

## Assessment of waste exports from Australia in August 2018

12 October 2018

Joe Pickin and Luke Richmond

In August 2018, Australia exported around 352,200 tonnes of waste with a value of \$A501 million. This represents a decrease in the total volume (-3%) and value (-5%) of waste exports compared with July 2018.

### Comparison by destination

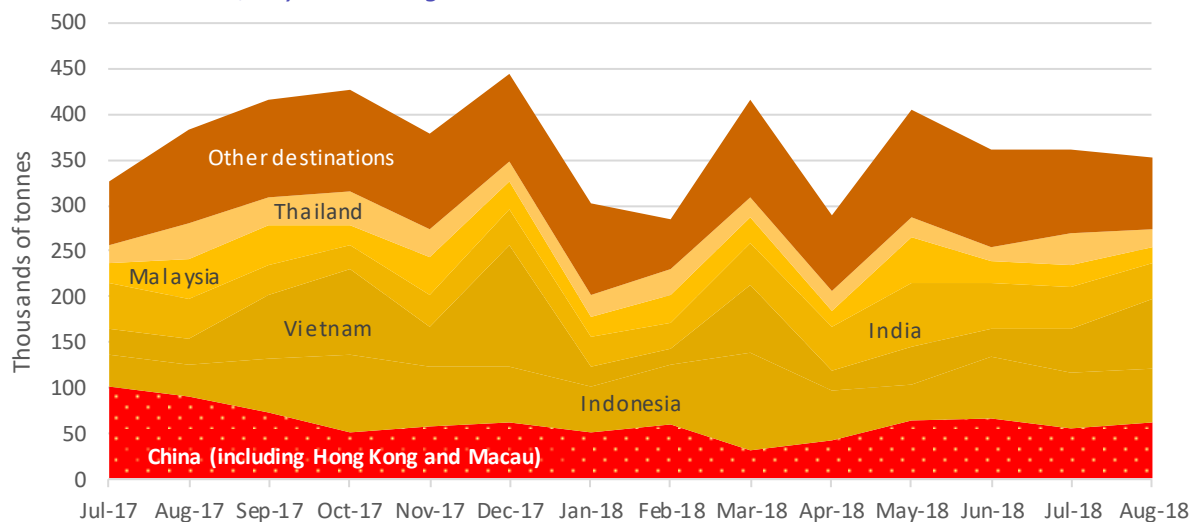
The top six countries receiving waste exports from Australia in August 2018 accounted for 78% of all that was exported. These countries were, in order, Vietnam, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), Indonesia, India, Thailand and Malaysia. These countries were also the top six receivers of waste in July 2018, with Vietnam and Indonesia switching places in the rankings. In August 2018 Vietnam received 22% more in volume than it received in July 2018 and was the only destination to receive more waste than their monthly 2017-18 average. Additionally, China received 11% more waste in August 2018 than it did in July 2018. China, Indonesia, India, Thailand and Malaysia received less waste than their monthly 2017-18 average. Table 1 compares the top six receiving countries in August 2018 with their July 2018 volumes and 2017-18 monthly average.

*Table 1 Comparison of month-to-month waste export volume by destination*

Export destination by monthly rank		August 18		July 18			2017-18	%
		Tonnes	% of total	Rank	Tonnes	% change	monthly avg	change
1	Vietnam	77,400	22%	3	48,600	59%	50,300	54%
2	China	61,600	17%	2	55,400	11%	62,100	-1%
3	Indonesia	58,900	17%	1	60,500	-3%	60,600	-3%
4	India	38,400	11%	4	46,100	-17%	42,400	-10%
5	Thailand	20,300	6%	5	35,000	-42%	25,700	-21%
6	Malaysia	17,300	5%	6	23,500	-26%	31,400	-45%
Top 6 total		273,900	78%		269,200	2%		
<b>Monthly total</b>		<b>352,200</b>	-		<b>362,000</b>	<b>-3%</b>		

Figure 1 presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia to the top six receiving countries and the other destinations between July 2017 and August 2018. Exports to China continue to remain reasonably stable while overall the proportion of exports to the top six destinations appears to increase.

*Figure 1 Monthly exports of waste from Australia by destination, ranked by total quantity received, July 2017 – August 2018*



## Comparison by material

Table 2 presents a comparison of waste export volumes between August 2018 with July 2018 and the monthly average from 2017-18 as well as the year to date volumes.

**Month to month** – Exports of metals in August 2018 closely matched those from July 2018 while exports of paper and cardboard (12%) and other (12%) increased. Exports of plastics (-19%) and hazardous waste (-66%) decreased between July and August 2018. The decrease in exports of hazardous waste is representative of a trend which experiences sharp spikes (as seen in July 2018 data), likely to be due to the removal of waste from stockpiles for export.

**2017-18 monthly average** – More metals were exported in August 2018 compared with the monthly average for 2017-18 however less plastics, paper and cardboard, other and hazardous waste was exported. Overall, August 2018 total exports of waste were slightly less (-5%) than the monthly average for 2017-18.

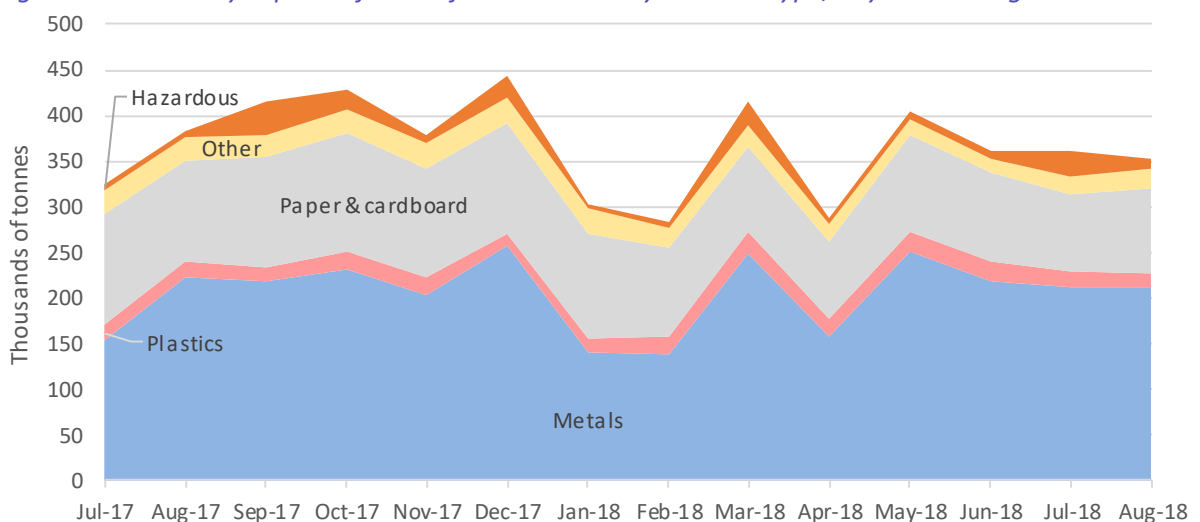
**Year to date** – The total year-to-date waste exported in August 2017 was around 708,300 tonnes compared to 714,300 tonnes in August 2018, a 1% increase in waste exported from Australia.

**Table 2 Comparison of waste export volume by material**

Material category	Month		% change	Monthly avg 2017-18	% change	Year to date (Jul-Aug)		% change
	July 18	August 18				2017-18	2018-19	
Metals	211,100	211,100	0%	203,800	4%	376,400	422,200	12%
Plastics	18,800	15,300	-19%	18,300	-16%	34,000	34,100	0%
Paper & cardboard	84,700	94,700	12%	109,800	-14%	232,600	179,300	-23%
Other	19,200	21,500	12%	23,800	-10%	52,900	40,700	-23%
Hazardous	28,200	9,700	-66%	13,600	-29%	12,300	37,900	207%
<b>Total</b>	<b>362,000</b>	<b>352,200</b>	<b>-3%</b>	<b>369,200</b>	<b>-5%</b>	<b>708,300</b>	<b>714,300</b>	<b>1%</b>

Figure 2 presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia by material type between July 2017 and August 2018. Most materials are experiencing a relatively steady trend following instability in exports up to May 2018.

**Figure 2 Monthly exports of waste from Australia by material type, July 2017 – August 2018**



## The current status of waste import restrictions

Table 3 presents our understanding of waste import restrictions which countries have implemented or are planning to implement. Note, this information has been compiled based on the best publicly available sources, sometimes translated from local languages. It therefore may not match the most up-to-date information available through official channels.

*Table 3 Current status of waste import restrictions*

Country	Scope of ban	Announced & implemented	Associated export volumes Material	2017-18	Aug-18	Impact and uncertainties
China	Restricted the import of certain materials covering specific commodity codes, mainly by specifying a threshold contamination rate of 0.5% <sup>1</sup> .	Ann.: Jul & Nov-17, Apr-18.  Imp.: Jan & Mar-18, end 2018.	Plastic, paper, metals, other	745,700 (62,100/mth)  16-17 = 1.26 Mt (105,300/mth)	61,500	Impact evident. Uncertainty whether newer announcements override older ones.
Malaysia	Import permits revoked from 114 factories that process imported plastic waste <sup>2</sup> .	Jul-18.	Plastic	71,300 (5,900/mth)	4,200	No impact apparent. Full number of plastic processors in Malaysia and how ban impacts Australian exports.
Thailand	Revoked a broad plastic scrap import allowance, meaning plastic waste and scrap is banned from import <sup>3, 4</sup> . Looking to ban imports of e-waste within 2 years <sup>3</sup> .	Both ann. Aug-18, plastic imp. Aug-18, e-waste within 2 years.	Plastic	26,900 (2,200/mth)	100	Apparent impact evident. Government announcement available in Thai only.
Vietnam	Tighter controls over imports of plastic, paper and metals. Only accepted if importers can prove that their shipment meets the specified environmental standards and there is capacity in the country to process the materials <sup>5</sup> .	Ann. in Aug-18, appears to be implemented.	Plastic, paper, metals	603,000 (50,300/mth)	77,400	No impact apparent. Unable to find environmental standards used to determine when shipments are acceptable. Processing capacity of sector.

Sources:

1. Blue Environment (2018) *Data on exports of recyclables from Australia to China*, available from <https://blueenvironment.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Exports-of-recyclables-from-Aust-to-China-v2.pdf>
2. FMT News (2018) *Permits to import plastic waste for 114 factories revoked*, available from: <https://www.freemalaysiatoday.com/category/nation/2018/07/24/permits-to-import-plastic-waste-for-114-factories-revoked/>
3. The Nation (2018) *Import of plastic waste banned*, available from: <http://www.nationmultimedia.com/detail/national/30351792>
4. Government Gazette Thailand (2018), available from: <http://www.ratchakitcha.soc.go.th/DATA/PDF/2561/E/188/T15.PDF>
5. Vietnam Briefing (2018) *Vietnam to Restrict Surging Scrap Imports*, available from: <http://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/vietnam-to-restrict-surg-ing-scrap-imports.html/>