

Q&A: Kylie Farrelley

Ecolibrium's Mark Vender sat down with the incoming general manager of Refrigerant Reclaim Australia about the plans and challenges ahead for both her organisation and the industry as a whole.

Refrigerant Reclaim Australia (RRA) recently announced Kylie Farrelley as its new general manager. She replaces Michael Bennett, who was slated to conclude handing over the role at the end of last month.

The role is a vital one in the industry. Since RRA was founded in 1993, the industry-funded not-for-profit has taken back more than 7,000 tonnes of used contaminated and unwanted refrigerant. This equates to more than 10 million tonnes of stratospheric ozone being saved from destruction, and more than 14 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalent being prevented from emission.

Farrelley has been affiliated with RRA since 2008 as an industry representative and was appointed to the board of directors in 2016. She also worked for almost 20 years at one of the world's largest chemical producers, Arkema, giving her a wider understanding of the refrigerant life-cycle.

Ecolibrium: What is top of your to-do list?

Kylie Farrelley: I know the organisation well from the outside, certainly from the top down. Now I want to understand it from the ground up through interactions with the contractors and the wholesalers. We'll look at operational efficiencies, and we're also doing some outreach work on refrigerant reclaim with the aim of trying to increase returns of most refrigerants.

Eco: Tell us about the outreach work

KF: I really want to talk about the RRA program and make sure everyone's across it. We know it's a legal requirement, but because there's no enforcement on recovery, make sure that people are aware of it and know that they're doing a good thing for the environment. There are real and measurable outcomes for that. They can also make money out of reclaimed refrigerant.

It's one thing to speak about what you know and what the contractors should know, but it's interesting to find out what's really happening out there.

How much is getting vented? Are they all recovering? You can find out more about the culture.

I'd also like to work more with the TAFEs, to plant the seed very early in people's careers.

Eco: How will your previous experience help you in this role?

KF: Having worked with Arkema for 20 years, I have a good understanding of trends and of the implications of the HFC phase-down legislation in terms of refrigerant transition.

I also have a good understanding of what to expect in terms of the timeframes for the transition and the big picture. Being involved in the industry for so long, and with a focus on refrigerants, you really understand the impact of the legislation.

Eco: What impacts do you expect to see in terms of reclaimed refrigerant?

KF: R404A will possibly be a big one. There are some systems that are already being converted to HFOs, so we'll see that. But also some R410A in time, as R410A equipment comes to its end of life and is replaced by R32. It's not a direct replacement, but the equipment will change. So we'll see an influx of R410A in a couple of years' time.



One of the challenges is the increase in flammables and managing that through our part of the supply chain. As we lower the GWP of products, there will be a higher rate of flammable refrigerants coming back through our network.

Eco: Your thoughts on the HFC phase-down?

KF: It's a good idea to keep it fresh in everyone's minds. What we saw with the R22 phase-out was that everyone was really complacent for a period because they weren't impacted. The market was converting as it should and there wasn't that shortage that people were expecting.

That's something we don't want to happen with the HFC phase-down, especially given that we're introducing refrigerants with different properties.

Eco: Where does Australia sit in terms of reclaim rates?

KF: We have one of the world's best programs. It's been recognised all over the world, and certainly in the past Australia has been called upon as an example of how to do it. But it's a hard thing to monitor how successful you are, because you can't really track the waste.

It's hard to know what you're not capturing, and that's why getting out to contractors is so important, to make sure that everyone is aware of the program. Hopefully with the education, we'll see if that changes mindsets in time and whether we're getting higher rates of return. ■



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