

Development of an Australian national life cycle inventory database.

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Providing accessible, transparent and quality LCI data is important to pave the way towards improving environmental best practice in industry and greening global supply chains. This is globally recognised as evident in the UNEP/SETAC's international life cycle partnership and the establishment of national LCI databases by many countries.

In the case of Australia, LCI data were developed to a draft stage in the Australian LCA Inventory Data Project undertaken in 1998 and 1999 in a collaborative effort between the Centre for Design at RMIT and the University of New South Wales. This was followed by the establishment of the Data Inventory Group by ALCAS in 2002 that is still in operation, though wider stakeholder participation has not been as expected. During this time, many others have invested heavily in the development of LCI and are gaining international attention for their efforts. While these efforts are commendable, successful establishment of an Australian National LCI database has been elusive, mainly due to lack of support for initial set-up and operation of the database.

This initial start-off phase is critical to set in motion the engagement of stakeholders and widen the coverage of the database as evident from international experience. Further, to be successful in this phase a reputable organisation having the expertise and resources has to assume a key role. CSIRO and ALCAS in a joint initiative have come forward to take up the challenge and have proposed an organisational framework. Main features of this framework include technical work packages to implement the technical tasks and database, and setting up a steering committee to engage the stakeholders and provide advice and guidance in the development of the project. A workshop of interested parties is scheduled in May 2006 to engage the stakeholders in this initiative.

This paper reports on the technical and organisational structures and guidelines that have been developed for the Australian LCA database, the scope of data to be collected and the timing for the project.