

VEHICLE END OF LIFE:

DO VEHICLES HAVE NEAR DEATH EXPERIENCES?

BY INTERNATIONAL CAR DISTRIBUTION
PROGRAMME AUSTRALIA

With an estimated 700 million motor vehicles of all types on the road worldwide, the impact that vehicles are having on the environment is extensive. How to deal with this impact has focussed largely on emissions standards, air quality, noise levels, and contribution to pollution and greenhouse gases.

Not only has the volume of vehicles currently produced and in use increased, but also motor vehicles have become more durable over the past 30 years, which has raised the environmental issue, of how best to treat vehicles that reach the end of their working life. And it is only in the last decade or so, that recycling has become an active consideration in vehicle design, vehicle assembly, and vehicle dismantling.

The steady international trend towards government mandated recycling has required particular innovative responses from the whole of the automotive industry.

The obvious focal point is manufacturers because of the application of the producer responsibility concept. But increasingly the focus is widening to examine the style and operations of recyclers, dismantlers, vehicle wreckers, and the expectation for dealers to have an expanded understanding of appropriate End of Life Vehicle (ELV) environmental systems as in some jurisdictions, for example Germany, dealers operate as collection points for ELVs.

The core aim of ELV treatment systems is to reuse recyclable resources, and reduce the need for and operations of landfill and waste dumps.

Internationally, the automobile industry has made significant engineering responses, producing vehicles that are more fuel efficient, require less material resources and energy to manufacture, and are increasingly simpler and more environmentally friendly to recycle.

In recent years, there has been an introduction of a number of mandatory and voluntary schemes controlling the best practice treatment of ELVs.

ICDPA has prepared a report that explores the key features of the major international ELV management and regulatory systems, and faced with those legal prescriptions what manufacturers particularly are doing to improve the ELV recyclability of their products.

This industry leading 76 page ICDPA report lays out the current thinking in ELV management, and the key international developments that have occurred to meet stipulated recycling targets. Given the increasing community awareness and concern for environmental protection, it is perhaps inevitable that in the near future local environmental regulators will look to international automotive recycling systems for guidance on what measures may be suitable to Australia.

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