



PUT THE BRAKES ON TOXIC TYRES

FACT SHEET | **WASTE TYRES OVERVIEW** | SEPTEMBER 2013

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OUR DIRTY LITTLE SECRET

Australia's Lethal Trade in Waste Tyres

Tyres are pretty harmless right? Just a simple piece of black rubber... when the dealer fits my new tyres they recycle them don't they? The invoice says I pay an environmental levy to recycle my old tyres.

That's what most tyre dealers and manufacturers want you to believe. Unfortunately the reality is that when you buy new tyres you are probably being ripped off through an elaborate 'con job' perpetuated by unethical and dishonest tyre dealers and criminal smugglers posing as recyclers. This practice has devastating and often tragic consequences.

We estimate that each year Australian Tyre Merchants are responsible for dumping nearly 14million tyres into situations where they jeopardize people's health and wellbeing. The consequences of this shameful practice include: Fires, Disease, Injury, and Poisoning.

The Facts about Tyres in Australia

Government estimates that around the equivalent of 48+million passenger tyres reach the end of their life each year¹ and that less than 16% of waste tyres (8million p.a.) are recovered and properly managed within Australia.

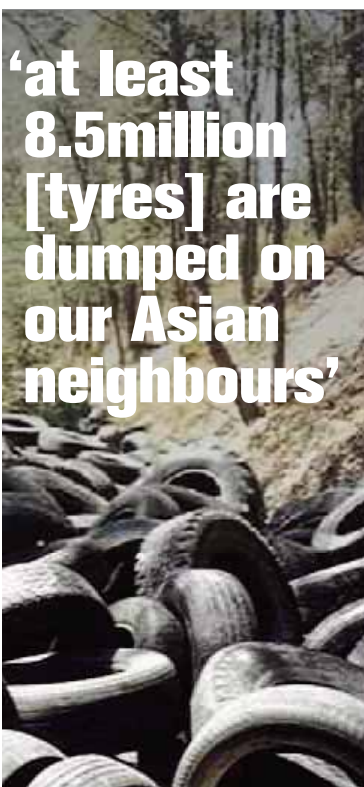
At least 8.5million tyres are dumped on our Asian neighbours (mostly Vietnam); generally via unlicensed operators and using a loophole in international agreements like the Basel Convention – which aims to stop developed nations from shipping toxic and hazardous wastes to those nations less equipped to deal with the problem. Just 1.6million tyres are disposed of in landfilled at licensed Australian sites.

No-one actually knows what happens to the rest of our waste tyres – a staggering 30.3million tyres simply disappear each year.

We know they aren't recycled in Australia, meaning they are either stockpiled or landfilled around the country; illegally dumped in our environment; or smuggled overseas by dodgy recyclers using false customs declarations to hide the contents of the shipment.

Feedback by industry operators suggests 2.5million of the missing tyres are being smuggled via dodgy operators into Vietnam; with a further 2.9million being illegally dumped or landfilled on unlicensed sites. The final 24.9million tyres are thought to be stockpiled around mine sites, agricultural properties and industrial sites. Very few of these facilities have the fire safety arrangements to cope with a tyre fire.

1. The actual number of tyres is somewhat less than this. The industry standard is to measure waste tyres in Equivalent Passenger Units (EPUs) to adjust for the fact that truck and mining tyres are much larger than passenger tyres. All figures regarding the number of tyres used in this fact sheet refer to EPUs.



THE RISK

The irresponsible management of waste tyres by Australian tyre merchants have placed people's lives and well being in jeopardy by:

> Extreme Fire Hazards by allowing 80% of all waste tyres to be handled in ways that create extreme fire hazards.

> Major Risk of Spreading Dengue fever in Australia & Asia – 15million tyres p.a. are potential mosquito incubators.

> Major risk of Toxic Pollution is caused by introducing over 2,600 tonnes of dangerous chemicals and heavy metals into the environment each year.

> If we recycled the 40million p.a. tyres wasted, Australia would save around 3.3Mt of CO₂-e (the entire waste stream only generates 14.4Mt of greenhouse gases each year).

FATE OF THE TYRE	KNOWN HAZARDS	OVERALL RISK RATING
Recycled in Australia 8million recycled	Moderate risk of Industrial Fires in Australia	
Landfilled in Australia 1.6million p.a.	Toxic Pollution in Australia Loss of Natural Resources Vermin	
Export of Tyres to Asia 8.5million p.a.	Industrial Fires in Australia Toxic Pollution in Australia Spread of Dengue fever in Asia Spread of Dengue fever in Aust Loss of Natural Resources	
Smuggling of Tyres to Asia . Est 2.5million p.a.	Industrial Fires in Australia Toxic Pollution in Australia Spread of Dengue fever in Asia Spread of Dengue fever in Australia Vermin	
Dumped into our environment Est 2.9million p.a.	Industrial and Bush Fire in Australia Toxic Pollution in Australia Spread of Dengue fever in Australia Vermin Loss of Natural Resources	
Stockpile Est 24.9million tyres p.a.	Industrial Fires in Australia Toxic Pollution in Australia Spread of Dengue fever in Australia Vermin Loss of Natural Resources	

The Consequences

The consequences of our pathetic product stewardship on tyres are devastating.

Dengue Fever is the most rapidly spreading mosquito-borne viral disease, with a 30-fold increase in global incidence over the past 50 years. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that over 2.5 billion people – over 40% of the world's population – are now at risk from dengue. WHO has identified that the poor management and international transportation of tyres across national boundaries has been a primary vehicle for the spread of this devastating disease:

“The mosquito *Aedes Albopictus*, a secondary dengue vector in Asia, has spread to North America and Europe largely due to the international trade in used tyres (a breeding habitat)”

— World Health Organisation.

While controlling Dengue fever is a more complex issue than simply managing our waste tyres, there is little question that Australia's poor management of waste tyres is a significant contributor. Since 2007 (when Australia started its deadly trade in waste tyres) the incidence of Dengue Fever in Vietnam has skyrocketed from an estimated 68,532 cases to 128,831 in 2010. Similarly in 2007 Dengue Fever was very much a rare disease in Australia, with just 187 cases in 2007; by 2010 the rate of infection has increased to 1,171. Leading Epidemiologists and Doctors are warning of the significant risk in Australia:

“We don't see much dengue haemorrhagic fever in Australia, because most people in Australia have not had it before. But with the recent big outbreaks we're had in far north Queensland we expect to see more in the future,” Professor John McBride, infectious disease specialist and the head of the Clinical School of Medicine at James Cook University.

As a result of these health concerns every European nation, the U.K. Canada, and most of the U.S. banned the export of whole waste tyres in 2007. Why on earth hasn't Australia?

Tyre Fires: Tyres cause some of our most dangerous fires, whether stockpiled on industrial sites or dumped in our environment. The smoke is heavily toxic and so black it makes visibility impossible. The Basel Convention in its guidance for the proper management of waste tyres describes some of the hazards:

“Uncontrolled tyre fires have major environmental impacts on air, water and soil...Open air tyre fires generate emissions of black smoke, carbon dioxide, volatile organic compounds and hazardous air pollutants, such as dioxins, furans, hydrogen chloride, benzene, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), arsenic, cadmium, nickel, zinc, mercury, chromium, and vanadium.”

Because of their unique shape and components, once lit, a tyre fire is almost impossible to extinguish. A stockpile of 10million tyres illegally dumped in parkland near Powys in Wales caught fire in 1989. Unable to access the area fire fighters could not extinguish the blaze and it burnt for over 15 years – in fact the fire continues to smoulder today. We have identified some 5 tyre fires in Australia over the past 12 months.

Toxic: Whether they are dumped, burnt or landfilled; every tyre that isn't properly recycled leaches significant toxics and hazardous compounds into our environment. Imagine the impact of 29million tyres p.a. – that's an incredible 2,653 tonnes of heavy metals, toxics and poisons introduced into our environment each year! That's lead, cadmium, dioxins, furans, hydrogen chloride, benzene, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), arsenic, mercury, chromium, and vanadium substances can cause cancer, mutations, and autism.



“The incidence of Dengue Fever in Vietnam has skyrocketed from an estimated 68,532 in 2007 cases to 128,831 in 2010.”



“A stockpile of 10million tyres illegally dumped caught fire in 1989. It burnt for over 15 years.”



**With over
40million tyres a
year illegally
dumped into our
environment ...**

**Who will win the
race to recycle?**

See www.theskids.org.au

Who's Responsible?

Most major tyre manufacturers deserve some congratulation. They have developed a decent stewardship program that will help address parts of the problem; but they have baulked at ensuring their dealers responsibly deal with their waste.

Of the 48million plus tyres that reach the end of their life each year just 8million (16.7%) are properly recycled. The rest are smuggled burnt or dumped ignoring Australian Law and fire and safety regulations. Most major tyre manufacturers and retailers say they are committed to managing their waste products but very few have taken any meaningful action.

It's the manufacturer's refusal to ensure their dealers and franchisees follow their stewardship guidelines that is causing the biggest problem. A few of the manufacturers company owned stores generally use a responsible recycler like the members of the Australian Tyre Recycling Association (ATRA); however, the vast majority of tyre retailers haven't followed suit with many tyre retailers using dodgy operators, who charge as little as \$1.00 to deal with the tyres, half the actual cost to responsibly process a waste tyre.

The only major retail brands that can assure you that all their outlets are doing the right thing are Bob Jane TMart, Bridgestone Select and Kmart Auto Centres whose policy requires every retail outlet to use a responsible and licensed recycler.

Advice to Tyre Buyers

We'll be setting up a comprehensive online guide to help consumers find a reputable tyre dealer but in the meantime if you need to replace your car's tyres:

- YOU CAN HAVE CONFIDENCE that if you buy tyres from Kmart Autocare Centres, Bob Jane TMart or Bridgestone Select, they are being properly recycled.
- Ask for evidence that the tyre dealer is using one of the following responsible recyclers if you have to buy tyres elsewhere:
 - Tyrecycle • Chip Tyres • C&R Tyres • Ecoflex • Tyre Crumb Australia
 - Tyre Solutions • Green Distillation Technologies • Rubber Recycle

Help us put the brakes on toxic tyres
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