

## **NSW CIRCULAR REPORT FLAGS TENS OF THOUSANDS OF JOBS IN NEW CIRCULAR ECONOMY**

### **MEDIA RELEASE**

**29 October 2020, Sydney Australia** – NSW Circular today released its report *The Circular Economy Opportunity* which sets out the evidence for why transitioning from a linear to a circular economy will be vital for job creation and economic recovery post-COVID-19.

It also announced the appointment of Australia's first circular economist, Dr Kar Mei Tang, as its Chief Circular Economist.

NSW Circular CEO [Lisa McLean](#) said: "The circular economy can generate up to 50,000 jobs in NSW over the next five years as the circular economy grows and is embraced by industry."

"Every sector has waste and uses raw materials for its goods and services. To realise the economic opportunity we need more data on the value of waste thrown into landfill. The role of Chief Circular Economist has been created to advise on the economic potential in materials such as e-waste, solar panels, plastics and glass, to highlight investment and policy opportunities, and drive the migration to the circular economy in Australia."

The report, which brings together for the first time a snapshot on the circular economy in NSW, highlights how NSW can unlock a jobs, growth and resource boom and be the powerhouse of circular economy innovation in Australia.

Dr Tang said Australia landfills 40 per cent of its core waste, with many of our landfills approaching capacity in the coming years. "If the whole of Sydney Harbour were a landfill, we would fill it before 2040. If we don't transition to a circular economy, we will continue to lose valuable resources that generate new jobs and industries, build sustainable supply chains, and are key to our economic recovery."

"With the official unemployment rate sitting at 6.9 percent across the nation and 7.2 percent in NSW, and many industries facing structural change, creating new jobs and stimulating new investment is the number one priority," she said.

"The circular economy presents a timely and urgent opportunity to create new resilient jobs that are fit for the future. For example, there are 3.3 times more jobs in recycling for every job in landfill," Dr Tang said. "We are fundamentally talking about rebuilding an economy by producing more and designing out waste - and we need this for productivity growth."

NSW Circular will be releasing monthly market spotlights on how much materials are worth to the market, along with helping create new marketplaces and bringing together new circular supply chains.

### **Key facts:**

- Adopting circular economy initiatives in the food, built environment and transport sectors is worth \$210 billion to Australia's GDP by 2048<sup>1</sup>
- Based on NSW's share of national GDP, could add up to \$7.6 billion to NSW's GSP by 2025, and up to \$69 billion by 2048

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<sup>1</sup> KPMG Economics, Potential Economic Pay-off of a Circular Economy, April 2020



- Circular economy initiatives in the built environment, transport, manufacturing and recycling industries can create some 150,000 ongoing jobs across Australia by 2025<sup>2</sup>
- Accelerating our recycling rate alone can create 28,000 new jobs in Australia by 2025<sup>3</sup>
- Australia is the largest materials user per capita in the region
- NSW generates three times the global average CO2 emissions per capita
- Australia has the third lowest rate of material productivity and lowest manufacturing self-sufficiency in the OECD

McLean said, “NSW and Australia need to open their economies to new sustainable sharing and reuse solutions and business models that keep resources in the market for longer, like as-a-service models for clothing, white goods and mobility, recycled waste and water, and remanufacturing.”

“If we expand the circular economy opportunity in key sectors including health, water, transport, the built environment, electronics, solar energy and manufacturing - we can generate tens of thousands more jobs,” Dr Tang said. “Developing thriving and self-sustaining markets for recycled products in particular will help grow the competitiveness of the Australian manufacturing sector, and help de-risk our supply chains by reusing our own recycled materials.”

NSW Circular CEO Lisa McLean welcomed the new appointment of Dr Tang: “Dr Tang’s expertise will assist NSW Circular as it defines the circular economy market opportunity, and shares circular economic principles and approaches to build new industries, businesses and jobs.”

“The circular economy is the only real option we have to grow our economy, to deliver productivity and liveability as we head into a resource constrained future.” McLean said.

“This not only makes solid economic sense, but provides a key solution for Australia’s waste crisis.”

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**NSW Circular’s Strategic Plan 2020-23 in PDF can be [downloaded here](#).**

#### **ABOUT DR KAR MEI TANG, CHIEF CIRCULAR ECONOMIST, NSW CIRCULAR:**

Dr Kar Mei Tang is an economist and policy specialist with over 25 years’ experience in the public and private sectors. She was previously Executive Director, Circular Economy with the NSW Department of Planning, Industry and Environment and the NSW Environment Protection Authority, and Director, Economic Policy with the NSW Department of Premier & Cabinet.

Kar Mei also has extensive experience in policy advocacy as the former Head of Policy and Research with the Australian Private Equity & Venture Capital Association, in technology commercialisation through previous roles in SMARTS (now a division of Nasdaq OMX) and the Capital Markets Cooperative Research Centre, and consulting for corporate, NGO and government clients. She has a PhD in Economics (Sydney), Masters in Applied Statistics (ANU) and B.Comm Hons (Melbourne).

#### **What is the Circular Economy?**

A circular economy aims to redefine growth, focusing on positive society-wide benefits. Gradually decoupling economic activity from the consumption of finite resources, and designing

#### **About NSW Circular:**

NSW Circular is a NSW government-funded body with environment, economic and social goals embedded into our work. Delivering for government organisations, and empowering industry and people is at the heart of what

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<sup>2</sup> Beyond Zero Emissions, The Million Jobs Plan, June 2020

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.



waste out of the system, it is based on three principles:

1. Design out waste and pollution
2. Keep products and materials in use
3. Regenerate natural systems

NSW has rising waste volumes, plateauing resource recovery rates and some of the highest per capita emissions in the world - almost triple the global average<sup>4</sup>. It has been identified NSW will not reach its target of net-zero emissions by 2050 without a circular economy in action

we do. We are created by the Office of NSW Chief Scientist & Engineer and hosted by UNSW Sydney. Our mission is to deliver a zero-carbon circular economy in NSW by:

- Providing transparent and open data to the market
- Helping deliver new circular economy markets, infrastructure and services
- Working collaboratively with businesses, government, researchers and individuals to remove barriers and scale the circular economy
- Empowering people to promote circular behaviours and change

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<sup>4</sup> NSW Environment Protection Authority, NSW State of the Environment Report, 2018