Circular economy: resource recovery

Liveability | Urban and rural

South Australia's environmental trend and condition report cards 2023

RESPONSE

Trend
Getting better

Condition
Fair

Reliability
Good

Trend

The trend of South Australia's transition to a circular economy has improved in the resource recovery sector since 2003–04.

A 'circular economy' utilises resources to their fullest potential. Waste avoidance, reuse and recycling are maximised while raw material extraction and landfilling are minimised.

To assess progress, South Australia annually evaluates recycling and resource recovery performance against waste strategy targets. According to the 2020–21 Circular Economy Resource Recovery Report, there has been an overall 35.3% reduction in waste sent to landfill since 2003–04. The latest waste diversion rates stand at 83.3% (top figure).

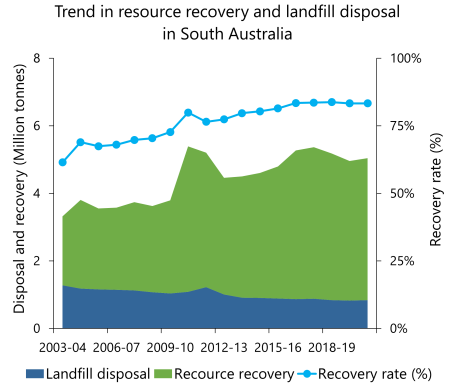
The report is based on a survey conducted within South Australia's waste and resource recovery sector.

Condition

South Australia's transition to a circular economy in the resource recovery sector is rated in fair condition, based on current high resource recovery rates.

The National Waste Report 2022 shows South Australia as the highest ranked jurisdiction in Australia for resource recovery and recycling rates. This makes South Australia a national leader in the transition to a circular economy from a resource recovery perspective. However, additional work is needed in some sectors to support the transition to a circular economy throughout the entire life cycle of products.

South Australia's transition to a circular economy is getting better based on high diversion rates in the resource recovery sector.



Why is a circular economy important?

A circular economy is a sustainable model for our future. It maximises the value we obtain from materials, reduces the amount of waste and pollution and regenerates the natural environment. A circular economy aims to avoid and reduce the amount of materials we use. It does this by circulating materials, such as organics into compost or other materials such as metals, paper and plastic, for as long as possible through repair, reuse and, as a last resort, recycling, without entering the environment for disposal.

What are the drivers?

The world population increased from 7 to 8 billion people between 2011 and 2022, resulting in a proportional rise in the demand for raw materials, estimated at 100 billion tonnes annually. This excessive use of resources contributes to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and higher greenhouse gas emissions. The transition towards a circular economy is being propelled by key factors such as advancements in recycling technologies, the adoption of sustainable procurement practices, and shifting attitudes towards sustainability.

What is being done?

The Government of South Australia is supporting the transition to a circular economy through developing waste strategies, phasing out single-use plastic products, investing in new or upgraded infrastructure to divert materials from landfill, promoting sustainable procurement to boost local market demand, and supporting local councils to roll out recycling education.

For further information see: technical information

Government of South Australia