Australia set to recharge lithium battery recycling with launch of B-cycle, national battery stewardship scheme

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In the World Bank's 2020 *Minerals for Climate Action Report*[4], it estimates demand for battery minerals, including lithium, cobalt, copper and zinc, is set to increase 500% by 2050. This increased demand is required to ensure a renewable energy future for Australia and the globe.

Conventional strategic approaches to meet this increased demand have included further mining and technology efficiency improvements. However, there remains another underexploited opportunity globally, and especially in Australia, that is the recovery or recycling of these valuable materials from existing/legacy used batteries.

Australia's battery recycling rate has been historically very low, the lowest of all OECD countries, with less than 10% of all imported and used batteries recycled. To disrupt the currently low recycling status-quo, Australia's first national stewardship scheme for batteries, B-cycle, launched in Jan 2022.

Unlike many European and North American schemes, and although supported by the Australian Government, accredited under their National Product Stewardship Scheme legislation, and authorised by the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), B-cycle is, a voluntary stewardship scheme.

B-cycle works across the battery value chain, including manufacturers, importers, users, collectors/transporters, recyclers and secondary processors, to incentivise the battery recycling industry to scale up battery recovery, especially electric vehicles (EVs) and energy storage batteries, through voluntary levies collected at import into Australia.

Currently, B-cycle is developing an EV and energy storage battery, recovery and recycling strategy, as Australia, like most countries, anticipates a significant and rapid transition to EVs and further energy storage technologies over the next 10 – 20 years.

As a resource rich country with infrastructure to accommodate extraction and processing of these materials, Australia should seek to position itself as a leader in both the mining and recovery of materials that is essential transition to a zero carbon and circular economy.

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[4] https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2020/05/11/mineral-production-to-soar-as-demand-for-clean-energy-increases

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Libby Chaplin is the Chief Executive Officer of Australia's Battery Stewardship Council, the organisation behind B-cycle, Australia's national government-backed battery recycling scheme. For the past 10 years, Libby has specialised in electronics and battery stewardship, working in the US, Canada and South Korea for clients such as the Green Electronics Council, the US EPA, the International Sustainable Development Foundation, and numerous electronic-waste recyclers. Libby has a strong focus on facilitating product stewardship at the national level by understanding the impact of life cycle dynamics on achieving responsible end-of-life outcomes.