

factsheet 2

used oil - it can be recycled

Used oil is a valuable resource. Even though Australians are good at recycling used oil (around 194 million litres was recycled last year), at least 60 million litres of used oil goes missing annually. By encouraging Australians to pour their used oil back into an empty oil container and take it to the local used oil facility for recycling, local governments are helping to conserve a valuable resource and protect the environment.



Used oil should not be dumped in landfills

What happens when used oil is collected?

Used oil collectors take used oil from collection points (such as landfills), service stations and other major used oil producers. They may then undertake some pre-treatment and recycling of the used oil or sell it to a specialised used oil recycler.

Pre-treatment of used oil involves removing any water within the oil, known as *dewatering*. One way of doing this is by placing it in large settling tanks, which separates the oil and water.

Further recycling steps include:

- *Filtering* the oil to remove any solids present in the oil;
- *Demineralisation* to remove inorganic material and certain additives producing a cleaner burner fuel or feed oil for further refining;
- *Propane de-asphalting* to remove the heavier bituminous fractions, producing re-refined base oil; and
- *Distillation* to produce re-refined base oil suitable for use as a lubricant, hydraulic or transformer oil. This process is very similar to the process undergone by virgin oil.



Oil filters and the oil they contain can be recycled for other uses



An Australian Government Initiative

oil, soil & water....they just don't mix!

How can used oil be recycled?

Used oil can be cleaned of contaminants so it can be recycled again and again. There are many uses for recycled used oil. These include:

- Industrial burner oil, where the used oil is dewatered, filtered and demineralised for use in industrial burners;
- Mould oil to help release products from their moulds (e.g. pressed metal products, concrete);
- Hydraulic oil;
- Bitumen based products;
- An additive in manufactured products; or
- Re-refined base oil for use as a lubricant, hydraulic or transformer oil.



Water quality can be affected by dumping used oil into stormwater drains

What is lube to lube recycling?

Turning used oil back into lubricating oil is referred to as *lube to lube* recycling. Re-refined used oil is blended with additives to produce oil suitable for re-use in the same situations as a 100% virgin oil product. The re-refined base oil is tested to ensure that its quality is as good, if not better, than virgin base oil, and it must also pass strict health and safety standards. Re-refined base oil can be recycled again and again.



Used oil collection facilities are being established throughout Australia, with over 450 sites already operational

What is the Product Stewardship for Oil Program?

The *Product Stewardship for Oil Program* provides incentives to increase used oil recycling in the Australian community. This will ensure the environmentally sustainable management of used oil. As part of the Australian Government's commitment to managing used oil, a levy-benefit system has been introduced where a levy collected on new oil funds benefit payments to used oil recyclers.

Complementing the benefit payments is transitional assistance funding, where \$35 million over 7 years is being provided to encourage environmentally sustainable management and re-refining of used oil. Some of the initiatives being undertaken include recycling technology, research and development and the establishment of collection facilities for used oil throughout Australia, with over 450 sites already operational nationally.

Where can I get more information on recycling oil?

To get more information on used oil and find out where your nearest used oil collection facility is, visit the *Product Stewardship for Oil Program* website at www.ea.gov.au/oilrecycling, email oilrecycling@ea.gov.au or phone the Department of the Environment and Heritage's Community Information Unit on 1800 803 772.



Used oil collection facilities enable us to recycle as much of our used oil as possible