



MEDIA RELEASE

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Report sets out solutions to poorly designed products, high waste and costs for Australian households and businesses

Equal to Canada, US and United Arab Emirates as the worst global performers, Australians will continue to drown in waste and landfills, unless improvements are made to products allowed to be sold here.

Australia has recently 'dis-achieved' the highest waste per person per year ever at massive 2.95 tonnes in 2020-21. This is an appalling record of 3% increase per Australian since 2016 and against nationally agreed targets to cut waste by 10% per person by 2030.

Clearly with this trend Australians will fail our targets, keep throwing our money and products away and will need ever more landfills to fill with stuff. But it does not have to be this way.

As an Australian first, the **Enabling Design for Environmental Good Report** released by Australian Government makes 10 recommendations for major overhaul of products allowed to be sold in Australia and how we label and handle them during their lifespan. The timing of the report amplifies the truth.

On 22 February, the **Prime Minister Anthony Albanese** uncovered the shameful truth at the Press Club - that Australia's manufacturing self-sufficiency is the lowest amongst countries in the OECD. This means that Australia imports ship-loads of stuff at great expense of its citizens and businesses, and falls to its knees with any global shock to supply chains.

Calling for greater action, **Minister for Environment and Water Tanya Plibersek** stated in February "Australians want to do their bit to reduce their waste, recycle household products and lighten their impact on the planet. Reducing waste – particularly plastic waste – is a priority for the Government.

"However, a circular economy is more than just better recycling systems. It's about designing out waste from the start. Making sure that new products are designed to last longer, to be reused and repaired, and able to have all parts recyclable at the end of the product's life.

"More than seventy percent of environmental impacts are locked in at the design stage, before a consumer ever purchases a product, and well before we even consider its disposal or reuse.

"I'm excited about the economic opportunities of a circular economy. Australia can be a global leader in technology, innovation, design, materials and processes. By taking the lead, we can create good local jobs using extraordinary Australian creativity.

Lead co-author and strategist for the Report, Helen Millicer, GAICD, Churchill Fellow says, "The fact is we have been lulled into complacency that more imported stuff is better and we don't need to manage the quality of products we buy. The consequence is higher consumption of poor quality products and higher losses. Our report is about more than recycling, it tackles the transition steps we require nationally and in priority sectors for Australia to become a low emissions circular economy. We need repairers,

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manufacturers, market pull through real procurement, better stewardship schemes, smarter supply chain collaborations and major overhaul of our funding priorities and landfill levies.

“Leading countries are turning the tide to right the wrongs of in-built obsolescence and high waste, and this Report provides the roadmap for Australia to do the same. From shonky heaters to unrecyclable packaging and million dollar ‘repair-locked’ farming machinery we need concerted action for better for Australians.

“This report is the first time an Australian government has commissioned and released a report on how to lift the eco-standard of products available to Australian consumers and businesses. This is the first time an Australian Government has asked how do we prioritise products with low toxicity, longer life, repairability and recyclability?

“We look at our strategies, regulations, financial levers and industry standards to ensure we grow our resilience and capacity, rather than hollow out our industries and economy” Ms Millicer added.

There are 10 recommendations covering all products sold in Australia, and focused on priority, high-impact sectors of electronic goods, textiles, buildings and plastics.

Interviews available with Report Co-Authors:

Helen Millicer, GAICD, Churchill Fellow on circular economy, Director One Planet Consulting

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Helen Millicer is an expert in industry and government programs, policy and governance, delivering systemic change for circular economy and climate change, and industry transformation.

Helen is the author of several national reports and industry guides, consulting to the Australian Food and Grocery Council on a national plastic packaging stewardship scheme, co-founder of ClimateWise Associations, and a member of the inaugural Tasmanian Government’s Waste and Resource Recovery Board and also Australian CRC to End Plastic Waste.

Associate Professor Simon Lockrey, Design and Social Context School of Design, RMIT

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Dr Simon Lockrey bridges the gap between technical, commercial, creative, and sustainability fields. His experience has been wide and varied. Products he has designed have won Australian Design Awards, and the internationally recognized Red Dot Award.

Dr Lockrey is Associate Professor at RMIT in sustainability and design, Executive Director of Glowpear, Vice President of Automotive Historians Australia, and sits on the board of International Sustainable Development Research Society. He serves as an expert witness for the Supreme Court of Victoria, and Reduce Program Leader at the Fight Food Waste CRC.

Richard Collins, Principal Consultant, Waste Advisory, Arcadis Australia

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Richard leads the highly successful NSW waste advisory team at Arcadis (the leading global natural and built asset design and consultancy firm, formerly Hyder Consulting). The Waste & Resource Management team provides services as diverse as: business case advisory services for organisations planning new waste and recycling infrastructure; strategies for local councils; detailed analysis for state and federal governments; and design and approvals of new infrastructure.

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