

## **Summary Comments**

The Productivity Commission is to be congratulated on its extensive, interim report on the promise and challenges of building the circular economy in Australia. Reading sections of the report, one can see the insights of experts being captured in clear terms. Examples providing details are balanced with attempts to portray the big picture, identify gaps, and focus attention on where government policy can make the greatest difference.

Discussions and correspondence that I have had with colleagues and counterparts in industry, government, community and academia suggest that this study is welcome in the nascent, fragmented domain of circular economy in Australia. That interest will be evident in the array of submissions that the Productivity Commission receives and the energy and passion captured in them.

My submission is a *Word* version of the overview report marked up with comments and 'track changes' in a range of sections. The mark-up has highlighted the good ideas suggested, endorsed certain conclusions, and noted potential pitfalls and gaps. I have included references and links, as well. The range of topics on which I commented reflect my range of experience, from small business operations to mine closure.

My specialties include organisational change, social learning, and participatory development of indicators of economic and social impacts. I hauled rubbish when I was at university, worked an engineer in the energy sector and then became a social scientist addressing environmental issues and regional development.

My recent work has ranged from assessing the potential for the circular economy in the Hunter region in the face of often missing or 'sketchy' data to helping to identify how to put circular economy considerations into NSW government business cases for precincts and infrastructure. Efforts this year involve characterising candidate strategies for regional governance to reduce negative cumulative impacts of mine closures and evaluation of ways to get small business operators more engaged with the circular economy.

Again, my comments are on the marked-up version of the overview report. Assembling this study is a worthwhile initiative for the Productivity Commission, and the report nicely captures a wide array of insights. The circular economy arena is a broad and diverse one with many disparate players and yawning gaps in data. Submissions will doubtless help to fill some gaps in this report, which should then become a helpful springboard for further discussion, debate and policy to help strengthen the country's circular economy.

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