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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Record destruction of ozone-depleting gases

Australia's refrigeration and air conditioning (RAC) industry has celebrated World Ozone Day (16 September) by setting a new record for destroying ozone depleting refrigerant gases and removing them permanently from the ecosystem.

In the last financial year the industry destroyed more than three times as much R22, one of the most common ozone-depleting refrigerant gases, as in any of the previous five years.

More than 120 tonnes of R22 were recovered in 2020-21 and sent for destruction at the Refrigerant Reclaim Australia (RRA) plasma arc facility in Melbourne – the largest amount since it began to be reclaimed for re-use a decade ago.

By contrast, destruction rates of R22 in the previous five years ranged from 14 to 39 tonnes.

The record rate of R22 destruction is a milestone in the permanent removal of ozone-depleting gases by the 124,000 refrigeration technicians licensed by the Australian Refrigeration Council (ARC).

ARC chief executive officer Glenn Evans said the record was a testament to the efforts of the entire RAC industry and to the legislation and regulations that underpin the licensing scheme.

“This record coincides with the 35th anniversary of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer – a great achievement built on long years of dedicated effort,” he said.

“Australia enshrined the principles of the Montreal Protocol in legislation with the Ozone Protection and Synthetic Greenhouse Gas Management Act 1989 – one of the first countries to do so.

“The first targets to protect the ozone layer were the chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) used in everything from aerosol cans to fridges and air conditioners, which were banned in 1996.

“After that, the RAC industry's focus moved on to eliminating hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) such as R22, and here we are today, closer than ever to that objective.”

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R22 DESTRUCTION BACKGROUND

As one of the early countries to ratify the Montreal Protocol (1989), Australia continues to be a leader in the phase out of ozone-depleting substances. Australia's approach has been based on a cooperative partnership between industry, community and all levels of government.

Since ratifying the Protocol, Australia has met or exceeded all of its phase out obligations. For example, Australia will largely phase out the use of hydrochlorofluorocarbons (HCFCs) by 2016, four years ahead of the schedule required under the Protocol.

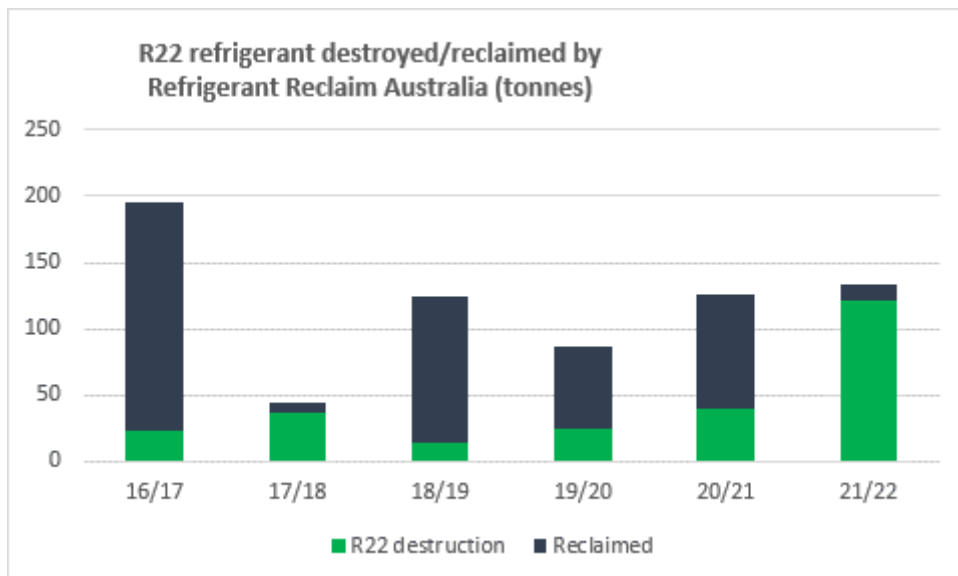
This accelerated approach was determined by a government and industry initiative agreed in the early 1990s, with the phase out schedule set in a subsequent legislative amendment in 1995.

HCFC-22 (also known as R22) has been commonly used in residential heat pump, air conditioning and refrigeration systems since the 1990s following the phase out of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs) in developed countries in 1995.

In 2012, R22 accounted for approximately 26% of the total bank of working gases in Australia

Over the past five years, with R22 equipment being either retired or converted to use other gases, there has been a strong shift from R22 being mostly reclaimed to being mostly destroyed.

RRA expects the return of R22 for destruction to continue at a high rate as ageing R22 refrigeration equipment reaches the end of its service life or is converted to other gases.



MEDIA RELEASE



CAPTION: Australia's licensed refrigeration technicians sent more than 120 tonnes of ozone-depleting refrigerant gas for destruction at the RRA plasma arc facility in 2021-22.