AUSTRALIAN SCIENCE COMMUNICATORS

Opportunities in the Circular Economy

Response to the call for submissions

The Australian Science Communicators (ASC) commends the Opportunities in the Circular Economy consultation process and appreciates the opportunity to comment at this stage.

This submission emphasises the pivotal role of science communication professionals in enhancing the positive uptake of Circular Economy measures in Australia, ensuring policymakers, industry, businesses and members of the community feel empowered to take positive actions to reduce our collective environmental footprint.

The need for quality science communication
The need for quality science communication to support and enhance Australia's circular economy measures has not been addressed adequately in the call for submissions or more broadly in the sector.

It is our view that effective science communication plays a crucial role in facilitating the implementation of the Circular Economy in Australia by:

1. **Empowering researchers and industry professionals with evidence-based strategies for engaging communities**
    a. Whilst scientists and researchers are highly regarded for quality work and research output, equal importance should be given to trained professionals and academics—science communicators— who specialise in translating complex technical research into accessible messages for diverse stakeholders.
    b. It is crucial to involve science communication professionals at the outset of the engagement process, ensuring adequate funding for their expertise and time, and incorporating provisions for communication activities in the budget.
    c. Skilled science communicators can help develop effective communication strategies to promote positive actions
    d. Science communication plays a crucial role in improving the credibility of policymakers and other key stakeholders, by providing them with the information required to make informed decisions about the future of Australian society
2. **Promoting collaboration and interdisciplinary research approaches**
    a. We benefit from each other's knowledge, across disciplines, stakeholders, society, industry and government, and science communication plays a fundamental role in communication to achieve that
    b. Science communication promotes integration within the tertiary system and collaboration between universities, industry, and government.

   c. Innovation requires collaboration between diverse perspectives, and this often happens at the intersections between disciplines; science communication can help facilitate such dialogues
   d. Effective communication channels share information about significant research problems and capabilities, helping stakeholders identify mutual interest and collaboration opportunities.
   e. Effective communication and collaboration can also lead to new outcomes, which can be shared strategically via relevant communication channels
3. **Public engagement and consultation**
   a. Considering the needs of real Australians will help create meaningful outcomes for all; consultation must be factored into the budgeting for such projects, to ensure they are informed by diverse voices and deliver outcomes for social good
   b. High-quality science communication helps scientists, the scientific community and industry connect with the public, raising awareness of research and opportunities for positive actions
   c. Engagement and education foster a sense of relevance and pave the way for public support, increased awareness and positive behaviour change.
   d. By promoting a better understanding of actions that can promote positive change, science communication helps build trust between stakeholders.
   e. Science communication professionals can facilitate dialogue and co-design between stakeholders
   f. Science communication professionals can enhance community knowledge through engagement activities, information sessions, and tailored communication relevant to specific stakeholders.
4. **Promoting equity and access**
   a. A one-size-fits-all approach never works; science communicators play a crucial role in supporting dialogue with diverse communities to promote uptake of policies, initiatives and positive behaviour change in focused and dynamic ways.
   b. Equitable access to information and research is crucial for all stakeholders. This involves choosing appropriate channels, simplifying technical language, and contextualising information—a task that trained science communicators excel at.
   c. Effective science communication can help break down barriers by ensuring information about educational opportunities, research initiatives, and potential collaborations is shared widely and in a way that is accessible to individuals from various backgrounds and communities.

As such, we implore the Opportunities in the Circular Economy vision to acknowledge and build in adequate support and resources for roles such as that of professional science communicators within circular economy initiatives, including community engagement and education, consultation and co-design, enhancing uptake of future circular economy initiatives and strategies.

The ASC urges the plans and strategies arising from the consultation process of Opportunities in the Circular Economy to appropriately acknowledge and include the role of science communication professionals in any forward-looking vision.

About the Australian Science Communicators

The Australian Science Communicators (ASC) is the peak membership body representing the interests of those who work in, study, teach and have an interest in the field of science communication. The Australian Science Communicators has been bringing science communicators together for 30 years.