Australian Government
Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water

Submission of information in response to decision MC-6/2: Australia

Available information on the supply, use and trade of mercury compounds

- Goods imported into Australia require classification under the *Customs Tariff Act 1995*. The Australian Harmonized Export Commodity Classification (AHECC) is the product classification used to identify goods being exported from Australia, and therefore shares the same structures and hierarchies of the international Harmonized Commodity Description and Coding System.
- Analysis of Australia's data indicates that:
    - Australia's import/export data is generally consistent with data on Australian imports and exports provided in the Minamata Convention study on the global supply, production, trade and use of mercury compounds (Attachment A refers).
    - For import tariff classification code 285210 (Inorganic or organic compounds of mercury, whether or not chemically defined, excluding amalgams), the mercury compounds imported most frequently and/or in the highest volumes included mercuric nitrate, mercuric thiocyanate, sodium ethylmercuric thiosalicylate (thimerosal), phenylmercuric neodecanoate and other compounds imported in smaller quantities.
        - Major suppliers comprise chemical-related businesses, including laboratory reagent suppliers, fine chemical manufacturers, and few general trading companies.
    - Several other import tariff classification codes were examined for records associated with mercury compounds, including 28529090, 28529010, 28259000, 28273900, 28309000, 28332990, and 28342900. Imports identified under these codes included mercuric/mercury oxide, mercury(II) chloride, mercury(II) sulfide, mercury(II) sulfate, and mercury(II) nitrate. Most of these substances are listed under Article 3 of the Minamata Convention. These imports of high-purity chemicals are most likely intended for research purposes.
    - Exports classified under code 285210, primarily within the Asia–Pacific region, have declined significantly between 2018 and 2023 (Attachment A refers). However, export goods descriptions generally lacked sufficient detail to reliably identify specific mercury compounds.
    - In addition, AHECC codes 28529000, 28273994, 28332992 and 28342905 were associated with a limited number of export records for mercury compounds (e.g., mercury(II) chloride, mercury (II) oxide, mercury(II) sulfate, and mercury (II) nitrate).
    - Data limitations and uncertainties were identified. Some goods appear to have been miscoded, as indicated by discrepancies between commodity codes and goods descriptions. While delivery locations are predominantly chemical-related suppliers, the subsequent distribution and end use of mercury compounds remain unknown.

Views and input on mercury compounds which could be listed in a possible annex pursuant to paragraph 13 of Article 3

- The Australian Government Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water administers the Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS). The IChEMS establishes nationally consistent standards for effective management of industrial[1] chemicals. From 1 July 2026, the import, export, manufacture and use of mercury **and mercury compounds** is prohibited under IChEMS. Exceptions only apply in very limited circumstances, including:
    - in circumstances where the chemical is present as unintentional or naturally occurring trace contamination
    - essential uses
    - research or laboratory purposes
    - where the chemical is present in finished goods ('articles') that are already in use
    - environmentally sound disposal.
- The IChEMS standard is available at: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/environment/protection/chemicals-management/national-standard/mercury.
- The IChEMS standard applies to any chemical found to meet the following group/class description: mercury and mercury compounds including mercury (CAS number 7439-97-6) and mercury alloys and amalgams, and any chemical compound that contains at least one mercury atom in the molecular formula, such as inorganic compounds (monovalent and divalent ions, i.e. mercurous salts and mercuric salts); and organomercury compounds (compounds in which mercury is bonded covalently to at least one carbon atom).
- The published Chemical Abstracts Service Registry Number (CAS RN) list provides an indicative list of chemicals covered by the IChEMS standard and is available at: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/ichems-mercury-indicative-list.xlsx.
- The list includes CAS RNs and associated chemical names. It has been compiled from multiple sources, including the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS) assessments, AICIS Inventory, Rotterdam Convention (Annex III), Concorde - Natural Resources Defense Council - Feasibility of conducting a global inventory of mercury compound supply, use and trade study list of Mercury compounds list, ECHA's (2013b) list of pre-registered substances and certain mixtures (identified with the use of the search string "mercu"), Pharos - Project : Materials : MERCURY COMPOUNDS (2017) CAS RN List. Additional substances were identified by searching the global inventory within internal Australian Regulatory Chemical informatics Engine system for chemical names and structures containing mercury.
- The list was refined to exclude some substances with clear agricultural, veterinary and therapeutic uses that are out of scope of the standard. All CAS RNs were confirmed as valid using the CAS Check digit verification algorithm. Invalid CAS RNs were removed.
- The CAS RN approach provides a globally recognised way to identify chemical substances, enabling accurate regulation, risk assessment, compliance, and supply-chain transparency regardless of naming differences.

[1] Industrial chemicals are those with an industrial use – this covers a broad range of chemicals used in inks, plastics, adhesives, paints, glues, solvents, cosmetics, soaps and many other products. The definition is provided by the Australian Industrial Chemicals Introduction Scheme (AICIS): https://www.industrialchemicals.gov.au/chemical-information/what-industrial-chemical

Proposed pathways for identifying mercury compounds that could be restricted under Article 3 of the Minamata Convention

Greater transparency in trade enables Parties to understand what mercury compounds are being traded and to take informed decisions to discourage undesirable trade in line with the Minamata Convention obligations.

In this spirit, Australia proposes the following pathways for consideration by the Open-ended Expert Group for identifying mercury compounds that could be restricted under Article 3 of the Minamata Convention:

- Consider restricting trade in mercury compounds that are being traded internationally, and:
    - could be used in products or manufacturing processes restricted under the Minamata Convention (e.g. cosmetics such as creams, polyurethane production); or
    - could be used to circumvent controls on the trade in elemental mercury, as identified in the Minamata Convention study on the global supply, production, trade and use of mercury compounds.
- Consider adopting CAS Registry Number (CAS RN)–based approach to clearly and consistently identify mercury compounds, using Australia's Industrial Chemicals Environmental Management Standard (IChEMS) indicative list as a starting point: https://www.dcceew.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/ichems-mercury-indicative-list.xlsx

Attachment A.

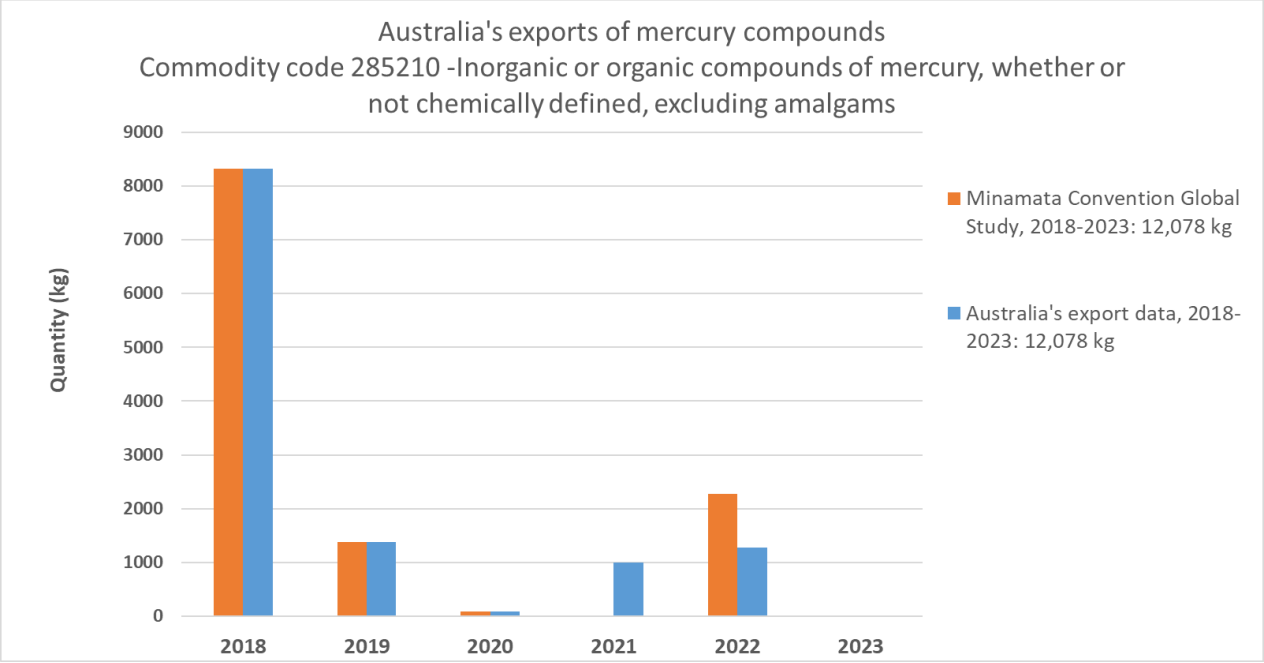

Figure A1. Comparison between Australia's export data for commodity code 285210 and data shown in UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/5 (Source: Trade Data Monitor (https://tradedatamonitor.com/)

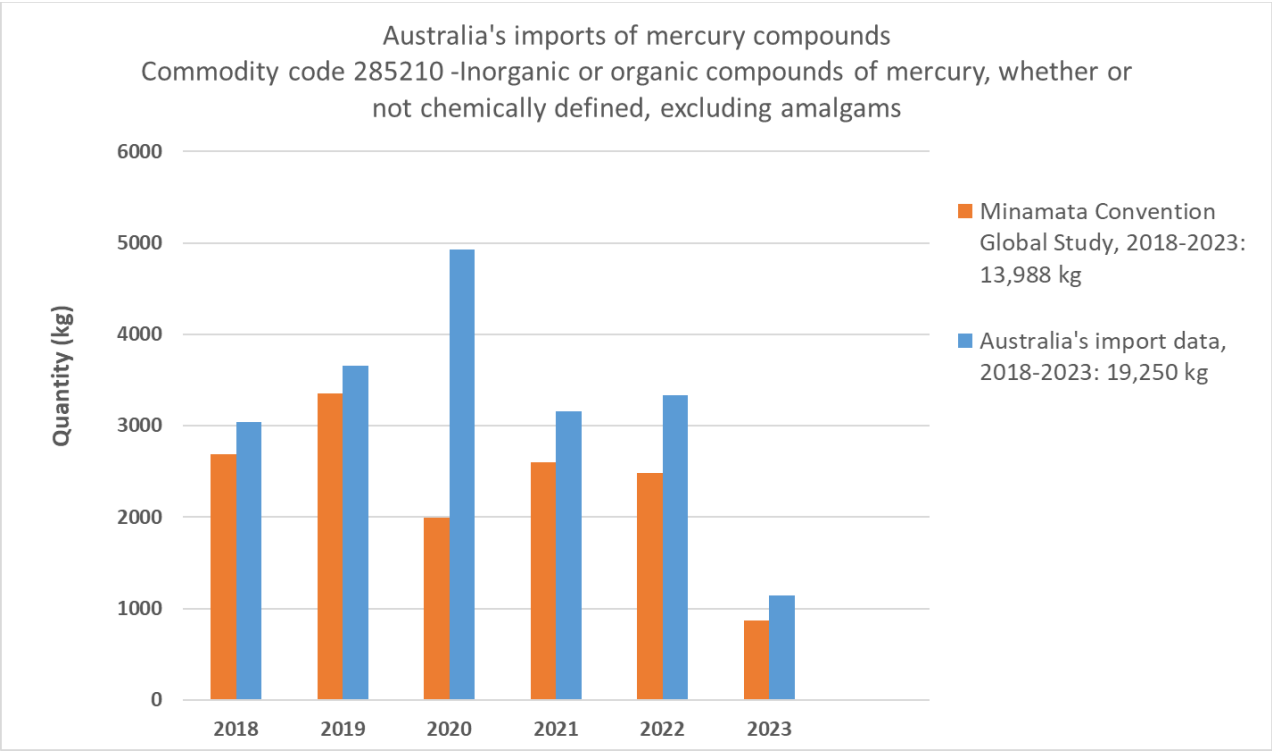

Figure A2. Comparison between Australia's import data for commodity code 285210 and data shown in UNEP/MC/COP.6/INF/5 (Source: Trade Data Monitor (https://tradedatamonitor.com/)