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# 2023 Key Takeaways Report

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# A Message from our CEO

If there is one message to take away from Circularity 2023, the second iteration of the annual circular economy conference from the Australian Circular Economy Hub, this is it: Australia's circular economy movement is gaining pace, but the time to act is now.

The urgent need to protect our finite resources, reduce greenhouse gas emissions and regenerate our natural systems is prompting key decision makers in government and industry to consider systems-wide changes that could fundamentally transform our relationship with production and consumption. For the past forty years we have been in the grip of an ideology that puts profits before people and planet and has yielded a bitter harvest of climate crisis, resource depletion, species loss, environmental pollution, and the worst wealth and income inequality since the early 20th Century.

But this is shifting both internationally and in Australia. Understanding that the current linear economic model is unsustainable has grown to a tipping point, and recognition of the possibilities a circular alternative can bring environmentally, socially and financially is quickly maturing. Solutions are already either in practice or within sight, and now the focus must move to taking practical action, whether that be changing business models or changing minds.

This was the overarching message delivered by the 70+ expert speakers and echoed by over 380 attendees joining us in-person for the conference in Melbourne - a crosssection of circular economy leaders representing both Australian and international action. The conference provided presentations on new circular economy research, perspectives on the challenges and opportunities we face, case studies of tangible action across all sectors of society and a forum to discuss how we further drive this critical transition.

The conference also provided the chance to present some of the important work being carried out by the Australian Circular Economy Hub (ACE Hub) team. From presenting the Circularity in Australian Business Report, the only study of its kind in Australia, to launching Planet Ark's new Product Stewardship Hub, to presenting our Strategic Action Plan for 2024-26, the ACE Hub continues to punch above its weight in driving circular action in Australia, and we have no intention to slow down.

The Planet Ark executive group, ACE Hub team, and I are thrilled to have been able to bring together what I believe is the vanguard of a movement with the potential to fundamentally transform our economic system.

> our conference partner Diversified Communications Australia, our steering committees, all the speakers, attendees, partners and event staff in attendance. As the saying goes, history is made by those who show up, and we sincerely thank all those who joined and supported us.

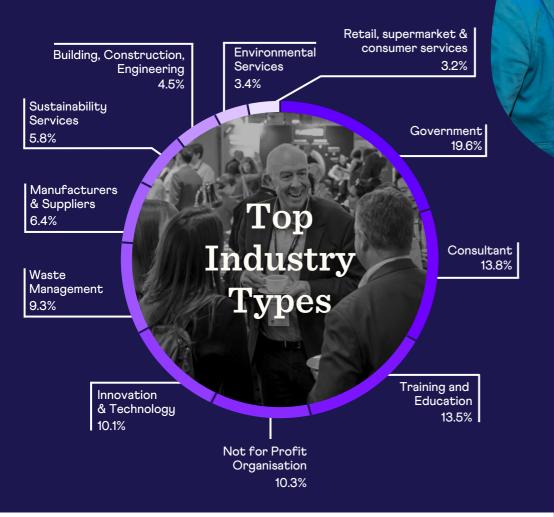
> > Rebecca Gilling CEO, Planet Ark

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# **Our Visitors**



# Headline Stats

450

Professionals were a part of <u>Circularity</u> 2023

380+

Conference Delegates in attendance

30

Conference Sessions

### **Top Job Functions**



CEO / Owner / Proprietor



C-Level Management / GM Director



Environment & Sustainability Manager



Academia / Researcher



Consultants

80 Expert

**Speakers** 



"Circularity 2023 had an information-packed and inspirational lineup of speakers. The opportunities to network with like-minded and passionate people were so beneficial and the ability to submit questions to be answered directly by these driven thought leaders was awesome."

2023 CONFERENCE DELEGATE

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# 2023 KEY THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS



This year at Circularity, we were joined by 300+ industry professionals, government leaders, innovators, academia, and sustainability enthusiasts for our annual 2-day conference at the Grand Hyatt, Melbourne. The program featured over 80 experts across 30 cross-industry sessions, each carefully crafted with industry insights looking to make the change towards implementing a more circular future.

Throughout the conference sessions, we had a dedicated group of skilled rapporteurs who captured the key takeaways from each session to highlight the pivotal themes discussed throughout the event. Take a look at this year's conference key themes and takeaways which offer a comprehensive overview of the cutting edge dialogues that shaped the event.

#### Rapporteurs

A special thank you to our amazing rapporteurs this year:

- Julie Boulton
- Mohana Motiei
- Alston Furtado
- Dr. Mayuri Wijayasundra
- Santiago Muñoz Vela





2023 KEY THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS

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# Day 1

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#### Transitioning to a circular economy requires a mindset shift

- We need to change our relationship with nature and Country to one based on regeneration rather than exploitation, and be guided by First Nations knowledge and experience.
- We need to think more in terms of sufficiency and efficiency. We must provide human needs and increase efficient use of resources while maintaining productivity and reducing production and consumption.

#### Communicating circular economy in a common language is needed

- Circular economy is a complex concept, and requires a common language.
- R-strategies are an important communication tool that businesses likely understand. The
  circular economy narrative is moving from waste to further up the R ladder and maturing into
  action especially around product longevity; "recycling" continues to be a key topic of
  discussion.
- More practical guidance is needed for the public/consumers with step-based interventions, where we break down the concept and speak to them in a language they can relate to.

#### Adopting a circularity mindset is key to achieving net zero targets

• 45 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions relate to material extraction and our current production and consumption patterns.

#### Collaboration is key to achieving a circular economy

- A successful transition requires collaboration across research, industry and government.
- Circularity cannot be achieved in isolation we must collaborate across supply chains and industries to make sure all parts of the system support one another.

#### We should support and develop scalable circular solutions

- A circular economy requires supportive policy and clear targets.
- · More innovation and R&D support is required.
- Investment is vital to kickstart and support the transition.

#### There has been some good progress in Australia, however there's still lots more to do!

- Transitioning to a circular economy is a priority for the Federal Government and State Governments.
- The Circular Economy Ministerial Advisory Group is developing a national circular economy framework to be released in 2024. Circular Economy principles will be embedded across all six net zero action plans (Department of Energy).
- The ACE Hub's latest report, <u>Circularity in Australian Business 2023: Perceptions, Knowledge and Actions Beyond Recycling</u> launched at the conference showcases progress among Australia's business community.
- Australian businesses are adopting more circular models and finding value in this e.g. <u>Koskela</u> (winner of Circularity's inaugural Innovation Pitch Fest).
- Awareness and knowledge of circular economy has improved, and we need much more investment for implementation, as approachability and practicality among business is less.





### 2023 KEY THEMES AND TAKEAWAYS

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# Day 2

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#### Whilst circularity is a global issue, we can start locally and scale up

- We heard from Sally Capp, Lord Mayor of the City of Melbourne about the action Melbourne
  is taking to support the transition to a circular economy. She gave examples of their 'Go full
  circle' program which aims to help businesses unlock the 'hidden value' in a circular economy.
- LGAs have an important role to play, and many are already doing great things local governments can create local circular economy hubs, support local businesses in the transition, and use their procurement power to drive real change.
- We heard from <u>Boomerang Labs</u> about some circular startups working at a smaller scale, in communities they know well.

#### We need to get better at measuring circularity

- There is currently no standardised framework to measure circularity Material Flow Analysis (MFA) and Life Cycle Analysis (LCA) are often used.
- Measuring circularity is more than just measuring carbon emissions
- Circularity is not just about retaining the value in materials, but is also about retaining the time and money invested.
- Issues around data availability and accessibility must be addressed businesses will likely need
  to access data from suppliers across their value chains, which means adopting a collaboration
  mindset is key.

#### There's been some great international progress towards a circular economy

- We heard examples from Japan, Finland, South Africa, Sweden and the Netherlands
- Finland is amongst the first to curb domestic use of natural resources, all under their plan for the economy to be based on circular economy principles by 2035 commitment. A key driver of adoption has been the integration of circular economy theory into all levels of education.
- We need to achieve 19 per cent global circularity to hit Paris Agreement targets
- Australia's circular economy community is part of a global network of actors we can share learnings and build on other countries' experiences.

# <u>Various strategies across different industries were identified for circular economy</u> implementation

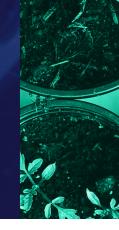
- Industries represented in targeted panel sessions included Clothing and Textiles, Built Environment, Banking and Finance, Mining and critical minerals extraction, and Research
- Strategies included redefining relationships, product resale and behaviour change, climate solutions and systematic functions, circular procurement and policy, education, innovation, collaboration and community involvement.

#### We need more education on designing for increased circularity

- Panellists shared some tips for designing for increased circularity throughout the conference.
- We need to consider the full product lifecycle and design with end of life in mind.
- We shouldn't wait for perfection before acting we won't necessarily get it right the first time but will learn by doing.







## Planet Ark & ACE Hub Initiatives



# The Circularity in Australian Business Report 2023

Since 2020, the Circularity in Australian Business report series has investigated the state of circular economy thinking within the Australian business community. The findings of this report series provide Australia's only longitudinal research to date that captures the sentiment of Australian businesses in their circular economy journey. Download here!

# The ACE Hub Strategy

The first three years of the ACE Hub have been exciting and busy! What we have seen over this time is the shift from raising awareness and providing inspiration to a need for education and action on circular practices. The ACE Hub Strategy 2024-2026 addresses this need to accelerate the transition to a circular economy in Australia and the APAC region. Read more <a href="https://example.com/here/">https://example.com/here/</a>.





### The Product Stewardship Hub

Planet Ark has unveiled the Product Stewardship Hub, designed to assist industries in navigating the steps involved in establishing voluntary accredited product stewardship schemes.

For more information, please reach out to enquiries@planetark.org

# Join the ACE Hub Portal

The ACE Hub Portal is the online community guiding Australia's circular economy. Join the network of circular economy leaders fast-tracking our transition from a linear 'take, make, waste' economy to a regenerative, circular one. Become a member to: Access knowledge and learnings. Find out more here!



JOIN THE ACE HUB PORTAL











# Conference Program and Audio Recordings

View Circularity's 2023 conference programme and click on the boxes below to access the recordings of each conference session.

#### DAY 1 | November 20















#### DAY 1 Cont.



















#### DAY 2 | November 21



















#### DAY 2 Cont.























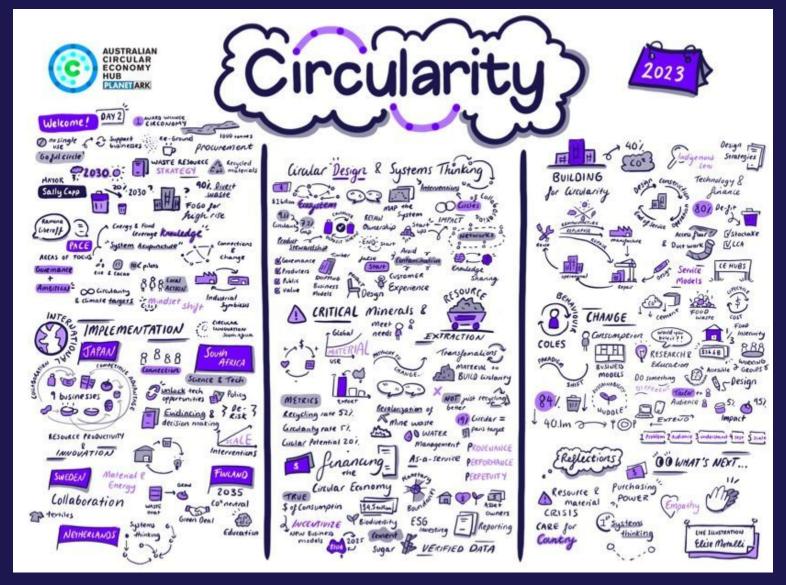
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## DAY 2 CONFERENCE ILLUSTRATION

Special Thanks to Elise Motalli







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