

## Exports of Australian waste-derived products and wastes in August 2019

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Blue Environment is commissioned by the Department of the Environment and Energy to analyse and report on monthly exports of waste-derived products (e.g. recycled plastic chip) and materials that are still wastes. The data is provided by the Australian Bureau of Statistics<sup>1</sup>, and comprises monthly data covering the previous six months, including any updates to previously reported data. On a tonnage basis nearly all these exports are materials recovered from waste streams for recycling<sup>2</sup> or energy recovery, but a small portion is hazardous waste sent for treatment.

### Summary

In August 2019, Australia exported about 338,000 tonnes of waste-derived products and wastes with a value of \$A249 million. This represents falls of 11% in quantity and 6% in value of these exports compared with July 2019. The tonnage decrease is attributable to a fall in exports of scrap metals, paper and cardboard, plastics and waste tyres. Exports of glass and hazardous waste were higher than the previous month.

About 100,000 tonnes of waste-derived products and waste exported in August could be affected by the COAG export ban. This is 30% of the total waste exported in August.

### Comparison by destination

The top 10 recipients of Australian derived products and wastes between July 2018 and August 2019 were Indonesia, Vietnam, China (including Hong Kong and Macau), India, Bangladesh, Malaysia Thailand, Korea, Taiwan and New Zealand. In August 2019, 91% by weight of Australia's waste-derived products and wastes were exported to these countries.

Table 1 (overleaf) compares exports of waste-derived products and wastes to these top 10 countries in August and July 2019 and includes each country's 2018-19 monthly average. Exports to most countries were lower than their 2018-19 monthly averages in August. Those to Indonesia, Malaysia, Bangladesh and Taiwan were higher.

August 2019 exports of waste-derived products and wastes to Bangladesh, Indonesia, Taiwan and Vietnam were dominated by scrap metals (>70%). Those to India and Thailand were about 50-60% metals with most of the remainder recovered paper and cardboard. China received mostly recovered paper and cardboard (69%) and New Zealand mostly organic materials waste.

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<sup>1</sup> Data in these summaries is sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and is originally entered by exporters or their agents. It cannot be guaranteed that exporters use the correct codes for their exports, so this data should be used with caution.

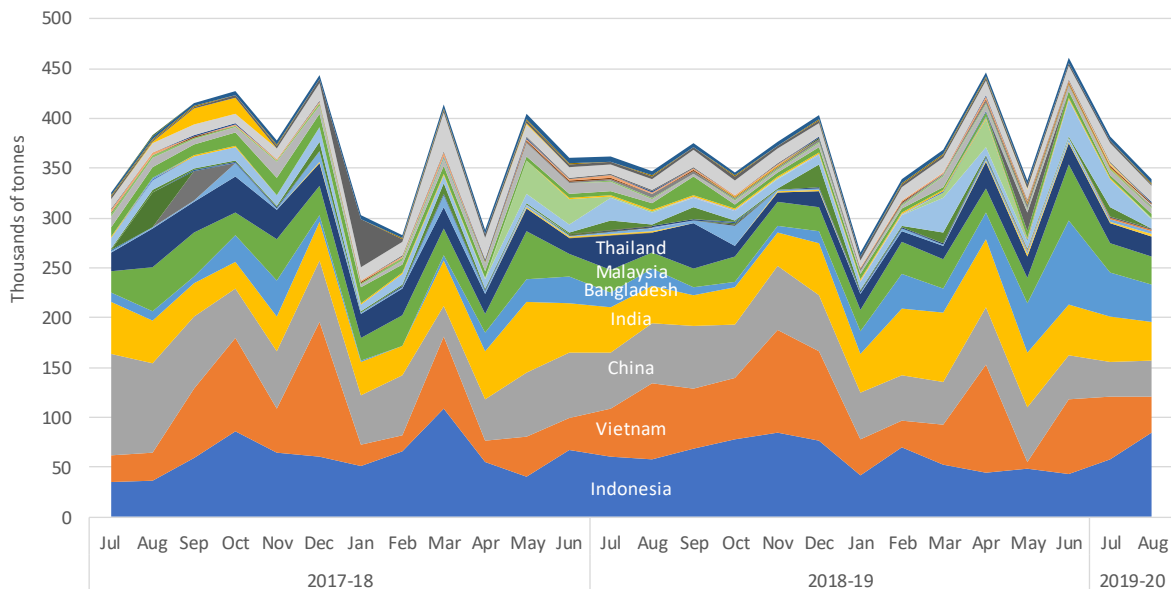
<sup>2</sup> Some of these recovered materials contain a proportion of contamination (or 'off-spec' content) that needs to be extracted before the material can be used.

**Table 1** Comparison of month-to-month exports of waste-derived products and wastes by destination

Export destination (ranked by tonnes since July 2018)	Tonnes					2018-19 monthly avg	Value			
	Aug-19 tonnes	% of total	Jul-19 tonnes	% change	Aug-19 \$ mil		Jul-19 \$ mil	% change	2018-19 monthly avg	
1 Indonesia	84,000	25%	57,000	47%	60,000	\$34.1	\$19.0	80%	\$23.7	
2 Vietnam	36,000	11%	63,000	-43%	61,000	\$18.1	\$28.4	-36%	\$29.8	
3 China	36,000	11%	35,000	4%	54,000	\$37.6	\$30.3	24%	\$41.6	
4 India	39,000	12%	45,000	-13%	49,000	\$23.0	\$29.8	-23%	\$33.5	
5 Bangladesh	37,000	11%	30,000	-6%	25,000	\$14.7	\$18.9	-22%	\$11.2	
6 Malaysia	28,000	8%	44,000	-15%	27,000	\$15.6	\$15.4	1%	\$10.4	
7 Thailand	21,000	6%	21,000	1%	20,000	\$7.2	\$7.5	-4%	\$7.9	
8 Korea	8,000	2%	27,000	-69%	15,000	\$38.5	\$48.4	-20%	\$32.6	
9 Taiwan	16,000	5%	18,000	-15%	13,000	\$7.4	\$12.1	-39%	\$8.3	
10 New Zealand	4,000	1%	2,000	55%	6,000	\$6.6	\$7.0	-5%	\$5.7	
<b>Top 10 total</b>	<b>309,000</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>343,000</b>	<b>-10%</b>	<b>330,000</b>	<b>\$202.9</b>	<b>\$216.6</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>\$204.5</b>	
<b>Monthly total</b>	<b>338,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>382,000</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>369,000</b>	<b>\$248.7</b>	<b>\$263.5</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>\$258.8</b>	

Figure 1 presents the monthly trend in tonnes of exports of waste-derived materials from Australia by destination between July 2017 and August 2019. Exports to Vietnam have been highly variable over this timeframe, ranging between 7,000 and 135,000 tonnes per month. Exports to Indonesia also varied widely in 2017-18 but have since remained fairly stable. As recorded in previous reports, exports to China fell markedly during much of 2017-18, reaching a low of 30,000 tonnes in March 2018. They subsequently recovered to 66,000 tonnes in June 2018 but declined again over 2019, standing at 36,000 tonnes in August 2019. Overall, no clear trend is apparent in the overall quantity of waste exports between July 2017 and August 2019.

**Figure 1** Monthly exports of waste-derived products and wastes from Australia by destination, ranked by total quantity received, July 2017 – August 2019



Over the same time period, the reported value of exports has ranged between \$A159 million to \$A321 million per month.

## Comparison by material

Table 2 presents a comparison of export tonnage and value by material type between July and August 2019, the monthly average from 2019-20 and 2018-19 and the year to date quantities.

*Table 2 Comparison of export tonnage and value by material*

Material	Tonnes					Value				
	Aug-19 tonnes	% of total	Jul-19 tonnes	% change	2018-19 monthly avg	Aug-19 \$ mil	% of total	Jul-19 \$ mil	% change	2018-19 monthly avg
Glass	2,000	1%	1,900	5%	1,300	\$0.1	<1%	\$0.1	4%	\$0.1
Paper and cardboard	82,000	24%	87,000	-6%	93,000	\$13.9	6%	\$14.4	-4%	\$19.5
Plastics	7,000	2%	13,000	-50%	16,000	\$2.4	<1%	\$3.6	-34%	\$3.6
Tyres	9,000	3%	11,000	-16%	10,000	\$1.6	<1%	\$1.5	3%	\$1.8
Metals	217,000	64%	240,000	-10%	220,000	\$169.3	68%	\$185.1	-9%	\$180.3
Hazardous (excl. tyres)	7,000	2%	6,000	14%	6,000	\$42.3	17%	\$39.4	7%	\$33.2
Other	15,000	4%	23,000	-35%	24,000	\$19.2	8%	\$19.4	-1%	\$20.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>338,000</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>382,000</b>	<b>-11%</b>	<b>369,000</b>	<b>\$248.7</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>\$263.5</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>\$258.8</b>

### Comparison with the previous month –

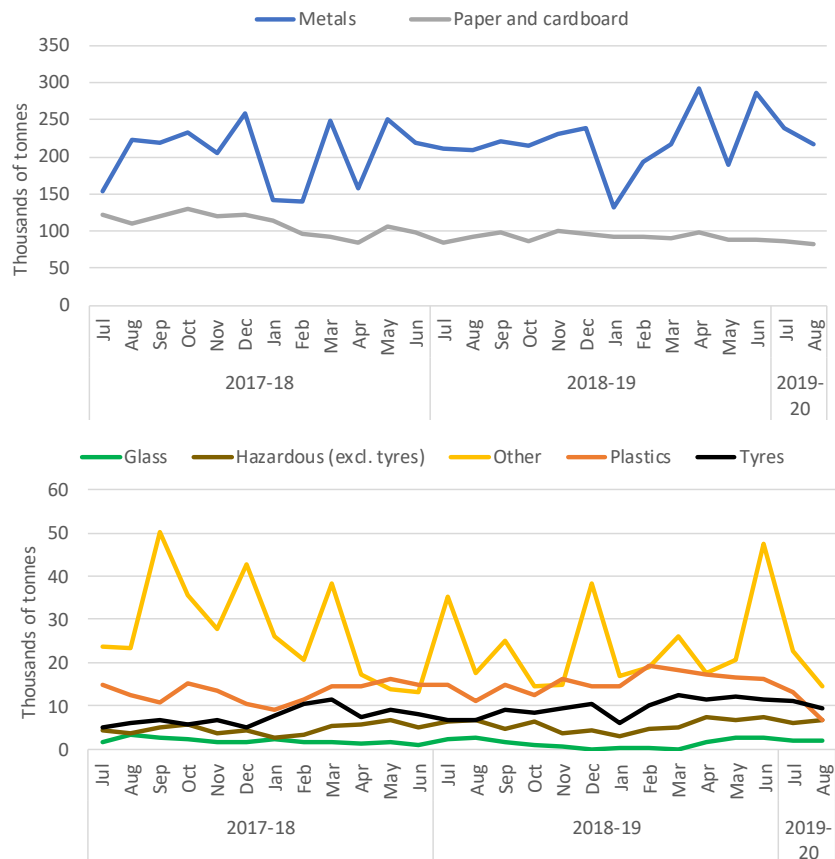
- August 2019 saw a 5% increase in the export of **glass** compared to the month of July. Malaysia received 76% of our glass exports and Bangladesh received 24%. The reported value of glass exports in August rose slightly by 4%.
- **Paper and cardboard** quantities fell by 6%. Exports of unbleached kraft (old corrugated containers) rose by 6% and mechanical pulp increased by 2%. Exports of other grades declined compared to the previous month. Unbleached kraft and mixed paper made up 93% of scrap paper and cardboard exports. China and Indonesia received 53% of paper and cardboard exports in August 2019. Paper and cardboard exports were valued at \$A13.9 million which represents 6% of the total value of exports in August. This is slightly lower than the previous month.
- Exports of waste **plastics** fell by 50% in August. Both Malaysia and Indonesia have been receiving most of Australia's waste plastics since China implemented its export restrictions, however in August 2019 exports to Indonesia declined by 94%. Malaysia received most of our plastic waste exports in August (31%); China received about 22%. Mixed plastics represented 66% of the total. The reported value of plastics exports fell by 34% in August to \$A2.4 million.
- Exports of waste **tyres** declined by 16% in August. About 9,000 tonnes were exported in July in the codes known to be dominated by waste tyres. India and Malaysia received 82% of these. Tyre exports were valued at \$A1.6 million in August which is 3% higher than the previous month.
- Compared to the month of July, **metal** exports fell by 10% in August. Most of this reduction was in 'waste and scrap of cast iron' exports to Vietnam. Exports of the ferrous waste, aluminium and copper waste and scrap categories remained consistent. Metal exports contributed to 68% (\$A169.3 million) of the total value for the month.
- Exports of **hazardous waste** (excluding tyres) increased in August by 14%. The largest fraction was lead waste and scrap (3,100 tonnes) followed by slag, dross, scalings and other waste from iron or steel manufacturing. Exports of hazardous waste were valued at \$A42.3 million which represents about 15% of the total exports in August.
- Exports in the '**other wastes**' category fell in August, mainly due to lower exports of organic materials compared to the previous month. Exports of other wastes were valued at about \$A19.2 million in August.

**Comparison with the 2018-19 monthly average** – Exports of glass and hazardous waste were higher than their monthly average for 2018-19, while exports of paper and cardboard, plastics and other wastes were higher. Scrap metal and tyre exports were similar to their monthly average. Overall, exports of waste in August 2019 were 8% lower than the monthly average for 2018-19. The reported value of exports for glass and hazardous waste were higher than their monthly average for 2018-19 while paper and cardboard, plastics, waste tyres, scrap metals and other wastes were lower.

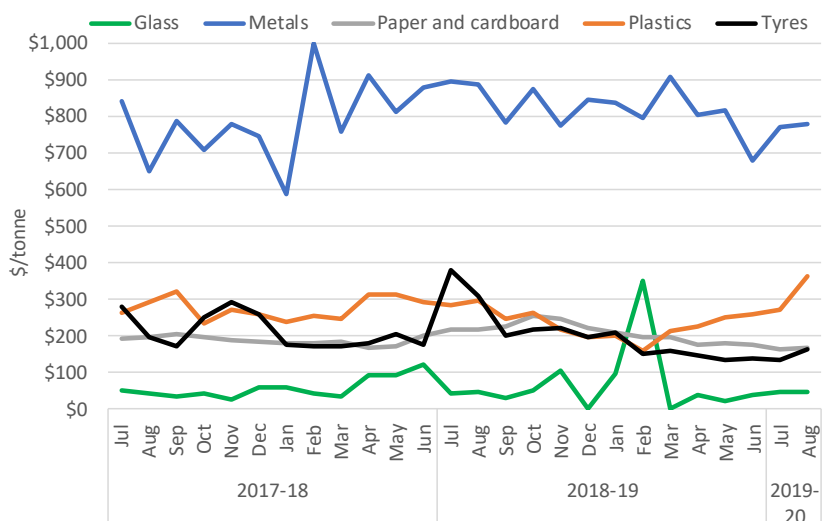
Figure 2 presents the monthly trend in exports of waste from Australia in tonnes by material type between July 2017 and August 2019. Scrap metal exports remain volatile. Exports of scrap paper and cardboard and tyres have remained fairly stable since January 2018. Glass has remained stable over the 26-month timeframe. The rise in exports of recovered plastics over the same timeframe may have reached its peak in February 2019. August 2019 exports of plastics were the lowest recorded over the 26-month timeframe.

Figure 3 presents monthly trends in the unit prices of key waste exports between July 2017 and August 2019. Over this timeframe, average unit prices for metals and paper and cardboard have remained fairly stable. Average unit prices for glass rose sharply in February 2019 but overall have been fairly stable in the 26-months. Average prices for waste plastics are driven mainly by the low-grade mixed materials grade, which represent most of the exported tonnes and includes process engineered fuel. Prices for this grade fell from an average of \$263/t over 2017-18 to a low of \$137/t in February 2019 but leaped to \$329 in August 2019.

**Figure 2 Monthly exports of waste-derived products and wastes from Australia by material type, July 2017 – August 2019**



**Figure 3 Comparison of unit prices by material (in \$/t), July 2017 – August 2019**



## COAG waste export ban

The November 2019 Meeting of Environment Ministers agreed to proceed with bans in the export of waste glass, paper, plastics and tyres that have not been processed into a value-added material. The banned materials, ban dates and codes where they are known to be present are shown in Table 3. Note this may not reflect the final ban design.

*Table 3 Material types facing export bans*

Material	Ban date	AHECC code	AHECC description	Aug-19 exports in this code (tonnes)	Estimated % of tonnes to be banned
Glass	Jul 2020	70010000	Cullet and other waste and scrap of glass; glass in the mass	2,000	100%
Paper and cardboard	Jul 2022	47071000	Recovered (waste and scrap), unbleached, kraft paper or paperboard or corrugated paper or paperboard	51,000	100%
		47072000	Recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard, made mainly of bleached chemical pulp, not coloured in the mass	100	
		47073000	Recovered (waste and scrap) paper or paperboard, made mainly of mechanical pulp (for example, newspapers, journals and similar printed matter)	6,000	
		47079000	Waste and scrap paper or paperboard (incl. unsorted waste & scrap) (excl. unbleached kraft or corrugated (470710); that made mainly from bleached chemical pulp, not coloured in the mass; or made mainly of mechanical pulp)	25,000	
Plastics	Jul 2022	39151000	Waste, parings and scrap, of polymers of ethylene	2,000	100%
		39152000	Waste, parings and scrap, of polymers of styrene	200	
		39153000	Waste, parings and scrap, of polymers of vinyl chloride	0	
	Jul 2021	39159092	Waste, parings and scrap, of plastics (excl. those of polymers of ethylene, styrene or vinyl chloride)	4,000	
Whole tyres	Dec 2021	40040000	Waste, parings and scrap of rubber (excl. of hard rubber) and powders and granules obtained therefrom	8,000	44% <sup>3</sup>
		40122000	Used pneumatic rubber tyres, whether or not subject to recutting or regrooving	1,000	100% <sup>3</sup>
		40129000	Solid or cushion rubber tyres, rubber tyre treads (incl. interchangeable tyre treads) and rubber tyre flaps	1,000	6% <sup>3</sup>

In total, about 100,000 tonnes of waste-derived products and wastes were exported in codes likely to be affected by the COAG export ban<sup>4</sup>. This represents about 30% of the total waste exported for the month.

<sup>3</sup> Based on an analysis of Australian Border Force exports data for 2018-19. This data set contained differences from the ABS data analysed here, and neither are consistent with industry-reported export quantities. Further investigations are underway at the time of writing.

## The current status of waste import restrictions

Following the lead of China, several Asian countries have flagged or implemented restrictions on the import of waste-derived products and wastes. These are described in Table 4. The information presented has been compiled based on publicly available sources, sometimes translated from languages other than English.

**Table 4** Status of waste import restrictions

Country	Scope of restrictions	Announced & implemented	Associated exports (tonnes) Types	Associated exports (tonnes)		Impact and uncertainties
				2018-19	Aug 19	
China	<p>Restricted the import of certain materials covering specific commodity codes, mainly by specifying a threshold contamination rate of 0.5%<sup>5</sup>.</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 2019<sup>6</sup>.</p> <p>From 1 July 2019, import restrictions extended to eight solid waste codes pertaining to metals<sup>7</sup>. China are reviewing the revised Solid Waste Management and Pollution Prevention Law that covers waste imports, which reiterates the complete ban of solid waste import by 2020<sup>8</sup>. Possible import ban on old corrugated cardboard and other fibre grades by 2021<sup>9</sup>.</p>	<p>Ann.: Jul &amp; Nov-17, Apr-18.</p> <p>Imp.: Jan &amp; Mar-18, Dec-18, Dec-19</p>	Plastic, paper, metals, other	643,000 (53,600/month)	36,300	Impact evident (2016-17 exports averaged 105,300/month and averaged 62,000/month in 2017-18)
India	<p>Import of scrap plastics banned from August 2019<sup>10</sup>. Also covers areas that were previously exempt under the 2016 ban such as special economic zones (SEZ) and export-oriented units (EOU)<sup>11</sup>. Excludes electrical/electronic assemblies or components that are defective which can be imported within a year of export. A six-month extension has been granted to three SEZs which allows plastic scrap to be imported until May 31 2020<sup>12</sup>.</p>	<p>Ann.: Mar-19</p> <p>Imp.: Mar-19, Aug-19 for importers currently exempt under SEZs and EOUs.</p>	Plastic	700 (60/month)	0	Impact uncertain.

<sup>5</sup> Blue Environment (2018) [Data on exports of recyclables from Australia to China](#)

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Commerce, State Development & Reform Commission (incl. former State Development Planning Commission), General Administration of Customs (2018) *Announcement No. 6 [2018] of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, the Ministry of Commerce, the National Development and Reform Commission and the General Administration of Customs*

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Ecology and Environment of the People's Republic of China (2018) [Announcement on adjusting the catalogue of imported waste management](#)

<sup>8</sup> Closed Loop Partners (6 October 2019) [The latest insights and analysis from Chris Cui, Director of Asia Programs](#)

<sup>9</sup> Resource Recycling (3 December 2019) [Signals point to all-out recycled fiber ban in China](#)

<sup>10</sup> Business Today, (24 June 2019) [India bans import of plastic waste from August this year to curb pollution](#)

<sup>11</sup> Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (2019) [Amendment in Hazardous Waste \(Management & Transboundary Movement Rules, 2016\)](#)

<sup>12</sup> Business Standard, (2 December 2019) [Govt grants six month extension to plastic scrap imports in three SEZs](#)



Country	Scope of restrictions	Announced & implemented	Associated exports (tonnes)		Impact and uncertainties	
			Types	2018-19 Aug 19		
Indonesia	A temporary moratorium on all waste scrap imports commenced 23 November 2019 as the new Ministerial Regulation No. 84/2019 on the <i>Provisions on the import of non-hazardous and non-toxic waste for industrial purposes</i> is implemented <sup>13</sup> . All shipments subject to inspection dates after 22 November 2019 have been stopped. Under the new regulation, transshipments are banned. Only direct shipments from exporters that have obtained a permit (which would be subject to occasional verification) and have inspected containers prior to shipment would be allowed. Scrap imports to be restricted to arrive at eight ports only: Tanjung Priok in Jakarta, Tanjung Emas in Semarang, Tanjung Perak in Surabaya, Soekarno Hatta in Makassar, Belawan in Medan, Batu Ampar in Batam, Teluk Lamong in Surabaya and Peacock in Cilegon. The set contamination thresholds are unclear with industry interpretation suggesting it could be 0% which contradicts the previous suggestion of 2% with a two-year transition to 0.5%. Illegally imported plastic waste to be returned back to exporters <sup>14</sup> . Reportedly rejected eight containers of 'contaminated' paper and plastic material in July 2019. Announced in September 2019 that another 100 containers of contaminated plastic material to be sent back to Australia <sup>15</sup> .	Ann.: Apr-19 Imp.: Nov-19	Plastics, Paper and cardboard, metals, glass, hazardous waste, tyres, other.	725,700 (60,500/month)	84,100	Impact uncertain.
Malaysia	Import permits revoked from 114 factories that process imported plastic waste <sup>16,17</sup> . Import of non-recyclable plastic waste to be banned by 2021 <sup>18</sup> . Contaminated, mislabelled or illegally imported plastic waste loads to be sent back to source <sup>19 20</sup> .	Jul-18.	Plastic	55,200 (4,600/month)	2,000	No impact apparent
Philippines	To issue a 3-month moratorium on recyclable waste imports including scrap metals, plastics, electronic waste, used oil and flay ash. <sup>21</sup>	Ann.: Aug 19	Plastic, metals	18,800 (1,600/month)	200	Impact uncertain.

<sup>13</sup> Argus (21 November 2019), [Indonesia suspends scrap imports amid new policy](#)

<sup>14</sup> VOA news (2019) [Indonesia vows to send back illegal plastic waste](#)

<sup>15</sup> Sydney Morning Herald (18 September 2019), [Indonesia to ship 100 containers of contaminated waste to Australia](#)

<sup>16</sup> FMT News (2018) [Permits to import plastic waste for 114 factories revoked](#)

<sup>17</sup> Waste Management Review (2018) [Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam waste imports crackdown](#)

<sup>18</sup> The Star Online (2018) [Govt to ban import of all non-recyclable waste](#)

<sup>19</sup> The Australian (2019) [Australia would vet any waste returns, says Ley](#)

<sup>20</sup> Malaymail (2019) [Yeo Bee Yin moots RM1,500 charge per shipping container to cut illegal imported plastic waste](#)

<sup>21</sup> ABS-CBN News (11 August 2019) ['Pirma na lang kulang': DENR all set to implement ban on waste imports](#)

Country	Scope of restrictions	Announced & implemented	Associated exports (tonnes) Types	2018-19	Aug 19	Impact and uncertainties
Taiwan	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 processes <sup>22</sup> . Paper imports restricted to only deinked paper, kraft paper, corrugated paper or cardboard that is not bleached. Import of waste newspapers and magazines banned.	Ann.: Aug-18 Imp.: Oct-18	Plastic, paper	17,700 (1,500/month)	1,900	No impact apparent
Thailand	Revoked a broad plastic scrap import allowance, meaning plastic waste and scrap is banned from import by 2021 <sup>23,24,25</sup> . Looking to ban e-waste imports within 2 yrs <sup>17</sup> .	Both ann. Aug-18, plastic imp. Aug-18, e-waste within 2 years.	Plastic	11,200 (900/month)	1,000	No impact apparent 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>26</sup> . No new licences issued for waste imports <sup>17</sup> . Plastic scrap imports to be banned by 2025 <sup>27</sup> . Under the new national standard QCVN 32: 2019/BTNMT, import of e-waste plastics (e.g. cases of TVs and computers) would be forbidden <sup>28</sup> . From 22 February 2019, all imports through road and railway border gates to be banned <sup>29</sup> . 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 in <sup>30</sup> .	Ann. in Aug-18, appears to be implemented. Mixed metal waste restricted from October 2018.	Plastic, paper, metals	732,600 (61,100/month)	36,200	Apparent impact evident for plastic exports from Australia. Environmental standards used to determine when shipments are acceptable or when the ban on e-waste plastic imports would take effect unavailable in English.

<sup>22</sup> Taipei Times (2018) [New waste plastic, paper import rules to take effect](#)

<sup>23</sup> The Nation (2018) [Import of plastic waste banned](#)

<sup>24</sup> CIWM (2018) [Thailand set to ban plastic waste imports by 2021](#)

<sup>25</sup> [Government Gazette Thailand](#) (2018)

<sup>26</sup> Vietnam Briefing (2018) [Vietnam to Restrict Surging Scrap Imports](#)

<sup>27</sup> VN Express International (2019) [Vietnam to end plastic scrap imports from 2025](#)

<sup>28</sup> Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam (2018) [Vietnam to ban imports of plastic from used electronics](#)

<sup>29</sup> VietnamPlus (2019) [Scrap imports through road, railway border gates to be banned](#), Ministry of Information and Communications

<sup>30</sup> S&P Global Platts (2019) [Vietnam's Jan scrap imports plunge amid stricter government rules](#)