procurement Framework and guides](#)
- LG NSW: [Sustainable Procurement Guide for local government in NSW](#)
- City of Greater Bendigo: [Circular Economy and Zero Waste Policy](#)
- City of Greater Bendigo Council have announced that all new projects and new and existing contract tenders (i.e. including variations) will be required to ask for reused/recycled product/content options and a requirement for the products to be feasibly (not just technically) recyclable.

The circular economy is a solution framework that offers better growth while addressing the most pressing global challenges.

- Ellen MacArthur

TOWARDS 2023

Evolve and accelerate from the 'what-is' to the 'how-to' of circular economy transition.

The ACE Hub is well on the way to achieving the Outcomes of the Strategic Action Plan 2020-2023 but there is still much to do. And it won't happen without the support and collaboration of the ACE Hub network. Work initiated at the end of 2022 and early 2023 will focus on a review of remaining deliverables in comparison to where the market needs are after a busy two years of activity.

The ACE Hub will continue to adhere to the five guiding principles:

- 1 Be collaborative, transparent and inclusive**
- 2 Leverage and amplify existing resources**
(people, content, research)
- 3 Prioritise initiatives that enable action and impact**
- 4 Take the lead only if an initiative scales impact at a national level**
- 5 Always make evidence-based decisions**

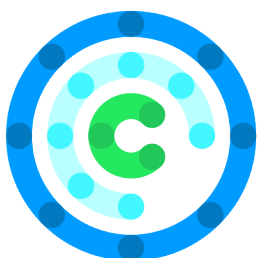
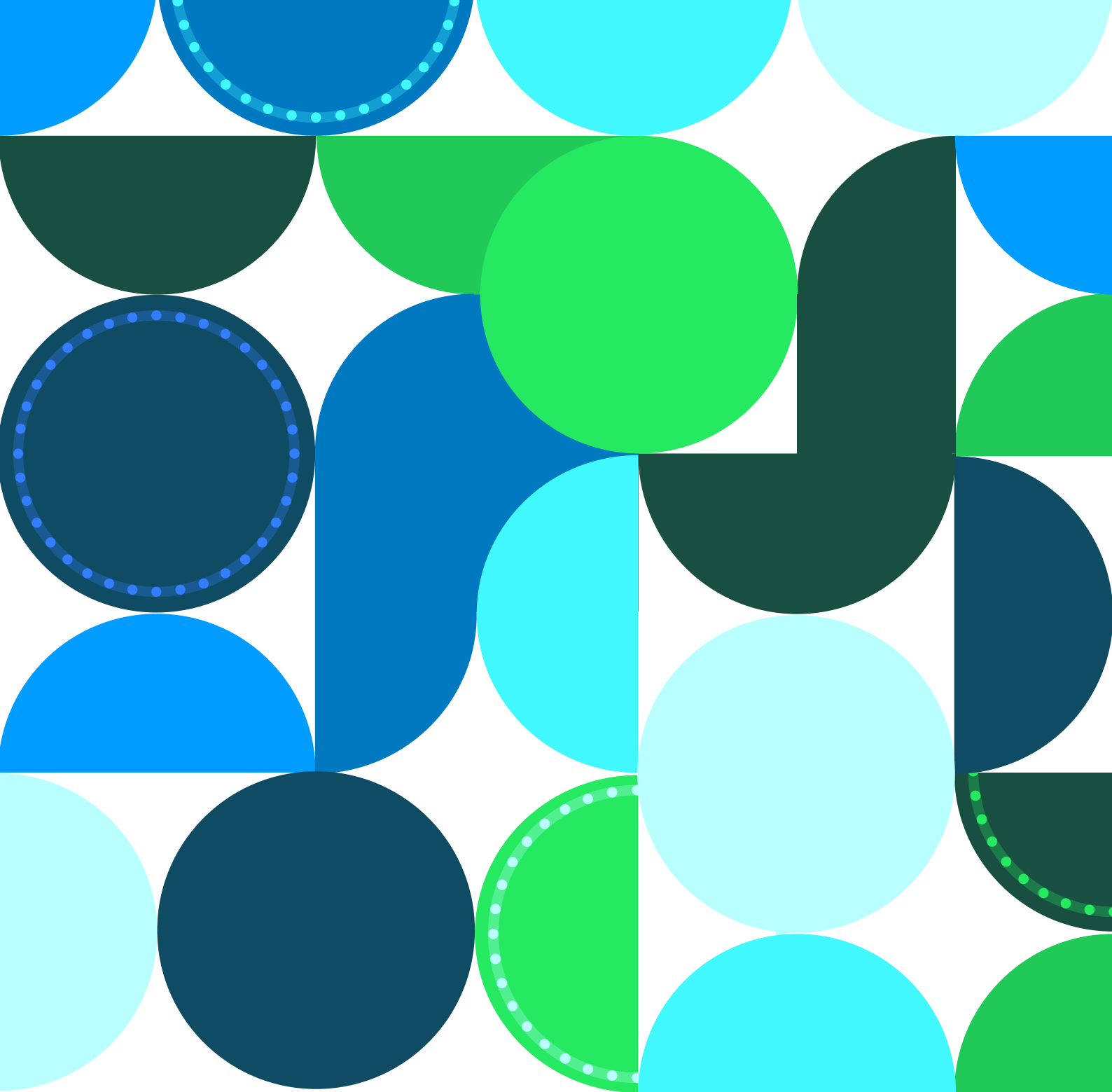
Informed by the visit of circular economy expert, Prof Jacqueline Cramer in 2022, hosted in collaboration with the Netherlands Diplomatic Missions in Australia and RMIT, and

with the market now calling for the 'how-to' of our circular economy transition rather than simply the 'what-is' of the circular economy generally, the ACE Hub will work with partners to build on the work presented in the [State of Circularity Report](#) launched at [Circularity 2022](#).

This work includes ecosystem mapping of specific sectors such as the built environment, textiles and local governments. 'How-to' guidance will include workshops, knowledge-sharing and networking events, and toolkits to support operators, particularly SMEs to accelerate the transition to a carbon neutral circular economy.

In the end, the term 'circularity' may be just one way to make us more aware that we need a more encompassing, integrated and restorative sustainability path that includes people as much as technology and nature.

- Michiel Schwarz



**AUSTRALIAN
CIRCULAR
ECONOMY
HUB**

PLANET ARK

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