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Product Stewardship Excellence Awards 2023 Winners Announced

Consumers today are demonstrating an increasing awareness of the environmental impacts associated with the products they purchase, use, and eventually discard. Authentic product stewardship is expanding its role of collecting and recycling, by evolving into a more holistic approach embraced by manufacturers and brands who put products into market.

Product stewardship encompasses all facets of a product's lifecycle, from design, durability and repairability, to effective consumer education, decarbonisation, using sustainable materials, eliminating hazardous materials, reuse, and increasing the amount of recycled content in new goods. Being a responsible product steward is not a new approach, but it certainly indicates that brands are increasingly taking greater environmental responsibility for their products.

This year's Product Stewardship Excellence Awards recognise outstanding commitment and innovation in product lifecycle management through national stewardship initiatives across diverse industries and sectors.

The Awards were presented at an event in Sydney on Thursday 2nd November. The Federal Minister for the Environment and Water, the Hon. Tanya Plibersek has been very clear about the need for Australia to transition to a circular economy and to place greater emphasis on designing-out waste and pollution while also prolonging the life of products and materials. This includes current government activity to regulate industries and products such as solar panels, packaging and small electronic products

Entrants this year reflected a growing number of companies, brands, and associations, that are acutely focused on minimising environmental impact, optimising resource use, and enhancing overall sustainability right through to managing products and materials at end-of-life.

Environmental issues are firmly on the agenda for governments, industry and the public, and the demand for effective national solutions is a high priority for all stakeholders. Best-practice product stewardship enables manufacturers and brands to transform their high-level ESG promises into real-world action that has meaning for consumers and the public.

The Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence congratulates all winners for their outstanding efforts in championing better product lifecycle management through product stewardship. Their commitment to environmental responsibility and innovation serves as an inspiration to other brands and industries.

Congratulations to the 2023 Product Stewardship Excellence Awards Winners:

Best Stewardship Outcomes Collective Scheme: Australia New Zealand Recycling Platform

Australia and New Zealand Recycling Platform (ANZRP) demonstrated exceptional commitment to product stewardship. They highlight how industry can work together to achieve sustainable outcomes through reuse, repair, and recycling. ANZRP's collection of 21,460 tonnes of e-waste in 2021/22 and the reuse of 91% of recovered materials in new products showcased their unwavering commitment to sustainable practices.

Best Stewardship Outcomes Large Business: Schütz Australia

Schütz Australia demonstrated an innovative approach and commitment to circular practices with their reusable packaging systems through responsible product management, minimising waste and maximizing the reuse of resources. Their Ticket Collection program, first initiated around 30 years ago, has grown rapidly recently. Schütz have successfully recovered around 16,000 tonnes of plastic over the last 4 years. They collect used containers, repair, and reuse them, and efficiently manage any that can't be reused through recycling.

Best Stewardship Outcomes SME: Cultivated

Cultivated advocates for longevity and repairability in the furniture circular economy. Their commitment to quality materials and thoughtful design ensures products endure, contributing to a more sustainable and circular approach in the industry.

Excellence in Design for Product Stewardship: A.H. Beard

A.H. Beard demonstrated exemplary efforts with their Origins mattress range. Addressing the environmental crisis of mattress accumulation in landfills, the company's innovative design approach tackles waste, pollution, and emissions, paving the way for a more responsible and sustainable mattress industry.

Product Stewardship Champion of the Year: Sophi MacMillan

An accomplished and respected product stewardship professional, Sophi MacMillan is a deserving recipient of the 2023 Product Stewardship Champion Award. Her contribution over two decades has been impactful, and always focused on uniting industry stakeholders towards action and solutions. From her work with the Vinyl Council and the Asia Pacific Vinyl Network through to her current role leading the ResiLoop scheme for the Australian Resilient Flooring Association, Sophi is a key player who understands the value and role of product stewardship in a sustainable future.

John Gertsakis, a director of the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence, expressed gratitude for the remarkable work of all entrants, stating, "*The Awards shine a light on those individuals and organisations that go above and beyond in managing products responsibly. This year's winners have demonstrated what is possible when manufacturers, brands and industry associations activate the potential of product stewardship.*"

The Centre applauds their achievements and expects that their success will inspire other businesses and industries to follow. As consumers we should expect much more from the brands we use and support.

The Centre looks forward to the continued growth of product stewardship thinking and action and encourages all participants to build on this momentum and drive positive change in their industry.

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About the Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence

The Product Stewardship Centre of Excellence was established in December 2020 by a consortium of UTS Institute for Sustainable Futures, the Australian Industry Group and Dentsu Creative in partnership with the Australian Government through the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water.

Product stewardship is a key implementation pathway for manufacturers and brands to operationalise ESG policies and circular economy objectives.

Our Mission:

To accelerate the uptake of product stewardship in Australia by mentoring, educating, and activating stakeholders across product and material supply chains.

Our Vision:

To see the wide scale adoption of product and material stewardship principles into business models that reduce waste generation and create positive environmental and social outcomes through good design, improved resource productivity and sustainable reuse.