

MINAMATA CONVENTION ON MERCURY TO BE RATIFIED IN EARLY 2022

Regulatory Update

The Australian Government is in the process of ratifying the Minamata Convention on Mercury. Once ratified, Australia will be bound under international law to meet the obligations of the Convention.

The Convention prohibits the import, export and manufacture of High-Pressure Mercury Vapour (HPMV) lamps. Meaning that Australia will need to stop the importation of HPMVs from the time that the Convention enters into force for Australia. Recently the Department of Agriculture, Water and Environment issued a notice outlining this is expected to occur in the first quarter of 2022.

The ratification of the Convention will ban the import, export and manufacture of HPMVs, however does not affect the ongoing sale, installation or operation of these lamps (until domestic supplies run out).

In a recent submission, Lighting Council Australia outlined that HPMV lamps are becoming increasingly difficult and expensive to source, while many OECD countries have already ratified the Convention leading to natural supply shortages. Low cost, long-life, high-quality, high efficiency LED products have been widely available on the Australian market since around 2016. This follows a period of significant market transformation during which large investments by the global lighting industry were made into the development of new technology LED products for all general lighting applications.

There remain approximately 500,000 HPMV streetlights installed across Australia, with a significant proportion in Queensland and Western Australia. The transition to LEDs in some areas is still in progress and might be difficult to achieve by early 2022

Lighting Council Australia has long supported the Minamata Convention on Mercury and recommends that binding treaty action be taken as recommended by the Commonwealth Government's Joint Standing Committee on Treaties (JSCOT). Furthermore, LCA supports the recommendation that the Government reassess the need to seek an exemption to allow for the continued importation of HPMV lamps into Australia, considering such an exemption to be reputationally damaging and of limited practical benefit.

Lighting Council Australia has raised concerns regarding the lack of appropriate market notification and has requested that the Commonwealth Government undertake a targeted and intensive market update on the formal procedures and requirements regarding the ratification planned for the first quarter of 2022.

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