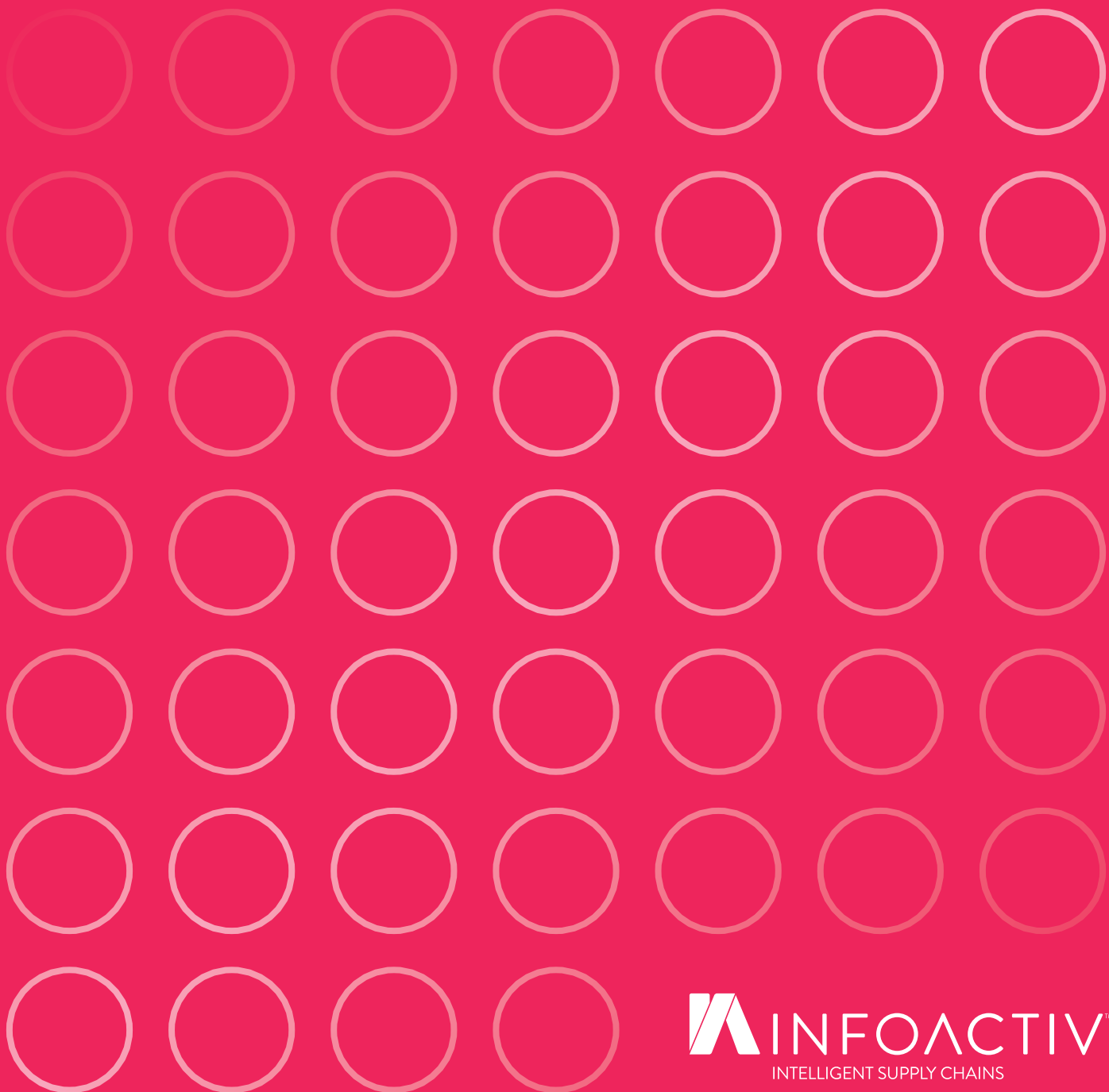


Product Stewardship Portal

Results of industry consultation



Disclaimer

This report has been prepared at the request of the Department of Environment and Energy in accordance with Infoactiv Australia Pty Ltd's scope of engagement.

This report is based on responses by industry stakeholders to an online survey and in interviews, and no warranty is given as to the completeness and accuracy of the information provided or statements made by survey responders or interviewees.

This report and analysis is provided solely for the purpose of evaluating the requirements for and developing a Product Stewardship portal, and is not to be relied on or used for any other purpose.

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Executive summary

With increasing societal concerns relating to product use and disposal, there has been an increase in the application of product stewardship principles beyond the simple 'product to market' focus. In an effort to go beyond compliance and adopt an end to end product lifecycle approach that also embraces circular economy thinking, more organisations have opted to pursue the development of voluntary programs across a variety of products and waste streams.

Product stewardship is an approach to managing the impacts of products on the environment and human health by manufacturers, importers, distributors and end-users of products. Product stewardship schemes exist in Australia at a national policy level through the Product Stewardship Act 2011, such as Product Stewardship (Televisions and Computers) Regulations 2011, and also through industry-led co-regulatory arrangements, most notably the Australian Packaging Covenant.

In order to promote, educate, develop and assist businesses in Australia to integrate product stewardship into their core 'go to market' strategy, their supply chains and business practices, the design and launch of a web-based Product Stewardship Portal is being developed by Infoactiv. With support from industry and the Department of Environment and Energy, this initiative will act as a catalyst to support the understanding and implementation of product stewardship by Australian businesses.

The Portal's objective is to increase product stewardship knowledge and competency among Australian businesses, through informing, educating, equipping and activating decision-makers across the product life cycle, to focus on better managing end-of-life issues and impacts.

To inform the development of this Portal, a consultation exercise was conducted with industry stakeholders to better understand their information needs, the perceived benefits and barriers to implementing product stewardship, and ascertain the types of resources that they would find most useful. This report presents the key findings from feedback gained through the industry consultation process.

The consultation involved two components: the launch of an online survey together with follow up in-depth interviews with selected organisations across varying roles and responsibilities (e.g. finance, marketing, service operations). The online survey produced 89 quality responses from a diverse range of industry sectors and professions. Follow up interviews were conducted with 20 individual business representatives to further explore some of the issues in more depth.

The feedback from industry stakeholders was generally positive, with most respondents expressing interest in a web-based resource for information and advice on product stewardship. Respondents were particularly interested in accessing relevant standards, guidelines, legislation, product-specific information, case studies and a directory of service providers. Over two-thirds of survey respondents said they or their colleagues would be likely to use a self-assessment tool ('health-check') that helped them improve their organisation's understanding and capability in product stewardship.

The consultation provided many valuable insights on current understanding and approach to product stewardship within organisations that will be used to inform the design of the Portal. These are summarised below

1) Product stewardship needs to be promoted and explained in business terms

While the meaning of 'product stewardship' is well understood amongst the people that were consulted for this project, there is recognition that this term may not be the most effective term for communicating to a business audience.

To maximise the effectiveness of the Portal in engaging a broad industry audience – beyond those who are already closely involved in product stewardship initiatives – more nuanced language may be required. The core principles of product stewardship, including life cycle thinking and corporate responsibility, need to be carefully explained by linking them to terminology that is more widely used or understood within companies, such as product sustainability, life cycle management and supply chain.

2) Product stewardship is not seen as a priority within many organisation

The survey identified a number of important barriers to the implementation of product stewardship within organisations as a key priority and driver of the business. These included a lack of time or staff resources, the perceived costs of implementation, lack of clear policy or the policy not integrated across the business, and lack of management support.

As a principle, it tends to be disconnected from core business priorities. The activities conducted by those interviewed were a direct result of the Key Performance Indicators, metrics and priorities set by the company linked to profit, consumer engagement and retention.

Implications for the Product Stewardship Portal:

- product stewardship should be reframed as a core business strategy rather than an environmental initiative that is relevant to business growth and responsible prosperity.
- the Portal should recognise and promote the business case for product stewardship, including data and case studies on the costs and benefits of voluntary programs versus regulated schemes.

3) Product stewardship is a broad concept that must be tailored to different target groups

The results of the consultation suggest that the Portal should be tailored to the particular circumstances and needs of particular groups or sectors.

A high priority target group that was identified through the interviews is Small to Medium Enterprises (SME's), who generally do not have the same resources to devote to product stewardship as larger companies. This group would benefit from simple guidelines and templates that they could use to help them implement product sustainability without the need for a specialist internal resource.

4) Product stewardship is seen by many organisations as important to protecting corporate reputation

The most commonly identified benefit of product stewardship according to the survey respondents is 'protecting or enhancing corporate reputation'.

This insight can be used in the development of the Portal in a number of ways, for example:

- the importance of product stewardship for corporate reputation and brand value should be given a particular focus
- case studies could be used to show how product stewardship has helped to enhance the corporate reputation of leading companies, and how for other companies, a lack of attention to product impacts in corporate supply chains has had a significant impact on reputation, advocacy and brand value.

Introduction

The awareness, adoption and practical application of Product Stewardship in businesses in Australia is of increasing importance based on multiple drivers such as Product Stewardship Regulation and community expectations of organisations placing product in the Australian market.

In order to engage with business in a practical way on product stewardship, it is necessary to address a potential gap in the market around access to information and tools designed specifically for business in adopting product stewardship and responsible lifecycle principles in their day to day business practices.

A web-based product stewardship Portal, designed for businesses, is being developed by Infoactiv, with support from industry and the Department of Environment and Energy, to support the understanding and implementation of product stewardship by Australian businesses.

This report provides an overview of the objectives and proposed content of the Portal. It also presents the results of the initial industry consultation that was undertaken to inform and guide its development.

About the product stewardship portal

The primary objective is to increase product stewardship knowledge and competency among Australian businesses. This will be achieved through informing, educating, equipping and activating decision-makers across the product life cycle to eliminate or minimise environmental and social impacts while highlighting the business benefits of product stewardship. Previous research and anecdotal evidence suggests that the benefits may include:

- protecting or enhancing corporate reputation
- development of new products or services
- access to markets that place a high priority on environmental performance
- reduced costs as a result of improved material or energy efficiency.

The Portal will be a web-based decision-support system that will allow a company to self-assess its performance based on core stewardship principles. The self-assessment tool will provide the user with high-level recommendations or guidance that the company and its suppliers can implement to improve their stewardship performance.

The Portal will follow life-cycle thinking principles and aims to be holistic and systematic. The emphasis of the Portal is self-assessment and improvement oriented rather than quantitative, and it will be free to use. It compliments most existing life cycle assessment packages by focusing on business opportunities and not just impacts.

The Portal's development will be informed by an expert Advisory Group as well as targeted stakeholder consultation and engagement.

Objectives

The Portal will play an important role in:

- educating business and related stakeholders about the environmental, commercial, social and consumer benefits of adopting a stewardship approach that contributes to achieving a circular economy
- allowing progressive companies to differentiate themselves based on life cycle thinking and relevant environmental and social issues
- helping identify and activate environmental improvement priorities from materials selection, design and production through to distribution, use and end-of-life management.

Product Stewardship Portal Results of Industry Consultation

The Portal will fill a major information and business education gap related to achieving higher levels of stewardship performance among companies in Australia.

Target audience

The Portal will target local manufacturers, product importers, retailers and others who might influence the environmental performance of manufactured goods. More specifically, the Portal will be relevant to:

- supply chain and procurement managers
- marketing and product category managers
- logistics and warehouse personnel
- environment, sustainability and waste management professionals
- EH&S, OH&S, Compliance, Quality and Risk managers
- product designers and engineers.

How would a business use the portal?

The Portal aims to drive creative business thinking that can demonstrate the multiple benefits that can be achieved by implementing product stewardship principles and solutions. It will:

- be simple to use
- facilitate easy-adoption and application by most decision-makers in business
- provide a high quality, engaging user experience through powerful user interface (UI) and experience (UX) design, with a smart web-based decision support system that has business relevance.

The Portal is expected to become a significant product stewardship resource, providing current and detailed information for any company or organisation involved in the manufacture, distribution, use or recovery of products in Australia.

A tool that is produced by business for business will directly inform, educate and highlight the commercial, environmental and consumer benefits of responsible product life cycle management.

Purpose of this report

This report presents the results of consultation with industry stakeholders to inform the design and launch of the on the Product Stewardship Portal in Australia. Funding for this preliminary work was provided by the Department of Environment and Energy

Approach

This initial work on the Portal involved three stages: project initiation; an industry survey and interviews; and analysis and reporting.

	Project initiation	Industry survey and interviews	Analysis and reporting
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a shared understanding of the project's goals and the steps required to attain these goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture information and feedback from industry for subsequent analysis and reporting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the Department of Environment and Energy to inform Portal recommendations and next steps
Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of existing resources Establish project Working Group and initial meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> On-line survey Targeted industry interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Descriptive analysis of the survey data and interview feedback
Outputs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Final project plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Aggregated survey results Exploration of survey findings through interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Draft and final reports including analysis, interpretation, conclusions and recommendations

Online industry survey

The target group for the online survey included decision makers involved across the product value chain, i.e. manufacturing, distribution, retailing, procurement etc. The survey was promoted over a three-and-a-half-week period from 3-29 March 2017. The target was to get 100 responses to the survey. By 29 March 2017, 89 usable responses had been received.

The questions used in the on-line survey are provided in Appendix 1.

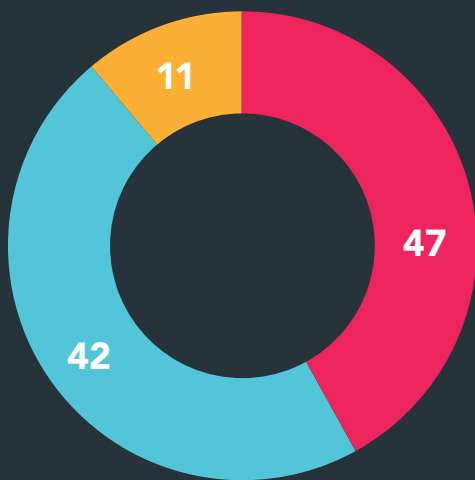
Survey respondents

The survey respondents represented a good mix of organisations and functional roles. Most classified their organisation as either small (<49 employees) or large (>250 employees) with fewer in between (Figure 1).

In terms of business activity, the highest percentage of respondents were in manufacturing (39%), followed by business services/consulting, wholesale, and waste management (Figure 2).

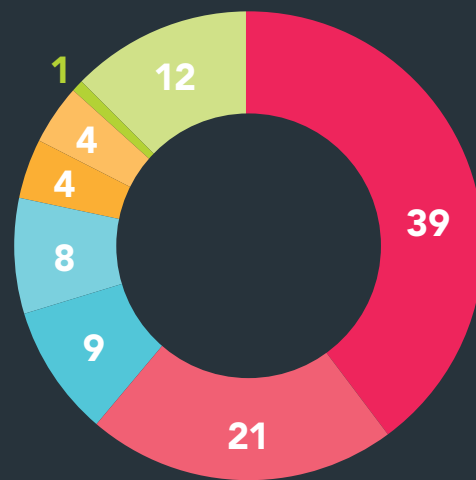
Some caution should be used in interpreting the survey data because companies with an existing interest in product stewardship are more likely to have responded to the survey. The results may not represent the views of the wider business community.

Figure 1: Respondents by size of their organisation



- Large organisation
- Medium-sized organisation
- Small organisation

Figure 2: Respondents by primary business activity



- Manufacturing
- Business services/consulting
- Wholesale
- Waste management
- Industry association
- Retail
- Distribution/logistics
- Other

A wide range of product sectors were represented, with the highest percentage of respondents from food and beverage, packaging, electrical and electronic products, or building products and lighting (Figure 3). The products that only attracted a few responses tended to be those with relatively new product stewardship schemes, such as paint, mattresses and textiles.

Survey respondents had diverse roles within their organisation, although two-thirds were in either management or environment/sustainability roles (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Number of respondents by product sector



Figure 4: Number of respondents by primary role



Industry interviews

Targeted industry interviews allowed the team to gather more detailed feedback and suggestions, and to explore some of the issues raised in the survey.

The aim was to interview organisations at different stages of the product life cycle (design, production, retail, service, remanufacture, recycling etc.). Organisations were selected on the basis that they were already involved or familiar with the concept of product stewardship / lifecycle thinking and thus were therefore most likely to provide useful feedback on the Portal's value and applications.

Sixteen interviews were conducted: six face-to-face and 10 by telephone. These included representatives from 5 industry associations and 6 companies.

The interviews were not recorded or transcribed. The answers to questions that are included in this report are paraphrased from notes, rather than being direct quotes.

Survey findings

Product stewardship within organisations

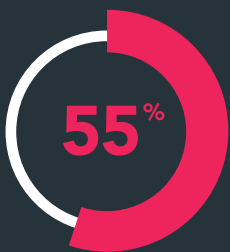
Understanding Product Stewardship

Product stewardship is defined in the Product Stewardship Act 2011 as:

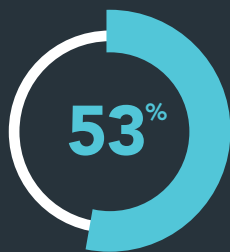
‘an approach to reducing the environmental and other impacts of products by encouraging or requiring manufacturers, importers, distributors and other persons to take responsibility for those products.’

While this definition is likely to be well understood within policy and academic circles, the survey explored its relevance to practitioners to ensure that the Portal is written and communicated in a way that is appropriate and relevant to its primary target market.

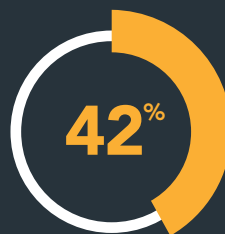
When asked which of the following statements best describe what product stewardship means within their organisation, the highest levels of support were for:



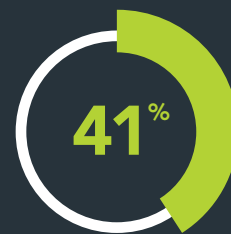
responsibility for
product sustainability
over the life cycle



taking responsibility
for product recovery
at end of life



designing
products to be
more sustainable



environmental
management of products
over the full life cycle

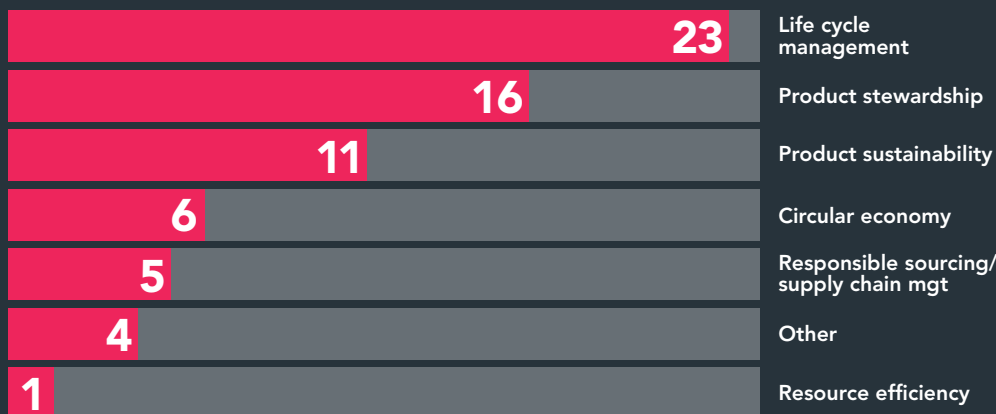
Most of those interviewed understood that product stewardship involves the full life cycle. However, interpretations varied depending on product impacts, the organisation's level of influence (e.g. on product design) and the activities undertaken in different parts of the business. One manufacturer, for example, note that "for us its mainly end of life because we don't design products or packaging in Australia". The interviewee from the property sector noted that "it has a very different meaning in our sector compared to manufacturing".

This feedback suggests that the Portal will need to target some of its resources to particular sectors, recognising differences in product impacts and varying levels of involvement in activities such as product design and procurement.

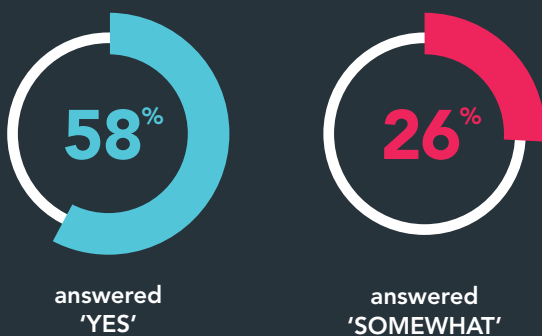
Is Product Stewardship the right term?

When asked to select the most effective terminology to communicate the principle of product stewardship to a business audience (Figure 5) 'life cycle management' received the highest level of support (35% of respondents). The term 'product stewardship' received the second highest level of support (24%) followed by product sustainability, circular economy and responsible sourcing/supply chain.

Figure 5: Most effective term to communicate product stewardship
(Number of Respondents)



Respondents indicated that they had a reasonable level of knowledge about product life cycles. When asked if they understood the social, environment and health impacts of their products/supply chains...



This issue was explored further in interviews. There was mixed feedback on the relevance of the term product stewardship, for example:

“It’s a good term but it **needs to be supported with education**. Internally we break it down into **components that make sense**, e.g. life cycle thinking or end of life.”

“**I wouldn’t have known what it meant until I took this job**. People involved in some aspect of product management would talk about smart use, unpacking value, life cycle management - **its more customer driven**.”

“A lot of people don’t understand what it means – **perhaps its dated. A brand refresh would be good**. It’s a bit vague and could be updated.”

“**We don’t generally use that term** within our company – we bring it under the banner of product sustainability.”

“Product stewardship is an appropriate term when dealing with waste streams because it focuses on responsible parties. **It puts a responsibility on the producer/importer**.”

One interviewee from the manufacturing sector who is closely involved in product stewardship provided an insight into why the term 'life cycle management' might have received strong support from survey respondents:

“For me, Product Stewardship is where environmental, health, and safety matters pertaining to the product are considered and everyone involved in the lifespan of the product is called upon to take responsibility to reduce the products environmental, health, and safety impacts. Product Stewardship is an inclusive term that considers all stakeholders and their requirement to take care of the product through the life cycle.

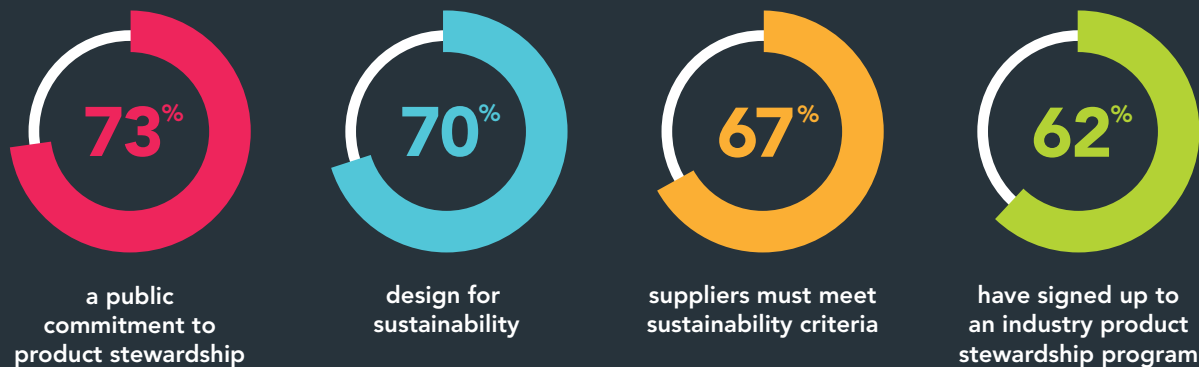
Life cycle management on the other hand is a process of managing the lifecycle of a product from inception, through engineering, design and manufacture, to service and disposal. This is a very manufacturing centric definition and is far narrower than product stewardship in my view. This term usually refers to the manufacturers actions throughout the life cycle and fails to consider other stakeholders. For example, we can control design, manufacturing, servicing the product, but we have no control over what the consumer does with it. It's better to engage all stakeholders.”

This person believes that life cycle management might be useful to communicate what manufacturers can do (i.e. what's directly under their control) on the way towards stewardship. In other words, he sees life cycle management as a sub-set of product stewardship.

Product Stewardship activities

Survey respondents provided feedback on which actions their organisation was taking to implement product stewardship, and the extent of their implementation (i.e. no implementation, has developed implementation plan, implementation in progress, or monitoring outcomes of implementation).

The most common actions being taken amongst those who responded are:



Not surprisingly, feedback from the interviews highlighted important differences between sectors, both in the material issues and appropriate responses. For example:

- In the automotive recycling sector, stewardship issues include compliance with laws covering recovery of refrigerant gases, liquids and batteries prior to crushing and finding end markets for the recovery shredder floc
- In property development and construction, sustainability criteria need to be integrated in procurement processes for products and materials
- Other issues that were mentioned included energy and water efficiency, removing heavy metals and supply chain management.

Once again this highlights the need for the Portal to focus on some of the specific issues for each key industry or product sector.

Approach to product stewardship

Respondents were asked to rate the relevance of different statements about the relevance of product stewardship to their organisation. The purpose of this question was to gauge their organisation's attitude to and commitment to product stewardship.

These responses suggest a high level of support for and involvement in product stewardship activities (Table 1). Over three quarters of respondents (80%) agreed that product stewardship was very important to their business and they had a strategy or plan.

A significant proportion of organisations appear to face important internal constraints, for example 32% agree or strong agree with the statement that 'we'd like to be more proactive... but don't really know what to do'.

It was clear from the interviews that the priority placed on product stewardship within organisations varies widely. One manufacturer stated that product stewardship was considered to be very important, even though it wasn't a high priority for their consumers compared to quality and cost.

Others suggested that product stewardship was a lower priority than other performance criteria. One interviewee, for example, commented that while people in their organisation genuinely felt responsible for the impact of products, product stewardship was prioritised

below activities that generate income for the business. In the property sector sustainability is included in proposals for construction work but it was a low priority for customers compared to issues such as safety and 'liveability' criteria.

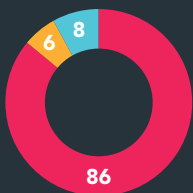
Interviewees within one large company highlighted a range of cultural and commercial barriers:

- the main drivers internally are day to day business pressures
- unless a project has major cost, revenue or customer retention benefits implementation will be limited
- product stewardship will only get traction if it is expressed in key performance indicators.

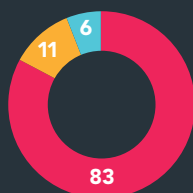
- One of the challenges for the Portal, and for other product stewardship advocates within government and industry, is to overcome this narrow view of product stewardship as separate from mainstream business activities. Product stewardship should be reframed as a core business strategy rather than just an environmental or sustainability initiative.

Table 1: Statements about the relevance of product stewardship in organisations

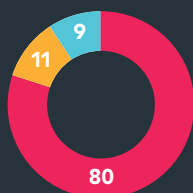
● Agree or strongly agree ● Disagree ● Not relevant



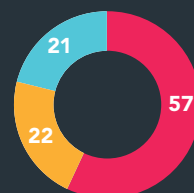
We have started to think about the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products



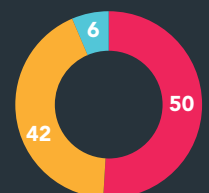
We are actively involved in any least one aspect of product stewardship, e.g. design for sustainability or product take-back



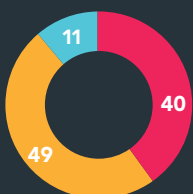
Product stewardship is very important to our business and we have a strategy or plan



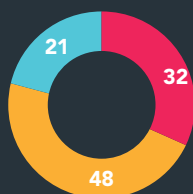
We have a committee with multiple stakeholders to investigate and generate ideas and implement greener initiatives



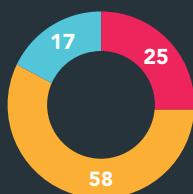
We believe that product stewardship is integral to our business and its future growth



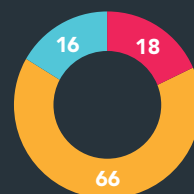
We would only consider implementing product stewardship if there was a clear business value or minimal cost to the organisation



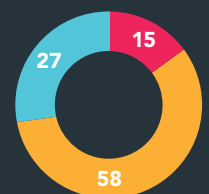
We'd like to be more proactive in managing the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products but don't really know what to do



We have limited ability to reduce the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products due to internal constraints (e.g. limited resources)



Product stewardship is only marginally important or relevant to our business



We don't really understand the implications of product stewardship for our business

Benefits of Product Stewardship

Survey respondents were asked to rank the importance of particular benefits of product stewardship to their organisation.

For their highest rated benefit, respondents were most likely to nominate 'reducing the environmental impact of our products on the environment' (44% of respondents), followed by 'reduce costs' (18%) or 'meet customer requirements' (17%).

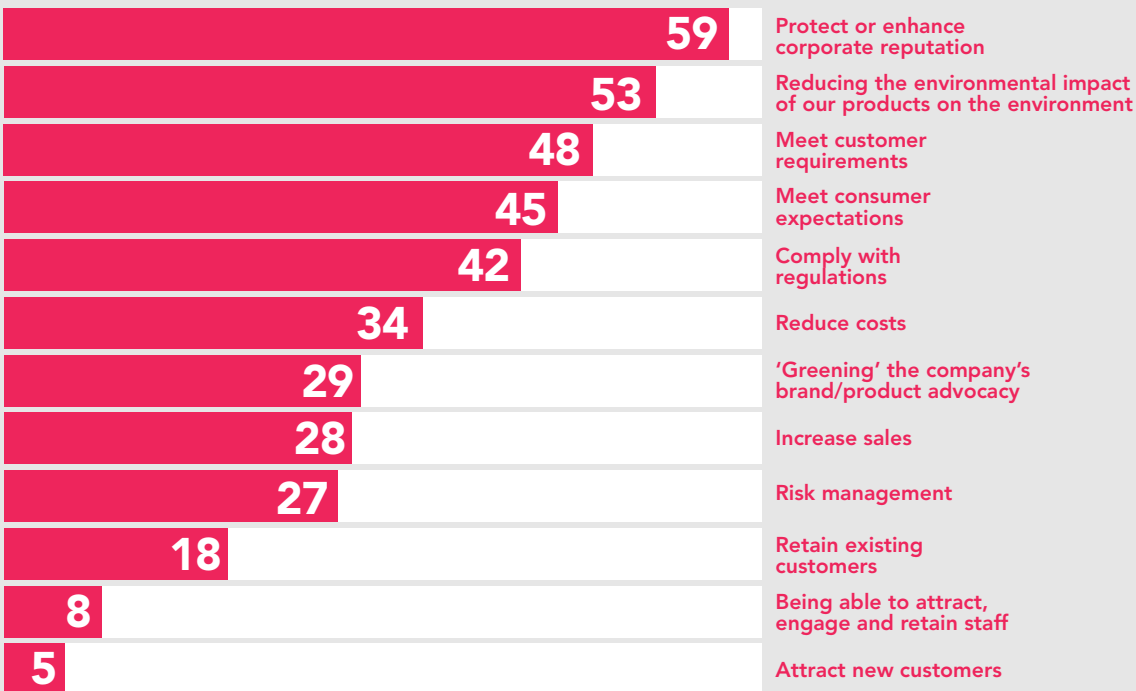
Figure 6 combines the percentage of respondents that ranked each benefit either first, second or third. This shows a slightly different hierarchy, with the highest percentage of respondents (59%) nominating 'Protect or enhance corporate reputation'. Direct and

quantifiable commercial benefits, such as reducing costs, increasing sales and attracting new customers were much less likely to be nominated as perceived benefits.

Feedback from interviewees was consistent with this result. While most interviewees did not mention any direct commercial benefit, they highlighted indirect benefits to reputation and potentially sales. For example:

- "Consumers are more interested in companies that have strong CSR presence"
- "There's the warm and fuzzy things – our large customers know we do these things and they like their partners to have a good environmental policy".

Figure 6: Percentage who rated each benefit of product stewardship as one of their top three benefits



Barriers to implementing Product Stewardship

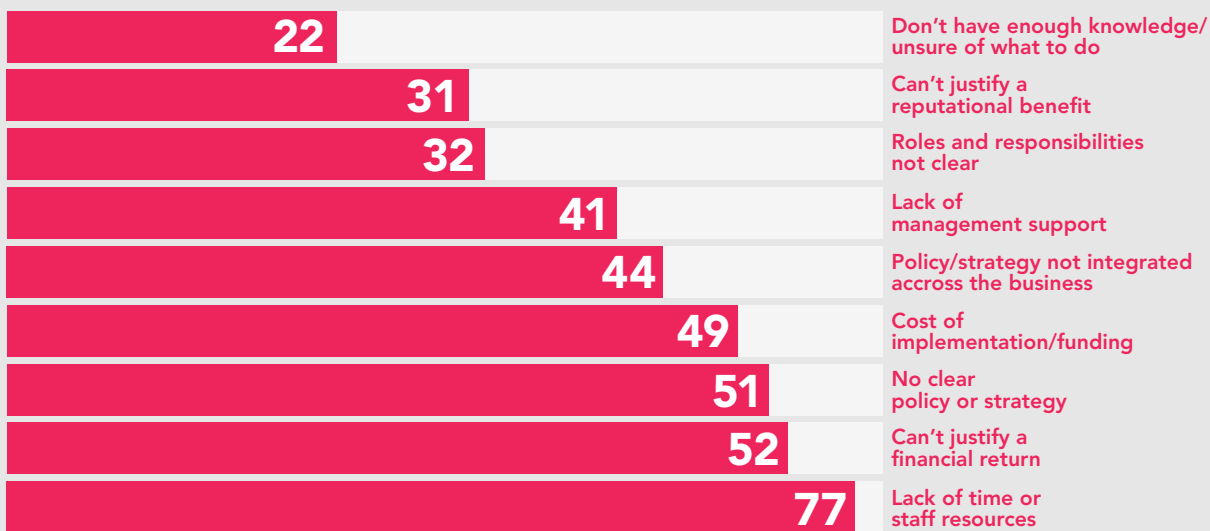
Survey respondents were also asked to rank the importance of different barriers to product stewardship to their organisation. For their highest rated barrier, respondents were most likely to nominate 'lack of management support' (24%), 'can't justify a

financial return' (24%) or 'cost of implementation/funding' (23%).

Figure 7 ranks the barriers according to the percentage of respondents who ranked each barrier as one of their top 3. By far the biggest barrier in this ranking was 'lack of time or staff resources', followed by 'can't justify a financial return' (52%) and 'no clear

policy or strategy' (51%). 'Lack of management support' was mentioned by 41% of respondents, reinforcing the importance of a corporate level commitment, policies and targets to support product stewardship implementation. Lack of knowledge is not seen as a significant barrier for most respondents.

Figure 7: Percentage of respondents who rated as one of their top three barriers



Lack of time and resources was also a theme that emerged from interviews, with these acting as a barrier to the implementation of action-orientated product stewardship programs. One interviewee commented that their sustainability committee had limited the information they would ask for from suppliers because they knew that they wouldn't have the resources to review and audit the information properly.

Some interviewees commented that there is a disconnect between product stewardship or corporate social responsibility principles and

the business priorities and KPIs set by the relevant functional areas in their business. Product stewardship, circular economy thinking and other shared value/CSR principles that are not closely connected with the pursuit of profit and customer engagement are not considered a priority. Product Stewardship is at times achieved through the pursuit of process and cost efficiency as an additional gain, rather than leading from the front, which can succeed if sanctioned by executive management and executed through activation of cross-functional teams.

Other barriers that were mentioned during interviews included:

- difficulties accessing information from companies in complex, global supply chains
- finding out what's possible
- the costs of recycling at end of life ('who will pay?')
- not understanding the business value of doing something
- lack of local reprocessing facilities for certain products.

Status of product stewardship within organisations

Survey responses to the question 'Please review the following product stewardship statements and rate their relevance to your organisation' (Table 2) highlight the different stages of implementation within organisations. Most signatories (88%) believe product stewardship is important to their business, and a slightly lower percentage have started to think about their impacts (86%). Progressively smaller percentages are doing something about it (83%); have a strategy or plan (78%); and have a committee to coordinate environmental initiatives (56%).

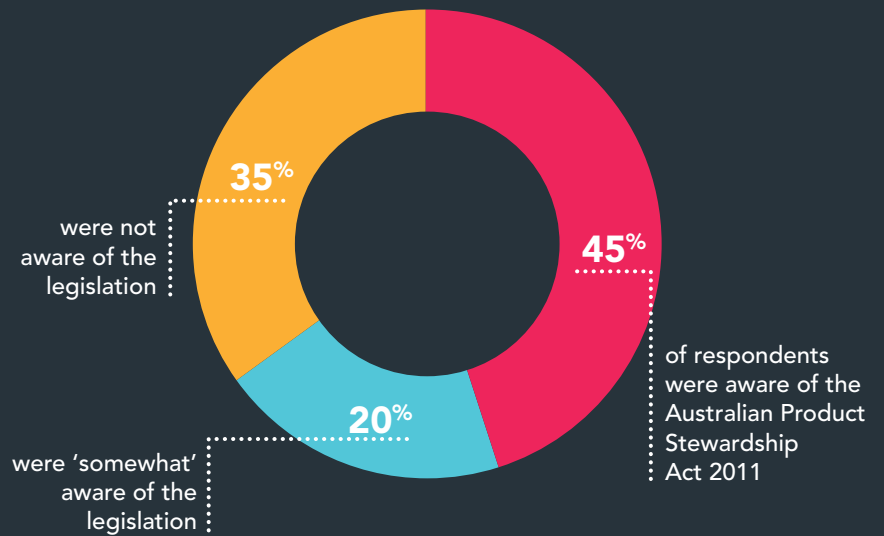
The lack of a clear business case or value to the organisation is not always perceived to be a barrier, with only 40% of respondents agreeing that this is necessary for the organisation is to take action. This is consistent with earlier feedback that the most important benefit of product stewardship for most organisations is to protect or enhance corporate reputation (Figure 6).

Table 2: Relevance of statements about product stewardship (Agree or strongly agree %)



Awareness of legislation

The lack of awareness of the Australian Product Stewardship Act 2011 amongst those surveyed has implications for the success of the Australian Government's product stewardship activities. A promotional campaign to raise awareness of the legislation, existing product stewardship schemes (either regulated or certified), and other products under consideration by the Government would help to raise the profile of product stewardship and support the business case for action within organisations. The portal will help augment businesses readiness for that potential Regulation.



Feedback on the product stewardship portal

Current sources of information

To access information on product stewardship survey respondents are most likely to turn to their industry association (55%) or the internet (56%), followed by a professional association, colleagues within their organisation, industry peers or a government agency (Figure 8).

The common use of internet searches suggests that web-based resources such as the Product Stewardship Portal are an appropriate medium for knowledge sharing and capacity building within industry.

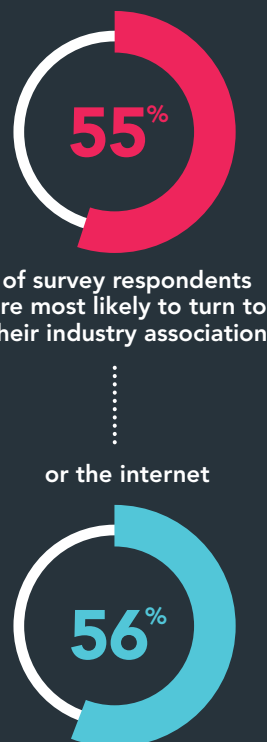
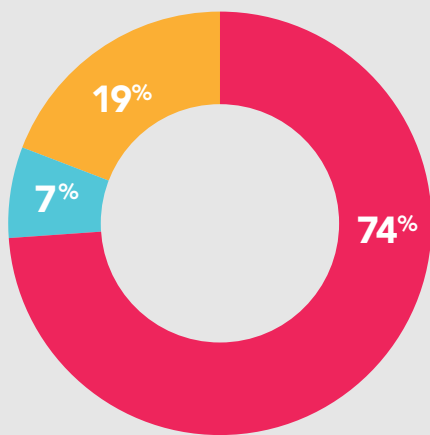


Figure 8: Current sources of information on product stewardship (number of respondents)

49	Internet search
48	Industry association
30	Professional association
28	Colleagues within my organisation
27	Industry peers
26	Government agencies
19	Industry journals
10	Universities
7	Other

Interest in the product stewardship portal



- of all survey respondents said they would like to have access to a single source of information on product stewardship from a web portal
- said they would not like to
- were not sure

This issue was explored further in the interviews. Most interviewees were interested in the idea of a Product Stewardship Portal but were unsure of its value to a broader audience. A number of target groups were suggested but there was a consistent view that SMEs were more likely to benefit. The following responses were typical:

- “Yes, if it saves them time, for example by providing lots of information on product sustainability legislation and obligations in one place. SMEs, local representatives of global firms and retailers would be most likely to use it”
- “I have all the information I need and I know who to talk to, to get stuff I don’t know. But then I’m heavily involved in product stewardship and so is my organisation. Organisations that are just getting started might get more out of it”
- “Large organisation like ours, probably not as we drive from the centre. It could be very valuable for SMEs to provide guidance”

It was recognised that SMEs, while most likely to benefit from the Portal, would also be amongst the most challenging to engage:

- “Small companies who want to do the right thing - maybe. But then most small companies couldn’t give a toss, they’re just trying to survive. Bigger companies have sustainability policies but then they already have people to do this sort of thing”
- “Those already doing product stewardship might be curious and want to know more but they may be the wrong audience. It would be good to target those who aren’t involved e.g. free riders on schemes - try to get to them. The other target group is those who are not directly obvious or engaged, but how do you get to them?”

Features of the portal

When asked which features of the proposed portal they would most like to see included, the features that most respondents regarded as 'very important' were:

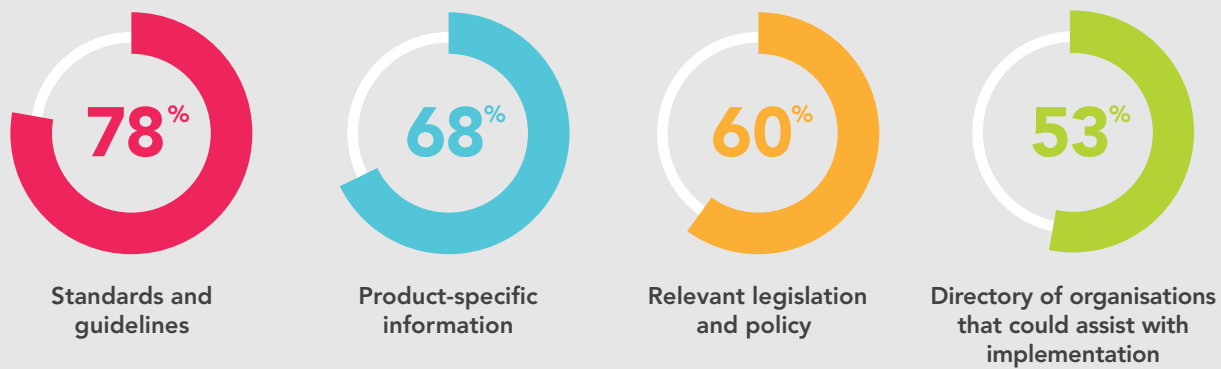
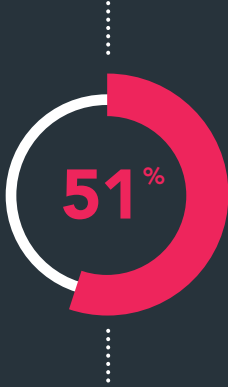


Figure 9: Aspects of the portal that respondents would like to see included (number rated 'very important')



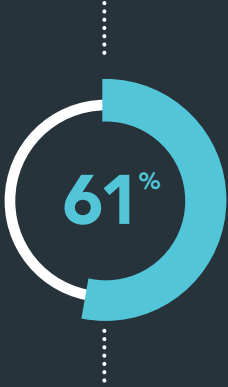
Self-assessment tool

The self-assessment tool ('health check') was considered to be a 'very important' aspect of the Portal by



of all survey respondents

Respondents in a management role were more likely than those in all other roles to be interested in the health check, with



rating it as a very important aspect of the tool.

When asked directly if they or their colleagues would be likely to use a self-assessment tool to improve their understanding and capability in product stewardship, 70% said they would use it (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Whether or not respondents are likely to use a self-assessment tool

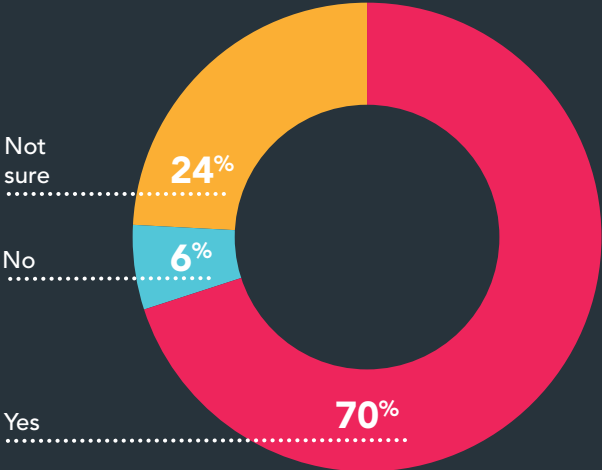
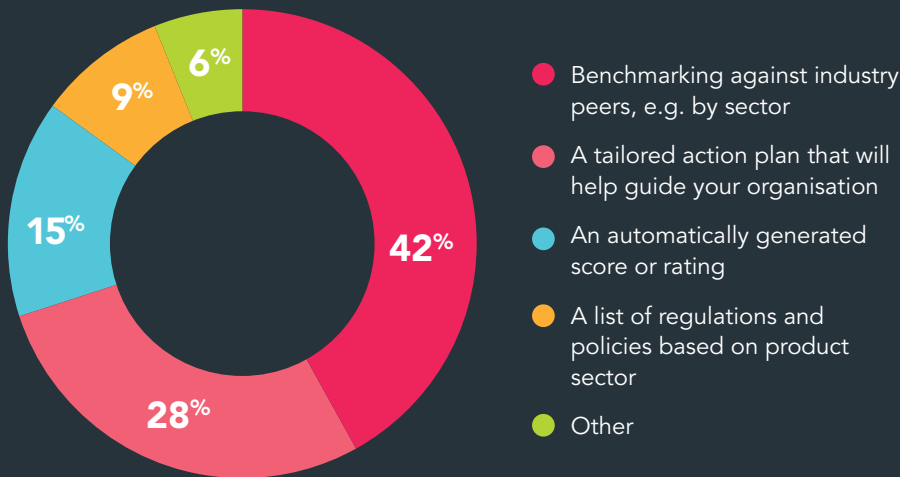
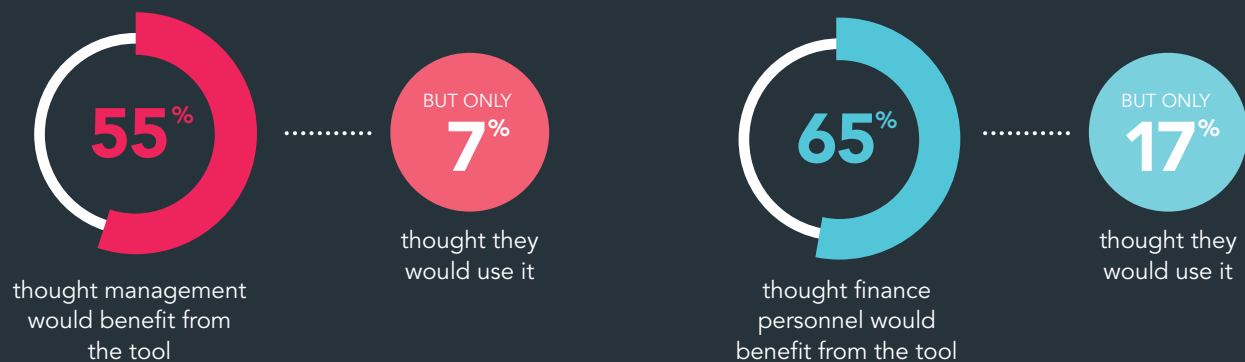


Table 3: Aspects of the self-assessment tool that would be most beneficial (Responses %)



Potential users of the portal within organisations

Respondents were asked which people in their organisation would be most likely to use and benefit from a web-based product stewardship tool. Many of the people that respondents thought would benefit from the tool were considered least likely to use it, for example:



Similar gaps were evident for marketing, operations and facilities.

The group that was considered most likely to use and benefit from the tool was environment and sustainability personnel (by 70% of respondents) followed by product development (58%).

Conclusions

The feedback received through consultation with industry stakeholders on the Product Stewardship Portal was positive, with respondents expressing strong interest in having access to a web-based resource for information and advice. Survey respondents were most interested in accessing information such as standards, guidelines, legislation, product-specific information, case studies and a directory of service providers.

While not rated as highly as other aspects of the Portal, over two-thirds of survey respondents said they or their colleagues would be likely to use a self-assessment tool ('health-check') that helped them improve their organisation's understanding and capability in product stewardship.

The consultation provided many valuable insights on product stewardship within organisations that will be used to inform the design of the Portal. These are presented below.

1) Product stewardship needs to be promoted and explained in business terms

While the meaning of 'product stewardship' is well understood amongst the people that were consulted for this project, there is recognition that it may not be the most effective term for communicating to a wider business audience.

Most respondents are already engaged in at least one aspect of product stewardship, such as design for sustainability, working with suppliers, or membership of an industry stewardship scheme. These tend to be seen as discreet activities, however, rather than elements of a broader 'product stewardship' strategy.

To maximise the effectiveness of the Portal in engaging a broad industry audience – beyond those who are already closely involved in product stewardship initiatives – more nuanced language may be required. The core principles of product stewardship, including life cycle thinking and corporate responsibility, need to be carefully explained by linking them to terminology that is more widely used or understood within companies, such as product sustainability, life cycle management and supply chain.

2) Product stewardship is not seen as a priority within many organisation

The survey identified a number of important barriers to implementing product stewardship within organisations, including a lack of time or staff resources, costs of implementation, lack of clear policy or policy not integrated across the business, and a lack of management support that would be required to implement product stewardship through cross-functional teams. These issues would need to be considered in the design of the portal if product stewardship were to be pursued as a key priority of strategic and market value rather than as a consequence of commercial activity focused on product differentiation, compliance, governance and pursuit of profit.

These responses all suggest that product stewardship is not seen as a high priority within many organisations. Individuals can find it difficult to justify the time or cost to implement product stewardship activities unless they are closely linked to KPIs set by particular functional areas in the business.

This has a number of implications for the Product Stewardship Portal.

Firstly, product stewardship needs to be reframed as a strategy that can support business growth and competitiveness as well as sustainability goals. Based on feedback from the online survey, product stewardship can contribute both directly and indirectly to business value, for example by protecting or enhancing corporate reputation or by meeting consumer expectations.

Secondly, the Portal should be designed around a clear business case for particular groups of users, for example:

- for SMEs, a single access point for information, 'how to' guides and templates would help them to implement product sustainability without the need for a specialist internal resource
- for product stewardship and sustainability personnel, a self-assessment rating tool could be used to build internal support for product stewardship projects and to promote their achievements to external stakeholders. The Portal could also provide them with convenient links to existing product stewardship (take-back) programs
- for building product suppliers, the portal could provide advice on meeting product stewardship criteria within the Green Building Council of Australia's Greenstar rating tool.

Thirdly, the Portal should be promoted as a solution to one of the most commonly mentioned barriers to product stewardship, i.e. a lack of time and resources for implementation. The Portal is expected to assist busy practitioners by providing them with easy access to a wide range of resources and a tailored action plan.

3) Product stewardship is a broad concept that must be tailored to different target groups

The results of the consultation advocate that the Portal should be tailored to the particular product impacts and drivers for particular groups or sectors.

Those companies and individuals that are already closely engaged in product stewardship activities are the most likely to use the Portal. This group is expected to have relatively simple information needs, such as accessing links to existing resources and programs.

A high priority target market is SMEs, who generally do not have the same resources to devote to product stewardship as larger companies. A compelling business case, promoted through an extensive marketing campaign, would be

required to encourage this group to access the portal. Resources that would assist this group include simple guidelines and templates that they could use to help them implement particular strategies, such as the development of a product sustainability policy or design guidelines.

As far as possible, resources should be tailored to the needs of particular industry sectors, such as manufacturers, distributors, retailers and large user groups. The issues of most relevance to the property sector, for example, include procurement guidelines for building products and materials and strategies to recover materials after a refurbishment or demolition. Within this sector sustainability initiatives are often driven by the Green Building Council of Australia's Greenstar rating tool. Potential users within the property and building sectors would therefore be more likely to access the Portal if it helped them to achieve a higher Greenstar rating by implementing product stewardship initiatives.

Another example is the automotive recycling sector, which is more interested in promoting compliance with laws covering recovery of refrigerant gases, liquids and batteries prior to crushing, and finding end markets for the recovered shredder floc.

Some of the target groups for the Portal that were identified through the industry consultation, and particular issues that would need to be considered in the design of the Portal, are highlighted listed below.

Target group	Rationale	Particular needs/interests
Small to medium sized organisations	Do not have the same resources to devote to product stewardship as larger companies	A compelling business case, promoted through an extensive marketing campaign, would be required to encourage this group to access the portal. 'How to' guides and templates will assist with implementation.
Product stewardship and sustainability personnel already interested/engaged in product stewardship	Already interested in product stewardship and want to know more	This group is likely to have relatively simple information needs, such as links to existing resources and programs. The rating tool could be used internally to build support by benchmarking against peers.
Individuals within companies that do not normally engage with environmental or sustainability issues, e.g. executive management, finance and marketing personnel	Addresses one of the identified barriers to implementing product stewardship i.e. lack of management support and lack of integration in the business	Would need to be convinced that there is a compelling business case
Free-riding organisations within sectors that have been identified as a priority for product stewardship	There is already a strong business case for this group but they may not be aware or interested in it	Need to raise awareness and highlight the business case for action - focus on the regulatory environment and the actions of industry peers

4) Product stewardship is seen by many organisations as important to protecting corporate reputation

The benefit of product stewardship that was most commonly identified by respondents is ‘protecting or enhancing corporate reputation’. This insight can be used to inform the development of the Portal:

- while there are more direct benefits of product stewardship, such as access to new markets or reduced costs, the importance of product stewardship for corporate reputation and brand value should be given a particular focus
- the Portal should provide case studies from a range of industry sectors that demonstrate how product stewardship has enhanced the corporate reputation of leading companies, or how a lack of attention to product impacts in corporate supply chains has had a significant impact on the reputation and brand value of others.

This insight also has implications for the implementation of the Product Stewardship Act by the Department of Environment and Energy. Companies that are already involved in regulated or certified schemes would benefit from a promotional campaign that raised public awareness of these initiatives. The business benefits of product stewardship, particularly for corporate reputation, could also be promoted to companies involved in products that have been identified for future consideration, such as photovoltaic cells and batteries.

Next steps

The next steps for the development of the Product Stewardship Portal are to:

- 1. Prepare a proposal for sponsorship for the next stage of work (preparation of a detailed project plan, basic Portal development and further consultation)**
- 2. Prepare a detailed project plan including:**
 - a. Specific target markets and their information needs
 - b. The business case for each of these target markets
 - c. Proposed content and functionality of the portal
 - d. A communications plan for the promotion of the portal.
- 3. Develop a beta version of the Portal to use as the basis for further engagement and consultation with key stakeholders. This consultation, including more face-to-face interviews and focus groups, will be used to further develop and refine the Portal, prepare supporting guidance and information on product stewardship, and develop a business model and governance structure for the sustained future of the Portal.**

Attachment one: Survey questions

Section 1: About your organisation

1. What is your organisation's primary business activity?

- Raw materials and additives
- Manufacturing
- Wholesale
- Retail
- Reuse or recycling
- Industry association
- Professional association
- Other (please specify)

2. How would you describe your organisation?

- Small organisation (<49 employees)
- Medium sized organisation (50-249 employees)
- Large organisation (>250 employees)

3. Which product sector are you working in?

- Raw materials
- Packaging
- Food / beverage
- Pharmaceuticals / personal care / cosmetics
- Other fast moving consumer goods, e.g. cleaning
- Furniture / mattresses
- Electrical / electronic goods
- Paint / oil / chemicals
- Automotive / tyres
- Building products / lighting
- Other (please specify)

4. What is your primary role?

- Management
- Operations
- Design
- Finance
- Procurement
- Waste management
- Environment/sustainability
- Compliance
- Marketing/communications
- Information technology
- Other (please specify)

Section 2: Content of the product stewardship portal

5. Would you like to have access to a single source of information on product stewardship from a web portal?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

6. Where do you generally go for information about product stewardship or environmental management of products? (tick all that apply)

- Industry association
- Professional association
- Internet search
- Industry journals
- Colleagues within my organisation
- Industry peers
- Government agencies
- Universities
- Other (please specify)

7. Which aspects of the proposed portal would you like to see included (rate as either not important, somewhat important or very important):

- Product-specific information (e.g. electronics, packaging etc.)
- Case studies
- Relevant standards and guidelines
- A self-assessment tool ('health check') that provides feedback on your product stewardship readiness and how to achieve the next steps
- Relevant legislation and policy
- Guidelines on building the business case
- A directory of relevant service providers / associations / product stewardship organisations
- A community of practitioners to crowd source information, best practices and networking synergies

Section 3: Content of the product stewardship portal

8. The portal's Self-Assessment Tool will provide you with feedback on your product stewardship performance. Which of the following would be most beneficial to your organisation?

- An automatically generated numerical score or star rating
- Benchmarking against industry peers (e.g. by sector)
- A tailored action plan that will help to guide your organisation
- A list of regulations and policies based on product sector
- Other (please specify)

9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for the web-based tool?

Section 4: Potential users of the portal

10. Would you or your colleagues be likely to use a self-assessment tool that helps to improve your organisation's understanding and capability in product stewardship, assuming it is free to use?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

11. Which people in your organisation would be most likely to use and benefit from a web-based product stewardship tool? (tick all that apply – use, benefit, or use and benefit)

- Senior management
- Finance
- Environment/sustainability
- Marketing
- Product development
- Procurement
- Operations
- Facilities
- Warehouse/distribution

Section 4: Approach to product stewardship in your organisation

12. Which of the following statements best describe what product stewardship means to your organisation?

- Taking responsibility for product recovery at end of life (e.g. reuse, recycling, diversion from landfill)
- Designing products to be more sustainable
- Responsibility for product sustainability over the full life cycle
- Environmental management of products over the full life cycle
- Managing health, safety and environmental impacts in the product life cycle
- Educating staff about responsible sourcing / product stewardship
- Not a priority to our business
- Other (please specify)

13. Which term do you think is likely to be most effective in communicating the principle of product stewardship to a business audience (tick one box):

- Product stewardship
- Product sustainability
- Life cycle management
- Circular economy
- Responsible prosperity
- Resource efficiency
- Responsible sourcing / supply chain
- Other (please explain)

14. Do you think you understand the social, environmental and health impacts of your product's supply chains? (tick one box)

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

15. Is your organisation taking any of the following actions to implement product stewardship? (rate your level of implementation - no implementation, has developed implementation plan, implementation in progress, monitoring outcomes of implementation, not relevant)

- Design for sustainability
- Utilising product-service systems to reduce life cycle impacts (e.g. take-back programs, leasing, asset sharing)
- Suppliers must meet sustainability criteria
- Have signed up to an industry product stewardship program
- A public commitment to product stewardship (e.g. in corporate strategy, policy, website etc.)
- Product labels include sustainability information for consumers
- Provide consumers with a free drop-off service for products or packaging
- Other (please list)

16. Please review the following product stewardship statements and rate their relevance to your organisation (rate the relevance of each statement - not at all relevant, disagree, agree, strongly agree)

- Product stewardship is very important to our business and we have a strategy or plan
- We believe that product stewardship is integral to our business and its future growth
- We have a committee with multiple stakeholders to investigate and generate ideas and implement greener initiatives
- We are actively involved in any least one aspect of product stewardship, e.g. design for sustainability or product take-back
- We have started to think about the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products
- We have limited ability to reduce the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products due to internal constraints (e.g. limited time/resources)
- We would only consider implementing product stewardship if there was a clear business value or minimal cost to the organisation
- Product stewardship is only marginally important or relevant to our business
- We'd like to be more proactive in managing the environmental or sustainability impacts of our products but don't really know what to do
- We don't really understand the implications of product stewardship for our business

17. What do think are the most important benefits of product stewardship for your organisation? (rank from 1 to 12, 1 being the most important and 12 being the least important)

- Reduce costs
- Protect or enhance corporate reputation
- Risk management
- Increase sales
- 'Greening' the company brand / product advocacy
- Meet consumer expectations
- Attract new customers
- Retain existing customers
- Comply with regulations
- Being able to attract, engage and retain staff
- Reducing the environmental impact of our products on the environment

18. What do think are the most important barriers to implementing product stewardship within your organisation? (rank from 1 to 9, 1 being the most important and 9 being the least important)

- Lack of management support
- No clear policy or strategy
- Policy/strategy not integrated across the business
- Lack of time or staff resources
- Roles and responsibilities not clear
- Cost of implementation / funding
- Can't justify a financial return
- Can't justify a reputational benefit
- Don't have enough knowledge/ unsure of what to do

19. Are you aware of the national Product Stewardship Act?

- Yes
- No
- Somewhat

20. Do you have any other comments or suggestions in regards to product stewardship and the portal?

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