



Citizens Report

Circular Economy Community Hubs:

A vision for a zero-waste,
zero-carbon future

MAY 2022

Project conducted and report prepared collaboratively by NSW Circular, UTS Design Innovation Research Centre (DIRC) and Good for the Hood.

Acknowledgement to Aboriginal people

NSW Circular acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we all work and live.

We recognise their continuing connection to land, water and community and pay respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

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Introduction

A circular economy is about **designing waste out of our systems, keeping materials in use, and regenerating natural ecosystems.** It is a social, economic and technological shift that requires **input from all areas of our society.**

This document targets citizens and communities in exploring **circular economy community hubs** as a means to implement circular solutions at a community level.

MESSAGE FROM

NSW Circular CEO Lisa McLean



Circular Economy Community Hubs present an exciting opportunity for citizens and communities to drive the transition to a zero-waste, zero-carbon future.

No-one wants to waste - if there are good options for repairing or up-cycling clothes, appliances, white goods, for example, people will jump at the opportunity. Services that enable people to get what they need by not always buying something new, are urgently needed locally.

This report puts a spotlight on how citizens can participate in the circular economy (CE) through innovative local Circular Economy Community Hubs. With feedback from our many stakeholders, UTS and NSW Circular showcase a number of Hub models from Resource, Retail, Garden, Repair, Experimental Hubs to Tool and Things Libraries. Each promoting unique circular services and solutions that build local skills and jobs while reducing waste and emissions, keeping materials in the economy longer, and protecting biodiversity and nature.

NSW Circular urges citizens, businesses, councils, clubs and community groups to start the Community Hub journey today, building a local circular economy.

Key Messages

Community hubs are a great way to help communities **transition to circular solutions** and enhance the way communities **care for Country**

- 1 Community hubs are essential in providing citizens with the services they need to waste less, keep resources in use and regenerate nature.
- 2 They are a global best practice helping citizens to transition to the circular economy.
- 3 These hubs must be designed with, and for the community.
- 4 There are many types of hubs with similar characteristics, but all will be unique to each community.
- 5 By maximising the co-creation with communities we can accelerate the transitional process and improve the outcomes for citizens.

Who is this document for?

Circular Economy Community Hubs must be implemented in nuanced and inclusive ways within local contexts across NSW. The relevant stakeholders who should read this are across public and private spheres, and include:

Architects, Urban Designers & Town Planners

Place-Makers & Designers

Economists & Developers

Artists, Makers and Creative & Community Groups

Investors & Philanthropists

Existing Small - Medium Enterprises

Chief Sustainability Officers

Researchers/PhD candidates

Industry Bodies & Associations

Clubs, Associations and other Non-For Profits

Start-Ups, Universities, Incubators & Accelerators

Futurists, strategists & innovations teams

Councils

Interested Citizens

Community Hub

A Community Hub is a space used for various community events, gatherings, and services. These buildings require particular attributes; a mechanism to facilitate service, collaboration and integration as well as a place-making opportunity to build cohesive communities. A hub may also have a digital component which can foster the development of an online community.

Community Hubs are building on global trends and issues, such as:

- Conscious consumption movement
- Localised production
- Access over ownership
- Right to repair movement
- Share and reuse business models
- Product stewardship schemes
- Waste to resource attitudes
- Pay-per-use service models
- Increased use of bio-materials
- Supply chain disruption and resource scarcity

Technical

This involves building decentralised circular economies by optimising material flows and services to locally cycle materials, increase resilience and self-sufficiency as well as reduce waste.

Shorter supply chains through distributed production reduces reliance on global production networks that externalise social costs onto other communities, whilst also bolstering local producers and manufacturers.

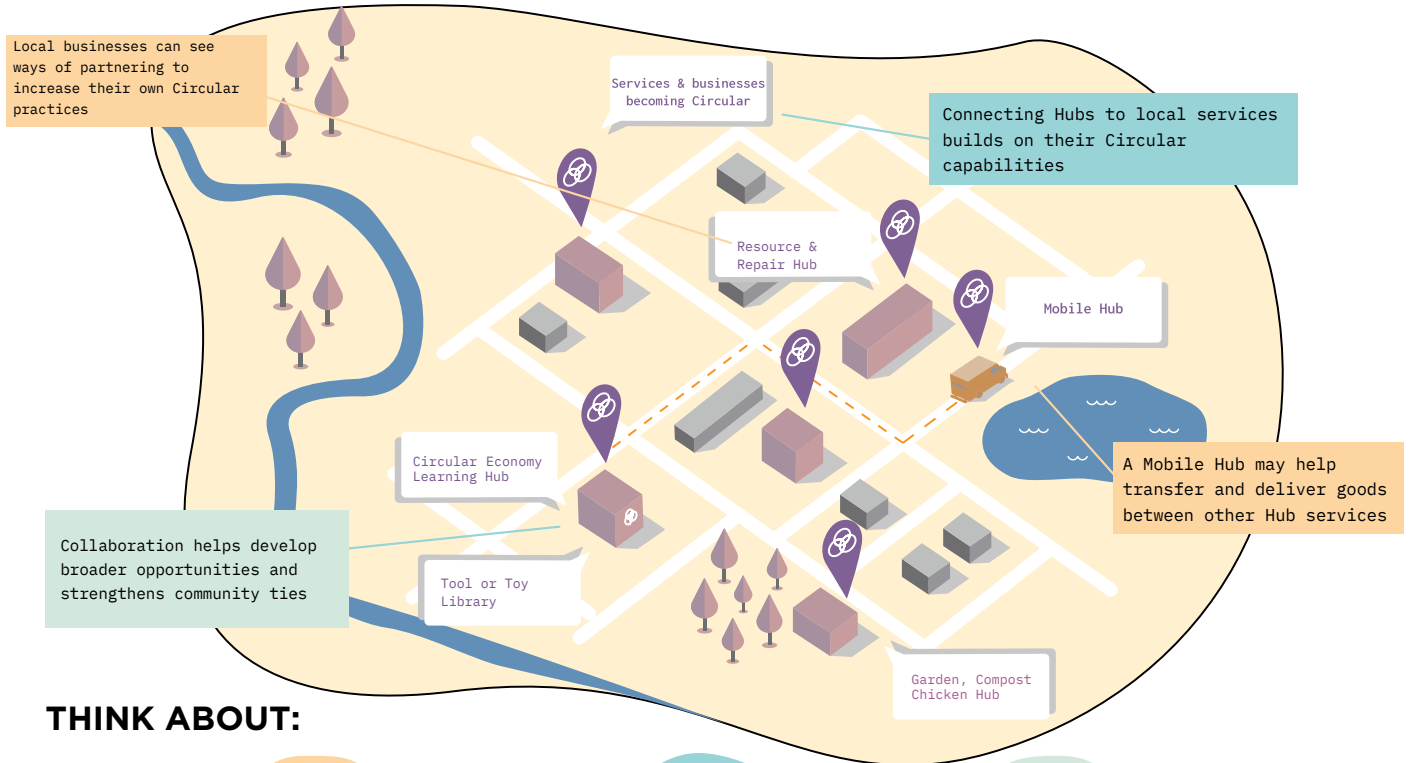
Cultural

This is primarily to do with bolstering individual and organisational practices of making, repair, sharing and communing.

These circular practices, lifestyles and infrastructures creatively embody the need for communities to slow down, build reciprocal relationships, consume less and live within ecological limits.

Roadmap to a Circular Economy

Circular Economy Community Hubs are an essential first step in building the new circular economy. By working together, business, government, community and citizens can build new local circular ecosystems, supply chains and services that will catalyse this important change.



THINK ABOUT:

Who is in the community?

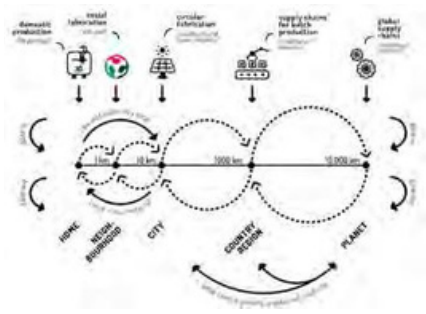
What is the community interested in doing?

How can we reach people?



CASE STUDIES

Existing community hubs



Fab city Barcelona

Neighbourhood model of circular supply chains allowing for decentralised manufacturing.

Image source: Sustainability



The Bower, Marrickville

The Bower Re-use and Repair Centre fosters a culture of sustainability, re-use and repair.

Image source: The Junk Map



Worlds Biggest Garage Sale

Sells dormant goods as a way to make purposeful-profit that creates a positive impact on people and the planet.

Image source: The West End Magazine



The YARN, Hunters Hill

The YARN is an innovative library and community space in Hunters Hill.

Image source: The Being Group



The Lost Plot

A range of crops are organically grown with constantly evolving community events.

Image source: www.thelostplot.org.au



The Inner West Tool Library

A library of things for local residents, with tools, camping equipment, appliances.

Image source: Quentin Jones/DPIE

Hub inspiration

Draw people in with signage, branding, presence and campaign

Key messages and communications to the community

Citizen science in testing water, air biodiversity

Leisure destination

Direct democracy engagement



Coming together to advocate for political change beyond consumer action

Biomaterial experimentation

Making objects for habitats & sanctuaries for wildlife



Enhancing and learning, connection to nature

CITIZEN CO-CREATION

ECOLOGICAL REGENERATION

Visually attractive

Events that broaden out reach

Governance and leadership

Waste plastic reuse and moulding

Clean up our streets and streams

Diverse, open source designs

Keeping alive or renewing lost arts and trades

Engaging with family as foundational to the hub

Networking for public and private enterprise



Intergenerational learning with schools

SKILLS AND EDUCATION

Space sharing for meetings/training

Lessons in local craft processes

Hands on demonstrations

Drop off things for repair

Wood work, metal work

Reuse database website



Place for sharing, borrowing, making things

Advocating for right to repair movement

High tech design and manufacture

Connecting local businesses to ecological initiatives



E-waste material recovery

Repair cafe

MATERIALS, MAKING AND REPAIR

LIVING LAB AND INNOVATION

Repair op-shop

Low tech hands on techniques

Textiles repair

Exhibit new ways of doing things - living show room

Design for disassembly and modular electronics

Hub concepts

“Revolutionise local land care.. retrain current staff in Indigenous & regenerative landcare to enhance local biodiversity”

Growing local produce is only one benefit of community gardens, they are also enable local connections, a place for coffee and sharing ideas.

Tool libraries can be connected to educational institutions, providing a space for practical learning for students in courses connected to TAFE and universities

Tool LIBRARY

Sessions run by local community members, groups, businesses and teachers.

Garden Hubs can be places of tranquility, reflection and discussion

A place for experimentation with biomaterials and methods e.g., hemp, algae, seaweed, and mycelium

Garden Hubs can facilitate sessions around skills sharing and stewardship of nature, such as through bush regeneration clubs and local native food production

1. TOOL LIBRARY & GARDEN HUB

Provide affordable and accessible tools that can be reused by members of the community, extending the life of resources. Grow and share local produce, build community through participation and regenerate country.

“Storytelling within the community of stories of care and circularity”

A Mobile Hub may take the form of a van that visits local schools and perform any number of activities, such as running programs on repair, developing fabrication skills, or education on the Circular Economy

The aesthetics of the Mobile Hub should be developed and adapted to suit the local Place and Culture

SCHOOL

he Mobile Hub can be branded by the local community Circular groups, or else by NSW Circular and connected cohesively to their initiatives in the area.

A Mobile Hub may create a bigger presence and visibility of Circularity in the community

2. MOBILE HUB

Encourage new circular services in the community that can move around - to schools, parks and businesses and where they are needed. New 'as a service' models are available to repair, recycle and bring new solutions for pre-loved items.

“Welcome and awareness in different languages”

A Digital Hub can encourage, educate and engage people in the community about how they can become more Circular in their lives, at home, work, and in other activities. Part of this could be a reuse database.

A Things Library can connect people with others in the community to share resources. Eg toys.

Community Hubs can partner with businesses and groups to create local platforms and initiatives for Circular practices.

A Digital Hub could map all the Circular kids services and touchpoints within a community

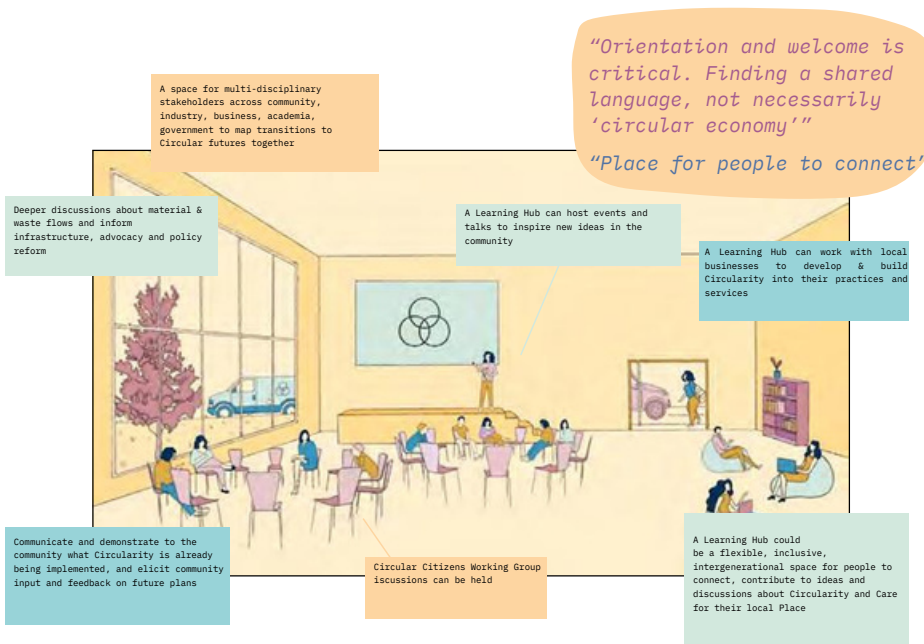
A Digital Hub or Things Library should dovetail with physical spaces and signals in the community, such as a local Circular brand or campaign

Transient community members might not always understand the nuances and expectations in Caring for Place. A Digital Hub may help in providing information and resources to those people, such as international students in universities

3. DIGITAL HUB & THINGS LIBRARY

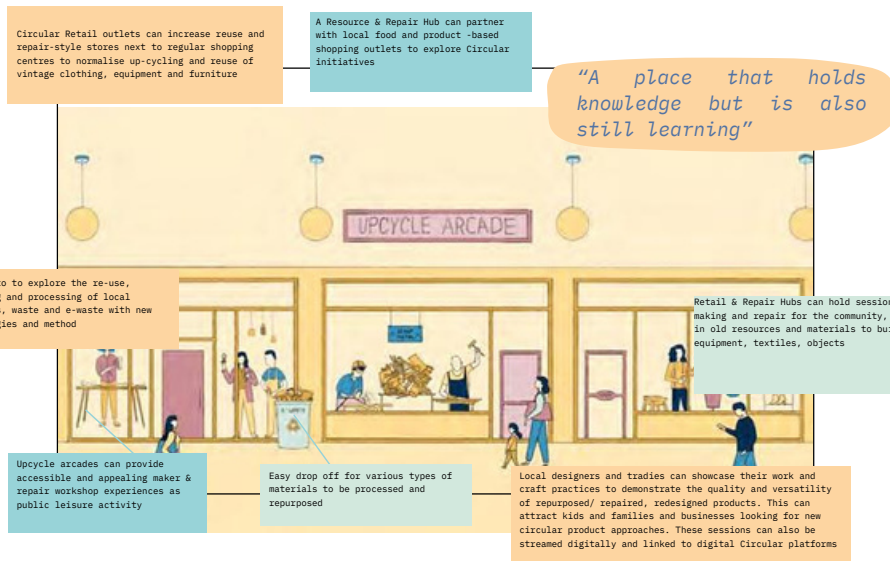
Leveraging local digital hubs and online resources to drive awareness of circular economy. A sharing space for circular services such as libraries of things where items such as toys, appliances are shared and reused.

Hub concepts



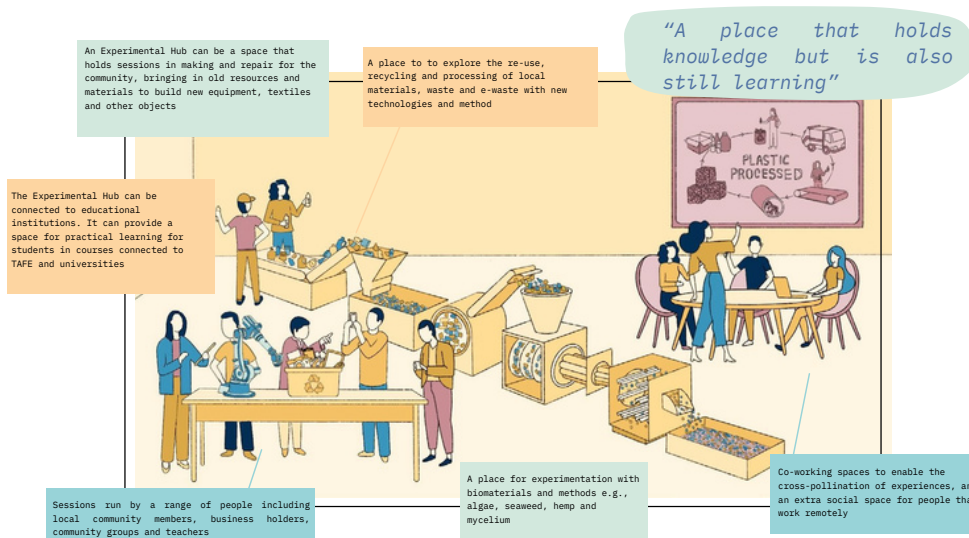
4. CIRCULAR LEARNING HUB

Deliver practical information, advice and courses on how to participate in the circular economy. Community members can gain an understanding and practical skills from organics recycling, to reuse recovery and regeneration.



6. RETAIL & REPAIR HUB

Get what you need without always buying it: A hub to repair goods, provide second-hand and reused products, and as a service sales models. Repairing appliances, clothes and textiles provides an important service and will support new jobs and businesses.



7. EXPERIMENTAL HUB




A space for experimental practices and learning. Communities may want a Hub to build awareness and share practices in reuse, recycling and repair. This can also be a space for the community to return high value items from batteries, e-waste to soft toys.

How-To




The co-creation process described over the following pages is a prototype for a community-led approach to establish and sustain Circular Economy Community Hubs in their local contexts.

We suggest that the co-creation process be creatively hacked as relevant to each context.

1. UNDERSTANDING THE CONTEXT OF PLACE AND COMMUNITY

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|  <p>Establish a core community group that is diverse and balanced</p> |  <p>Understand the qualities of Place</p> |  <p>Understand community and stakeholder needs</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who needs to be involved to help understand the place and people? • How does NSW Circular establish this core group? • What is the overarching circular vision and how can it be linked to this specific context? • Core group is to lead community engagement • Diverse types of people & representation | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore what caring for Country means to the core community group • What does it mean to care for Place, Each Other and Things? • Philosophical underpinnings of why this is worth doing • Describe the spirit of the place • Describe the bio-geo-physical characteristics of the context • Populate a map of the context with things the core team value and do in various locations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who are the members of this local community, what are their demographics, livelihoods, types of business and industry? • What are the needs of the community? • What are the needs of relevant stakeholders e.g., business, industry, government? |

2. EXPLORING CURRENT AND FUTURE CIRCULARITY



| | | |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>Map the circularity that already exists</p> |  <p>Explore the aspirations of what could be</p> |  <p>Engage the broader community to build on needs & goals</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify seeds for a circular economy that already exist - services, infrastructure, organisations, practices • What are the key waste streams? • What are the key barriers and challenges? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the desires and aspirations for circularity in this place? • Create measures, improvements and place-based goals (connecting to broader and longer term CE movement). • What have other people done in other contexts? • Draw from and feed into a NSW Circular collection of what other hubs have done • How can circularity enhance local relationships? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Validate the already discussed needs and goals • Explore further articulations of needs and goals with community members and other stakeholders • Participatory public engagements, surveys, town halls, etc. • Involve scientists where possible as experts in social, ecological and technological research |

How-To

3. ESTABLISHING A COMMUNITY HUB

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|  <p>Outline the shape of a context-specific hub</p> |  <p>Distil an articulation of relevant hub catalysts</p> |  <p>Find a space and investment</p> |  <p>Define the range of hub activities and engagement</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What could it be/do/look like? • Core team explores what opportunities are for a hub? • How could a hub help catalyse the previously determined goals/needs? • Do we even want or need a hub here? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to examples of hub catalysts provided (grouped thematically as social, material, ecological, educational and innovative) • Core community team to flesh out the shape of their hub using these examples • Refer to previous explorations - 'map of seeds of circularity' and 'what could be' | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where are the specific locations where the hub could flourish? • Who is the hub to engage with in the community and what are its channels of engagement, e.g., physical or digital? • What are its funding sources? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific practices and services, infrastructures and networks does the hub enable? • Refine the range of hub activities and engagement based on the following three prompts • How well does the hub concept suit the place-context? • How well does the hub concept suit the needs and aspirations of the local community? • How well might this hub concept dovetail into the already existing seeds for a circular economy in the context? |

4. SUSTAINING A COMMUNITY HUB

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|  <p>Catalyse the local circular networks</p> |  <p>Enable the hub to evolve + learn over time</p> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who else is (or should be) involved in this? • Who else could be involved that is not already in the core team? • What are the supporting services, people and infrastructure? • The core team engages with the rest of the community to connect up the seeds for circularity • How can the hub be better connected to supply chains and industry? • How does NSW circular support and connect with the hub? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check in and update goals and measures • NSW Circular can abstract a growing set of practices and learnings from the different types of hubs around NSW • Establish and maintain relationship with statewide network of community hubs • What are the ongoing sources of funding? • What are the emerging trends and dynamics that the community hub could tap into? |



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