



# Enabling Design for Environmental Good TEXTILES SECTOR

Australia is the second highest consumer of textiles per person in the world. On average each Australian consumes 34 kilograms of new clothing per year and disposes of an average of 31 kilograms of clothing to landfill each year (DAWE 2021a). It is estimated that over the past 15 years, Australians increased their consumption of clothing products by 60% (ACTA, 2020), although textile waste disposed of in landfill has increased nationally by about 56% since 2010 (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2020b). **Overconsumption is arguably the biggest issue driving inefficient resource use in Australia's textiles sector, largely influenced by low product durability and longevity and constant seasonal fluctuation in trends.** Despite this, there is growing consumer demand for sustainable and ethically produced products, which has begun to prompt voluntary action by early adopters and some mainstream key players.

'Enabling Design for Environmental Good' is a project that uses insights and approaches from design, innovation, and sustainability to propose a suite of actions to improve the uptake of sustainable design for products and associated materials used in Australia.

This is an extract from the original project report, focusing specifically on the textile sector which was selected as it holds significant potential for impact on the Australian economy.

For the report, the textiles sector is considered to encompass all products comprised mainly of textiles including clothing and footwear, carpet, mattresses, furnishings, furniture and homewares, leather, and various other textiles used in both domestic, commercial, and industrial applications.

To encourage more action, key points of potential intervention along the supply chain have been identified. These 'cross-cutting levers' have been identified so that stakeholders can apply the research outcomes by specifically implementing Eco-Design initiatives at meaningful points in the development of products (see other reports for details on these). The four most important levers for improved Eco-Design and circularity in textiles are (in numerical/not priority order):



#### CROSS CUTTING LEVER 1

A national strategic plan would help to drive a significant increase in national levels of textile reuse and recycling (which are currently at very low levels). This approach could also lead to a dedicated national textiles industry circular economy plan to harness opportunities for sector growth and global leadership based on circularity.



#### CROSS CUTTING LEVER 4

Raising standards and specifications for Eco-Design appears to have the most widespread support from stakeholders within the textiles sector. Stakeholders emphasised the need to restrict the importation of clothing and textiles which are not recyclable or reusable locally or contain substances that limit the ongoing circularity of materials.



#### CROSS CUTTING LEVER 5

The proposed Eco-Design Innovation Fund would help to stimulate new investment in Eco-Design projects and related collaborative ventures for improved circularity.



#### CROSS CUTTING LEVER 8

Ambitious sustainable procurement for public sector uniforms could generate a significant level of demand for Eco-Designed and circular textiles with potential for far-reaching influence on design in other clothing categories, particularly driving innovation, and supply of reusable, repairable, and recyclable textile products.

The Enable Design for Environmental Good publication is available at [www.dcceew.gov.au](http://www.dcceew.gov.au)

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## TEXTILES SECTOR

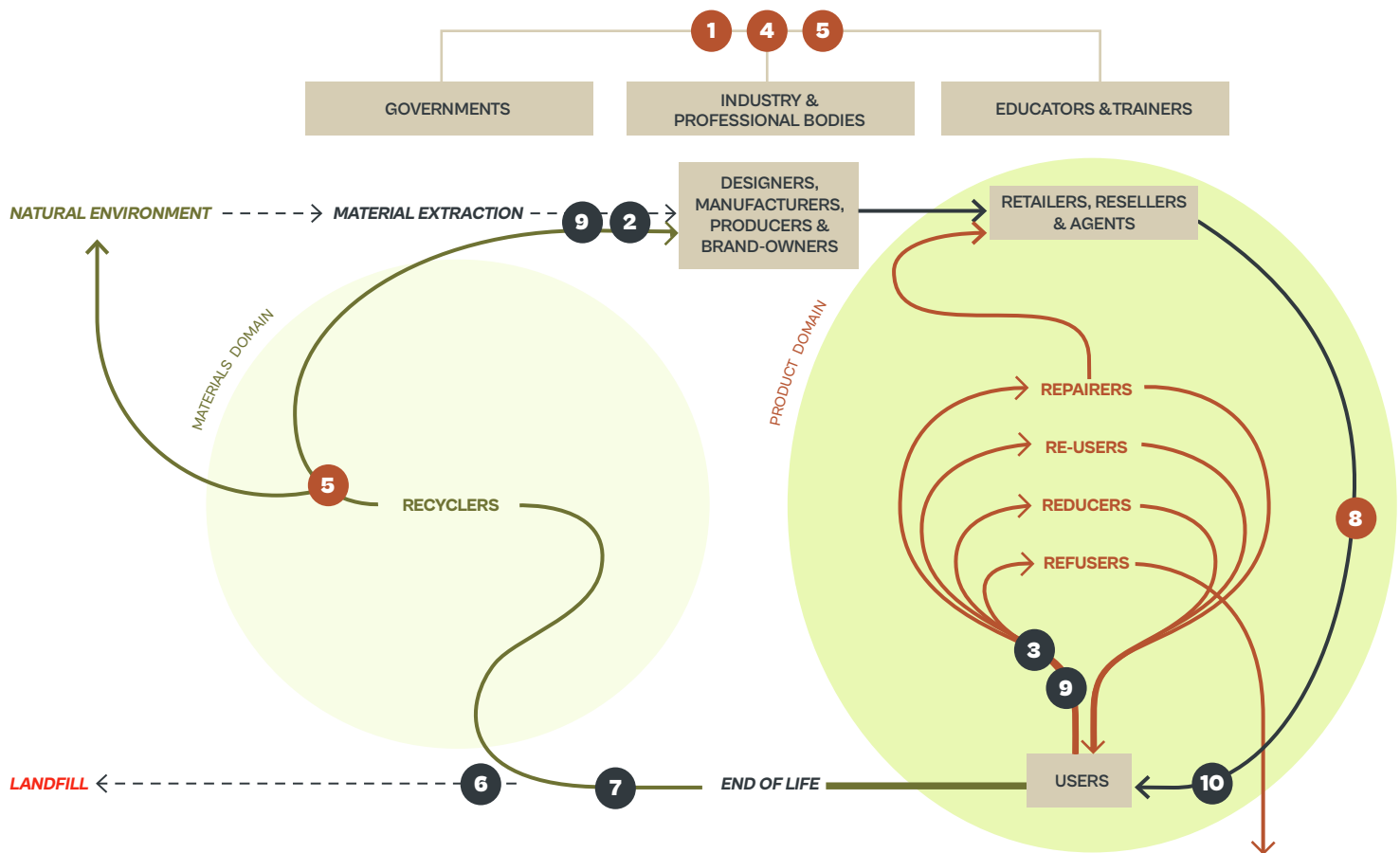
The diagram below is adapted from various circular economy diagrams, such as the Ellen MacArthur circular diagram, which represents the flow of materials from extraction/production to manufacture, use and end of life at landfill in the textiles industry.

It shows the specific points along the supply chain where recommended levers may be applied to improve Eco-Design and circularity. If levers are not formed and activated, material flows directly in a linear way through to landfill at the end. The diagram also shows two distinct circular loops:

Orange shows actions and pathways that keep a product in circulation for as long as possible (reuse and repair); and Green shows actions and pathways that keep material in circulation for as long as possible (recycling).

### Impacts of levers for Eco-Design within a product supply chain

Example: high visibility work wear (textiles sector)



- Cross-cutting lever 1**  
Strategy for Eco-Design for a Circular Australia
- Cross-cutting lever 2**  
Revise and energise product stewardship and extended producer responsibility
- Cross-cutting lever 3**  
Activate design for reuse, repair and refurbishment: the Reuse & Repair Reset program
- Cross-cutting lever 4**  
Raise standards and specifications for products and materials for national alignment with global best practice producer responsibility
- Cross-cutting lever 5**  
National funding for Eco-Design, circular supply initiatives and supply chain innovation: The Eco-Design Innovation Fund
- Cross-cutting lever 6**  
Phase in Accelerating Recyclables from Landfill Fees on priority products
- Cross-cutting lever 7**  
Financial and regulatory mechanisms addressing negative externalities
- Cross-cutting lever 8**  
Procurement power and market pull: Buy for Good program
- Cross-cutting lever 9**  
Professional education program to activate skills and capacity: Learning for Environmental Good and Up-skilling Program
- Cross-cutting lever 10**  
Accelerate public acceptance and support of design for environmental good

Responsible entities (Grey box)    Current dominant linear flow (Dashed line)    Preferred circular flow (Solid black line)    Products flow (Solid orange line)    Secondary Materials flow (Solid green line)