

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

Design innovation transforming the mattress industry.

Founded in 1899, A.H. Beard remains a family-owned business manufacturing bedding for the Australian and New Zealand markets. In 2019, the company embarked on a 2.5-year innovation process aimed at ‘designing out’ waste, pollution, and emissions resulting with the creation of the A.H. Beard Origins mattress range.

The proliferation of mattresses in landfills is a significant environmental issue. The Australian Bedding Stewardship Council estimates that around 1.8 million mattresses are discarded each year in Australia alone, with a substantial portion ending up in landfills.

Taking a leadership role in creating a more responsible and eco-friendly mattress industry, A.H. Beard devised a five-point plan to promote a circular and sustainable approach to mattress production and drive heightened product stewardship outcomes. The plan focused on material sourcing, elimination of hazardous substances, recyclability, circular sustainability, stewardship, and impact.

Some key points the company addressed were:

- Using materials with a lower environmental footprint such as locally sourced wool and fabrics woven from sustainably grown eucalyptus trees.
- Prioritising the elimination of commonly found hazardous substances and chemicals during manufacturing.
- Developing what the company describes as the world’s first 100% recyclable pocket spring system and ensuring all mattress components can be separated, recycled, and repurposed at end-of-life.
- Collaborating with experts to ensure design decisions maximise renewable materials, incorporate post-consumer recycled content and promote stewardship.

Creating circularity of products, raising industry and consumer awareness

Insights into the varied sleep preferences among consumers had a role in informing A.H. Beard’s design philosophy for the Origins mattress collection, in an effort to ensure prolonged product life and value. With reparability in mind, mattresses can be easily disassembled, and components replaced if needed, enhancing product lifespan, and reducing disposal levels.

The company drives a closed-loop solution where mattress components are kept in circulation, to be reused in new products. The reduction of mattress waste in landfills and the potential for reusing materials contribute to a restorative and regenerative cycle, rather than simply mitigating harm.

A.H. Beard also has a program of engagement and education activities with customers and distributors to create awareness of responsible and sustainable consumer choices that promote longevity of use.

The company says its innovations have set a precedent for sustainable mattress design, to challenge the industry norm and inspire other manufacturers to adopt similar approaches.