

CELL

CIRCULAR ECONOMY
LIVING LAB

2026 CIRCULATE EXPO & PITCH FEST

ATTENDEE POST EVENT REPORT

Introduction

The 2026 Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest brought together industry leaders, innovators, researchers, government partners, and investors committed to accelerating the circular economy across the Hunter and Central Coast. Designed as both a showcase and a catalyst, the event highlighted the depth of capability emerging across our region from advanced manufacturing and resource recovery to clean-tech, materials innovation, and circular business models.

Across the day, exhibitors, founders, and project teams demonstrated practical solutions that address real-world challenges in waste reduction, materials efficiency, and sustainable industry transformation. The Pitch Fest program provided a platform for emerging innovators to present their ideas to a panel of expert judges, while the Expo floor enabled attendees to explore new technologies, form partnerships, and identify opportunities for collaboration.

The event reinforced Lake Macquarie's growing reputation as a national leader in circular economy and demonstrated the momentum building across industry, government, and research to drive long-term economic and environmental outcomes.

CIRCULAR ECONOMY LIVING LAB (CELL)

The Circular Economy Living Lab (CELL) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation based in Lake Macquarie, created to accelerate regional circular economy transformation. Founded by Dantia, Lake Macquarie City Council, and the University of Newcastle, CELL drives circular outcomes by accelerating innovation, building industry capability, and supporting the creation of new jobs. As the organisation behind the Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest, CELL brings together industry, researchers, government, and investors to showcase solutions, strengthen collaboration, and advance practical circular economy adoption across the region.

Acknowledgement & Thanks to our Sponsors

The Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors. Their commitment to innovation, sustainability, and regional capability-building plays a vital role in enabling events that bring our ecosystem together and accelerate real progress.

We extend our sincere thanks to our sponsors for their leadership, partnership, and investment in strengthening the circular economy across the Hunter and Central Coast. Their support ensures that local innovators have the platforms, visibility, and networks they need to grow, collaborate, and scale their impact.

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Agenda

Time	Session / Activity	Exhibitor Focus
10:00 am	Exhibition Opens	Morning arrivals and initial networking Tea, coffee and light food.
10:45 - 11:00 am	Welcome & Introduction	MC: Russ Martin. Official opening.
11:00 - 11:45 am	Panel 1: Investment in the Circular Economy	Panelists: Colin Seeger Hunter Angels, Brett Thomas The MELT and Piers Grove Impact Ventures
11:45 - 1:00 pm	Lunch & Networking	Lunch catered for the day and talk to the stakeholders in the marquee
1:00 - 1:45 pm	Panel 2: Demand & Implementation in the Circular Economy	Panelists: David Hughes Lake Macquarie City Council and Katie McElhone Fulton Hogan
1:45 - 2:30 pm	Afternoon Networking Break	Discuss panel sessions, talk to stallholders, vote for peoples choice award for stallholders
2:30 - 3:30 pm	Pitches/Presentations	Pitch Fest commences, award for best pitch and peoples choice awards for stallholder
3:45 - 4:00 pm	Closing Remarks & Conclusion	Official program wraps up.
4:00 - 6:00 pm	Networking Drinks & Nibbles	Ticketed networking drinks
6:00 pm	Event Concludes	Venue must be vacated.

Event Statistics

97+

ATTENDANCE

The event attracted over 97 participants from industry, research, investment, and government, all engaging across a full day of exhibitions, panel conversations, networking opportunities, and pitch presentations.

100%

FEEDBACK

Organisers received a 100% positive response rate on the day, reflecting strong satisfaction with the event's program, delivery, and overall experience.

97+

WASTE TO ARTWORK

Over 97 people contributed to the creation of the commissioned Waste to Art piece, adding their own materials, ideas, and creativity to the collective artwork.

14

EXHIBITORS

Fourteen companies showcased circular economy solutions ranging from recycled plastic products to solar panel recycling, demonstrating the breadth of innovation on display.

8

PITCH PRESENTATIONS

8 companies pitched their innovations to a room of investors, potential buyers & end-users, showcasing a strong pipeline of circular solutions ready for market adoption.

2

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

The event featured two fantastic panel discussions, bringing together five experts to explore investing in circular economy companies and the demand side of circularity, offering practical insights from across the sector.

2

AWARDS

Two awards were presented on the day, with ARC Ento Tech receiving the People's Choice for Best Exhibitor and Second Life Solar winning the Pitch Fest Award, highlighting excellence in circular economy leadership.

Gallery



Panel 1

Topic: Investing in Circular Economy Solutions

Moderator: Russ Martin President and CEO of GlobalPSC

Panelists: Colin Seeger Executive Officer at Hunter Angels, Brett Thomas Director & COO of The Melt & Piers Grove General Partner & Cofounder of Impact Ventures

The first panel at the Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest brought together three experienced investors to unpack what makes circular economy ventures genuinely “investable” in today’s market. Moderated by Russ Martin (GlobalPSC), the discussion offered a clear and pragmatic view of how investors assess opportunities in a tightening capital environment.

A central theme was that impact alone is no longer enough. While circularity and sustainability remain important, investors emphasised that they ultimately back teams who can execute. Strong delivery capability, a credible plan, and evidence of traction matter more than a compelling idea. As one panellist noted, ideas are cheap; execution is everything. Investors are looking for founders who can demonstrate a pathway to scale, not just a vision for change.

The panel agreed that the bar for circular solutions has risen significantly. Circularity is now expected to be strategic, not a “nice to have”. Buyers and investors increasingly prioritise solutions that reduce cost, reduce operational or regulatory risk, or help organisations meet compliance and reporting obligations. The era of relying on a “green pitch” has passed; commercial value must be front and center.

A nuanced distinction emerged between waste conversion (which is easier to fund) and true system transformation (which is harder). Clear, measurable waste diversion outcomes are straightforward for investors to understand and underwrite. In contrast, system-level circularity often requires infrastructure, aligned demand, and significant capital, far beyond the \$50k–\$100k many early-stage founders seek to get started.

Panel 2

Topic: Demand and Implementation in the Circular Economy

Moderator: Russ Martin President and CEO of GlobalPSC

Panelists: David Hughes Director Built and Natural Assets, at Lake Macquarie City Council & Katie McElhone National Environment and Sustainability Manager at Fulton Hogan

The panel explored how circular economy solutions progress from concept to practical adoption, highlighting the real-world drivers and barriers faced by councils and major contractors.

Procurement was identified as a major constraint. Councils operate under strict transparency and risk requirements, making new procurement of innovations and business requiring additional processes. Suppliers who secure government panel or prequalification status face fewer barriers, as councils can engage without restarting the procurement process.

Awareness and adoption is fastest when three factors align: visibility, an internal champion, and a clear operational problem. Suppliers were encouraged to be active in industry forums where technical teams seek solutions, as adoption rarely occurs through cold outreach alone. The panel stressed suppliers and innovators designing for risk. Trials succeed when expectations are clear, including what is being tested, how success is measured, additional benefits and acceptable performance thresholds. “Drop-in” solutions that require minimal change to process or standards are adopted easily in these environments.

Contractors also face capacity limits, with progress often relying on individual champions. Early engagement is essential, as circular products must be considered during the design, specification and pricing stage. Regulation and insurance remain significant factors influencing adoption, particularly in road construction.

The panel outlined a pathway to business-as-usual: fit checks, alignment with state and federal government standards and guidelines, technical assessment, approvals, structured trials and evaluation, evidence of a secure supply chain and scalability. Their advice to suppliers is to bring evidence, simplify trials, and demonstrate reliable supply.

EOI Process, ecosystem review of local Suppliers

The EOI process uncovered existing, and new or unknown businesses. Unknown businesses uncovered during this process included:

EOI Process

- ARC Ento Tech
- Novecom
- CandleXchange

Review of Ecosystem

- Trees in Newcastle Lake Macquarie
- Emergent Group
- IQ Renew Central Coast
- Feedback Organic Recovery Newcastle
- 3ME Technology Lake Macquarie
- Oz Tukka Lake Macquarie
- Aquacultr Group Port Stephens
- Bee Innovative Maitland
- Herb Urban
- Hone Global
- BYKKO
- Fibre Boats
- Green Bean Carbon
- Zyora

- Farmed Carbon
- Janus Electric Central Coast
- Banlaw Lake Macquarie
- Downer Lake Macquarie
- HiVis Newcastle
- Molycop
- Morgan Engineering
- Varley Group
- Curby Central Coast
- PlasTech Recycling Lake Macquarie
- My-fleet GPS tracking Newcastle
- Onecircl Central Coast
- RAM Manufacturing
- ITAR Cessnock
- Weston Aluminium Cessnock
- Bibn'Brac Scone
- Daracon Lake Macquarie
- The Groundswell Collective Lake Macquarie
- Hexcore Lake Macquarie
- Australian Biodiesel Maitland
- Anditi Newcastle
- AmpControl
- Booma Foods
- Borne Clothing
- Wild Yeast Zoo

The local suppliers that provided an EOI or exhibited during the event are provided on the next page

Suppliers



Resourceful Living

Based in Kurri Kurri, NSW, Resourceful Living is an Australian leader in the plastic circular economy. The company transforms local plastic waste into premium recycled sheets, construction materials, and custom products. Its closed-loop system manages every step from collection to manufacturing, delivering sustainable, high-quality outcomes for industry and the environment.

Website: resourcefulliving.com



Australian EVS

Australian EVS specialise in bringing the latest EV technology from around the world to assist those looking to transition to zero emissions, from classic cars, to modern 4x4s, and commercial fleets. Through our team of Engineers and Experts, we are the go-to business for those who want to improve their vehicle's performance, reduce their running costs and reduce emissions using practical steps.

Website: australianevs.com.au



ARC Ento Tech

ARC Ento Tech Ltd. is an Australian biotechnology company tackling the global challenge of mixed solid waste. The company is redefining waste through its patent-pending ARC Process™, which recovers resources from waste streams. This technology transforms discarded materials into environmentally sustainable commodities, aiming to clean up the environment, reduce carbon emissions, and create a more sustainable future.

Website: arcento.com.au



Novecom

Novecom enables companies across diverse industries to transform environmental data into actionable insights. Through platforms like the SureWaste IoT system for hospitals and the SynaptiX LID for agricultural water management, Novecom helps clients reduce waste, conserve vital resources like water in the Murray-Darling Basin and achieve operational and regulatory excellence.

Website: novecom.com.au



Second Life Solar

Founded in 2022, Second Life Solar tackles photovoltaic waste through a circular model. The company employs low-cost, mobile testing technology co-developed with CSIRO to assess and repurpose decommissioned solar panels. Partnering with industry and government, it redirects verified panels to solar gardens, ensuring functional equipment is reused rather than landfilled.

Website: secondlifesolar.com.au



Recycle Central Group

Recycle Central Group is a leading Australian waste management firm focused on sustainable, high-volume resource recovery for commercial, construction, and residential clients, offering skip bin hire and specialized recycling services in the Newcastle, Hunter, and Central Coast regions.

Website: recyclecentralgroup.com.au

Suppliers



Superyard

Superyard is an Australian-based, award-winning social enterprise and online marketplace (founded 2021) that connects businesses to buy, sell, or redistribute surplus, unused construction materials. Headquartered in Smithfield, NSW, it promotes circular economy principles, reduces waste, and helps construction firms cut costs with no commission fees.

Website: superyard.com.au



Eco Surfaces Australia

Eco Surfaces Australia is a Newcastle-based manufacturer specialising in sustainable, low-silica engineered surfaces made from 100% recycled glass. They produce durable benchtops, splashbacks, and outdoor surfaces designed for residential and commercial applications, focusing on environmental responsibility, safety, and the circular economy.

Website: ecosurfacesaustralia.com.au



Loop Organics

Loop Organics Pty Ltd is an award-winning Australian environmental services company (founded 2012) specialising in organic waste recycling, including biosolids, FOGO, and food waste. Headquartered in Berry, NSW, with a facility in Ravensworth, they produce premium soil amendments for agriculture, mine rehabilitation, and landscaping.

Website: looporganics.com.au



Tyrex

Tyrex Solutions is an Australian-owned manufacturer founded in 1990, specialising in sustainable, 100% recycled rubber products, primarily threshold ramps, safety matting, and custom access solutions. Headquartered in Cardiff, NSW, they serve the disability, aged care, mining, and commercial sectors with durable, eco-friendly, and locally made products designed to improve accessibility and safety.

For inquiries, contact: bailey@tyrex.com.au



PV Industries

PV Industries is an Australian-owned renewable energy company founded in 2018, specializing in end-of-life solar panel recycling, logistics, and decommissioning services to prevent landfill waste. Operating in NSW and Victoria, they utilise advanced, in-house technology to recover materials like aluminium, glass, and copper.

Website: pvindustries.com.au



The Full Circle Collective

The Full Circle Collective is a Newcastle-based, not-for-profit social enterprise (established 2024) at 437 Hunter Street, dedicated to promoting a circular economy through resource recovery, repair, and reuse. It acts as a community hub for sustainable, local product including clothing, furniture, and workshops, while offering services like, environmental education and consulting to reduce waste.

Website: thefullcirclecollective.com.au

Suppliers

Candle Exchange



CandleXchange creates all-natural, locally made candles designed to be returned and refilled, with every purchase helping us donate one to survivors of domestic violence.

Every time you Return & Swap your candle with CandleXchange, you save on average 1kg of glass (and packaging) from ending up in landfill as well as 30% off the next purchase.

They welcome donations of old candle containers. They will refill and donate to organisations supporting survivors of domestic violence, when setting up a new home.

Website: www.candleexchange.com.au

Additional local circular economy suppliers can be found from the following online resources.

Hunter Circular Website www.huntercircular.com.au, currently operated by the Hunter Joint Organisation, it is a place to seek sustainable, circular and local suppliers, case studies and direct you to solutions.

Seeking Suppliers? Or a Supplier wanting to get noticed?

www.huntercircular.com.au/our-ecosystem/directory

Seeking Case Studies? Or if you have a case study to provide?

www.huntercircular.com.au/our-ecosystem/#case-studies

Contact cell@dantia.com.au for any circular solutions including from an exhibitor contact on the day supplier, available grants or connect with a researcher for your next project.

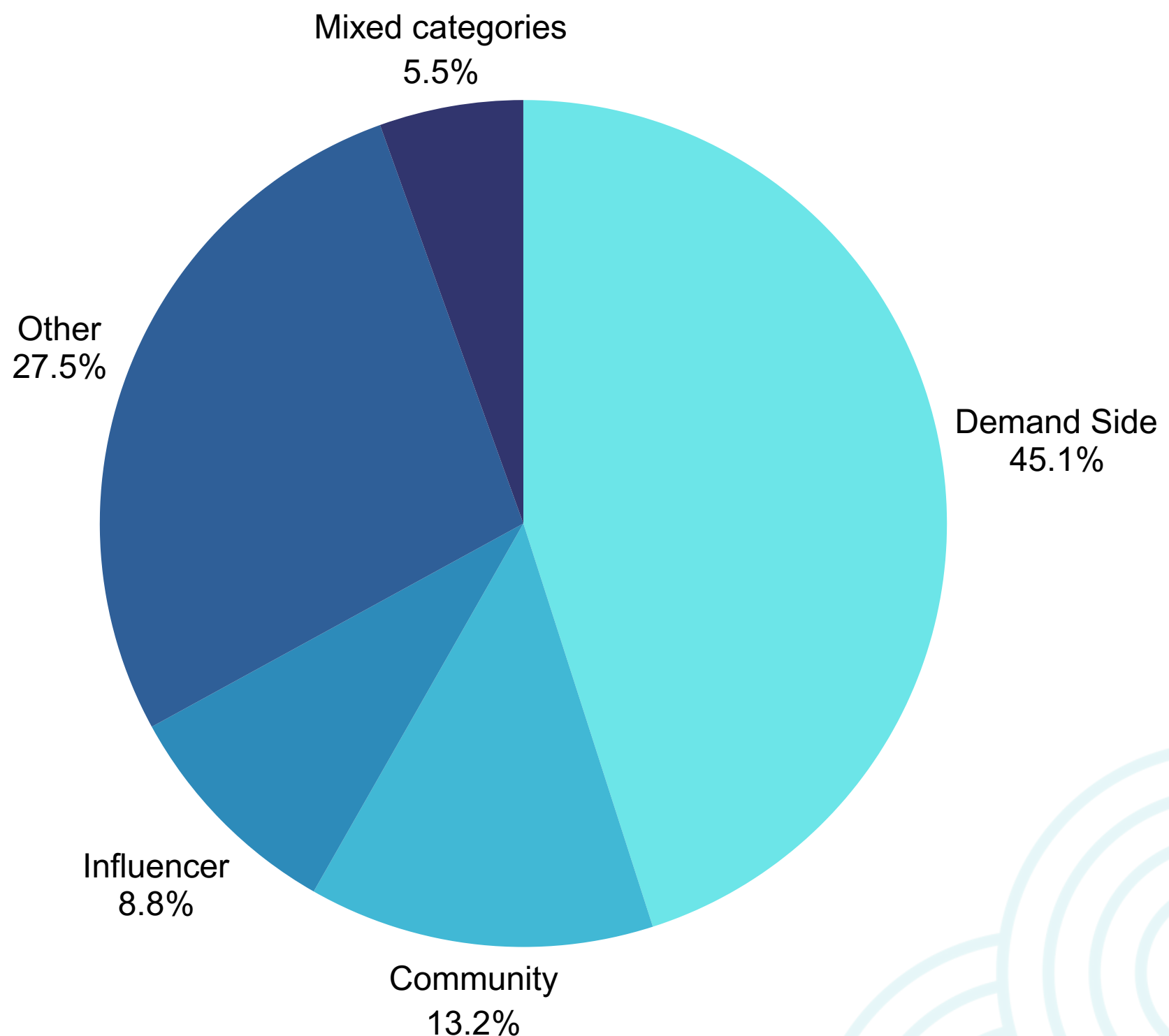
Attendees insights

We had a great turnout with 97+ attendees to the event.

This showcases the momentum of the region and interest in circular economy.

Audience Composition (Self-Identified Alignment)

A strong supplier representation (41%) indicates strong solution-side engagement. Demand-side representation present but lower (12%), which presents opportunity for future targeted procurement/government engagement.



Attendees insights

Registered attendees could volunteer to categorise themselves as community, demand, influencer, or other roles in the circular economy and where they work and live.

Community

- Work in Lake Macquarie
- Work in City of Newcastle
- Live in Maitland

Demand

- Work in Lake Macquarie
- Work in City of Newcastle
- Live in Lake Macquarie

Both as a Demand and Influencer

- Lake Macquarie

Influencer

- Lake Macquarie City Council
- Work in City of Newcastle
- Live in Newcastle City Council
- Work in Sydney
- Work in Hunter Region & beyond
- Work in Maitland
- Work in North Sydney
- Work in Parramatta
- Work in Port Stephens
- Work Statewide
- Work Wollongong City Council
- Work in Maitland LGA

Supplier

Lake Macquarie
Newcastle
Canterbury Bankstown
Central Coast
Maitland
Singleton

Both as a Supplier and Community

- Lake Mac (Live) Newcastle (Work)

The event attracted a highly engaged cross-section of the circular economy ecosystem, including local government decision-makers, regional influencers, suppliers and community representatives. Strong representation from Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and surrounding LGAs demonstrates growing regional momentum.

Although the event was marketed to Hunter and Central Coast Region, we welcomed travellers from Wollongong, North Sydney, Parramatta and Statewide attendees.

The Expo functioned as enabling infrastructure, strengthening the pipeline between innovation, procurement and implementation across the Hunter and Central Coast region.

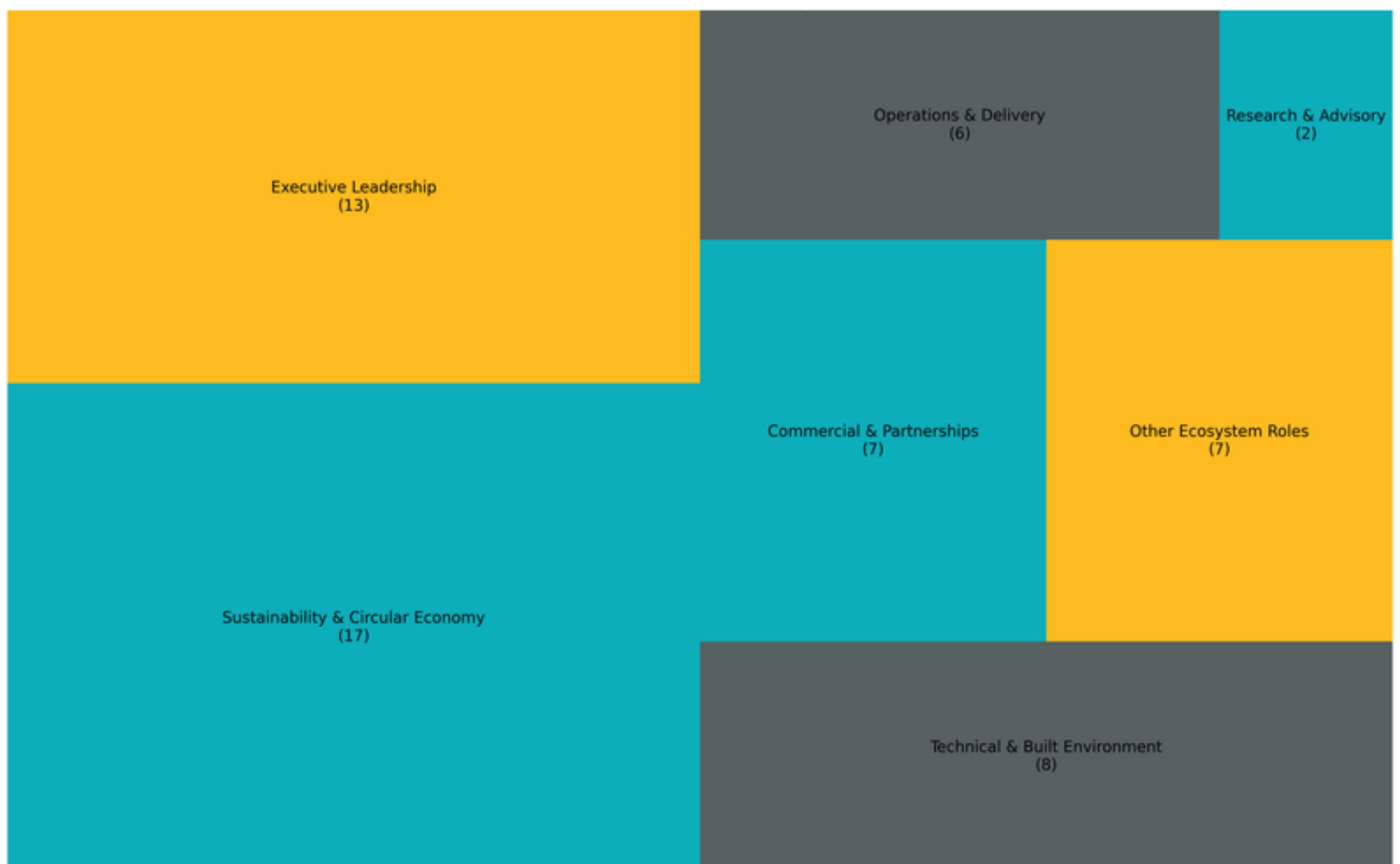
Attendees insights

Ecosystem Role Composition

The ecosystem role composition demonstrates that this event attracted a high concentration of sustainability and circular economy practitioners, alongside strong executive leadership representation.

This balance indicates that both strategic decision-makers and operational implementers were present.

The diversity across technical, commercial and delivery roles reinforces that the event functioned as an implementation focused platform, strengthening pathways between strategy, procurement and on-ground execution across the region.



Attendees insights

Ecosystem Connection Insights

The Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest not only generated immediate engagement, but also expanded CELL's ongoing regional network and communication base.

- 88% of attendees opted to remain engaged with future CELL initiatives, indicating strong trust and sustained ecosystem interest in CELL and circular economy.
- 86% of attendees requested post-event exhibitor connections, demonstrating strong appetite for continued engagement and indicating the event successfully generated implementation-oriented interest rather than passive attendance.
- Executive-level attendees demonstrated extremely strong ongoing engagement, with over 90% opting to remain connected to CELL initiatives.

The Pitch Fest judges saw 8 businesses pitch their solution in 4 minutes to attendees. The judges awarded Second Life Solar as the winner for their great use of quantifying the problem, practical testing methodology and equipment verified and co-designed with the CSIRO, having solutions for reuse of solar panels and a partnership for non reusable solar panels to be recycled through PV industries where metal, silica glass and other components are broken down for remanufacturing.

A close runner up was Loop Organics who transform food and garden organics into soil which is nutrient rich and restores depleted soil.

The Peoples Choice Awards allowed all the exhibitors to be in the running for the favourite solution of the attendees on the day. The winner was ARC Ento Tech whom have a new solution for general waste integrating biological solution to food and garden organics transforming into protein rich source for agricultural animals and fertiliser and a solution to plastics reuse into fuel.

Testimonials

Organisers

“After years of managing events...this one sits right at the top. Why? Because we absolutely nailed the most important thing: connecting the right companies with the right attendees: people actively seeking solutions. The energy in the room was pure purpose.”

Exhibitors

“The Circular Economy Expo was a wonderful platform to showcase the work Novecom Pty Limited does in remote agriculture settings. As one of the very few Newcastle based AgTech manufacturing companies, we love that the Hunter Region cheers us on when we leave the city for extended periods to work on significant farms that provide immense economic, sustainability, and social returns for Australia”

“Thank you for letting us be apart of Circulate Expo. We are grateful for the support we received and look forward to what’s next “

“The opportunity to present Loop's organics recycling and reuse to fellow sustainability-focused businesses was truly valued. Thank you”

“Huge thanks to Circular Economy Living Lab for having ARC Ento Tech as part of Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest, we’re grateful for the opportunity to share what we’re building and connect with so many people driving the circular economy forward. And to everyone who stopped by the ARC stand, asked questions, cheered us on, and voted for us, thank you! We’re genuinely honoured to be named the 2026 People’s Choice Award recipient. Your support means a lot, and it fuels what we’re working toward next.”

“I feel very privileged to be part of this informative, entertaining and enjoyable day! The chats in the exhibit area, the panel discussions and the pitches made the day a truly memorable one. Well done - you're under pressure to deliver over and above this next year!”

“Thanks for hosting and organising the event. So many great circular economy businesses operating in the Hunter”

“A brilliant platform to showcase how Loop Organics Pty Ltd composting transforms a liability into a resource and a waste stream into a regional asset! Thank you for this opportunity”

“Look forward to being at Circulate Expo 2027”

“by all accounts it was an excellent event.”

“What an outstanding day!”

“Proud to have been involved in such a great event. We need to have more of such events.”

Testimonials

Panelists:

“it was a tremendous event, and I was delighted to be involved! “

“an absolute pleasure to be part of it.”

Attendees:

Special” thanks to Hunter Joint Organisation, Circular Economy Living Lab and everyone else that helped deliver such a great event. I’m proud to have been involved and hope for more in the future.”

“This is exactly the kind of investment CELL exists to make in the local ecosystem. Events like this create space for honest, practitioner-led conversations..”

“I was an exhibitor and was also on the judging panel where we heard from some genuinely impressive circular initiatives across the region. I love days like this because it gives me the opportunity to catch up with founders I admire and meet new humans working on some really impactful initiatives.“

“Was a great day” “Such an inspiring day” “Was a great experience to be part of”

“What a great event”

“awesome event and also, what a location!”

“It’s was a great day, thank you to everyone for making it such an amazing event!”

“Great to see first hand the fabulous circular economy businesses happening in the Hunter region and wider last week. Thanks to the Circular Economy Living Lab for this great event. Some inspiring pitches included recycling solar panels, Second life for discarded solar panels, recycled glass counters, recycled products into disabled access ramps, converting vehicles to EVs, organics processing Looping to raising cattle (life cycle approach) to community outreach
“

Sponsors

“It was fascinating to see the number of creative ways participants divert material from landfill and value add - the web of connections and useful consumer goods created is very impressive!”

“Events like this showcase local innovation and strengthen the circular economy ecosystem while playing an important role in connecting businesses, councils, researchers, and investors to practical, local solutions that drive sustainable growth. Bringing together such a strong platform for collaboration, ideas, and impact. We’re excited to see the outcomes this will deliver for the region.”

“Good vibes. Great people”

Our procurement

We like to lead by example in circular economy and chose where possible local and sustainable procurement.

What we focused on:

- Localised catering: Maddz on York catered the morning, lunch. Local drinks for networking drinks. We chose to only have 2 drop offs than 3 to reduce carbon emissions.
- Most of the catering was reusable, recyclable or compostable. The food catering came in recyclable cardboard boxes for transport which were reused for serving plates. Glass and BioPak coffee cups, cups and plates were supplied.
- FOGO bins provided near the catering.
- No lamination of paper, easily reusable and recyclable lanyards and tags.
- Resourceful living 100% recycled plastic trophies procured for peoples choice awards and pitch.
- Signage designed for reuse.
- We hired chairs, tables and linen.
- Chose a venue with a large array of solar panels to ensure power was renewable during the day.
- Chose a venue with an existing marquee, meeting the required format for the expo part of the day.
- We reused the PA system, and recently procured 2 microphones and speaker for other events hosted for reuse.

What we can do next time:

- Choose to ask for no plastic lid on coffee cups from the van and the sauces for the catering boxes.
- Consider partnering with reusable cup brands such as WOSUP (Sydney based), ReVibes (custom cup order required), Good Cup or local hiring company for all reusable drinkware, cutlery and plates.
- Procure signage from local industry.
- Provide mostly vegan or vegetarian meals to reduce emissions.
- Change the date or supply fans for warm weather exhibitors.

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Thank you to everyone who helped bring the Circulate Expo & Pitch Fest to life. From the dedicated staff at the Museum of Art and Culture, the committed team at Dantia, and our generous sponsors, to the exhibitors, panellists, and attendees, your collective effort made this event possible.

The energy, collaboration, and innovation showcased throughout the day reflect the strength of our growing circular economy community and the momentum building across the region.

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