



Media Release

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Beyond measuring waste: How Australia can become a circular economy measurement leader

New research from Planet Ark's Australian Circular Economy Hub (ACE Hub) finds consistent data is needed across all levels of government to support Australia's transition to a circular economy.

Local, state and federal governments currently lack a comprehensive framework for measuring the circular economy. While some measurement activities do exist, they are disconnected, piecemeal and focused on waste and recycling.

"Data is the driving force of a circular economy — it allows us to identify problems with the linear system and advance circular solutions. Waste and recycling are important but are only a part of the picture. We need to move beyond measuring waste to build a truly circular economy in this country," Planet Ark co-CEO Paul Klymenko said.

The research report, titled *Measuring the Circular Economy: An Australian Perspective*, establishes a baseline understanding of circular economy measurement in government. It examines existing data gaps and outlines strategies for improving circular economy data sets across all levels of government.

The research shows interest in circular economy metrics is gaining traction among policymakers in Australia. Activities taking place at the state level are referenced in the report as important first steps that could help form the basis of a national approach.

"This research shows there is momentum in government departments across the country, and, in many cases, valuable data too. What we must focus on now is working together to harness this huge opportunity and establish a nationally coordinated approach for measuring circularity in Australia," Klymenko said.

The report findings were generated through interviews with technical experts in the fields of circularity and metrics, and surveys with government representatives from the local, state and federal level. Among both sample groups there was agreement that a circular economy measurement framework is needed to guide decision-making at all levels of government.

"The report shows the benefits that could be gained from aligning and harmonising the many efforts by governments and the business community for developing such metrics. It also shows the immense intellectual potential that exists in Australia's innovation system, which could make Australia a regional and even global leader in circularity assessment," expert interviewee Dr Heinz Schandl said. Dr Schandl is the Senior Science Leader at CSIRO and Chair of the ACE Hub's Metrics Working Group.

The research was conducted by sustainability and circular economy consultancy Edge Environment in collaboration with the ACE Hub. It is the first in a series of projects the ACE Hub is undertaking with its Technical Supporters — a selection of organisations partnering with the Hub to fast-track Australia's circular transition.



“There is a general belief that we need to start from scratch and that we don't have data to measure circularity. The reality is, we have a solid foundation of data across departments and agencies to build a first picture of Australia's circularity, which is really encouraging,” report author Jenni Philippe, Head of Circular Economy and Life Cycle Thinking at Edge Environment, said.

“Setting up the right infrastructure to collect, analyse and visualise the data will be the challenge. This requires collaboration, supported with dedicated funding to help bring all the pieces of the puzzle together and identify some clear priorities to make progress.”

The report finds Australia has the opportunity to capitalise on existing data sets to build a comprehensive circular economy measurement framework. Such a tool would help Australia realise the projected social, economic and environmental benefits of the transition to a circular economy.

Head to the [Measuring the Circular Economy: An Australian Perspective](#) report to read the research in full. To find out more about the Australian Circular Economy Hub, visit acehub.org.au.

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Report launch event

To launch the report, the ACE Hub is co-hosting a virtual session with Edge Environment. The event will bring together the report's authors, an expert contributor to the report and a representative from government to present findings from the research. Planet Ark's Dr Nicole Garofano will be joined by the following speakers for the discussion session:

- Jess Braun, report author and researcher and Senior Circular Economy Consultant at Edge Environment.
- Dana King, report author and researcher and Sustainability Consultant at Edge Environment.
- Dr Heinz Schandl, an expert contributor to the report, Senior Science Leader at CSIRO and Chair of the ACE Hub's Metrics Working Group.
- Kate Dundas, Director of Strategic Foresight and Research at Sustainability Victoria.

When: Friday February 25 from 12:00 PM-1:00 PM AEDT

Where: acehub.org.au/whats-on/events/measuring-the-circular-economy-report-launch

Key findings and recommendations

Emerging measurement of the circular economy in Australia:

- Circular economy and its measurement are currently centred within the waste management narrative.
- Australia has sufficient data to start measuring circularity more comprehensively.
- Some stakeholders are making progress on circular economy measurement, but are disconnected from one another, stifling progress.

Potential for accelerated change in circular economy measurement:

- A national circular economy measurement framework tailored to our context and objectives.
- A sophisticated data collection, integration and management system underpinned by strong governance.
- Effective measurement to create shared value and accelerate Australia's transition to a circular economy.



Establishing an effective circular economy measurement framework:

- Plan — agree on the objectives and particulars of an Australian circular economy measurement framework.
- Do — calculate the circular economy baseline for Australia.
- Evolve — evaluate, iterate, set a long-term vision and targets and drive long-term improvement in how the circular economy is measured.

Full report available at: acehub.org.au/knowledge-hub/research/measuring-the-circular-economy-an-australian-perspective. Planet Ark's commissioned research *Measuring the Circular Economy: An Australian Perspective* was conducted by Edge Environment in 2021-2. The findings are based on qualitative data generated from interviews with technical experts in the fields of circular economy and measurement. This is supported by quantitative data captured through online surveys of 23 government representatives from the federal (3), state (11) and local (9) levels.

About Planet Ark

Planet Ark Environmental Foundation is an Australian not-for-profit environmental organisation that was founded in 1992. We create simple, powerful and positive actions that help people, governments and businesses reduce their impact on the environment. Our vision is to create a future where people live in balance with nature.

About the Australian Circular Economy Hub

The mission of the Australian Circular Economy Hub (ACE Hub) is to facilitate the transition away from the take-make-use-dispose linear economic model to a regenerative circular economy in Australia. The ACE Hub aims to be the focal point for all things circular in Australia — a platform for sharing information and inspiration, and for celebrating the efforts of all those working towards this vital transition.

About Edge Environment

Established in 2008, Edge is a full-service sustainability consultancy focused on Asia-Pacific and the Americas. Our mission is to create a world where unsustainable is unthinkable. We exist to help our clients create value from tackling one of the world's most fundamental challenges: creating truly sustainable economies and societies. We do this by combining science, strategy and storytelling in a way that gives our clients the confidence to take ambitious action and do well by doing good.

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