Meet The Australian ELV
Almost 600,000 ads similar to those on the right, fail to attract the public’s attention each year. That’s because they go unpublished and unaccounted for.

The End of Life Vehicle or ELV is the largest product that we dispose of, weighing 1300kg on average.

Current Situation
Australia’s ELV processing stream is mainly driven by profits from the recovery and recycling of metals that make up 70% of a vehicle’s composition. The remainder 30%, called shredder residue, which amass to around 240,000 tonnes yearly and contain hazardous materials, end up in landfills.

There is no government policy on ELV management anywhere in Australia.

ELV Policies Overseas
Europe and Japan adopted ELV policies based on industry, waste and energy related issues most of which do not apply to Australia.

Their implementations were less than ideal and revealed that they were ill-conceived with little consideration for the complex issues in the prevailing practice in the industry. Adopting the overseas ELV policies locally will prove unsuitable and will negatively affect the local automotive industry, their associated industries and the environment.

Factors that Shaped the Australian ELV System

Governance
Federal level: policies, pursued from the 1960s, to protect the local automotive industry; hazardous waste act exclusions and implementation.
State level: laws and regulations on motor vehicles registrations, repairs and trade that are not standard across Australia; loopholes in regulations causing secondary effects.
Local level: environment protection policies that came in late and less than comprehensive.

Organisational
Lack of order in the automotive trade industry which is struggling to maintain its profitability let alone finding a national standard for business conduct.
Lack of coordination among the stakeholders from different sectors (auto makers, importers, aftermarket, dismantlers, waste) towards a goal.

Social
Laid back attitude, lack of interest in shredder residue from ELVs that can be treated, thus yielding resources for recycled materials (mainly polymers).

Technological
Post shredder treatment technologies non-existent in Australia.

The Question – and part of the answer

Given Australia’s unique automotive history and ELV system, and given the implications of the ELV policies pursued in other countries on Australia’s growing automotive fleet, what should be done to develop a well thought out Australian national ELV policy?

This complex matter calls for systems thinking to help enhance our understanding of the ELV system, and hence come up with an effective policy!