

Give toxic lighting the flick

Environmentally friendly programs and products are becoming an industry in their own right. One electrical contactor is working hard to keep mercury laden globes out of landfill.

With the Government's attention now squarely on electronic waste, or e-waste as it's better known, a new service provider, Lamp Recyclers, has developed an effective and environmentally responsible system for disposing of old fluorescent tubes and globes.

The Federal Minister for the Environment, Heritage and the Arts Peter Garrett declared in May that e-waste was henceforth a priority when he outlined an initiative called the Fluoro-cycle scheme, the aim of which was to recycle lamps that contain mercury and prevent that mercury going into the waste stream.

The development of a national e-waste policy follows in the footsteps of other countries, where many of them have already outlawed the dumping of lamps.

"Due to its high toxicity and the tougher regulations governing its disposal, landfill and incineration will no longer be an acceptable means by which to safely dispose of mercury waste," says John Field, managing director of Lamp Recyclers Pty Ltd.

"To reduce current mercury levels in our eco-system, recovery and recycling is the only safe, efficient and effective way.

"It's very important to make recycling readily accessible to the electrical trade and end-user markets. We all have a



Due to its high toxicity and e-waste regulation governing its disposal, landfill and incineration are no longer acceptable means by which to safely dispose of mercury waste, such as what is found in fluorescent lamps. Lamp Recyclers has developed a simple way to promote the proper recycling of these lamps.

responsibility to promote and support recycling to ensure environmental sustainability."

John and his team have developed and fine-tuned a back-haul recovery system, initially throughout NSW but which is due to expand nationally in the near future.

The Lamp Recyclers system is designed to work in support of both electrical contractors and electrical wholesalers, with an emphasis on service and safety. And there is no capital outlay required for anyone to purchase any equipment.

Once collected, collated and sorted, the product is sent to a hi-tech processing facility where the mercury, glass and metal are separated into waste streams.

"It's all about the interface, it needs to be as simple as possible," he says.

"Through our system, wholesalers or electricians can purchase our boxes and then pass the (nominal) cost on to the end user."

Some may question how their clients will respond to being charged for the removal of old lamps but, from experience, John says commercial end-users, particularly the larger corporations, are keen to ensure lamps are being treated like other waste they are now compelled to dispose of responsibly.

"There is some margin built-in for both contractors and wholesalers which everyone appreciates but the big advantage with our systems is the headaches it saves for everyone."

Further, he says the best way to explain the charge (fee-for-service) is to compare it with what is happening in the tyre trade. There is now a charge, often incorporated into the total of the sale, which includes the disposal of the old tyres.

"Electricians really need to look at this as a way of offering a total solution to their clients, which is something everyone is striving to achieve."

The Lamp Recycler program will solve an everyday business issue for electricians, which is destined to grow with the introduction of the Fluoro-cycle scheme. Knowing that you can meet your customers e-waste requirements could be the difference between winning a job and not. ■

Lamp Recyclers
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