

Circular Design Thinking; Opportunities in the Circular Economy Submission

I am the Director of [Circular Design Thinking](#) (CDT), an environmental consultancy specialising in the interiors and fit-out sector. Our mission is to shift the sector from linear to circular processes due the overproduction, waste and lack of responsibility around valuing materials, with landfill being the easiest and cheapest option.

I am submitting this response to Requests 2 and 3 - Priority; opportunities to progress the circular economy, as well as hurdles and barriers to a circular economy. With over 25 years in product design and extensive experience across global supply chains, I have witnessed the profound environmental, social, and economic impacts of traditional, linear practices in this industry. CDT is uniquely positioned as a connector between suppliers, manufacturers, designers, and government bodies to implement circular models within the supply chain, driving realistic change and showcasing how circularity in interiors and fit-outs is both achievable and advantageous.

Rationale for Participation

I am keen to contribute to the discussion, particularly as the majority of the sector will face regulatory shifts in their organisations because of the mandatory climate related reporting and in preparation for Scope 3 reporting, (which many of the larger firms are already starting to request from industry).

Despite its often overlooked status, the interiors and fit-out sector has a significant environmental impact—estimated at 1.5 times more over a building's lifetime than its construction phase. Yet there aren't any regulations with 95% of deficits ending up in landfill. Many in industry believe that the [30,000 tonnes](#) reported as commercial waste in fitouts is grossly underestimated due to the churn rate of fitouts turning over on average every 7 years (not the lifetime of the furnishings and materials within the fit-out which equates to 30,000)

After discussions I have had with the DCCEEW procurement division, there is a gap between training and collaboration across supply chains for our sector to better address emerging challenges and report effectively on sustainability goals. The Federal Government has said it will spend 2 billion on sustainable furniture in the next ten years however they are not trained on what sustainable furniture (only relying on certifications) and by default will delay the urgent change we need in our sector.

Government and industry alignment are essential to ensuring that circular economy principles become core to sector operations. Without collaboration and supportive frameworks, meeting these standards will be challenging, given the reliance on non-renewable, resource-intensive materials with limited lifecycle management pathways.



CDT's Role in Enabling Circularity

CDT actively facilitates the shift from linear to circular models in the interiors and fit-out sector, working alongside manufacturers, retailers, industry associations, universities and importers. Our work focuses on “narrowing,” “slowing,” and “closing” material loops, believing in “radical collaboration” to get the job done.

The work is slow and as a small business, difficult to build momentum in but the network from designers through to recyclers, remanufacturers and innovators is priceless in this transformation.

CDT has cultivated an extensive network across Australia and internationally, which supports our efforts to enact circular practices throughout the supply chain. From procurement to disposal and beyond, CDT's connections allow for cohesive implementation of circular strategies, bringing manufacturers, suppliers, and designers together.

Catalysing Australia's Circular Economy Vision

CDT's practical experience in circularity aligns closely with Australia's goals for circular economy progress. Our approach offers the Productivity Commission a unique perspective grounded in real-world implementation and measurable outcomes. With our focus on transparency and environmental impact quantification, CDT is prepared to help shape policies that support sector-wide adoption of circular principles.

Through collaboration and strategic government alignment, CDT envisions a future where circular models become the foundation of sustainable industry practices, supporting Australia's transition toward a resilient, low-impact economy.

Clients of CDT include:

Associations; Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA), Australian Resilient Flooring Association (ARFA) for ResiLoop, Australian Furnishings Association (AFA)

Universities: Curtin University, Deakin University, The University of Sydney (collab)

Government; NSW Environmental Protection Authority

Business; Space Furniture, District Furniture, Koskela (collab), Snooze Bedding, Cult Design, Cultivated; Charter Hall (collab)

Textiles; Kvadrat Maharam, James Dunlop Group

Recyclers: Textile Recyclers Australia, TRAKS Textiles (co-founded)

