



Best SME | Cultivated

Achieving full circular potential for furniture

Starting out as the product stewardship arm of Melbourne-based furniture business, Cult Design, Cultivated has evolved into a standalone brand offering buyback, refurbishment and recycling for any authentic design furniture pieces.

It actively engages with customers across corporate Australia to educate them on the benefits associated with furniture longevity and reuse.

The company has determined that, each year in Sydney alone, the equivalent of 800,000 three-seater sofas, 1.65 million dining tables or 3.4 million coffee tables, are thrown away. The Cultivated program seeks to keep authentic furniture out of landfill, support local manufacturing by contracting workshops to refurbish pieces that are resold and ensure anything to be recycled is handled appropriately using waste management partners. The buyback scheme gives consumers store credit for future purchases.

Furniture designed for repairability

Cultivated says authentic designer furniture is key to maximising its circular potential. The company believes repairability and longevity are not viable options for products made from inferior materials or featuring poor design.

A network of workshops across Australia minimise furniture movements across state lines, to reduce transport emissions. Cultivated engages with these suppliers to ensure alignment with its overarching circular economy and product stewardship aims, across the elements making up furniture pieces, including timbers, textiles. It has also embarked on a project to investigate new pathways for recycling polyurethane foam, a material with a lifespan of over 50 years. Foam analysis conducted by Cultivated showed the chemicals within the material could cause contamination if placed in landfill.

The company seeks to underpin its circular economy goals by:

- Minimising the use of finite resources
- Minimising the extraction of raw materials including iron ore, timber, and cotton
- Reducing the amount of landfill and incineration waste
- Preventing and avoiding unnecessary pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and energy exerted in a product's lifecycle.
- Reducing emissions from volatile organic compounds found in foams, fabrics, plastics, manufactured wood products and adhesives.

Beyond its work on furniture pieces, Cultivated has also prototyped a reusable protective chair transport bag to replace single-use plastic bags.



Full Project Life Management

Cultivated purchased over 110 unwanted chairs from the Art Gallery of NSW. After restoration they were used at three other venues, including two office blocks and a wine bar. As part of its audit program, Cultivated returns to these venues at regular intervals for the life of the furniture, to deliver on any warranty issues, maintenance needs, or advice on repair and reuse.

In 2023, the company trialled a digital product passport, placing a QR code on a chair at a trade show, which showed its history and refurbishment details. It recently launched its digital products passport, you can view an example [here](#). Cultivated seeks to roll out the technology to all its products within a year.