

Dangerous cladding to be recycled in bid to end waste crisis

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Dangerous flammable building cladding will be turned into products for the building industry as the Morrison government pumps more money into recycling technology to meet a looming 2022 deadline on waste exports.

A Melbourne company has been funded with \$2.9 million to develop a commercial use for the massive haul of flammable building cladding, which is being stripped from hundreds of Victorian buildings.



Australia exported around 4.5 million tonnes of waste in financial year 2018-19. JASON SOUTH

A Sydney firm has also received \$2 million to develop technology to convert contaminated waste plastic into reusable packaging and new products. Both are working with universities on three-year projects to commercialise their technology.

Industry, Science and Technology Minister Karen Andrews said the government backed projects that could create commercial markets for products that limit waste generation.

“Not only are these projects helping to ensure Australia has a more sustainable and prosperous future by reducing the impact of plastics on our environment, they are also opening further opportunities for new jobs,” Ms Andrews said.

The Victorian Building Authority estimates about 500 buildings need to be stripped of flammable cladding, and last year Premier Daniel Andrews announced a \$600 million scheme to undertake the

work.

New building cladding identified as hazardous

A new type of cladding on NSW buildings has been identified as hazardous.

Property services company Sebastian Group is working with the University of Melbourne and the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology on recycling processes to turn the huge haul of cladding set to come down, made from a mix of aluminium and plastics, into products for the building and industrial sectors.

“We’re looking at how to separate the components so they can be recyclable, investigating ways to make it reusable,” said Sebastian Group managing director Matt Marsh.

“There is a growing movement in Australia into reusing and recycling to create a circular economy. Rather than sending it overseas for someone to make a product out of, we are trying to find partners to generate those products.”

Integrated Green Energy Solutions (IGES) is working with the University of Sydney on pyrolysis technology to convert waste plastics into reusable clean plastic films or pellets, which could be used for a range of packaging and products.

Pyrolysis is currently deployed to create fuel for transport from plastics and IGES is setting up a plant in Amsterdam to produce marine fuel with this process.

“We are researching how to adapt pyrolysis for recycling, to heat the plastic material to 300 to 400 degrees Celsius, and if you don’t allow oxygen into the petrochemicals it came from it can be refined from there,” said IGES quality manager Ian McIntosh.

Seven other recycling projects have been funded, including a \$3 million project to create factories that turn waste plastic into engineered projects, a \$2.7 million initiative to make prefabricated building products out of plastic waste, and a \$1.9 million deal to grow production of diesel from landfill.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison announced in August last year Australia would phase out waste exports by 2022 with progressive bans starting with glass in July, mixed waste plastics and tyres by

the end of 2021, and remaining waste products including paper and cardboard are set to cease by mid-2022.

Australia exported around 4.5 million tonnes of waste in financial year 2018-19.

In 2018 China, Australia's major export destination for waste recycling, restricted waste imports. Several major import nations have followed suit, with India, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand announcing or foreshadowing similar restrictions.

Ms Andrews is also announcing \$25 million for research projects to address industry challenges, including \$3 million for a project to increase the resilience of salmon at high temperatures

Nine projects will share in the Cooperative Research Centres Projects funding, including \$3 million to manufacture lightweight rocket fuel tanks to make space more affordable.



Mike Foley



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