Circular Procurement 101

Course content – external reference version

Sustainability Victoria

VICTORIA State Government

Circular Procurement 101

Course content – external reference version

Table of Contents

How to use this document

This document contains the written learning content (and links to associated videos) from Sustainability Victoria's Circular Procurement 101 (CP101) course. It is shared to support learning, reference and sector capability building.

Permitted use

You may use this material for **non-commercial, public benefit purposes**, including to support learning, policy/strategy/education design, and training or other capability-building activities. The material is provided on a **non-exclusive** basis.

What you can use it for
You are welcome to use this content to:

- build understanding of circular procurement concepts and approaches
- inform policy, strategy, education or program design
- support training, discussion or other capability-building activities.

Attribution and integrity
When sharing or adapting this content, please:

- attribute Sustainability Victoria (Victorian Government) as the source
- keep references to Sustainability Victoria and the Victorian Government where they appear
- ensure your use does not imply Sustainability Victoria endorsement of you or your organisation.

Videos
Course videos are available via this playlist link for viewing.

Disclaimer
This content was published on the Learning Portal in March 2026. The information contained in this document was accurate and current at the time of publication.

Sustainability Victoria will cease to operate as an entity from **30 June 2026**. Accordingly, the content of this document may become outdated and should be interpreted in that context.

Management and ownership of all of Sustainability Victoria's materials, including all intellectual property rights and the granting of licence to use will be transferred to the Department of Energy, Environment and Climate Action.

General

Welcome Message

Welcome to Sustainability Victoria's Circular Procurement 101 foundational course. Thank you for joining the growing number of councils and organisations exploring how circular procurement can drive circular economy outcomes.

This course builds on concepts introduced in the CE101 course and is designed to provide foundational knowledge on how circular economy principles can be applied to procurement decisions through circular procurement. We encourage participants to complete the Circular Economy 101 modules prior to commencing this course.

Throughout the course, you will explore the many opportunities to embed circularity into procurement documentation and processes, and identify approaches that are most relevant for your organisation.

The course takes approximately 5 hours to complete. You'll be able to download a certificate of completion upon finishing the course. Your learning journey will include videos and readings, as well as activities, questions, and reflective exercises that support discussion with your peers. We encourage you to share your experiences and insights, and learn from one another to make the most of the course.

Module 1: Introduction to Circular Procurement 101

Welcome to the first module of the Circular Procurement course. We acknowledge that transitioning to circular procurement is a complex journey, much like navigating a maze. It requires strategic thinking, patience, and a willingness to explore new paths. This course is designed not to provide all the answers, but to equip you with the foundational knowledge and critical thinking skills to determine what circular procurement approaches will work best within your own council or organisation.

You are encouraged to first complete the Circular Economy 101 training before making a start on this course.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Define circular procurement and differentiate it from the conventional linear model.
- Understand the critical role and influence of government in driving the circular economy through procurement.
- Identify the core benefits of adopting circular procurement practices for local governments.
- Explore real-world examples of circular procurement principles in action

Chapter 1.1 - Introduction to Circular Procurement

Please watch the introductory video presented by Dian Lipiarski, Buy Circular Team Leader to set the context for this module.

Chapter 1.2 - Linear vs. Circular

The Conventional Model: Linear Procurement

The procurement model most used today is the linear procurement model. This approach is fundamentally focused on a straightforward, one-way path:

- Acquiring resources (Take)
- Transforming them into products or services (Make)
- Consuming those goods (Use)
- Disposing of any resulting waste (Dispose)

This 'take, make, consume, dispose' pattern prioritises short-term cost and convenience over long-term sustainability.

It does not consider the environmental or social impacts of resource extraction, the sustainability of materials during the product's use phase, or the possibilities for reuse, repair, or recycling at the end of its life. Consequently, linear procurement is a significant contributor to global challenges like pollution, climate change, and resource scarcity.

Linear procurement follows a 'take, make, consume, dispose' pattern, which does not prioritise efficient resource usage, waste reduction, or circularity principles.

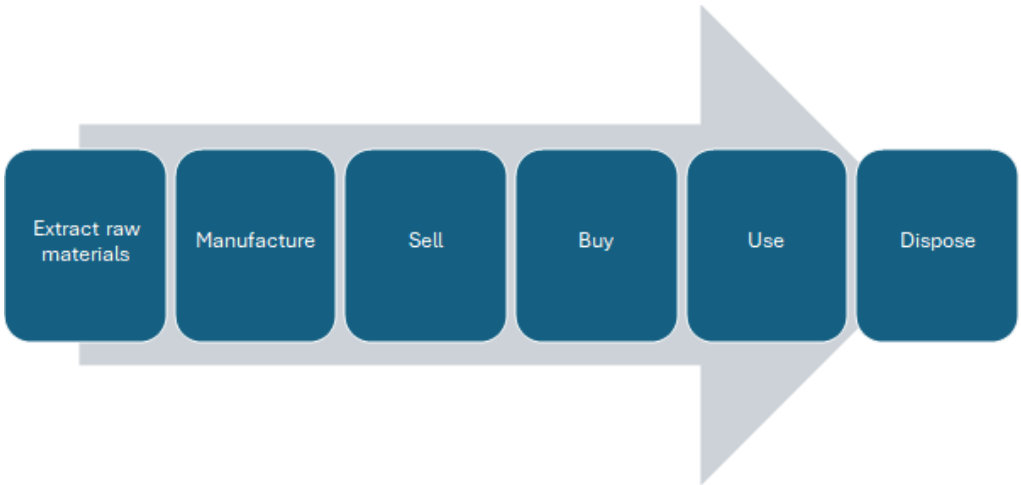


Figure: A Linear Procurement approach

Sustainable Procurement - where does circularity fit?

Sustainable procurement considers social, environmental and economic drivers. Within procurement and the supply chain, sustainability can be defined as the process of making decisions that benefit not only the organisation but society as a whole, while minimising its impact on the environment. This means considering social and environmental factors alongside purely financial and economic ones.

Environmental sustainable procurement, a part of sustainable procurement, considers minimising negative impact on the environment, while enhancing positive outcomes. Circular procurement may be considered as a subset of environmental sustainable procurement.

Circular Procurement

Figure: Linear economy vs. Circular economy

Circular procurement is an approach that supports a transition to a circular economy by purchasing works, goods, or services that are designed to create closed energy and material loops within supply chains. The primary goal is to minimise, or ideally avoid, the generation of waste and other negative environmental impacts.

This represents a fundamental shift in thinking. Instead of just asking, "What product do we need to buy?", circular procurement prompts us to ask a more holistic set of questions:

- Is this purchase necessary? Can the need be met in a different way?
- Can we procure a service instead of a product? (e.g., leasing furniture instead of buying it).
- How is the product designed? Is it durable, repairable, and modular?
- What materials are used? Are they non-toxic, regenerative, recycled, or recyclable?
- What happens at the end of its life? Can the product or its components be easily disassembled and reused, remanufactured, or recycled?

By maximising resource efficiency and fostering closed-loop systems, circular procurement directly addresses the shortcomings of the linear model, leading to reduced environmental impacts and greater long-term value.

Read the case studies in the next section to learn more about circular procurement in action.

Chapter 1.3 - Case studies of circular procurement in action

Case study: City of Aalborg's Take Back IT program and Circular Playground

The City of Aalborg in Denmark, with 207,000 inhabitants, is improving municipal sustainability using procurement to drive innovative circular solutions. Two pilot procurements challenged conventional practice and produced cost-effective, long-term ways to meet staff and community needs.

Aalborg joined the Circular Public Procurement network to test government procurement as a lever to drive the circular economy, reduce resource consumption and take action on emissions.

The first pilot tackled the 3-4-year laptop replacement habit. Only three of seven ICT departments had take-back contracts, logo-engraving blocked reuse, and discarded machines were treated as a disposal cost. By shifting to a buy-back service, extending life to six years and requiring annual circularity reports, the city can save emissions equivalent to a full year of municipal building energy and the waste output of 3,000 households.

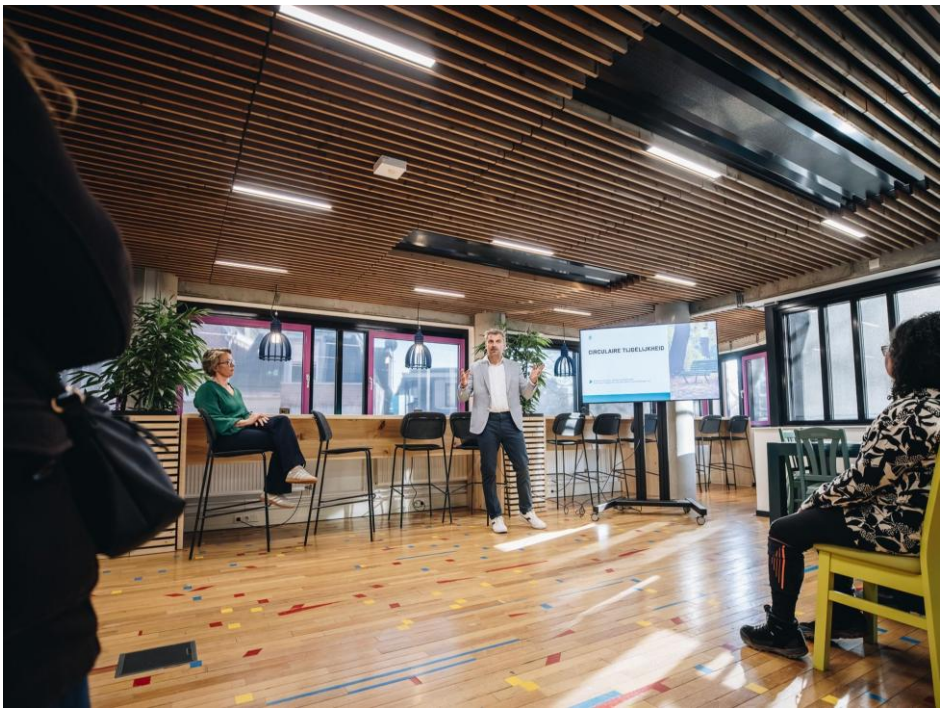
The second pilot re-imagined playgrounds. Starting in 2018, the Environmental Department interviewed schools, kindergartens, safety officers, park staff and procurement to discover shared needs: low cost, high durability, safety, teaching utility and sustainability. A cross-department steering committee translated these into a bold brief—use landscaping and vegetation instead of equipment, cut lifetime maintenance, store carbon and boost biodiversity. Hills, plants and terrain create open-ended play while meeting curriculum goals for outdoor learning.

Market engagement began three years ahead of tender: a 2018 festival announcement, a 2020 playground fair and an online "Meet the Buyers" event signalled the shift from equipment catalogues to landscape-based solutions. Suppliers lacking in-house landscape architecture were asked to submit first-draft terrain models showing plants, surface materials and learning value.

The circular playground vision is now being built in Stigsborg, a former industrial docklands being converted into a residential and education quarter for 8,000 people.

Read the full case studies here: FACTS_INDUSTRIES_ET_DECHETS-V2.indd

Case study: Leeuwarden circular office renovation



The municipality of Leeuwarden in the Netherlands has embraced the circular economy as a core element of its broader sustainability ambitions, recognising its role in resource efficiency, economic resilience, and environmental protection. The municipality harnessed collaboration with businesses and knowledge institutions, in what is known as ‘the triple helix’, acknowledging the necessity of collective change at multiple levels.

The renovation of the Carré 1 municipal office in Leeuwarden integrates circular principles by reusing existing materials and sourcing new ones sustainably to minimise its material footprint.

Traditional renovation projects often generate significant material waste and rely heavily on virgin resources, contributing to environmental degradation and carbon emissions. As buildings age, refurbishments become necessary, but these interventions often neglect circular design principles, missing opportunities for material reuse and efficient resource management.

The Municipality of Leeuwarden sought to challenge this approach by making circularity a core requirement in the renovation of Carré 1’s first floor.

The Municipality of Leeuwarden adopted a circular renovation strategy focused on three key ambitions. First, existing materials such as ventilation pipes, hanging systems, and gypsum boards were assessed for reuse, minimising waste and reducing the demand for new resources. Second, any additional materials required were carefully sourced from sustainable origins, prioritising reused, recycled or bio-based options to align with circular principles.

Circularity within the project included reusing ceiling tiles from other renovated buildings, reusing a floor from a church, reusing isolation material, reusing doors, doorframes, and window frames, using circular furniture, reusing drywall, creating tables of citywood from Leeuwarden trees and from a train ceiling, using a slatted ceiling from rejected wood, reusing wooden sport floors, creating lamps, acoustic walls and chairs made of Petfelt, making acoustic isolation panels from 350 jeans, and maintaining the ICT-network, part of the air duct, and radiators.

Finally, the renovation was designed as a learning experience, showcasing circular construction techniques to inspire other municipalities and businesses to adopt similar approaches.

As a result of this approach, the renovation used 80% recycled and reused materials in the project.

Learn more about this case study: Circular Renovation of Carré 1: Leading by Example | Knowledge Hub | Circle Economy Foundation

Chapter 1.4 - Role of government in Circular Procurement

The Strategic Role of Government in Circular Procurement

Governments are not just participants in the market; they are major catalysts for change. Their role in advancing circular procurement is multifaceted and critically important.

Why Local Government Should Lead the Way

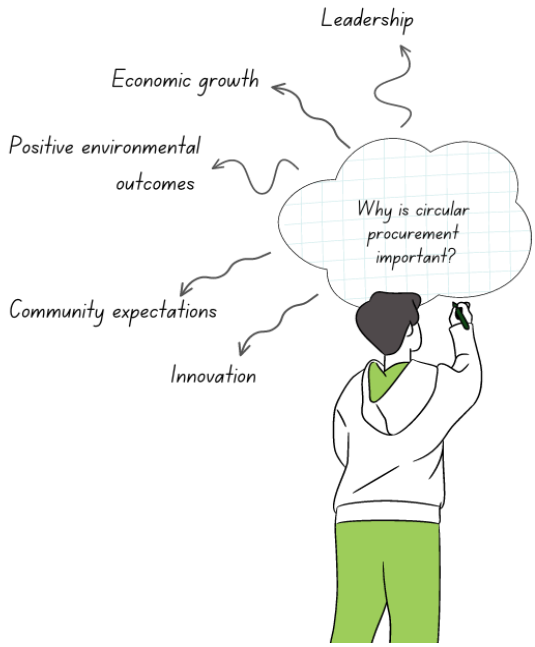
For local governments, adopting circular procurement is not just an environmental gesture − it's a strategic imperative with compelling benefits:

- **Demonstrates Leadership:**
  By prioritising sustainability, councils set a powerful example for businesses, communities, and other stakeholders, creating momentum for wider circular economy adoption.
- **Drives Local Economic Growth:**
  Circular approaches often involve localised activities like repair, refurbishment, and remanufacturing. This can stimulate local job creation and support small-to-medium enterprises that innovate in the circular space.
- **Delivers Positive Environmental Outcomes:**
  Direct benefits include reduced waste to landfill, lower carbon emissions, and conservation of natural resources, contributing directly to council's climate and sustainability targets.
- **Meets Community Expectations:**
  Communities increasingly expect their local governments to operate sustainably and be transparent about their environmental impact. Circular procurement demonstrates a commitment to these values.

- **Promotes Innovation:**
  By incorporating circular criteria into tender processes, governments incentivise suppliers to develop new, sustainable solutions. This pushes the entire market toward innovation.

The Power of Public Spending

Government spending accounts for a significant portion of most economies' GDP. This immense purchasing power means that when governments demand circular products and services, they create guaranteed markets for them. This "demand pull" effect is one of the most powerful tools for triggering market-wide shifts towards a circular economy. Furthermore, by showcasing the use of recycled materials in public infrastructure – like roads made with crushed glass – governments can play a vital role in educating the community and building public trust in circular products and approaches, including closing the loop on kerbside recyclables.



Module 2: Embedding Circular Procurement Processes

Welcome to the second module of the Circular Procurement course. In the last module you covered:

- What circular procurement is and how it differs from conventional “linear” procurement, why government has influence, and the benefits of leading through procurement
- Examples of circular procurement in action

This second module will cover the embedding circular procurement into processes in your organisation and lots of tools and resources to help you do this.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Understand the stages of procurement process and where circularity can be incorporated
- Explore tools and resources developed by SV, SV’s Buy Circular Champions and Procurement Australia and how these can be used at the various stages of the procurement process
- Tool spotlight: Five circular approaches lens and the Circular Economy Matrix

Chapter 2.1 - Embedding Circular Procurement Processes

Please watch the video presented by Katherine Ponton, Procurement Advisor – Buy Circular to set the context for this module.

Chapter 2.2 - Embedding Circular Procurement Processes

Sustainability Victoria's Buy Circular team has worked with councils across Victoria to understand what support they need most when getting started. Based on this feedback, this section brings together a range of practical resources, tools, and guidance to help you take your first steps in developing circular procurement processes and documentation.

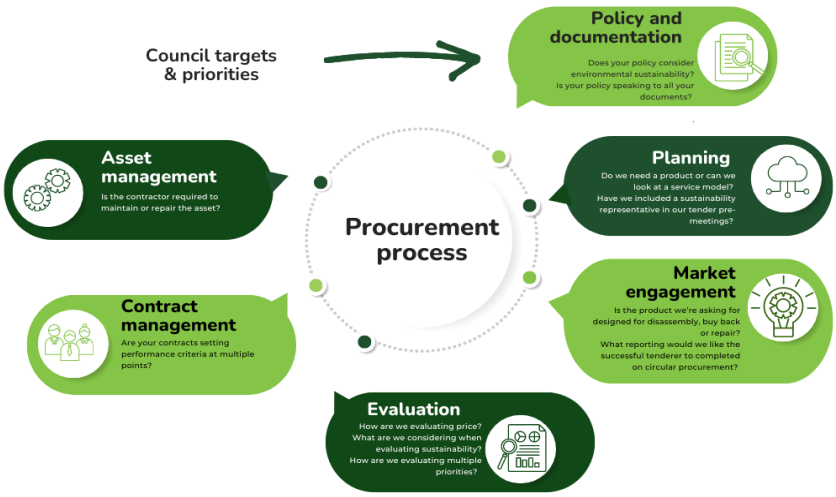


Figure: Procurement process diagram

Chapter 2.1.1 - Council targets and priorities

It is important to start at the beginning and consider what your organisation's overarching targets or priorities are for circular or sustainable procurement. Is recycled content a key driver for your organisation, or perhaps supporting local suppliers is your council's biggest priority. These key targets and priorities may be found in your council's procurement policies or in strategic sustainability documents e.g. Council Sustainability or Circular Economy strategies or actions plans.

These targets and priorities may be in the form of:

- A list of key procurement principles and objectives that guide your council's decisions
- A % minimum weighting the sustainability must be weighted at in tender evaluations e.g. 10% in all tender evaluations
- Minimum recycled-content requirements or embodied carbon reduction for products or projects

Consider the existing targets and priorities of your own council – reflect on these and discuss internally with your colleagues. Use these to guide you on your council's circular procurement journey to ensure everyone is working towards a common goal. Identifying these existing targets and priorities at this early stage will also ensure they feed into any changes you make to your organisation's procurement documentation and processes.

Resource:

You may find the following resource helpful:

- **Surf Coast Shire Circular Economy Action Plan**

Chapter 2.1.2 - Step 1: Procurement policy and documentation

Next you should consider your council procurement policy and the broader suite of procurement documentation. The council procurement policy sets the rules, expectations and governance for how purchasing decisions are made. The documentation (e.g. templates, procedures, guides and more) is what turns that policy intent into day-to-day practice. The goal is simple: Ensuring your council's circular (or sustainable) procurement targets and priorities are clearly reflected across the full procurement document set, so everything "speaks to each other".

This step matters because even when councils have strong sustainability or circular economy ambitions, those ambitions can fall short at the delivery stage if procurement policy and tools don't support them. For example, if your policy says circularity matters, but your tender/RFQ template doesn't ask questions around circularity, your evaluation guide doesn't weight it, and your contracts don't require reporting, then circular outcomes rely on individual champions rather than business-as-usual systems.

Embedding circularity into your procurement policy and documentation helps you:

- Create consistency with everyone using the same expectations and wording
- Reduce risk with clear requirements meaning fewer disputes and better probity
- Make it easier for staff by less "reinventing of the wheel" in every tender
- Send a clear market signal with suppliers understanding what the expectations are
- Track progress with data and reporting becoming part of the normal contract management

Resource:

If your council procurement policy lacks content on circular economy and procurement and there is an opportunity for an update, you may find these resources developed by Sustainability Victoria's Buy Circular Council Champions helpful.

- **Incorporating Circularity into Council Procurement Policies – guidance document**
- **Sample Policy content for circular procurement**
- **Staff Key Performance Indicators Template**

Chapter 2.1.3 - Step 2: Procurement Planning

It is now time to plan the procurement. This is a really good stage to start thinking strategically and with circularity in mind. Procurement planning is where you clarify the problem you're trying to solve, determine the best way to meet that need, and set yourself up for a fair, robust and outcome-focused procurement process.

1. Start by defining the need (then challenge it)

   You may be undertaking a procurement because you need a new product however perhaps you can first challenge the need. Ask:

   - Do you need to purchase at all? Can the need be avoided, reduced or shared?
   - Can you look at refurbishment? Replace parts, extend life, re-upholster for example.
   - Can you reuse what you already have? Check storage assets, consider redeployment or redistribution across departments.
   - Could the product be purchased as a service instead? Consider leasing, hire, maintenance-included contracts.
   - Can you purchase second-hand, remanufactured, or with high recycled content?

- Can you design the scope to reduce material use? Right-sizing, modular solutions for example.

Once these questions are addressed (and if procurement is still required), set 2-3 circular priorities to guide the tender and evaluations. For example:

- Repairability/durability and maintenance expectations
- Recycled content
- Take-back or end-of-life recovery arrangements

2. Get the right people involved early

   Getting the right people in early reduces the risk of late changes, improves specification quality, and builds ownership of circular outcomes across the organisation. Consider involving a mix of colleagues from across departments such as:

   1. Procurement
   2. Subject matter experts
   3. Sustainability/Circular Economy team/Waste teams
   4. Finance
   5. Asset management//Operations/Maintenance

Circular outcomes often sit across departments and planning is where you align everyone on what success looks like. This helps avoid “circularity getting dropped” later because decision-makers weren’t engaged early.

Resource:

You may find the following resources developed by Sustainability Victoria’s Buy Circular Council Champions helpful when undertaking procurement planning and trying to visualise Circular Economy outcomes in a project:

- **Circular Economy Matrix Tool**
- **Matrix Background Document**
- **SV’s Buy Recycled Procurement Toolkit**

Chapter 2.1.4 - Step 3: Market Engagement

It’s now time to engage the market via the tender process using criteria that aligns to your council’s targets and goals. Consider what information and questions you would like to include in the tender to gather all sorts of information about the circular or sustainable attributes of the products you are procuring.

There are plenty of example of questions in the Tender Criteria Questions Database resource. These cover general, construction/civil and waste criteria and have been developed by SV’s Council Champions.

As part of the tender development you also need to think about how you are planning to evaluate price

- Will you assess only the upfront cost, or whole-of-life cost/cost of ownership (including maintenance, replacement and end-of-life)?

Finally, a sense-check alignment can support decision-making.

- Does your evaluation criteria align with your council targets and goals? What percentage is your criteria allocated to environmental sustainability?

Chapter 2.1.4 - Step 4: Evaluation

It is now time to evaluate the tender responses.

When the tender clearly outlines requirements, circularity expectations, evaluation criteria, and scoring guidance, evaluators can assess bids consistently and objectively. Using the Tender Criteria Questions Database resource below can assist with this.

When assessing, check claims against practical delivery: durability/repairability, end-of-life take-back or recovery pathways, and supplier reporting capability.

Consider value beyond upfront price by assessing whole-of-life costs/cost of ownership (maintenance, replacement, and end-of-life). Finally, ensure the best circular commitments are carried through into contract deliverables and KPIs so outcomes can be measured during delivery.

Resource:

You may find the following resources developed by Sustainability Victoria's Buy Circular Council Champions helpful when developing tender criteria and questions:

- **Tender Criteria Questions Database**
- **Environmental Management Plan Template**
- **Waste Management and Circular Economy Plan Templates**
- **Buy Recycled Evaluation Scoring Template**
- **Tender Response Question Options**

You may find the following resources developed by NSW Government helpful when considering other options for developing criteria to evaluate price.

- **Template 3 - Whole-of-Life Costs Calculator - (XLSX, 1.2 MB) XLSX, 1224.7 KB**

Chapter 2.1.5 - Step 5: Contract Development and Management

This phase of the procurement lifecycle focuses on translating what was promised in the tender into clear contract deliverables and then managing this contract to ensure both parties deliver on their commitments to achieve the circular outcomes proposed.

Including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and a practical reporting schedule in the contract can help with achieving these circular outcomes. Requesting the provision of data throughout the project on sustainability or performance outcomes as part of contract delivery can assist you in effectively managing the contract and ensuring you have all the information you require.

The contract management phase is key to ensuring the long term value of the project is achieved. Effective contract management maximises performance, strengthens supplier partnerships, and ensures the project achieves its intended outcomes.

Chapter 2.1.6 - Ongoing: Asset Management

Asset management is about ensuring the asset performs as intended over its full life, not just at the point of installation or handover. Consider whether the contractor is required to maintain or repair the asset during the contract term, and what this looks like in practice (e.g. response times, preventative maintenance schedules, and clear responsibilities).

Plan how the asset will be maintained over time: are spare parts available, are components replaceable, and can council (or council's contractors) repair it locally? Where relevant, build in requirements that support longevity - such as maintenance instructions, warranty details, training for council staff/contractors, and an asset "handover pack" that includes specifications and recommended maintenance activities.

Also consider end-of-life early. What happens when the asset reaches the end of its useful life - can it be refurbished, disassembled, reused, or returned to the supplier through a take-back/buy-back arrangement? Clarifying end-of-life pathways helps avoid unnecessary disposal and supports circular outcomes.

Finally, consider a performance review at the end of the project (or at key milestones) to capture lessons learned - what worked, what didn't, and what you would change next time—so future procurements can improve.

Chapter 2.1.7 - Other Resources

In collaboration with ecologiQ, SV has made the following resources available to councils, to use only as a reference for council road projects. These resources were first developed by ecologiQ for State Government Contractors.

- Recycled First Plan for Projects Under $50M
- Contractor User Guide: Recycled First Forecast and Reporting Table for Projects Under $50M
- Recycled First Forecast Reporting Table for Projects Under $50M

Chapter 2.2 - Tool spotlight 1: Circularity Deck - Five circular approaches in procurement context

This section will provide you with an overview of the Circularity Deck approaches and how to use them in the context of circular procurement planning.

Please watch the video presented by Florian van den Corput, Senior Advisor Circular Economy.

The Circularity Deck

The transition to a circular economy represents one of the most significant opportunities for organisations to reduce their environmental impact while creating economic value.

Circular procurement sits at the heart of this transition, transforming how organisations purchase goods and services to minimise waste and maximise resource efficiency. The circular procurement framework provides organisations with clear intervention points to make purchasing choices more circular, aligning with global sustainability goals while delivering strategic, financial, and social benefits.

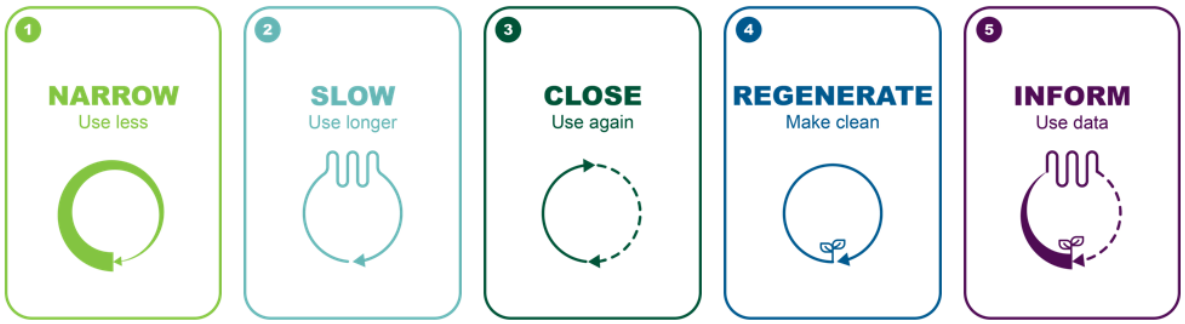
This section introduces the Circularity Deck framework, a practical tool developed by Dr. Jan Konietzko, which has been adopted by European policy makers and tested by Sustainability Victoria for effectiveness in the Victorian context.

The Circularity Deck Framework: Simplifying Circular Action

Many circular economy frameworks exist, but most struggle with being either overly detailed or too vague to support meaningful action.

The Circularity Deck addresses this challenge by distilling circular principles into five clear, actionable approaches that can be applied regardless of industry sector or materials involved. This simplification makes circular thinking accessible to procurement professionals, designers, and decision-makers at all levels of an organisation. The framework's strength lies in its flexibility—organisations can select and combine approaches based on their specific project requirements rather than following a rigid, one-size-fits-all methodology. The framework offers three main benefit categories: strategic benefits by managing linear risks and creating resilient organisations, financial benefits through increased recycling and reduced procurement costs, and social benefits that contribute to community wellbeing.

The Five Circularity Deck Approaches Explained



Narrow

The first approach, **Narrow**, focuses on reducing material flowing through the system by using less material to create more value. This involves careful consideration of the volume and type of materials required, prioritising lightweight options, optimising designs for efficiency, and sourcing materials locally to minimise transport emissions. Material reduction strategies can yield significant cost savings while substantially lowering environmental impacts associated with extraction, processing, and transportation.

Procurement example: Purchasing void formers (especially those made from recycled or non-toxic materials) to reduce the amount of concrete needed in construction. Check out an example of a void former for concrete structures here.

Slow

The second approach, **Slow**, aims to extend the lifespan of products and materials, thereby retaining their value for longer. This requires prioritising durability, designing for easy maintenance and repair, and using interchangeable standard components that can be replaced individually rather than requiring full product replacement. Extending product lifespans can dramatically reduce waste generation and lower the environmental footprint associated with manufacturing new products.

Procurement example: Selecting street furniture that is made from durable materials and has interchangeable parts so it can be repaired easily.

Close

The third approach, **Close**, involves creating closed-loop systems where materials are continuously reused and their value recovered. This encompasses designing with recycled inputs, specifying clear end-of-life management plans for recycling, and creating systems where products can be disassembled and returned to suppliers for material recovery. Closing resource loops are a fundamental strategy for reducing dependence on virgin materials and minimising waste.

Best practice examples include innovative models like leased photocopiers and "lighting as a service" systems, which require market dialogue and engagement from suppliers ready to participate in circular business models.

Procurement example: Using furniture that has recycled material content and can be reused or recycled again at end of its life.

Regenerate

The fourth approach, **Regenerate**, goes beyond just reducing harm by actively restoring natural systems through the use of clean, renewable materials. This involves selecting materials from sustainable sources, ensuring production processes use renewable energy, and considering how procurement decisions can contribute to local ecological health. Regenerative approaches can play a crucial role in combating climate change while supporting biodiversity conservation.

Procurement example: Using organic material to improve soil quality and growth of native plants

Inform

The fifth approach,**Inform**, leverages data and digital technologies to enable and optimise circular practices. This includes building material databases, tracking product usage patterns, monitoring equipment condition through sensors, and using analytics to inform design improvements and procurement decisions.

Procurement example: Using the Buy Circular Directory to research and search for circular products that can be purchased for infrastructure projects

Practical Application: Playground Equipment Example

Consider a council procuring new playground equipment—a common municipal project that illustrates how the five approaches of the Circularity Deck can be applied in practice.

Under the **Narrow** approach, the council would specify lightweight, efficiently designed equipment using locally sourced materials to minimise transport emissions.

The **Slow** approach would involve selecting durable materials designed for easy maintenance, with standardised components that can be repaired or replaced individually.

For the **Close** approach, the council would require equipment containing recycled materials and establish clear end-of-life recycling protocols, possibly including take-back arrangements with suppliers.

The **Regenerate** approach would guide the selection of renewable materials like sustainably harvested timber or local compost for the flower bed, while prioritising suppliers using renewable energy in their operations.

Finally, the **Inform** approach could involve using or creating a material database for the playground, understanding peak times and wear patterns, and tracking maintenance data to inform future procurement decisions.

This hypothetical example demonstrates how the five approaches each offer a different pathway to achieve more circular outcomes. There is no hierarchy in this framework; one approach isn't more circular than the others. Instead, one approach might suit your procurement requirements better, or might simply make more sense for your context. Multiple approaches can also be combined to work together, allowing for flexibility based on your resourcing, appetite and ambitions.

Benefits of using the Five Approaches

As organisations face increasing pressure to demonstrate environmental responsibility and resource efficiency, circular frameworks like the Circularity Deck provide systematic approaches for incorporating sustainability into decision-making processes. Achieving more circular outcomes helps mitigate linear risks such as supply chain disruptions, resource scarcity, and increasingly stringent regulations. Circularity also helps improve operational and resource efficiency, enabling higher levels of value retention. And finally, the adoption of circular strategies helps improve stakeholder confidence, attract new environmentally-conscious customers, and meeting sustainability targets.

The flexibility to mix and match approaches based on specific project needs makes the five approaches from the Circularity Deck framework adaptable to various contexts, from small purchases to major infrastructure projects. By embracing these principles, organisations can transform their procurement practices to support both environmental sustainability and economic resilience, creating value that extends far beyond the immediate transaction.

The strategic importance of circular procurement continues to grow as organisations recognise the interconnected benefits of reduced environmental impact, improved resource efficiency, and enhanced community wellbeing.

Chapter 2.3 – Tool spotlight 2: Circular Economy Matrix Tool

Please watch the video presented by Maarten De Beurs, Circular Economy Coordinator at Mornington Peninsula Shire and Tri Setyani, Principal Urban Designer at Merri-bek City Council, to talk you through the Circular Economy Matrix Tool they developed and how they have used it.

You don’t need to be a circular economy expert to start building circularity into your next project. The Circular Economy Matrix is a simple tool that helps you estimate and compare the circularity of different project options - including different material choices.

Circular Economy Matrix

Material Source	is reused	is repurposed or recycled locally	is fully recycled	is partially recycled	goes to landfill	is persistent environmental pollutant
No new material	5	5	4	3	1	
Reused sources	5	4	4	3	1	
100% Recycled	4	3	3	2	1	
Some or all recycled sources	3	2	2	1	1	
Sustainably sourced virgin materials	2	2	2	1		
Virgin materials	2	1	1			

Figure: Circular Economy Matrix

The matrix prompts you to consider where materials come from and how much is used, and what happens to them at end-of-life.

It is designed to be used during the planning and implementation phases (including options analysis, design, specification and construction). It can also be used to review past projects, capture lessons learned, and improve future decision-making.

For more detail and guidance, see the resources toolbox below.

You've now seen where and how circularity can be embedded across the procurement lifecycle - from planning and market engagement through to evaluation, contracting and asset management. We also explored tools that can support stronger decisions. But embedding circular procurement isn't only a technical or process task. It also depends on people, habits and organisational systems that can make circular choices easier to adopt in day-to-day work.

In the next module, we'll focus on championing circular procurement: practical behaviour-change tools you can use to build buy-in and help circular procurement stick.

Module 3: Championing in Your Organisation

Welcome to the third module of the Circular Procurement course.

In the last module you covered:

- How circularity can be embedded across the procurement process
- Tools and resources that can support procurement decisions – such as the Circularity Deck and Circular Economy Matrix

This module is about aligning your circular procurement internally and influencing externally. Embedding circular procurement in your organisation is as much about the people and systems as it is about policies and documentation. This section introduces a simple behaviour change process and tools you can use to identify barriers and design simple interventions that make circular choices easier, more normal, and more likely to become embedded.

Learning Objectives

- Describe the five-step behaviour change process at a high level
- Use the COM-B model to identify barriers and drivers for circular procurement behaviour
- Design behaviourally informed interventions using the EAST framework

---

Chapter 3.1 - Behaviour change 101 – The five step process

The five-step process below provides a clear pathway to help simplify the task and identify practical actions you can take.

Figure: Five-step behaviour change process

In this module, we will jump in at Step 3 in the diagram above – Gather insights. We are assuming the work has already been done to **understand the problem and the system at hand**.

We have identified a number of likely circular procurement behaviours to address based on our ongoing work with local councils. For this course, the priority behaviours we will focus on are:

1. For council staff to consider recycled materials and circular products/services during their procurement activities
2. For council staff to involve cross-teams early in the planning process to embed circularity from project inception
3. For council officers to accurately assess tender responses with circular requirements.
4. For circular suppliers to submit tenders with circular requirements.

These behaviours were selected because they collectively represent the minimum set of actions that must happen for circularity to show up in real procurement outcomes — across both internal council practice and the external supplier response.

In order to gather insights from your stakeholders (both internally and externally), you will likely need to narrow these behaviours down further by establishing the target audience. For example, when we refer to “council staff”, consider who in your organisation that behaviour relates to? Once you have identified this audience, you can talk to those people to understand the context around the behaviour, as this will help you to understand how best to address it. If this is a large group of people, you could consider a survey; however, talking face-to-face with your target audience will often be sufficient.

In the next section, you will learn about the COM-B model and how you can use that to gather insights.

Chapter 3.2 - Use the COM-B model to gather insights

To help you consider what questions to ask, The COM-B model (Michie, Van Stralen & West, 2011) is widely used. It suggests that a particular behaviour is more likely to occur when the target audience has:

- Capability (e.g. awareness, knowledge, skills, etc.)
- Opportunity (e.g. time, resources, tools, money, access, etc.)
- Motivation (e.g. beliefs, attitudes, enthusiasm, etc.)

To learn more about the COM-B model of behaviour, you can visit this link

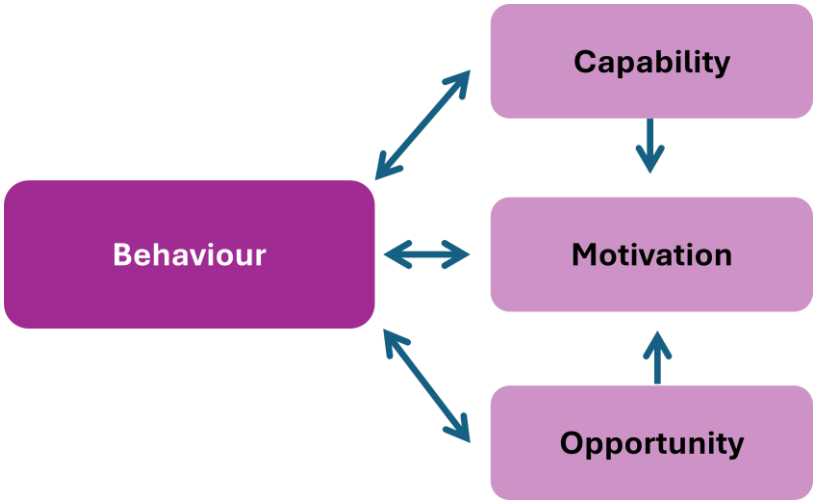


Figure: The COM-B model of behaviour

Use COM-B to explore all three drivers for the behaviour you are interested in. Below are example questions for the first priority behaviour identified in the previous section : 1. For council staff to consider recycled materials and circular products/services in during their procurement activities

Capability

- "Do you know what recycled materials are available for this kind of procurement"
- "Do you know the specifications of recycled materials?
- "Do you know how to include evaluation criteria relating to recycled content?"

Motivation

- "Do you think there's any benefit to procuring recycled material?"
- "Do you think it's easy or difficult to include recycled content in your procurement?"
- "What would make it easier for you to consider recycled material?"

Opportunity

- "Have you ever evaluated a submission with recycled content?"
- "What do your procurement guidelines or process include regarding recycled content?"

Using the COM-B model helps you ask more complete and practical questions because it prompts you to look beyond just "awareness" or "attitudes" and consider all three drivers of behaviour: Capability, Opportunity and Motivation.

Rather than guessing why circular procurement isn't happening (or assuming one single barrier), COM-B helps you pinpoint which type of barrier is most important for your audience. For example, whether staff need clearer knowledge and tools (Capability), more time/resources and supportive processes (Opportunity), or stronger confidence and buy-in (Motivation).

This makes your insights more actionable: once you know what's really getting in the way, you can design targeted supports and interventions (e.g. templates, prompts, checkpoints, leadership messaging) that are more likely to shift day-to-day procurement decisions.

Chapter 3.2.1 - Consider common cognitive biases and heuristics

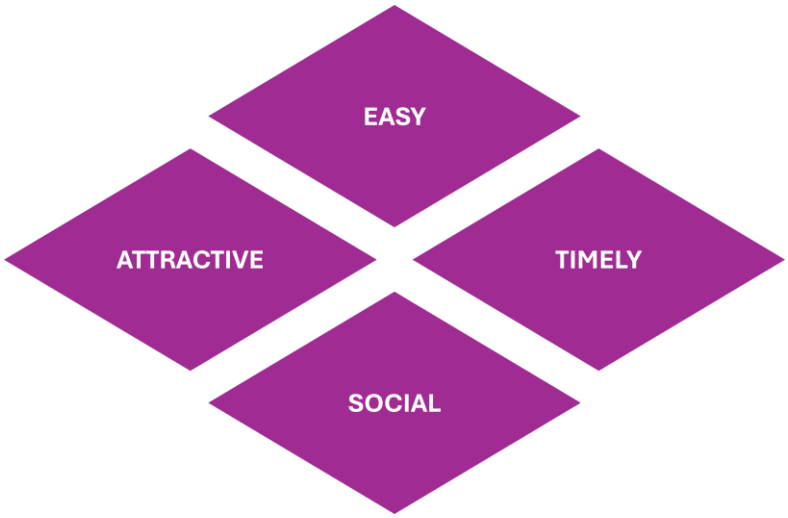
As you conduct research, it's also helpful to consider how some **common cognitive biases or heuristics** might be influencing your behaviour. For a great list, definitions and examples of known biases, see the https://thedecisionlab.com/biases-index.

Here are some examples of how this could apply to the priority = behaviours identified earlier:

- **Confirmation bias** - Council staff or suppliers may preferentially notice information that supports their existing views about "what works" in procurement, making them overlook evidence that circular options are viable or high-quality.
- **Status quo bias** - Teams may default to familiar suppliers, materials, or procurement processes, making them less likely to adopt early cross-team involvement, explore recycled options, or adjust tender criteria for circular requirements.
- **Availability bias** - If staff have limited exposure to examples of successful circular procurement, they may assume such options are rare or risky, reducing their confidence in choosing recycled materials or in evaluating circular tender responses.
- **Temporal discounting / present bias** - Council officers and suppliers may prioritise short-term convenience (e.g., sticking with known materials, avoiding extra planning effort, or minimising immediate tender preparation time) over the longer-term benefits of embedding circularity.
- **Social norms -** If staff perceive that colleagues or other councils are not prioritising circular procurement, they may feel less compelled to consider recycled options, involve others early, or signal circular expectations in tenders.Visible leadership or peer uptake can strongly motivate change.

Chapter 3.3 - From barriers to interventions — use the EAST framework

Once we have honed in on a barrier we want to address, it's time to think about an intervention we could develop to overcome it. A useful resource to utilise to help brainstorm is the EAST framework. **EAST stands for Easy, Attractive, Social and Timely**. These are good guiding principles for how to encourage a behaviour.



Ask yourself, how can I make this behaviour…

- **Easier? -** Shorten the number of steps, pre-fill information, develop guides or templates.
- **Attractive? -** Show influential people participating, build-in incentives, showcase successful case studies.
- **Social? –** Create friendly competitions, leaderboards, public disclosures or commitments.
- **Timely -** Intervene at key decision points, make it faster or more efficient.

Some examples of EAST informed interventions

Social norms and normative messaging

- Share a short internal news post showing other councils already specifying recycled materials in tenders, signalling that this is becoming the expected norm. This helps staff feel that considering circular options and involving other teams early is "what people like us do."
- Include a "normative statement" in tender packs such as "Most councils in Victoria are now assessing circular requirements," or "more and more councils…" making visible an injunctive norm for suppliers. This reassures suppliers that addressing circular criteria is standard practice rather than an optional extra.

Changing the system, not the individual

- Build a mandatory early-stage "Circularity Review" checkpoint into the project workflow so cross team involvement becomes part of the system rather than an individual remembering to engage others. This reduces reliance on individual motivation and removes a systemic barrier cited across councils.
- Update procurement documentation to automatically include circularity content criteria so evaluators don't need to redesign or remember these requirements each time. This shifts the organisational environment so circular assessment is the default process.
- Prepopulate RFQ/RFT templates with standard circular criteria and questions making circular criteria the default rather than an add-on. Evaluators can still opt out, but the default nudges higher quality assessments. SV's Tender Criteria and Questions Database may assist with this.
- The ordering of lists can influence behaviours. If possible, configure procurement systems so recycled or circular suppliers appear first or they are ranked in order of recycled content used in search results. This harnesses primacy effect to increase staff exposure to credible circular suppliers.

Simplification / Make it easy

- Provide a one-page "circular specs cheat sheet" and an auto-fillable assessment rubric so officers can quickly assess circular tender responses without digging through guidance. Reducing effort helps overcome capability and time barriers repeatedly identified in COMB analysis. SV's Circular Economy Matrix Tool and Background Document may assist with this. -
- Create a short supplier evidence template (tickbox and brief prompts) to simplify how suppliers demonstrate circularity, especially helpful for regional SMEs under tendering burden. This lowers friction and increases the likelihood suppliers submit. SV's Tender Criteria and Questions Database may assist with this.

Module 4: Next steps

Welcome to the final module of the Circular Procurement course. In the last module you covered:

- Describing the five-step behaviour change process at a high level
- Use the COM-B model to identify barriers and drivers for circular procurement behaviour
- Designing behaviourally informed interventions using the EAST framework

This final module covers setting expectations for yourself on your circular procurement journey and other circular procurement support and resources that are available in addition to this online course.

Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this module, you will be able to:

- Explore case studies from councils who have applied circular procurement principles
- Consider what the next steps are likely to be for you and your organisation.
- Be aware of the other resources available and where to find them

Chapter 4.1 - Don’t Let Perfect Get in the Way of Good

Please watch the video presented by Kate Shaw, Regional Engagement Lead, to set the context for this module.

Chapter 4.2 - Circular Procurement in Action: Council case studies

In this section, we will continue to bring circular procurement to life and further explore real world local government applications where circular procurement principles have been applied. We hope these inspire you and continue to prompt your own thinking about what could be possible in your own

organisations.

The following case study highlights how circular procurement principles can be incorporated into council procurement processes and documentation.

Case study 1: City of Stonnington's Kerbside Organics Buy Back

The City of Stonnington, in Melbourne's south-eastern suburbs, has incorporated circular principles into their kerbside Food and Garden Organics (FOGO) collection contract.

The council initially undertook trials of good quality compost made from the organics collected across the municipality as part of their kerbside FOGO collections. It was also important that these composts met the relevant Australian Standards. Nearly 500 m^3 of mulch was applied to garden beds, nature strips, parks and gardens and in fixing holes and trip hazards on lawns in 20 different locations.

Through close monitoring and evaluation by the Parks and Gardens team, they discovered real benefits to using the FOGO compost. These included taking longer to break down compared to other traditional composts that had previously been used, less compaction of the soil, increased weed suppression and better water retention, even during a hot dry summer.

The City of Stonnington also used this initiative as an opportunity to promote and educate the community on the benefits of the FOGO bin and the importance of participating in the service and minimising contamination. They are also hoping these initiatives will assist in growing the residential market for recycled organics.

The City of Stonnington also used this trial project as an opportunity to identify barriers in their current procurement process which were impacting council buying back kerbside collected organics. They then applied circular procurement principles when updating their existing contract, to better enable council to buy back recycled organics from their FOGO processing provider. This was a lengthy process but has set them up to more easily purchase FOGO compost in the future.

Based on the success of this trial project and their updated garden waste contract, the City of Stonnington's Parks and Gardens team are continuing to buy back and use FOGO compost in parks and gardens across the municipality.

Figure: Public signage from City of Stonnington about their FOGO initiative

The next case study explains how circular procurement principles have been incorporated into strategic council documents.

Case study 2: Surf Coast Shire's Circular Economy Action Plan

Surf Coast Shire, a coastal municipality in regional southwest Victoria, developed a Circular Economy Action Plan. Within the plan there are multiple levers for driving circular procurement focused on waste avoidance, reuse, innovation and collaboration, creating systems change and advocacy.

These include:

- Targets to help drive the transition to a Circular economy including for increasing recycled materials use in a range of council projects and embodied carbon reduction based on the use of recycled materials.
- Specifying a preference of use of products and materials that contain recycled content for new projects, asset renewal, and maintenance
- Ensuring data on key procurement items is captured on Council's top 10 spend items, that could be replaced by alternative recycled content options across new projects, asset renewals and maintenance.
- Reviewing strategic Council documents and processes to embed circular economy principles for a range of documents including Procurement Planning document and Procurement Policy
- Document options for Council to participate in share economy services such as leasing schemes to prevent the need to unnecessarily purchase items, which will help reduce waste.

Link: https://www.surfcoast.vic.gov.au/Environment/Circular-Economy/Circular-Economy-Action-Plan

Case study 3: Traralgon Road Resurfacing using recycled glass

Access to recycled products and materials can sometime be a barrier for a project based on locations. This can tend to be for regionally based projects and councils. The following case study shares an example in Gippsland in South-East Victoria where the council worked with their local recycling processor to develop a locally based asphalt product.

Watch: Buy Recycled Traralgon Road Resurfacing Using Recycled Glass

Chapter 4.3 - Conclusion

You are best placed to know what next on your circular procurement journeys and we hope that by undertaking this course you feel equipped to take the next step – whatever it may be!

In addition to all the resources shared throughout these modules, there are other organisations that also work in this space. Many of them have tools and resources that you may find helpful:

- NSW Government Guide to Environmentally Sustainable Procurement
- Green Industries South Australia – Circular Procurement: Tools Policies and Guidelines
- ecologiQ – Victoria's Big Build
- Australian Government – Environmentally Sustainable Procurement Policy and Guide
- Australian Circular Economy Hub
- A practical guide to circular procurement: For new buildings and major refurbishments
- Circular Procurement Best Practice Guideline
- Sustainable Public Procurement (SPP) | PIANOo - Dutch Public Procurement Expertise Centre

We wish you well on your circular procurement journeys!