

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

In the spirit of reconciliation, GECA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognises their continuing connection to land, water, culture, and community.

We pay our respect to their Elders, past, present, and emerging. And we extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

While our headquarters are in Sydney, GECA's dedicated and hardworking team operates remotely. Therefore we'd like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the Countries from which our staff work:

- The Cammeraygal People The Darkinjung People The Guringai People The Kabi Kabi (Gabi Gabi) People The Jinibara People The Gadigal and Wangal Peoples
- The Muru-ora-dial People The Gweagal People The Bidjigal People The Awabakal People The Wallumedegal People The Wurundjeri People



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Patrick Walker GECA Chair

INTRODUCTION

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

It is with a healthy mixture of pleasure and pride that we look back on GECA's achievements during FY 2022. We had another year disrupted by the pandemic, with our clients and team settling into different ways of working and coping with lockdowns and travel restrictions that affected both working and personal lives. On top of this, climate change caused a third successive La Niña, which wreaked havoc on communities along the east coast of Australia.

Against this backdrop, the GECA team worked remotely – but impressively collaboratively – to drive significant improvements to our services. The team designed these improvements to enable individuals and organisations to make more sustainable choices. A major step forward was the development and launch of the GECA Portal – aimed at speeding the onboarding process for new licensees and making assessments smoother and quicker. The creation of the Portal was a complex project, working with an offshore technology partner, and we are already starting to see positive results.

On top of this, the GECA team conducted a strategic review of our ecolabel, including its underlying standards and associated offerings, designed to reflect emerging regulations, market trends and new technologies. We will be sharing the outcomes of this process during the coming year, which will reflect our desire to ensure that the GECA ecolabel remains a trusted and respected benchmark in the market while reducing barriers and pain points for our clients. An important aim is also to improve our agility and speed to market so that GECA can continue improving how we serve our clients' changing needs.

These significant strategic developments did not prevent us from achieving outstanding results in the market.

Perhaps most pleasing was the growing progress in the consumer sector – evidence that retailers and B2C providers are seeing the need to provide sustainability credentials to attract and retain their customers. In this respect, we were delighted to continue our partnership with Woolworths by certifying their Bricks and Fix-ems[™] under our Recycled Products standard. We also welcomed Koala's mattress range as the first to become GECA certified! GECA also cemented its relationship with Officeworks, verifying environmental claims across 54 products.

And once again, we achieved excellent financial outcomes – lifting revenues to just shy of \$1.1m and achieving a net surplus of \$136k. To restate my message from previous years: as a not-for-profit, the purpose of achieving a surplus is to enable our organisation to invest in future growth so that we can achieve further positive impacts on sustainability. The investments highlighted above – in our Portal and in modernising our ecolabel standards to reflect a changing world – are great examples of GECA doing just that, and we are confident that the results will speak for themselves in years to come.

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO

This past year has once again proven to be one with challenges and further realisation of the fragility of the world we live in, with the continuing pandemic disruptions, disturbing unrest in Ukraine and IPCC reports calling for immediate action.

At GECA, we have embraced the challenges and adapted where possible. This year, we have taken the opportunity to reflect on our offerings and look at ways to ensure more efficient continual improvement and consistency in our standards.

We have commenced our GECA standards strategy, comprehensively reviewing how our standards can remain consistent across all our product and service categories and how we can align better with external schemes and international partners.

We aim to ensure even greater recognition for our licensees.

It's an exciting process and the most significant holistic review of our ecolabel standards since our conception. We hope the redesign will address our licensee, partner, and stakeholders' requirements and ensure that GECA remains a sustainability leader.

We further embraced our love of continuous improvement by completing an independent peer review of our GECA scheme. As part of our membership in the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN), our ecolabel program is reviewed every five years. Conducted by the Global Ecolabelling Network's Internationally Coordinated Ecolabelling System (GENICES), the review provides independent verification that GECA continues to align with ISO 14024 principles. And we are proud to say we completed a successful review this year, with GECA receiving recognition for this at the last GEN AGM.

GECA is also a certified B Corporation. We completed our recertification in early 2021 and received recognition as one of the Best For The World™ B Corps in the impact area of governance. We're incredibly proud of the governance structures we have put in place, as they ensure we are continually adhering to our values of integrity, independence and impact.

GECA is truly about the amazing people we work with! From our passionate internal team and amazing licensees who continue to lead the way, with more sustainable practices and solutions, to the wonderful collaborations we are fortunate to be part of.

Overall, it has been a positive, busy year for GECA, and our ongoing plans for continual improvement will ensure a more impactful, supportive and collaborative way forward.



Michelle Thomas CEO



FY21/22 HIGHLIGHTS GECA'S STANDARDS & TECHNICAL SERVICES



Thank you to our longstanding ecolabel licensees - with a special mention to Independent Cement and Lime, who have been GECA certified for 18 years!

Woolworths has mandated that certification under GECA's Recycled Products standard is now a supplier requirement for products with recycled content claims.



Geosentinel Australia was our first licensee to certify under our Sustainable Products & Services standard for their Washbox product - a multi-trade tool wash station for construction projects. This standard is a unique fusion containing the robust nature of a lifecycle ecolabel with the data generation of a Life Cycle Assessment.







Koala's mattress range became the first-ever fully GECA certified mattresses under our Furniture, Fittings, Foam & Mattresses (Level A) standard.

OUR IMPACTS



"GECA is a leading authority on global sustainable solutions, and our goal is to innovate acoustic architectural designs for a greener, simpler life. So, for us, GECA certification ensures we're developing products with tomorrow in mind." -Decor Systems

"It's really important to us that we have independent certification about the environmental credentials of our products. It's meaningful to us and to many of our clients." - Koskela

"GECA certification is for us, the most effective way for Sustainable Living Fabrics to remain accountable to our commitment to sustainable practices as well as keeping our fabric at the highest quality." - Sustainable Living Fabrics

> "GECA is a world-recognised certification essential to our business's success, as it ensures that we are always on the cutting edge of environmental-friendly innovation." - Healtheclean – Derivan

"Obtaining GECA certification helps clients with ease of choosing Green Star compatible products in their projects. It also has the added benefit of the assurance that the materials and processes used in our products have been assessed by a trusted third party to be environmentally and socially sustainable." - Luxmy Furniture

"It's always been important that we back up our eco-friendly claims with respected third-party certification to build and maintain trust with our customer base...GECA provides a rigorous and detailed approach to certification that not only challenges us as a brand to continue to improve; it also holds us accountable as we grow." - Koh

"We view GECA certification as the highest level of Australian certification...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

"After comparing a few other certifying organisations, we found GECA to be more professional with their standards and specifications, with timely audits and a high level of technical understanding." -Clean Plus Chemicals

"For our customers, I believe it's very complex to compare different suppliers in terms of their sustainability performance. Being able to rely on a solid certification scheme takes that task away from them." - modulyss

#LOVEOURLICENSEES

We congratulate all of our lifecycle ecolabel licensees and claims authentication clients for demonstrating their continued commitment to having a lower environmental, health, and social impact via independent GECA certification!



GECA'S STANDARDS STRATEGY

In 2022, GECA has been focusing intensely on our Standards Strategy. A core part of our Standards Strategy is to see our lifecycle ecolabel standards undergo restructuring within the next financial year and beyond.

This transition period will involve introducing a new system with two levels of compliance, mandatory and optional, which aims to improve consistency across GECA standards, add flexibility to criteria implementation, and reflect the nuances in current and upcoming sustainability best practices.

Optional criteria will acknowledge manufacturers' commitment towards continuous improvement and enable the achievement of additional credits toward points in Green Star and other applicable schemes.

While GECA's standards reflect world-class benchmarks across environmental, health, social and fit-for-purpose criteria, new sustainability indicators are constantly emerging. Even in the last few years, new science has emerged on embodied carbon in materials, human health performance, ingredients disclosure and circular economy metrics.

Our long-term goal is to improve the consistency of criteria across our standards to facilitate greater agility in adding new criteria to our standards, as well as conducting research and developing new criteria areas such as carbon and circularity. We are also exploring the evolution of the GECA ecolabel into a data-driven, two-tiered program.

As always, everything we do is in collaboration with our stakeholders. Therefore, during this crucial transition phase, we will continue to engage with our licensees and other stakeholders, including collecting ideas and feedback on our strategy. In particular, we plan to work with our stakeholders to develop new criteria areas. We have identified high priorities to integrate into our standards, including carbon reduction and circularity.

We aim to begin integrating the new criteria into our standards by early 2023. In the next financial year, we will see GECA's built environment product, material and service standards restructured into our new system two-tiered system.



FY21/22 HIGHLIGHTS PROJECTS, CONSULTANCY & TRAINING

GECA

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2022

In August 2021, the Australian Senate voted to ban the importation of any goods made with forced labour into Australia



Making self-declared incorrect, misleading, and sometimes entirely false

claims breach Australian Consumer Law. In 2022, the Australian Competition and

Consumer Commission (ACCC) emphasised its commitment to weed out greenwashing in the marketplace.

We've partnered with our fellow B Corporation, Marque Lawyers, to deliver environmental claims training. Our training module educates employees and

marketing and management teams for

businesses of any size. Together we're

raising awareness about how to correctly

make and substantiate environmental claims and ensure compliance with legal obligations.

We assisted eight clients and their entities to reflect on their year's actions on modern slavery and deliver their second Modern Slavery Report We supported two clients in developing and refining their sustainable procurement policies and strategies

STRIPOUT WASTE PROGRAM

Increasingly, the focus of waste recovery and reduction efforts within Australia's built environment sector is on stripout waste generated from end-of-lease, refurbishments and demolition activities.

GECA, with support from the Better Buildings Partnership (BBP), was awarded a grant from the City of Sydney to develop a program to improve the accuracy and transparency of stripout waste data. As part of this program, we have developed a simplified yet robust data reporting process that can be utilised by building owners, BBP members and the broader industry. The program is currently undergoing a pilot phase.

Applicants can be:

- property owners who want to verify the tenant or the demolition contractor have practised a sustainable stripout process
- tenants at the end of their lease which are wanting to verify that the demolition contractor has practised a sustainable stripout process
- demolition contractors hired by the building owner or the tenant wanting to prove that their stripout process was resource efficient

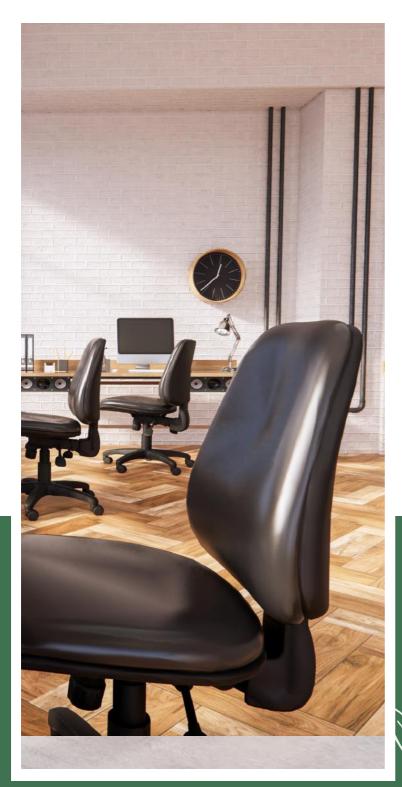
Specifically, the <u>Stripout Waste Program</u> will:

- provide a clear view of current performance by building owners and contractors, targeted areas for improvement and necessary intervention points
- provide the means for data-driven decisions and support for driving policy improvements by building owners, industry, and governments
- provide a guiding methodology for stripout contractors to report projects; upskilling local contractors to meet the challenges in our transition to a circular economy
- enable performance comparisons between management processes, projects, and contractors.



FIT FOR OFFICE

An estimated 30,000 tonnes of furniture – much of it in excellent condition – end up in Australia's waste stream each year. Edge Environment was awarded a grant by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment (DAWE) in mid-2021 to develop a national stewardship approach to address and divert commercial furniture from landfill. GECA and other collaborators have joined Edge Environment to help deliver the project and will continue the work in 2022 –2023.

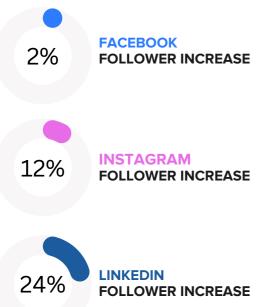


Named Fit for Office (FFO), the project is only possible with support from the building industry and commercial furniture manufacturers, including some of GECA's fantastic licensees, who are again leading the way in sustainability. The past year has been busy with research and design options for a stewardship scheme that supports landfill diversion, reuse and repair, design considerations, enhanced recycling methodologies and improved social outcomes to drive responsible management of commercial furniture in Australia.

GECA's robust ecolabelling standards include product stewardship criteria, emphasising the value of decreasing contribution to landfill and increasing the reuse and recycling rate of the product at the end of its life. Along with our licensees, we are thrilled at the opportunity this grant brings to support a successful product stewardship scheme for commercial office furniture, working with all entities involved to create a real impact.



FY21/22 HIGHLIGHTS **ENGAGEMENT &** STORYTELLING



GECA NAMED BEST FOR THE WORLD IN GOVERNANCE 2021

At GECA, we take the concept of continuous improvement very seriously, not just for our licensees but for ourselves too! So, we are incredibly proud about being recognised as one of the Best for the World[™] B Corps of 2021 in governance. This recognition means we achieved a top score in overall mission, ethics, accountability and transparency during our independent B Corporation recertification.



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AMPLIFYING OUR IMPACTS

The COVID pandemic continued to bring challenges throughout the second half of 2021, particularly regarding industry events.

However, as restrictions eased in early 2022, we were delighted to meet with our stakeholders face-to-face and exhibit at the first <u>DesignBUILD x Total Facilities</u> joint expo as a supporting partner and speaker. We want to give a big thank you to our GECA certified space design contributors for fitting out the GECA stand! District Australia provided their lovely Border Side Table, Cugino Stool, Forcina Chair, Isabella Chair, Osso Chair, and Underline Café Table. Gerflor supplied our beautiful flooring using DLW Marmorette. And innovative green cleaning products by Airestec.

We were also able to meet up with many familiar faces at <u>Sydney Build</u>! Over 10,000 attendees had the opportunity to visit our Materials in Mind pod and discover a range of beautiful and functional GECA certified products. Our CEO, Michelle Thomas, was there to talk about how our collaborative governmentsupported project is tackling office furniture waste.

In October 2021, we joined the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) and our fellow GEN members to launch the international <u>Look Closer campaign</u> 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 a significant core value of our work. We are grateful to our licensees, stakeholders, event organisers and media partners who continue to work with us towards our vision for a sustainable future.





FY21/22 HIGHLIGHTS



Action Paper

GECA

GECA Solutions for a Circular Economy

2022

At NSW Circular's Industry Taskforce meeting in May 2022, GECA's Strategic Communications Manager presented our action paper and showcased how independent environmental labelling can power circular procurement. Embracing the transition to a circular economy in Australia is a significant step toward achieving a better future for people and planet. Federal and State governments have also made it clear that business as usual is no longer an option.

We published our <u>GECA Solutions for</u> <u>a Circular Economy</u> action paper to showcase how we can help manufacturers, procurement, and sustainability stakeholders achieve their circular targets with credibility and transparency via three forms of environmental labelling.

- Lifecycle ecolabels
- Third-party claims authentication
- Environmental Product Declarations

GECA ran a masterclass for B Corporations across the globe to demonstrate how robust voluntary environmental labelling can combat greenwashing and give consumers confidence in their products, services, and organisation

We continued to advocate for climate action via WWF-Australia's Renewables Nation campaign, the B Corp Climate Collective, and the Materials & Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance (MECLA)

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We submitted a letter to the Australian Government's Productivity Commission advocating for more action on the Right to Repair, which is an integral part of the circular economy

GECA BOARD

As a not-for-profit organisation, GECA relies on volunteers to support and inform us and help drive strategy. We are fortunate to have a very talented, voluntary Board of Directors, to whom we are hugely grateful for their time, guidance, advice and strategic brains.

They are generous with their wealth of experience in many fields, helping to shape GECA for a more positive outcome. GECA is very lucky to have you as part of the team!

"My thanks go to our volunteer Board Members – Lorraine Stephenson, Steve Humphries, Emma Bull, Angus Kell and Suzie Hollott. The skills, experience and expertise you bring to bear in your roles is immensely valuable and much appreciated by your Chair!" - Patrick Walker, GECA Chair.



Patrick Walker GECA Chair



Stephen Humphries Chair of GECA's Finance & Risk Committee



Angus Kell Director

Lorraine Stephenson Chair of GECA's Standards Committee



Suzie Hollott Director

Emma Bull Director

THE GECA FAMILY

GECA's constitution outlines the fundamental principles according to which the organisation is governed. <u>Click to</u> <u>download the latest</u> <u>version, which was</u> <u>updated in 2022.</u>

STANDARDS COMMITTEE

Our lifecycle ecolabel standards lay at the heart of what we do. We want to give special thanks to our Standards Committee members who provide oversight and recommendations to ensure the continued effectiveness of GECA's standards and their alignment with ISO 14024. Thank you so much to Stephen Reardon, Libby Staggs, Angus Kell and Lorraine Stephenson for their invaluable support in ensuring GECA continues to provide robust and impactful standards.











ASSURANCE PROVIDERS

Thank you to our independent Assurance Providers, Bureau Veritas and For Future Generations, who provide valuable comfort to producers and consumers alike that GECA's standards are being met in practice. Our Assurance Providers are committed to providing outstanding service to our licensees.





TECHNICAL ADVISORY GROUPS

The development of GECA's standards is supported by the integral assistance of its technical advisory groups. A special thanks to all our technical advisory group members, and we look forward to continued collaboration in creating solutions for sustainable consumption and production across Australia's industrial sectors.

OUR COLLABORATORS

At GECA, we continued our work with our many stakeholders and partners, organisations that help shape the future of sustainable practice in Australia and worldwide.

Highlights:

- As a member of the Australian Life Cycle Assessment Society (ALCAS), we remain at the forefront in the use and development of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA), management and thinking.
- GECA, in partnership with the Australian Furniture Association (AFA), collaborated and delivered on a substantial project focusing on Chemical Management.
- We continue to work as a founding member of the Australian, New Zealand and Pacific Island Plastics Pact (ANZPAC) to accelerate the circular economy for plastic in our region.
- We see our membership with the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) as pivotal for our work to help foster a more sustainable, productive and resilient built environment.
- At GECA, we're proud to continue our support of the Banksia Foundation's Sustainability Awards because we share their aims of using the SDGs as a framework to unite world businesses, governments and citizens to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and protect the planet.
- As a supporting member, we continued our longstanding partnership with the Better Buildings Partnership (BBP), including developing our new Stripout Waste Program.
- GECA is proud to be a member of the Business Council of Sustainable Development Australia (BCSDA). In May 2022, BCSDA launched the first-ever survey on Australian business sentiment and long-term plans to drive transformative change across business operations and impacts on society.
- We have joined forces with EPD Australasia to provide a mutual discount for GECA licensees registering an EPD with EPD Australasia and an EPD owner applying for GECA certification for their product.
- Our status as a member of the Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) continues to be crucial to the growth and continuous improvement of GECA's ecolabelling program.
- Thank you to the Infrastructure Sustainability Council (ISC), the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA), the International WELL Building Institute (IWBI) and the Living Future Institute of Australia (LFIA) for your ongoing recognition and support!



OUR COLLABORATORS

- The Materials & Embodied Carbon Leaders' Alliance (MECLA) was launched in 2021 to drive reductions in embodied carbon across the building supply chain. GECA is proud to be a Founding Partner of this collaborative initiative.
- We continued collaborating with the National Australian Built Environment Rating System (NABERS), including participating in the review of their Material Recovery Score (MRS).
- GECA continues to have a close and productive relationship with Standards Australia as part of the EV-021-03 Environmental Labelling working group.
- We're proud to be an Industry Fellow and Silver Member of the Supply Chain Sustainability School and an active participant in their Local Government Working Group. Our relationship with The School amplifies our educational and advocacy goals.
- GECA is a member of the Trusted Labels Group (TLG), which aims to identify common areas of interest and shared learnings while promoting the benefits of independent third-party certification. Members include the Aquaculture Stewardship Council, Australian Organic, Fairtrade Australia and New Zealand, the Forest Stewardship Council Australia and New Zealand, and the Marine Stewardship Council.
- Our focus extends beyond Australia's borders, so our UN Global Compact Network Australia (UNGCNA) membership is a valuable asset. Together we empower businesses to act responsibly, set a positive example, and create a sustainable future.
- GECA is an Organisational Member of the US Green Building Council (USGBC), which has developed the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) rating system.
- The Vinyl Council of Australia (VCA) and GECA have collaborated to create the VinylCycle Label and verification process to verify recycled PVC content claims, encouraging recycled PVC uptake and related innovation.



• GECA continues to champion WWF-Australia's Renewables Nation campaign to push for smarter, stronger, and more diverse supply chains and better social, economic, and environmental outcomes for all.





Michelle Thomas CEO



Jessica Mutton Head of Business & Strategy



Kendall Benton-Collins Strategic Communications Manager



Karina Schlieper Marketing Manager



Raven Mason-Uyeda Operations Officer



Jacqui Wagar Client Engagement Manager



Shelby Kerr Client Engagement Officer



Dr Shadia Moazzem Standards & Technical Officer



Shahin Chandriyakat LCA, Standards & Technical Officer



Jasmin Lewis Standards Strategy Project Manager

TEAM GECA

As we continue to experience change in many areas of the GECA business and see changes across industries, it also coincides with changes within the GECA team.

GECA has been lucky to have a team of devoted, passionate and amazing individuals, to whom we are incredibly grateful for all the hard work and determination they deliver daily to keep GECA ticking!

And there is a lot to do to keep the wave of continual improvement going. We have said a fond farewell to a few really valuable GECA team members over the past year who have chosen to embark on new adventures within the field of sustainability as they continue sharing the message from different angles. We would wholeheartedly like to thank, bid a fond farewell and wish the best of luck in their future endeavours to Rodrigo Martinez, Marlene Brueton, Dr Joel Tan, Judith Schinabeck, and Paula Clasby.

And with farewell and growth, we have been lucky to welcome some exciting new team members to GECA! Jasmin Lewis, Dr Shadia Moazzem, Shelby Kerr and Jacqui Wagar have been welcomed into the team and have already proved extremely valuable to GECA. Watch this space as the team continues to grow.



"Great results can only be achieved through teamwork, and my thanks go to everyone who contributed to such an excellent year. To our CEO Michelle Thomas and all of Team GECA – thank you for being so passionate about making a difference and for your resilience and good cheer despite the many challenges 2022 has thrown at us!" - Patrick Walker, GECA Chair.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY

GECA has once again seen a profitable end to the Financial Year. While GECA is a not-for-profit organisation with the primary objective of protecting people and planet - to ensure we can carry out our activities and increase our reach, we must have the funds to do so.

For the 21/22 Financial Year, we are glad to finish the year with a total revenue of \$1,075,479, resulting in a net profit of \$120,053. While the primary source of income is received from our core business of ecolabelling, we have a consistent 20% turnover realised from other business activities, such as Claims Authentication, Advisory and Environmental Product Declarations. This means we can continue supporting businesses that wish to improve their environmental and social impacts.

FUTURE INVESTMENTS

As technology is required more for sustainability reporting and collaboration, GECA plans to invest in more efficient and streamlined processes in the next FY. GECA is looking at ensuring we remain leaders in promoting sustainable practices, which will see us also heavily investing in a project to develop GECA standards further.

26 STANDARDS 110 LICENSEES NET SURPLUS \$120,053 2,047 PRODUCTS At GECA, we firmly believe collaboration is essential for creating a better future for people and the planet. <u>Contact</u> <u>us today</u> if you are interested in learning more and collaborating with us.



SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS FOR PEOPLE AND PLANET