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Comprehensive online-tool will inform and improve product stewardship action in Australia

Australia's first comprehensive study of the benefits and effectiveness of product stewardship has highlighted the significant environmental, social and economic outcomes delivered by product stewardship initiatives.

The **Assessing stewardship benefits and effectiveness study** was conducted by UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures and the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence. The project was funded by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Study co-author Dr Nick Florin, Institute for Sustainable Futures, said the study found significant scope to expand stewardship to tackle more of Australia's environmental challenges, including the need for next level waste avoidance and system-wide changes that support a truly sustainable circular economy.

The study reviewed performance data for 106 product stewardship initiatives, including 59 collective schemes (17-regulated) and 47 voluntary individual business initiatives.

The study found that in 2020:

- more than 330,000 tonnes of used products were collected for recycling, including televisions, computers, mobile phones, tyres, hospital PVC, paint, beverage, and agricultural containers, batteries, sports shoes and cosmetics;
- there were more than 12,000 recycling collection and drop off points available to the community; and
- several collective schemes contributed significant funds to charities.

Dr Nick Florin said the application of stewardship thinking has created a number of tangible benefits for business, the community and the environment.

"The study identified the emergence of more sustainable supply chains, including the elimination of hazardous materials; better product and packaging design; and, new markets for recycled materials," he said.

The data from the study will be published on the Product Stewardship Gateway:

(<https://gateway.stewardshipexcellence.com.au/>).

“The Product Stewardship Gateway is a detailed database of existing and emerging product stewardship activity in Australia. It includes publicly reported data on the environmental, social and economic outcomes that product stewardship initiatives are achieving, including contributions to waste avoidance and resource recovery targets,” Dr Florin said.

“The Product Stewardship Gateway will be an essential tool for policy makers, businesses, brands, local government and product stewardship initiatives to better understand the contribution stewardship is making, and the opportunity to improve the environmental and social benefits being delivered by product stewardship as Australia shifts to increased levels of circular economy action.

“Collective schemes and individual business initiatives have made significant contributions to addressing Australia’s waste problems and better managing the associated costs and impacts by requiring companies to take greater responsibility for the products they place on the market.

“Through this project we want to encourage more business led stewardship solutions to design out waste and pollution in product lifecycles, to keep products and materials circulating in the economy for longer, and for our current stewardship schemes to maximise their positive impact through innovations across supply chains and product lifecycles,” Dr Florin said.

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