

Assessment of waste exports from Australia in January 2019

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Blue Environment is commissioned by the Department of the Environment and Energy to provide a monthly analysis of waste export data to June 2019. The data is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, which provides monthly data covering the previous six months, including any updates.

Summary

In January 2019, Australia exported about 272,000 tonnes of waste with a value of \$A381 million. This represents a reduction of 33% in the quantity and 35% in the value of waste exports compared with December 2018. This is the lowest monthly total in the last 19 months. The reduction is attributable to a sharp fall in metals exports, probably due to improved domestic prices.

Comparison by destination

The six countries receiving the most waste exports from Australia in January 2019 accounted for 78% of all that was exported. These countries were, in order, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), Indonesia, India, Vietnam, Bangladesh and Malaysia. Other than Bangladesh, these countries were also in the top six receivers of waste in December 2018. China moved from third to first place, Indonesia remained second, India moved from fourth to third, and Vietnam dropped from first to fourth place. Vietnam received about 45,000 tonnes less 'ferrous waste and scrap (excluding waste and scrap of cast iron, alloy steel, stainless steel, in tin plate and tinned iron or steel)' and 8,000 tonnes less 'waste and scrap of cast iron' than in December 2018¹. Bangladesh moved from ninth place to fifth, having received an additional 11,300 tonnes of 'ferrous waste and scrap' and 'waste and scrap of cast iron' compared to last month. Malaysia moved from fifth to sixth place and Japan dropped out of the top six from sixth place to 18th place.

Table 1 compares exports to the top six receiving countries in January 2019 with their December 2018 volumes and 2017-18 monthly average. Except for Bangladesh, the top six mostly received less waste than their monthly 2017-18 average or their December 2018 receipts. The change is largely due to the decline in metal waste exports.

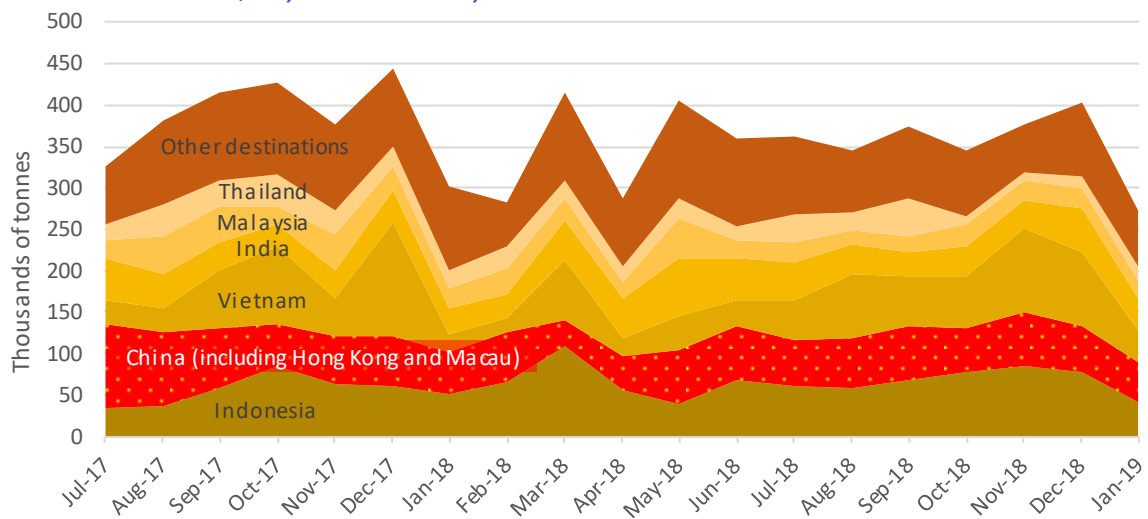
Table 1 Comparison of month-to-month waste export volume by destination

Export destination by monthly rank		January 19		December 18		2017-18 monthly avg	% change
		Tonnes	% of total	Rank	Tonnes		
1	China	49,400	18%	3	56,300	62,100	-21%
2	Indonesia	41,100	15%	2	76,600	60,600	-32%
3	India	39,400	14%	4	52,100	42,400	-7%
4	Vietnam	37,300	14%	1	89,500	50,300	-26%
5	Bangladesh	23,200	9%	9	11,900	13,900	67%
6	Malaysia	21,600	8%	5	24,800	31,200	-31%
Top 6 total		212,000	78%		311,200		-32%
Monthly total		272,000	-		403,900		

Figure 1 (overleaf) presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia to the top six receiving countries and the other destinations (by total quantity) between July 2017 and January 2019. Examined over this timeframe, the top six includes Thailand but not Bangladesh. Exports to China have remained relatively stable since May 2018.

¹ The decline in metal exports to Vietnam in January was also seen by other countries including Japan.

Figure 1 Monthly exports of waste from Australia by destination, ranked by total quantity received, July 2017 – January 2019



Comparison by material

Table 2 presents a comparison of waste export volumes between December 2018 and January 2019 and the monthly average from 2017-18 as well as the year to date volumes.

Month to month – January 2019 saw a large 44% decline in the export of metals. Waste metals are a traded commodity, and the fall is likely to be due to better domestic prices. Paper and cardboard quantities fell slightly (-1%), plastics exports remained steady and ‘other’ exports grew by 10%. Exports of hazardous waste dropped sharply (-76%) after a big increase in December². Sharp spikes are a feature of hazardous waste exports, as seen in July and September 2018 data.

2017-18 monthly average – The quantities of metals, paper and cardboard, hazardous waste and ‘other’ exported in January 2019 were less than their monthly averages for 2017-18 while exports of plastics were greater. Overall, total exports of waste in January 2019 were 26% lower than the monthly average for 2017-18.

Year to date – Year-to-date waste exports in January 2019 were about 2.21 million tonnes, compared with 2.67 million tonnes in the equivalent period last financial year (17% less). Most of the difference is due to lower quantities of paper and cardboard.

Table 2 Comparison of waste export volume by material

Material category	Month		% change	Monthly		Year to date (Jul-Jan)		% change
	Dec 18	Jan 19		avg 2017-18	% change	2017-18	2018-19	
Metals	239,100	133,200	-44%	203,800	-35%	1,430,300	1,459,400	2%
Plastics	14,500	14,600	0%	13,200	10%	86,800	99,000	14%
Paper & cardboard	97,200	96,200	-1%	109,800	-12%	838,400	657,000	-22%
Other	17,800	19,700	10%	23,800	-17%	189,300	126,000	-33%
Hazardous	35,200	8,300	-76%	17,900	-54%	126,300	139,300	10%
Total	403,900	272,000	-33%	368,500	-26%	2,671,100	2,208,700	-17%

² The large increase in December relates to a ‘wood waste’ code included because it may contain treated timber. However, could also be non-hazardous sawmill residue or, if collected direct from forestry and not via timber processing, non-waste.

Figure 2 presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia by material type between July 2017 and January 2019. Except for metals, monthly exports have remained steady this financial year relative to the volatility of 2017-18.

Figure 2 Monthly exports of waste from Australia by material type, July 2017 – January 2019

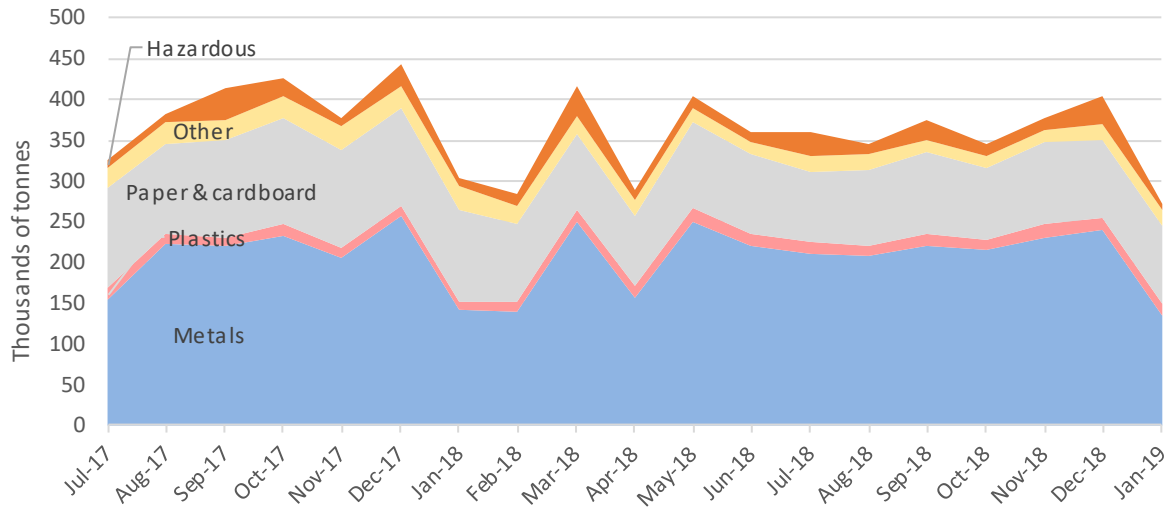
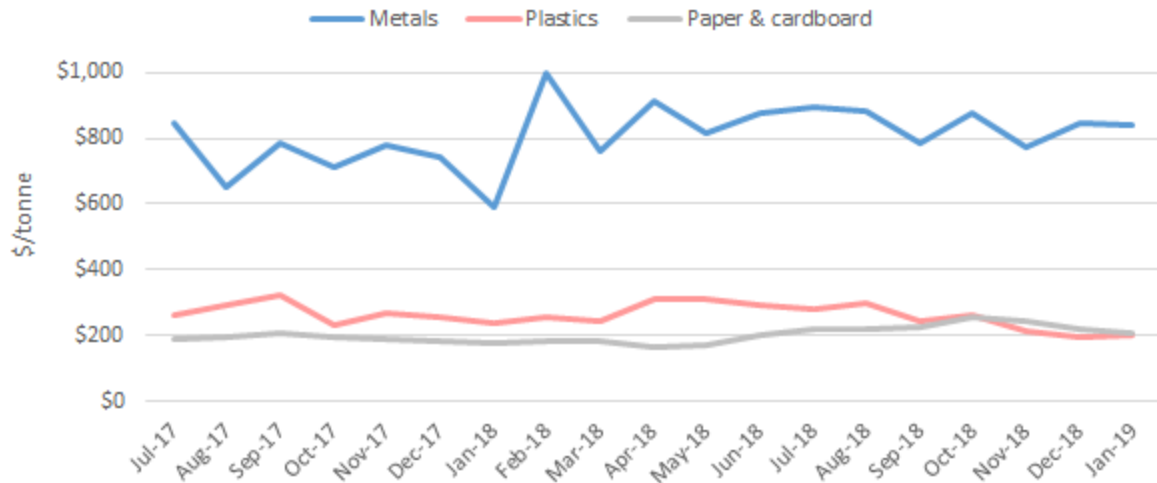


Figure 3 below presents the monthly trend in the unit prices of the main waste export materials between July 2017 and January 2019. Over this timeframe, average unit prices for metals, paper and cardboard and plastics have remained fairly stable. Note that the relative quantities of the different grades of material may vary across this time period.

Figure 3 Comparison of unit prices by material (in \$/tonne), July 2017 – January 2019



The current status of waste import restrictions

Table 3 (overleaf) presents our understanding of waste import restrictions which countries have implemented or are planning to implement. 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 exports (tonnes)			Impact and uncertainties
			Types	2017-18	Jan 19	
China	<p>Restricted the import of certain materials covering specific commodity codes, mainly by specifying a threshold contamination rate of 0.5%¹.</p> <p>A ban (issued in April 2018) on the import of 32 varieties of solid waste codes which were previously restricted. 16 of these are banned from 31 December and the other 16 to take effect from 31 December 2019².</p>	<p>Ann.: Jul & Nov-17, Apr-18.</p> <p>Imp.: Jan & Mar-18, Dec-18, Dec-19</p>	Plastic, paper, metals, other	745,700 (62,100/mth)	49,300	Impact evident (2016-17 exports averaged 105,300/mth)
India	<p>Import of scrap plastics banned. Also covers areas that were previously exempt under the 2016 ban such as special economic zones and export oriented units³. Excludes electrical/electronic assemblies or components that are defective which can be imported within a year of export³.</p>	<p>Ann.: Mar-19</p> <p>Imp.: Mar-19, Aug-19 for importers currently exempt under SEZs and EOUs.</p>	Plastic	800 (70/mth)	80	Impact not yet apparent.
Malaysia	<p>Import permits revoked from 114 factories that process imported plastic waste⁴. Import of non-recyclable plastic waste to be banned⁵.</p>	Jul-18.	Plastic	71,300 (5,900/mth)	4,400	No impact apparent
Taiwan	<p>Import of plastic waste is banned. Exceptions are made to licensed local firms that import plastic waste originating from their own overseas production processes or are a single material, but not from original production processes⁶. Paper imports restricted to only deinked paper, kraft paper, corrugated paper or cardboard that is not bleached. Import of waste newspapers and magazines banned⁶.</p>	<p>Ann.: Aug-18</p> <p>Imp.: Oct-18</p>	Plastic, paper	14,100 (500/mth)	1,600	
Thailand	<p>Revoked a broad plastic scrap import allowance, meaning plastic waste and scrap is banned from import by 2021^{6,7,8}. Looking to ban imports of e-waste within 2 years⁵.</p>	Both ann. Aug-18, plastic imp. Aug-18, e-waste within 2 years.	Plastic	26,900 (2,200/mth)	1,000	Apparent impact evident. Government announcement available in Thai only.
Vietnam	<p>Tighter controls over imports of plastic, paper and metals. Only accepted if importers can prove that their shipment meets the specified environmental standards</p>	Ann. in Aug-18, appears to be implemented.	Plastic, paper, metals	603,000 (50,300/mth)	37,300	Apparent impact evident for metal exports from Australia. Environmental standards used to

Country	Scope of ban	Announced & implemented	Associated exports (tonnes)			Impact and uncertainties
			Types	2017-18	Jan 19	
	<p>and there is capacity in the country to process the materials⁹. No new licences issued for waste imports¹⁰.</p> <p>Under the new national standard QCVN 32: 2019/BTNMT, import of e-waste plastics such as cases of TVs, computers, office equipment would be forbidden¹¹.</p> <p>From 22 February 2019, all imports through road and railway border gates to be banned¹².</p> <p>Import of mixed metal waste (containing any plastic, paper, other non-metallic metals) now understood to be restricted. Composition of metal waste needs to be 99% metal to be allowed in¹³.</p>	Mixed metal waste restricted from October 2018.				determine when shipments are acceptable or when the ban on e-waste plastic imports would take effect unavailable in English.

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