

# Advancing Circular Economy Adoption in Domestic Waste Management: Evidence from Sydney Basin Councils

(A content analysis of CE- related local government documents)

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## Abstract

Local governments in Australia are facing significant environmental and social challenges, including increasing waste generation, resource scarcity, and raising community expectations for sustainable services. While Circular Economy (CE) practices offer innovative solutions for achieving sustainability, awareness of CE principles remains limited among local councils. Moreover, the adoption of these practices tends to be fragmented and inconsistently reported, which diminishes the effectiveness of various initiatives. This paper explores how local councils in the Sydney Basin can enhance the adoption and integration of Circular Economy practices in Domestic Waste Management reporting, through a content analysis of their strategic documents. Employing a theoretical framework grounded in Public Interest Theory (PIT) and regulatory capture, the research examines the extent to which local governments integrate CE principles into their strategies and reports while maintaining focus on public-centered governance. A central question of the study explores the extent to which the CE - related public documents from local governments in the Sydney Basin reflect the principles of Public Interest Theory (PIT), which prioritises transparency, equity and community welfare and determine how much they exhibit characteristics associated with regulatory capture, where the strategies and reports may be influenced by industry interests. The findings reveal that the adoption of Circular Economy principles varies among local governments. While some councils are making progress in integrating CE principles into their strategies and reports and aligning them with the principles of Public Interest Theory, the majority demonstrate only partial or minimal adoption and alignment. The impact of this research lies in its practical contribution to strengthening internal decision - making in domestic waste management within local governments. It provides valuable insights for policymakers and councils seeking to enhance the Circular Economy (CE) adoption in local government context, emphasising the need for a more inclusive, transparent, and integrated approach to CE planning and reporting. Raising awareness is a crucial first step in this process. Such an approach would enhance the adoption of the Circular Economy in Domestic Waste Management, leading to improved efficiency, accountability, and equity in this essential service. Additionally, it would foster greater transparency, increase stakeholder engagement, and encourage both environmental and social transformation.

## Keywords

Circular Economy, Local Government, Domestic Waste Management, Sustainability, Public Interest Theory, Regulatory Capture.