

June 14<sup>th</sup> 2025

Dear Commissioners,

Noting that the closing date for the productivity inquiries submissions has passed and that a number of circular economy concepts translate into that arena, it is entirely plausible that this submission may have some crossover. Should you wish to include it in others, that is completely fine by me.

Having worked in the construction industry in numerous roles over the course of my working life so far, from apprentice to carpenter, to window sales, to site supervisory roles, I have gained an experience and understanding from the frontline.

The supporting attachment in my submission includes practical ways in which the circular economy can benefit Australia for a productive and sustainable future. It is a combination of ideas derived from my building career and from my parent's teachings in environment and social awareness.

Construction waste in Australia is a large contributor to landfill and a loss of resources that could be reused, repurposed or recycled.

<https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/construction-waste.pdf>

We can and should do better in these areas. The single biggest issue faced is care factor, followed by education, incentive and accountability. These are also the root causes of the productivity decline, not only in construction, but in Australia. The sometimes overwhelming nature of life and evaporating sense of hope that becomes "tactical fatalism", coined by Ketan Joshi. He writes this as a hypothesis to why we don't see meaningful change in environmental laws, so as to say, "it is the intentional, weaponised insistence that a worse future is the only future (from those who benefit the most from whatever makes it bad)". We are seemingly being defeated by our leaders who are influenced by the electoral cycle and campaign funding.

The evaporation of hope comes from people feeling as though they have no control over the big picture items. Where vested interest and big money get a seat at the political table to persuade politicians to take a particular pathway, that most likely will only benefit a few at the cost to the many. This creates a sense of why bother and a care factor of zero. The little that we can do as individuals can seem to be pointless in the grand scheme of things. What will change this is the collective understanding that we all individually create massive change when the individual contributions are linked together. Our actions inspire others. Three items picked up or saved by one person becomes three million when a million individuals complete the task.

The circular economy and productivity go hand in hand. When the academics realise that they are not experts in the frontline workings and ask those that perform the tasks, how best to improve their efficiency, will they get the answers they are searching for.

<https://billmitchell.org/blog/?p=62583> The Webbs knew more than a century ago that if you pay high wages, you get high productivity.

It is often referred to as “tricks of the trade”, that knowledge that only comes with practical experience and the teachings passed down by those who have earned the practical experience.

The same applies to the circular economy, not everyone can see the next use or purpose for an item, and not all can see the value in the resource waste. If they didn't pay for it originally then why would they care if it is discarded? Until people understand how the waste impacts their pockets some will not care to improve. Same for productivity. When you increase the profits of the business you work for, you increase the likelihood that the business can pay you more.

The circular economy and ecology economics are a fit that integrates all aspects of change so that people can choose to be onboard. Opportunity, education, incentive, and a sense of hope for the future. I hear academics talk about things like, investor behaviour, herd mentality, group think, and then they wonder why productivity is decreasing. Stop and look at the world from the perspective of the low income worker. Don't just imagine the struggle, go out and see the practical experience, ask them their opinion on how things could be improved. Be ready for some fiery commentary and be open to that one nugget of gold that will undoubtedly be uttered.

Then we can seriously discuss the circular economy and how we all get onboard to make positive long term change that has a real impact on resource management. If Maslow's hierarchy of needs is not met, then you will not engage people to ascend to the greater good for the benefit of all.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s\\_hierarchy\\_of\\_needs#Historical\\_development](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Maslow%27s_hierarchy_of_needs#Historical_development)

The circular economy needs to be of benefit to the many and that will drive engagement. The smartest business owners will recognise the opportunities and share the savings with their staff to develop higher productivity of people, capital and materials. The shareholder is not the most important entity in the equation. Happy staff look after the customer – happy customers support and promote the business – margins increase – profitability increases – shareholder returns increase. When staff have a vested interest in the business via bonuses or ownership structure or profit sharing, then they have an incentive.

An outstanding outcome from this inquiry into the circular economy would be to increase the use of indigenous knowledge of Country that would increase the regeneration of biodiversity and inspire others to consider other best practice ways to look after resources.

As a country, Australia also needs to start backing the clever innovators that create the new ways of doing things. Designing elements that are recyclable, or repairable, or reuseable needs to be the subsidies of the future by government instead of what takes place now. We need to create a sovereign wealth fund that has the capability of investing into future facing innovations that can be commercialised.

The circular economy includes capital that creates new materials or methods to enhance the modern lifestyle. We can again punch above our weight in these spaces when we choose to back the brightest of our country. Value adding shouldn't just be something we buy back from overseas, it should be Australia that benefits by supplying others.

Answers to the questions of circular economy and productivity should not reside in the aisles of complexity of academic thought. The basics of human needs, physiological, safety and belonging need to be met to allow people the ability to then undertake the more altruistic endeavours that are required to achieve the circular economy and a sustainable future.

Thank you.