



How effective are product stewardship initiatives in Australia in supporting a circular economy?

Findings from Product Stewardship Benefits and Effectiveness study

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Acknowledgement of country

I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community. Today I am talking to you from the ancestral lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. I pay respects to elders past and emerging and recognise elders as holders of knowledge and stewards for country.

Project overview & research methodology

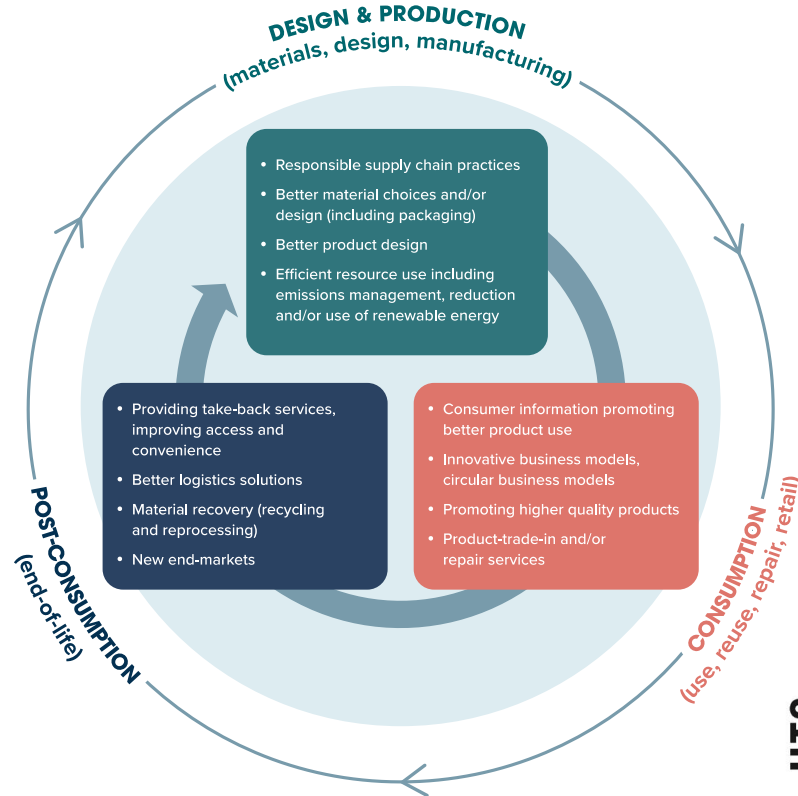
- First comprehensive evaluation of product stewardship activity, including extended producer responsibility (EPR) in Australia;
 - Evaluated effectiveness in managing & reducing environmental & human health impacts of products, packaging through whole lifecycle
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- Identified (106) existing and emerging product stewardship initiatives;
 - Classified stewardship initiatives by organisational type, regulatory model, funding and geographic status, product class, lifecycle focus and objectives;
 - Collated and assessed publicly reported data on each initiatives' objectives, environmental, social and economic performance;
 - Surveyed consumers (n=1001), business (n=601), local government (n=89) & product stewardship actors and experts (n=60)

Product
Stewardship
Gateway



Product stewardship activities across the product life-cycle

Everyone who designs, makes, sells, and uses a product or its packaging has a role; Primary responsibility rests with those placing products onto the market, including producers, distributors, importers, retailers



Product stewardship activities in Australia



There are 59 collective schemes, 16 of which are currently in the planning stage.



There are 47 individual business initiatives.



The majority (88) of product stewardship initiatives are voluntary industry-led.



There are seven voluntary government-accredited initiatives,



There are 18 regulated initiatives.



Top five product classes addressed by initiatives: Packaging (n=28), electrical or electronic products (n=17), clothing textiles (n=9), building materials (n=6) and plastics (n=4).



Collective schemes focus on the post-consumption stage emphasising *resource recovery* and *take-back services*.



Business initiatives more evenly address different lifecycle stages: better material choices and design at the production stage; circular business models at the consumption stage; and material recovery at the post-consumption

Annual performance reported by initiatives

Collective Schemes			Individual Business Initiatives		
Key performance indicator	Type	Number of initiatives reporting	Key performance indicator	Type	Number of initiatives reporting
Market share of participating entities	Economic	27	Emissions reduction	Environmental	18
Number of collection or drop off points	Social	20	Sustainable supply chains	Social	17
Waste collection volume	Environmental	19	Product, packaging or process design	Environmental	17
Waste diversion volume	Environmental	14	Waste diversion volume	Environmental	14
Community education and marketing	Social	13	Use of recycled content or materials	Environmental	14
Collection rate	Environmental	10	Number of collection or drop off points	Social	13
Recovery rate	Environmental	9	Renewable energy	Environmental	9

Characteristics of effective product stewardship initiatives

(1) High levels of industry or business investment and participation is essential — Ensuring equitable cost sharing, usually requires regulation

Four additional characteristics:

(2) Clearly defined objectives— Measurable environmental, social, and economic performance indicators demonstrate benefits and allow for continual assessment of the effectiveness

(3) Good governance—This includes defined roles and responsibilities and ensures transparency through public reporting

(4) Use of financial incentives—to drive behaviour change of businesses, consumers, repairers, collectors, sorters, and recyclers

(5) Effective and targeted marketing—leading to high awareness and increased consumer and business participation

Concluding remarks

- Product stewardship is effective in managing and reducing environmental and human health impacts of products and packaging throughout the lifecycle
- Level of effectiveness varies subject to how the initiatives are established
- The approach provides business with an implementation pathway to operationalise circular economy objectives (ie. design our waste and pollution, keep products and materials in the economy and regenerate)
- Focus has been on end-of-life, need to increase product stewardship action at production and consumption lifecycle stages to deliver further environmental and social benefits
- Regulation needed to address free-riding in priority product categories (eg. e-products, plastic packaging, mattresses, tyres) to ensure greater industry investment and participation
- Financial support needed to assist with establishing emerging initiatives that focus on designing-out waste (targeting building products, clothing textiles and furniture)

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