



# Circular Ecosystem Innovation and Remote Communities

## Inclusive Economic Development for Western Cape York, Queensland, Australia

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Remote and outback communities in Australia face unique challenges in managing waste and recovering and re-using resources. Designing for a circular economy is increasingly the leading policy agenda, involving multiple levels of governance, industry, and community.



Figure 1: Mural above the entrance to the Malakoola Primary Health Care Centre in Napranum, Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council, Western Cape York, QLD

### Challenges

Due to extreme distances and the resulting financial burden of access, the isolation of the Central and Northern Australian Outback mounts distinct challenges for people living and working in this remarkable and vast part of the world. Environmentally sustainable waste management and recycling is one of those challenges.

The *Circular Ecosystem Innovation* project aims to support the advancement of people living in Far North Queensland through inclusive economic development and innovative resource recovery solutions. This project emerged from a collaboration between The University of Queensland, Weipa Town Authority and Napranum Aboriginal Shire Council, with funding from Connellan Airlines Trust.

### Catalysing the transition to the circular economy

is complex, particularly in remote communities requiring innovative and equitable solutions.

### Opportunities for strengthening the local economy through resource recovery

The scoping study conducted between November 2022 – March 2023 in Weipa and Napranum included thirty eight semi-structured interviews and two co-design workshops with stakeholders.

The findings:

- Confirmed strong interest among community members in a local initiative for addressing plastic and other waste streams at a local level.
- Identified potential business opportunities for addressing a variety of problematic waste streams

### Supporting the advancement of people living in Western Cape York through innovative circular solutions

Building on the initial scoping study and working closely with communities and industry partners, this project is being led by Griffith University and James Cook University. It aims to:

- Co-design local circular economy opportunities
- Pilot new micro businesses, including community-based enterprises
- Provide innovative fit-for-purpose solutions that can be applied in other parts of Cape York and Indigenous and remote communities in Australia
- Strengthen capacity and business ecosystems in Western Cape to support the transition towards the circular economy
- Leverage producer responsibility
- Inform policy and programs for future sustainable waste management and resource recovery in remote regions



Figure 2: Photo 1: remote Outback, Photo 2: Containers for Change Depot, Weipa - Auswaste Environmental Services



#### FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

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