

## Assessment of waste exports from Australia in October 2018

13 December 2018 Jenny Trinh and Joe Pickin

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 October 2018, Australia exported around 353,400 tonnes of waste with a value of \$A562 million. This represents decrease of 6% in the quantity and an increase of 3% in value of waste exports compared with September 2018.

### Comparison by destination

The top six countries receiving waste exports from Australia in October 2018 accounted for 79% of all that was exported. These countries were, in order, Indonesia, Vietnam, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), India, Malaysia and Belgium. Other than Belgium<sup>1</sup>, these countries were also in the top six receivers of waste in September 2018, with Indonesia again as the top receiver, Vietnam and China switched places in rankings and India moved from fifth to fourth place. Belgium's ranking jumped from 16<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place in the rankings, and Thailand dropped out of the top six from fourth to eighth place.

In October 2018, most of the top six received more waste their monthly 2017-18 average except for China (8,500 or 3% less). Belgium received an additional 18,600 tonnes (1151%) and Malaysia 6,800 tonnes (36%). Table 1 compares the top six receiving countries in October 2018 with their September 2018 volumes and 2017-18 monthly average.

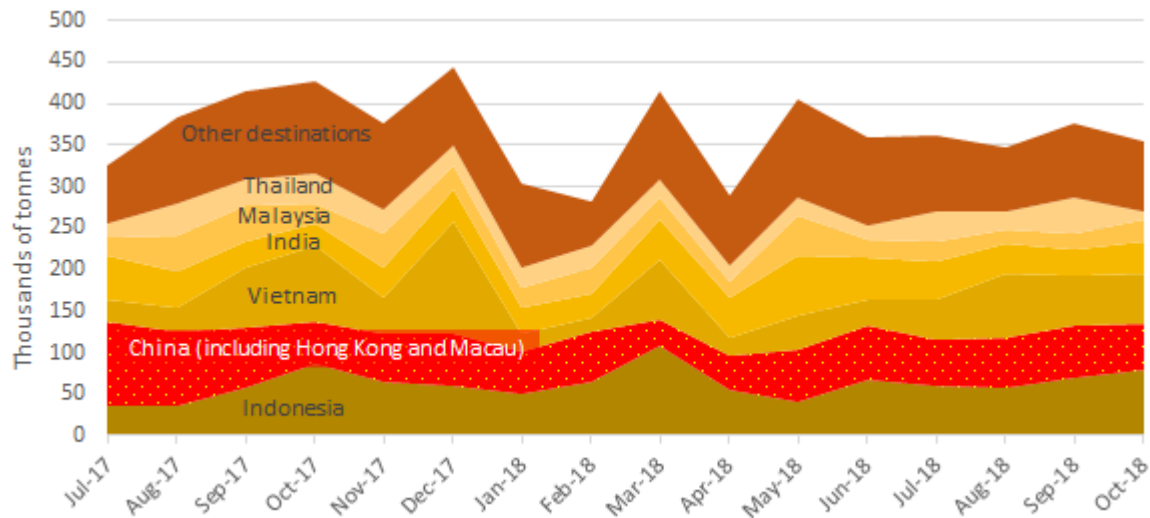
**Table 1** Comparison of month-to-month waste export volume by destination

Export destination by monthly rank	October 18		September 18			2017-18	%
	Tonnes	% of total	Rank	Tonnes	% change	monthly avg	change
1 Indonesia	79,100	22%	1	69,000	15%	60,600	31%
2 Vietnam	61,800	17%	3	59,800	3%	50,300	23%
3 China	54,900	16%	2	63,400	-13%	62,100	-12%
4 India	38,300	11%	5	31,000	23%	42,400	-10%
5 Malaysia	25,800	7%	6	19,000	36%	31,200	-17%
6 Belgium	20,200	6%	16	1,600	1151%	3,900	417%
<b>Top 6 total</b>	<b>280,100</b>	<b>79%</b>		<b>243,900</b>	<b>15%</b>		
<b>Monthly total</b>	<b>353,400</b>	<b>-</b>		<b>374,900</b>	<b>-6%</b>		

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 October 2018. Examined over this timeframe, the top six includes Thailand but not Belgium. Exports to China have remained relatively stable since May 2018. Exports to the top six overall rose by 6% in this timeframe.

<sup>1</sup> In last month's report Malaysia was not included in the top 6 receiving countries in September 2018 but in this most recent analysis it is included. The difference is due to revisions to the ABS data or the classification changes listed in the introduction to this report, or both.

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



### Comparison by material

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

**Month to month** – October 2018 saw decreased exports of metals (-1%), plastics (-9%), paper and cardboard (-9%) and hazardous waste (-53%) compared with September. Exports of ‘other’ increased by 10%. The large reduction in exports of hazardous waste is representative of a trend which experiences sharp spikes (as seen in July and May 2018 data), probably due to the removal of waste from stockpiles for export.

**2017-18 monthly average** – The quantity of metals and plastics exported in October 2018 was greater than the monthly average for 2017-18 but paper and cardboard, hazardous waste and ‘other’ were below their 2017-18 average. Overall, October 2018 total exports of waste were slightly lower (-4%) than the monthly average for 2017-18.

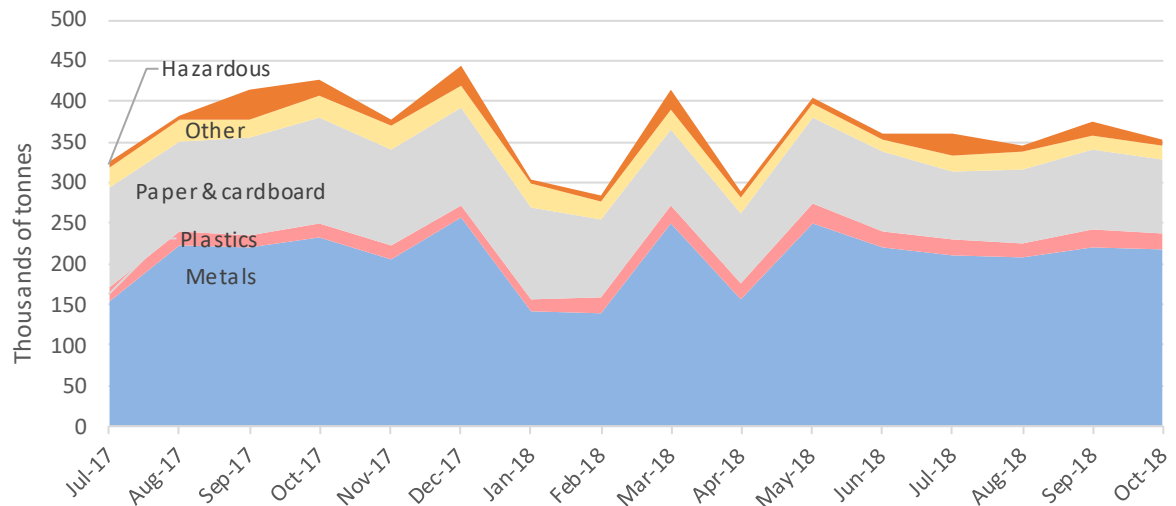
**Year to date** – The total year-to-date waste exported in October 2017 was around 1,548,300 tonnes compared to 1,435,600 tonnes in October 2018 (7% less).

Table 2 Comparison of waste export volume by material

Material category	Month		% change	Monthly avg 2017-18	% change	Year to date (Jul-Oct)		% change
	Sep 18	Oct 18				2017-18	2018-19	
Metals	220,800	217,600	-1%	203,800	7%	827,700	858,400	4%
Plastics	21,700	19,800	-9%	18,300	8%	67,800	75,500	11%
Paper & cardboard	98,600	90,000	-9%	109,800	-18%	483,000	365,700	-24%
Other	16,200	17,900	10%	23,800	-25%	103,600	74,300	-28%
Hazardous	17,600	8,200	-53%	12,900	-36%	66,300	61,700	-7%
<b>Total</b>	<b>374,900</b>	<b>353,400</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>368,500</b>	<b>-4%</b>	<b>1,548,300</b>	<b>1,435,600</b>	<b>-7%</b>

Figure 2 (overleaf) presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia by material type between July 2017 and October 2018. Overall, export quantities have been relatively steady since autumn.

Figure 2 Monthly exports of waste from Australia by material type, July 2017 – October 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. 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	Oct 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)	54,900	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)	4,900	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 by 2021 <sup>3,4,5</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)	1,100	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	Ann. in Aug-18, appears to be implemented.	Plastic, paper, metals	603,000 (50,300/mth)	61,800	No impact apparent. Unable to find environmental standards used to determine

Country	Scope of ban	Announced & implemented	Associated export volumes Material	2017-18	Oct 18	Impact and uncertainties
	standards and there is capacity in the country to process the materials <sup>6</sup> . <b>NEW THIS MONTH:</b> Under the new national standard QCVN 32: 2019/BTNMT, e-waste plastics such as cases of TVs, computers, office equipment would not be allowed to be imported <sup>7</sup> .					when shipments are acceptable or when the ban on e-waste plastic imports would take effect. 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. CIWM (2018) *Thailand set to ban plastic waste imports by 2021*, available from: <https://ciwm-journal.co.uk/thailand-set-to-ban-plastic-waste-imports-by-2021/>
6. Vietnam Briefing (2018) *Vietnam to Restrict Surging Scrap Imports*, available from: <http://www.vietnam-briefing.com/news/vietnam-to-restrict-surging-scrap-imports.html/>
7. Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2018) *Vietnam to ban imports of plastic from used electronics*, available from: [http://www9.monre.gov.vn/wps/portal/news/!ut/p/c5/dclJDoIwFADQE5n\\_RYawbJAZFWgh2A0hJpCw6AVINPrBcxbPuDwMzSLuDdKjEMjoQJu1o5PAAt1KEP2SmEgozS6hFWnoI1yBW38\\_1oFBhXpNOxxfCZ3ijS5v1uLDrIjebZl2VlkgJl54M5tzPeafmzSignihK4-OduoIKrv09mva9lxU0phZvxaHUHVuELqZk-6eooepb8gXeJcnsw!!/](http://www9.monre.gov.vn/wps/portal/news/!ut/p/c5/dclJDoIwFADQE5n_RYawbJAZFWgh2A0hJpCw6AVINPrBcxbPuDwMzSLuDdKjEMjoQJu1o5PAAt1KEP2SmEgozS6hFWnoI1yBW38_1oFBhXpNOxxfCZ3ijS5v1uLDrIjebZl2VlkgJl54M5tzPeafmzSignihK4-OduoIKrv09mva9lxU0phZvxaHUHVuELqZk-6eooepb8gXeJcnsw!!/)