

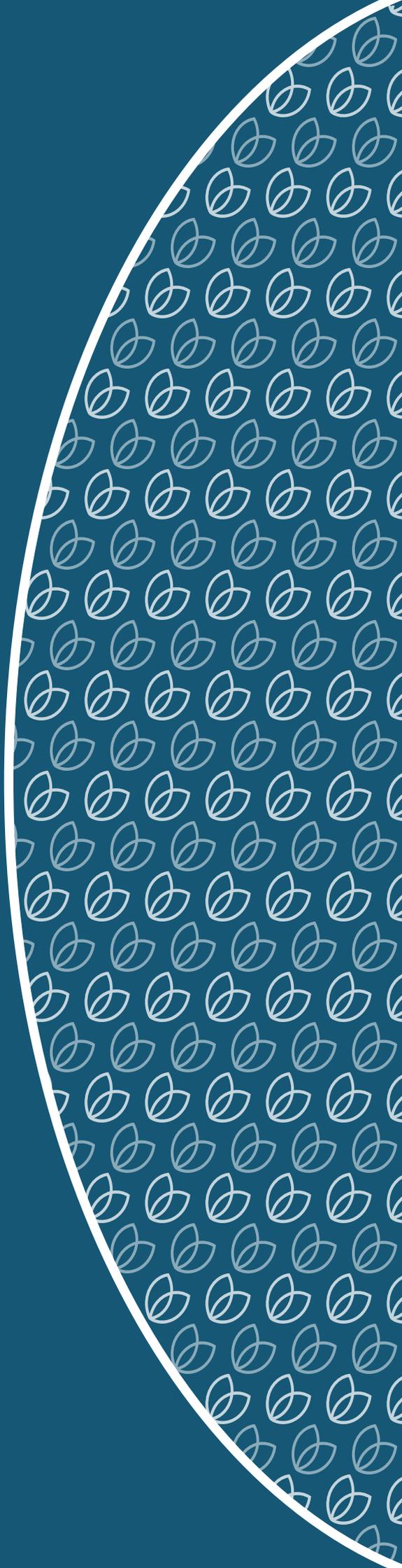
# GECA



## ANNUAL REVIEW

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# 2021





*GECA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the country throughout Australia on which we live, learn, and work, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters, and culture. We pay our respects to them and to their Elders past, present and emerging.*



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# Message from the chair

Patrick Walker

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2021 was a volatile and challenging year for everyone in Australia – and indeed globally. In common with most other Australian businesses, GECA moved to a remote working model when the pandemic hit, and this has largely continued even when lockdowns were not imposed. In addition, our team faced difficulties in a number of areas – including disruptions to planned events, challenges in visiting

and working with our licensees, and barriers to the assessment and auditing processes that are so important in ensuring the robustness and transparency that underpin our work, and that help position us as the leading life cycle ecolabel in Australia.

Against this backdrop, the Board is enormously proud that **our team didn't miss a beat during the year.**

Their passion and dedication for the cause of sustainability, and their desire to deliver excellent support and services to our licensees and customers drove GECA forward to achieve outstanding success during 2021. Revenues grew by around 12% to nearly \$1.1m, and this growth helped deliver a healthy operating surplus of \$191k – nearly double that achieved in the prior year.

Of course, for a charity achieving a surplus is not important in itself (although avoiding recurring deficits is fundamental to ongoing survival!). However, revenue growth demonstrates that we are **increasing our impact** by working with more businesses and helping them achieve and demonstrate sustainable consumption and production. **We also continue to increase our influence on individuals**, making it easier to choose sustainable products and services. More and more people have discovered that when they see the GECA ecolabel, they can be confident it meets exacting standards that have been independently developed and assessed.

There is an increasing focus on sustainability evident among the business and political community across the globe. GECA is well-positioned to both meet increasing demand for its services, and to leverage these trends through an expanding range of offerings. The Board has been working closely to support our management team and approving strategic investments that will enable us to **expand our impact even further in the years ahead.**

As ever, my thanks go to our CEO Michelle Thomas and our outstanding GECA team for their passionate commitment to furthering our mission. My thanks also to our volunteer Board members Steve Humphries, Emma Bull, Angus Kell, Lorraine Stephenson and Suzie Hollott, who together bring a diverse range of skills and experience that will greatly benefit GECA in the years ahead. My particular thanks go to Steve and Lorraine (who Chair our Finance and Standards Committees respectively), who fulfil these important roles with diligence and integrity, and on whom I rely heavily as Chair.

*“ The Board has been working closely to support our management team and approving strategic investments that will enable us to expand our impact even further in the years ahead.”*

# Message from the CEO

Michelle Thomas

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As we come to the end of another year full of unpredictability, and pause to reflect, we see many positive changes and a real shift in some vital areas. While there is so much more that we need to achieve, globally, nationally and locally, to tackle the key sustainability issues of our time - people, governments and businesses are sitting up and taking notice. We must catalyse this shift to keep the momentum going in the right direction!

At GECA, we have spent a lot of time reflecting this year too on some core questions such as:

- How do we ensure our lifecycle ecolabel standards remain relevant to ever-changing industries?
- Which new best practices can we incorporate into our ecolabel and other services?
- How can we better collaborate with our stakeholders to be more influential with our collective voice?

- Are there new gaps in the market that we have solutions for?
- In short, how can we at GECA best make an overall impact?

2021 has been a year of many developments. Earlier this year, we [launched the GECA Portal](#), a tool for our licensees to access all their certification needs in one place. We refreshed the look of all the GECA standards and included how they address the **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. We **redeveloped the product search** function on our website to help you find GECA accredited products and services seamlessly, including more search filters and updated product categories. Through an increase in organisations approaching us for GECA accreditation, including many consumer-facing brands, GECA has featured in a series of high-profile digital and print campaigns.

As always, we are truly reliant on relationships and collaborations at

GECA. Being a small team, we rely on the support of many and without whom we would not be where we are today. I want to **personally thank** those of you that have continued to support our work. Thank you to the members of our **Technical Advisory Groups (TAGs)** and our **Standards Committee**. They provide us with their expertise and valuable time to ensure our standards remain best practice. A substantial heart-felt thanks to the **GECA Board** for their valuable input into our strategic direction, with a special mention to our **Chair Patrick Walker** for his ongoing indispensable guidance.

The past 12 months have seen our team collaborate on some significant projects with a variety of collaborators. GECA was awarded a grant by the **Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE)** to start the **Fit for Office (F4O)** project in collaboration with **Edge Environment** and the **Global Product Stewardship Council**. Over the next few years, we will work together to tackle the issue of commercial office furniture going to landfill. We also supported the **Australasian Furniture Association (AFA)** in conjunction with DAWE on a project 'Understanding and Exploring Chemicals Management in the Furniture and Furnishing Industry. This important project explored the key issues surrounding chemicals of concern in the sector.

The **Materials & Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance (MECLA)** launched this year to drive reductions in embodied carbon across the building supply chain. GECA is proud to be a Founding Partner of this collaborative initiative. And GECA joined the **Australian, New**

**Zealand, and Pacific Island Plastics Pact (ANZPAC)** as a Founding Member to accelerate the circular economy for plastic in our region. Led by the **Australian Packaging Covenant Organisation (APCO)**, this collaborative program includes members across every stage of the plastic packaging supply chain. We continued to work closely with our long-standing collaborators:

- Calling for Australia to become a Renewable Energy Superpower, alongside **WWF-Australia** and more than 100 other businesses.
- Forming an agreement with **EPD Australasia**, creating an offer to support organisations combining the transparent and comparable data of an EPD with the rigour and robustness of the GECA ecolabel.
- Working with leading property owners and industry influencers via the **Better Buildings Partnership (BBP)** to provide green leadership and sustainable innovation for Sydney's commercial and public buildings.
- Supporting the **Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council's (ASBEC)** commitment to a more sustainable, productive and resilient built environment.
- Being an active member and Industry Partner of the Supply Chain Sustainability School, including our Local Government Working Group participation.
- GECA continued to demonstrate our engagement with the **UN Global Compact**, by submitting our Communication of Engagement, expressing our continued support for the UN Global Compact initiative.



We'd also like to give a special thanks to the **Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA)**, **Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA)**, and the **Living Future Institute of Australia (LFIA)**. Thank you for your ongoing recognition and support!

As you know, we're massive advocates of continuous improvement and independent assurance. So we're always keen to walk the walk! At GECA, we're

dedicated to sustainably and strategically taking meaningful action to advance reconciliation. Our first step has been to submit an initial draft of our [\*\*Reflect Reconciliation Action Plan\*\*](#). We look forward to learning and growing through this process.

This year we also underwent internal assessments for our **B Corporation certification**, and our lifecycle ecolabel scheme was peer-reviewed through the **Global Ecolabelling**



**Network (GEN).** We were delighted to come through each with success, with B Corp recognising our efforts in governance as one of the Best for the World! This means that we have achieved a **high score in overall mission, ethics, accountability and transparency**, placing us in the **top 5% of all B Corps worldwide!**

*“ The Better Building Partnership has a target of 80% of BBP members' waste contractors and stripout projects to be GECA certified or verified by 2025. ”*

**Ben Thomas** - Chair of the Circular Economy Working Group and National Manager – Environment at GPT



MECLA



ANZPAC



RECONCILIATION  
ACTION PLAN



GEN



B CORP

# Standards overview

 <p><b>NEW STANDARD</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Construction &amp; Demolition Waste Services standard</li> </ul>	<p><b>NEW SERVICE</b></p> <p>We contributed to the publication of 6 EPDs registered under the EPD Australasia framework</p> 
<p><b>REVISED &amp; REPUBLISHED STANDARDS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cleaning Services</li> <li>Floor Coverings</li> <li>Carpets</li> <li>Panel Boards</li> </ul> 	 <p>We published our standards in a fresh new look that clearly shows how it contributes to the UN Sustainable Development Goals and highlights our four main areas of sustainability – fitness for purpose, health, environment and social aspects.</p>
 <p>Many of our standards contribute to the Green Building Council of Australia’s (GBCA) Green Star rating system. Besides the already existing recognitions, we received recognition for the new <a href="#">Green Star Buildings</a> system and the accompanying <a href="#">Responsible Products Framework</a> for the following standards:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adhesives, Fillers &amp; Sealants</li> <li>Building Insulation Materials</li> <li>Carpets</li> <li>Cement, Concrete &amp; Concrete Products</li> <li>Floor Coverings</li> <li>Furniture &amp; Fittings (Level B)</li> <li>Furniture, Fittings, Foam &amp; Mattresses (Level A)</li> <li>Hard Surfacing</li> <li>Paints &amp; Coatings</li> <li>Panel Boards</li> </ul>	
<p><b>THANK YOU</b> to our Standards Committee members for their continued support and expertise: Lorraine Stephenson, Angus Kell, Libby Stags and Stephen Reardon. We are so grateful to you, along with our Technical Advisory Groups. Your ongoing efforts are key to keeping our standards up to date and remaining the benchmark for sustainable products and services.</p> 	

# Standard in focus: Construction and Demolition Waste Services

In 2018, GECA released its first standard targeted to the waste sector with the [Waste Collection Services standard](#). We always intended this to be the first in a suite of GECA waste standards created to promote and reward best practice waste management. Therefore, we are excited to release our new [Construction & Demolition Waste Services standard](#). Our Standards Team has then adapted the criteria to meet Australian conditions.

According to the [National Waste Report 2020](#), **construction and demolition (C&D) waste is the fastest growing waste sector**, with an increase of 32% over a 13-year period. GECA's standard recognises waste service providers and waste generators who reliably demonstrate best practices in C&D waste minimisation and management and deliver substantial environmental benefits. C&D waste can be reduced by early waste management measures like source reduction or reducing the use of materials, salvaging and reusing C&D materials, recycling and converting them into energy. So, to

become GECA certified, applicants must show that they follow the waste priority hierarchy starting with waste avoidance. These measures divert waste from landfills and reduce the burden on raw materials by using recycled materials.



The Construction & Demolition Waste Services standard requires that **at least**

**90% of materials are diverted from landfill.**

Annual reporting on these numbers, including a comparison to previous years, is mandatory. Regular training of waste contractor personnel, waste generators and contractors is also a requirement of our standard.

Training helps raise awareness of key issues, such as where waste material is sent, among staff, and provides quality assurance.

Like with all GECA standards, we know there's no such thing as sustainability without looking at the treatment of people. Therefore, the Construction & Demolition Waste Services standard sets requirements for social aspects like fair wages, workplace health and safety, human and labour rights and taking action to eliminate modern slavery.

# Marketing overview

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The COVID pandemic continued to bring challenges throughout 2021 in our everyday lives and work. Despite this, we witnessed great resilience from ourselves and our licensees, embracing new and creative ways of working and increasing the demand for our services to drive sustainable consumption and production. We are proud and grateful to have not only survived but thrived, bringing more GECA certified products and services to the market.

We continued to work closely with our licensees in enabling them to **share their stories** through [case studies](#), social media (**#WeLoveWednesday** and **#LoveOurLicensees**), newsletters and our media partners. We worked together on shared marketing campaigns enabling us to increase awareness of what our lifecycle ecolabel represents and demonstrates to a wider audience, including the consumer market.

In May, it was lovely for our team to talk to people face to face again at the Sydney Home Show, where [we](#)

[exhibited](#) our Materials in Mind pod as part of their Eco Town.

We launched our [GECA Portal](#), where applicants for GECA certification can now undergo the assessment online, allowing them to upload, save and complete each step of the certification journey. And our website [product search](#) update made it even easier for people to find accredited products and services.

In October, we joined the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) and our fellow GEN members to launch the **international Look Closer campaign** on World Ecolabel Day. The campaign shows people how to avoid products and services with unsubstantiated “green” claims and empowers them to buy better. GECA is proud to be the only Australian GEN member.

**Collaboration is key**, and we are very grateful to our licensees, clients, stakeholders and media partners who have contributed to our shared vision for a sustainable future. We look forward to our continued work together!



Click to watch ‘Take a look closer’ video - Global Ecolabelling Network

## EDITORIAL FEATURES

- Flooring Magazine
- InCLEAN Magazine
- Supply Chain Sustainability School
- The Guardian
- Cleanaway Newsroom
- Lifehacker
- WasteRight Australia
- The Fifth Estate
- Architecture & Design
- BuildIt
- Property Manager
- Green magazine
- Waste Right
- Built Environment Channel
- 36 Internal blog articles



## EVENTS & AWARDS

- Cleanup Australia Day
  - INDE.Awards 2021
  - The Circle Awards 2021
  - Banksia Awards 2021
  - Green Gown Awards
  - Sydney Home Show
  - Supply Chain Innovation 2021
  - Global Week to #Act4SDGs
  - World Ecolabel Day
  - Impact X Summit Sydney 2021
- Postponed & Partnering in 2022**
- DENFAIR & Interiors Australia
  - Sydney Build
  - DesignBuild & Total Facilities
  - Australian Waste & Recycling Expo
  - Waste Strategy Summit



## HIGH LEVEL ACHIEVEMENTS

- Released '[A GECA Guide to Sustainable Steel](#)' - a standard guide video
- Launched new website Product Search
- Greater growth and entrance in the consumer market
- Launched a new GECA Portal for licensees
- GECA named Best for the World in Governance
- Joined Connected By Association
- Built Environment Channel partnership
- ArchiPro partnership



## CASE STUDIES

- Luxmy Furniture
- Healthclean - Derivan
- Decor Systems



GECA  
1,807 followers  
\*34% increase



@GoodEnvChoice  
1,177 followers  
\*3% increase



GoodEnvironmentalChoiceAustralia  
1,539 followers  
\*4% increase



@geca\_official  
961 followers  
\*37% increase

\* compared to 2020



# Linking our world Sustainable Dev

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The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are the United Nations agreed framework for urgent action to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The goals address global challenges, including global inequality, climate change, environmental degradation, peace, and justice.

Sustainability is core to GECA's mission and purpose. We believe we have a strategic role in progressing the SDGs in Australia as a key actor and collaborator, translating the SDGs from international commitments to specific actions at the national and local levels. We do this in our operations and services, primarily focusing on SDG 12: Sustainable Consumption and Production.

GECA is proud to be a [signatory to the UN Global Compact](#), the world's largest initiative that drives business principles and action to achieve the SDGs by 2030.

This year we added new pages into all our lifecycle ecolabel standards to illustrate the relevant SDG targets that each standard addresses.

While all SDGs are relevant to GECA's vision and purpose, here are the six SDGs that are critical to our current offerings:

## **SDG 12 – Responsible Consumption and Production**

SDG 12 is core to GECA's purpose: "to create solutions for sustainable consumption and production".

We achieve this via our lifecycle ecolabel, consultation and advisory, education and training, events, engagement services, and advocating for sustainable public procurement practices.

GECA's lifecycle ecolabel standards drive several SDG 12 targets, with a particular focus on sustainable management and efficient use of natural resources; environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout a product's lifecycle; reducing waste generation and promoting circular economy principles; and encouraging companies to adopt sustainable practices and integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle.

## **SDG 3 – Good Health and Well-Being**

GECA promotes healthy work practices with staff, supporting the team's physical and mental well-being.

In our ecolabel standards, GECA promotes the health and well-being of people via robust criteria restricting chemicals that can affect human health. This includes volatile organic compounds (VOCs), heavy metals, and other harmful ingredients such as carcinogens, mutagens or reproductive toxins, fragrances and enzymes. GECA's standards also ensure that workers and suppliers across the supply chain can expect fair pay, equal opportunity, and a safe working environment.

# Link to the United Nations Development Goals (SDGs)

## **SDG 6 - Clean Water and Sanitation**

GECA acts for clean water and sanitation via ecolabel criteria that prohibit the release of hazardous chemicals and materials into waterways and improve water quality by reducing pollution. GECA standards also include criteria related to efficient use of water and environmental management plan.

## **SDG 8 - Decent Work and Economic Growth**

Goal 8 promotes sustained, inclusive, and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. GECA standards include criteria to reduce environmental degradation, protect human health from damaging chemicals or emissions, and promote human and labour rights for businesses to implement to contribute to a fair economy.

Our current social criteria include equal opportunity, fair pay, lawful conduct, modern slavery reporting, and commitments to international initiatives such as the UN Global Compact.

At GECA, we also see our role as providing circular economy solutions and supporting others to implement their own. We do this via our ecolabelling program, providing independent third-party assurance on sustainability claims, government and industry advocacy, consulting and training.

## **SDG 15 - Life on Land**

Unsustainable practices in the extraction of raw materials can result in many environmental issues, such as threatening biodiversity in adjacent areas, erosion in coastal areas and riverbanks, or pollution of waterways. Our standards include criteria related to sustainable forest management, environmental management plans, cultural heritage plans, environmental remediation, application of environment legislation, and efficient use of resources and energy.

## **SDG 17 - Partnership for the Goals**

GECA fosters strong partnerships with a range of stakeholders to strengthen and implement sustainable development. In 2021, we collaborated across industries, NGOs, government, education and research institutions. This includes playing an active role in several working groups such as MECLA, ANZPAC, Better Building Partnership, ASBEC Council, GEN, ISCA and Sustainability Supply Chain School.

The SDGs, combined with Science-Based Targets, circular economy thinking, and lifecycle ecolabels, are a formidable blueprint for GOOD. At GECA, we know that collaboration is critical to creating real and lasting positive change. So, we would like to invite anyone interested in working with us to get in touch!



# The people that make GECA 'tick'

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The GECA team has seen some changes over the last year, with us bidding farewell to **Dr Sahar Farzadnia** and **Deepali Ghadge**. Their contributions to GECA were considerable. We thank them for their commitment and wish them the best of luck in their future endeavours. We were also fortunate to have two interns work with GECA, Rohit Bansod and Minjee Park and thank them also for their valuable contributions.

We've also had the pleasure of onboarding and welcoming some new faces! **Karina Schlieper**, who had been volunteering with GECA for a year and now our new Project Officer, Karina uses her marketing and project implementation skills to contribute to lasting change for a more sustainable Australia. We also welcomed chemical engineer **Dr Joel Tan**, as our new Standards & Technical Officer. He brings a wealth of experience in hazardous waste management services and environmental and water technology research and development. And most recently, **Shahin Chandriyakat** as our new LCA, Standards & Technical Officer! Shahin assists with creating Life Cycle Assessments (LCAs) and Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). She also supports developing and revising GECA's lifecycle ecolabel standards.

## The Board



The Board: Left to right; Patrick Walker, Lorraine Stephenson, Stephen Humphries, Emma Bull, Angus Kell and Suzie Hollott.

# The GECA Team



The GECA Team  
 Left to right (row one); Michelle Thomas, Paula Clasby, Kendall Benton-Collins, Marlene Brueton  
 Row two; Jessica Mutton, Judith Schinabeck, Rodrigo Martinez, Dr Joel Tan  
 Row three; Shahin Chandriyakat, Raven Mason-Uyeda, Karina Schlieper  
 Row four; Dr Sahar Farzadnia, Deepali Ghadge  
 Row five (Interns); Rohit Bansod and Minjee Park.

# Finance report

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**28 Standards**

As the challenges of the Covid pandemic continue, we at GECA have knuckled down to maintain our drive to promote best practice in sustainable procurement via our ecolabel program and other services. While global economic uncertainty remained in 2021, businesses also had a strong appetite to examine their sustainability practices closely, to strengthen and future-proof their supply chains. This resulted in a noticeable increase in demand for GECA's expertise and solutions.



**107 Licensees**

The 2020/2021 Financial Year saw outstanding results for GECA, **with a net surplus of \$191,511**, a remarkable result in a tumultuous year. We currently have **107 licensees** across **28 GECA Standards**, showcasing more than **3500 products and services**.

FY21 saw an increase in income as we onboarded new licensees and supported more businesses to navigate improvements in their sustainability practices. Due to disciplined cost control and a natural reduction in some expenses because of lockdowns, our expenses were also lower.



**3500 products**

GECA is therefore now well placed to invest in increasing our offerings, work with our licensees to showcase the sustainability benchmarks that their products and services should meet and remain a leader in our chosen markets.



**Net surplus  
\$191,511**

*“ We view GECA certification as the highest level of Australian certification. GECA’s high standards match the product and service standards at Spectrum Floors.*

*GECA also maintains international connections to certifications around the world which ties in with our manufacturers. The GECA team provide excellent support to their licensees! ”*

**Spectrum Floors**

*“ We have carried green and biodegradable products for many years, but after getting GECA certification, we immediately saw a huge spike in sales for those certified products that were of interest to corporate and government buyers. We found certification helped to build an extra level of trust, both in the product itself and in our own capabilities. ”*

**Clean Plus Chemicals**

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# 2021

At GECA, we firmly believe that collaboration is essential if we are going to move our country and our planet toward a circular economy. If you are interested in learning more and collaborating with us, [contact us today](#)

[www.geca.eco](http://www.geca.eco)

# GECA

