



PUT THE BRAKES ON TOXIC TYRES

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Backgrounder: Waste Tyres in Australia

Dave West, National Policy Director - January 2014

What is the Problem?

According to analysis commissioned by the Commonwealth Government, less than 16.7% of all used passenger, car and off road tyres are currently recycled in Australia. This is one of the worst levels of performance around the globe. Even worse, of the 48million waste tyres (passenger tyre equivalents) each year, over 80% - some 38.5million tyres - create a substantial risk to public safety and our environmental health being either illegally dumped, smuggled into developing nations with inadequate treatment standards, or stockpiled.

Tyres are an important product for most Australians. They can be very efficiently and properly recycled at the end of their life, but when improperly managed they are a dangerous and toxic fire risk; and have been identified as a major contributor to the spread and increase of vector borne diseases like Dengue Fever, Barmah Forest Virus, Ross River Fever, Chikungunya, and Japanese Encephalitis.

As a result of our poor waste tyre stewardship, Australia has experienced a horrendous increase in both the number of tyre related fires (323 fires from 2008-13 in NSW alone) and in the rate of infections of vector borne disease (over 11,000 cases in 2013; a 39% increase over the past 5 year average). Waste tyres are now one of Australia's most dangerous wastes!

Who is Responsible?

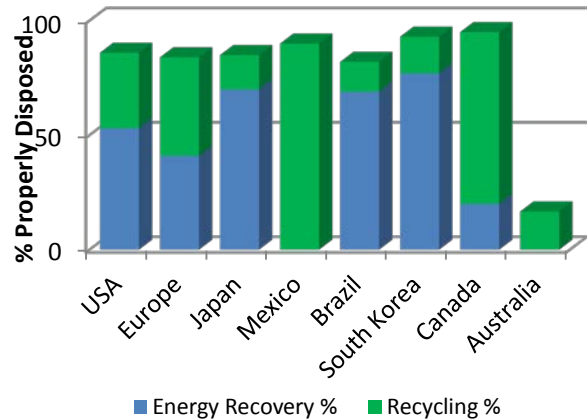
Tyre fitters and commercial road transport fleet owners have a legal responsibility to ensure their waste is properly disposed. Unfortunately, in recent years many – including a number of leading tyre brands - have chosen to ignore this obligation in order to save around 30¢ a tyre by using unlicensed rogue operators, many of whom have been repeatedly prosecuted by state environment agencies. The head offices of a number of the major national tyre retail franchises are aware their dealers are choosing these rogues and have been informed they are ignoring state licensing, local government planning regulations and fire safety standards.

What Needs to be Done?

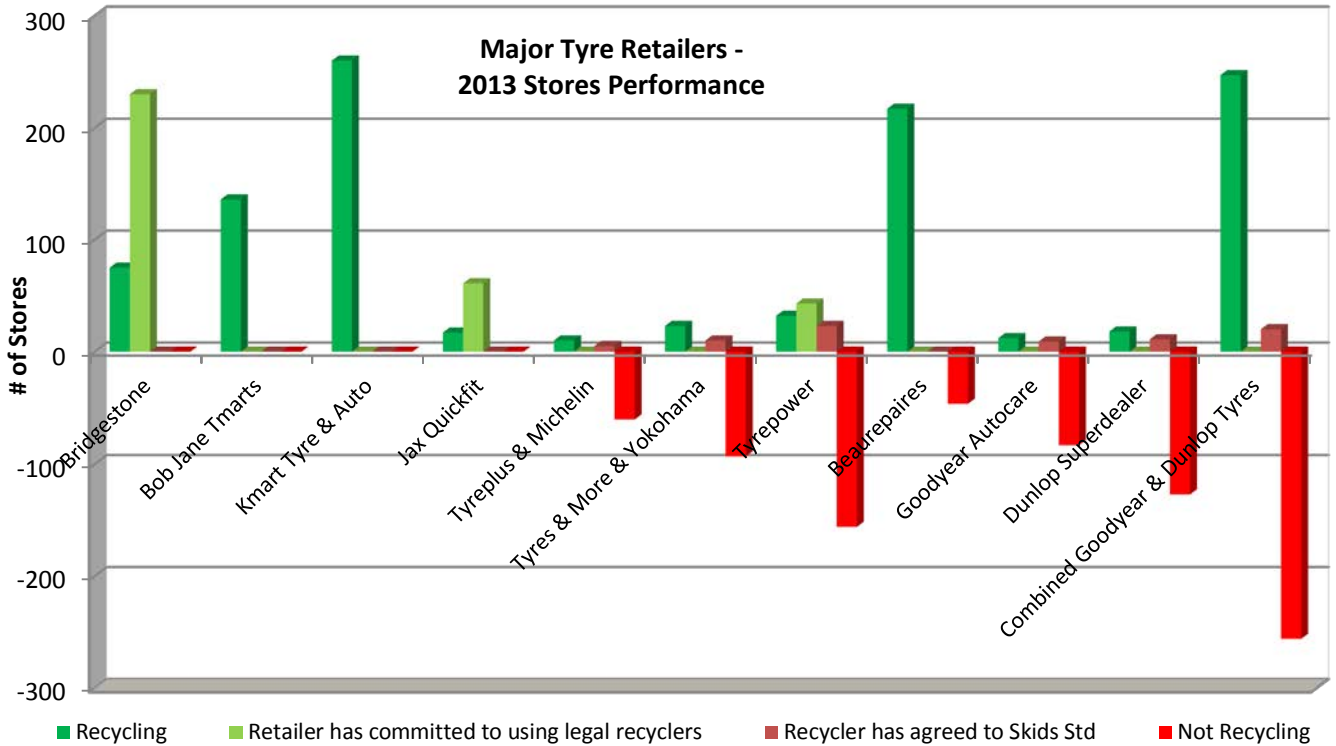
In September last year, frustrated by 10 years of inaction by government and the industry to develop a credible and effective national program to control waste tyres, Boomerang Alliance joined forces with the Australian Tyre Recycling Association (ATRA) to address the problem. Boomerang investigated the bona fides of all ATRA members and verifies that this organisation is virtually the only legitimate pathway to ensure waste tyres are responsibly managed. We also hired private investigators, surveyed dealerships, and accessed the customer lists of recycler to establish exactly which tyre dealers are using the rogues.

Major tyre retail networks - Bob Jane TMarts, Bridgestone, Jax Quickfit and Kmart Tyre and Auto stores are to be congratulated for their performance. They have not only backed our campaign efforts, they have also taken action, at significant expense, to ensure that in 2014 - 100% of the tyres they remove from vehicles will be responsibly recycled. In just 3 months these efforts have already seen the projected recycling rate of tyres increase from less than 17% to over 34%.

Tyre Recycling Across the World



Unfortunately a number of major tyre networks have failed to act. As a result their recycling performance does not reflect the standards expected by the community or government. These include foundation members of the proposed Tyre Stewardship Australia initiative: Goodyear & Dunlop Tyres, Michelin Tyres, and Pirelli Tyres. The chart below reflects the performance standards of each major dealer network in Australia. ['Recycling' = using licensed operators now; 'Retailer committed...' = in transition; 'Recycler agreed...' = recycler not retailer action]



At the government level, NSW Environment Minister, The Hon. Robyn Parker, has responded quickly and decisively. She instructed the NSW EPA to raid some 300 tyre dealerships to check they are responsibly managing their waste. Minister Parker has also drafted tough new licensing conditions for NSW tyre recyclers and legislated anti-dumping measures including financial bonds and waste levy instruments to ensure rogue operators are put out of business.

All other Australian states and territories should immediately ensure they adopt regulations modelled on the NSW action. At the national level the introduction of the Tyre Stewardship Australia (TSA) concept is welcomed as a contribution to the state government and community efforts; but the pressing first step is to ensure the program's integrity by ensuring that every tyre company associated with the initiative makes an immediate commitment that it and all its points of sale will immediately commit to ensuring their waste tyres are collected and managed by a legally compliant operator that meets the proven standards established by ATRA and Boomerang. It is significant their joint efforts have achieved results with minimal bureaucracy and in rapid time. The TSA should not impose unnecessary costs on industry and the community nor inject delay into industry transition to legitimate recyclers.

