

AUSTRALIAN GREENHOUSE OFFICE

FINAL REPORT

*APPLIANCE ENERGY RATING LABEL TRANSITION
PROGRAM – COMMUNICATION STRATEGY
EVALUATION*

THE PHILLIPS GROUP

Level 8, 16 O'Connell St, Sydney NSW 2000
Telephone (02) 9233 4499 Facsimile (02) 9233 4199
email sydney@phillipsgroup.com.au

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Introduction

The Phillips Group was appointed by the Australian Greenhouse Office (AGO) to develop and implement a communication strategy to support the transition to the revised Appliance Energy Rating Label.

The strategy was implemented over a nine month period from February to October 2000. This report provides details of activities undertaken, an evaluation of the effectiveness of the strategy and recommendations which may enhance future programs.

Objectives

The overall goal of the communication strategy was to maximise compliance with the new regulation and minimise consumer confusion during the transition period.

Strategic Approach

The majority of activity was directed towards the supply side of the market – with manufacturers, buying groups and retailers – as this is where compliance falls. A ‘top down’ approach was adopted whereby these audiences were informed of the transition to the revised label, the timetable for the transition, and the label changes. Sales staff would then be key message carriers to raise awareness and understanding amongst consumers.

Activities undertaken

The communication strategy comprised of a variety of activities to ensure target audiences were adequately informed during the transition period. These included:

- Three editions of *Label Update*, a newsletter for industry;
- Industry education kits, including a booklet, staff poster and training video;
- Point-of-sale material, including a consumer flyer and sign;
- Telephone inquiry line;
- Website;
- Catalogue/advertising inserts;
- Presentation material; and
- Media relations activities.

Evaluation Methodology

Evaluation of the communication strategy was undertaken both during and on completion of the transition period. Evaluation activities included:

- pre-testing of messages and draft designs for all information material;
- media monitoring;
- review of the telephone hotline reports;
- in-store visits;
- follow up telephone interviews; and
- a survey conducted at the end of the transition program.

Evaluation Findings

Survey Findings

A total of 25 respondents completed and returned the evaluation survey. The majority of respondents were manufacturers. Other sectors represented were retailers, interest groups, consultants and government organisations.

The survey revealed that the most popular communication materials were the booklet, *Label Update* and the website. These three items had the highest recall among respondents and

everyone said they found them useful. All other materials rated well in terms of usefulness, but fewer people had seen them. The only initiative which received a negative response was the telephone hotline, with more than half the respondents who used the service saying they did not find the information they were seeking.

The timing of the transition period was the most commonly raised issue in the survey.

Media Coverage

Changes to the energy rating label generated a large amount of media coverage in industry, environmental and ethnic media. A total of 22 articles were identified during the transition period, all of which presented either a positive or neutral stance. Most were taken directly from media releases, ensuring that key messages were accurately conveyed.

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were held with buying groups and major retailers during early September to gain qualitative feedback on the communication materials. Overall there was a positive or neutral response to the materials provided.

Telephone Hotline

A total of 178 calls were recorded over a seven month period between mid April and mid November 2000. Almost 50 percent of calls were from retailers and 23 percent were from the general public.

The evaluation survey identified some issues with the telephone hotline, with 57 percent of respondents indicating they had not been able to obtain the information they wanted from the service.

In-store Visits

Twelve random in-store visits were conducted to test sales staff knowledge of the label changes and see whether point-of-sale material was on display. The results were varied, with 58 percent of retail outlets using the material and 58 percent of staff demonstrating knowledge of the label changes.

Conclusions

Anecdotal evidence from buying group representatives during telephone interviews indicated that retailers were generally aware of the changes and the transition program was seen to be running smoothly. This was supported by the evaluation survey conducted at the end of the program. The use of multiple communication channels during the transition program – media, printed materials and the website – helped to ensure the target audience was reached.

The evaluation survey revealed a high level of satisfaction with the communication materials provided during the transition period. The booklet, *Label Update* and the website appeared to be the most popular sources of information, with all respondents rating these materials as useful or very useful. The survey also revealed a high level of awareness and positive response to the education kit as a whole.

The positive response to the information materials can be attributed in part to the extensive consultation undertaken with industry during the strategy development phase to identify their information needs and preferred information delivery mechanisms.

Recommendations

A number of lessons can be learnt from this project, drawing on initiatives which worked well and also opportunities for improvement. Recommendations for future communication strategies are provided in Chapter 7. These focus on consultation, the telephone hotline, media relations and distribution of information materials.

Background

On 1 July 2000, the National Appliance and Equipment Energy Efficiency Committee (NAEEEC) introduced a revised energy rating label for appliances. The improved efficiency of appliances in recent years has resulted in a clustering of products at the top of the star rating range. The revised label was introduced to encourage even greater energy efficiency improvements, by measuring against a tougher standard. The program was a cooperative initiative of the Federal, State and Territory Governments, in consultation with the appliance industry and other interested parties.

A transition period of three months was allowed for retail outlets to attach the revised label to all display stock. From 1 October 2000 it became a legal requirement that all appliances on display in retail outlets carry the new label.

The Phillips Group was engaged by the Australian Greenhouse Office to develop and implement a communication strategy aimed at maximising compliance with the new regulation and minimising consumer confusion during the transition period. The strategy also aimed to raise awareness and understanding of the environmental and consumer benefits associated with purchasing efficient appliances.

Extensive consultation was undertaken with industry during the development of the strategy to ensure the communication tools were appropriate for the audience. A variety of tools were used to inform manufacturers, buying groups, retailers and consumers

of the transition to the revised label, the timetable for the transition, and the implications changes to the label.

The communication strategy was implemented nationally over a nine month period from February 2000 through to October 2000.

Report Outline

This report describes the main components of the communication strategy and reports on the findings of evaluation activities carried out both during and following the transition program. Conclusions are drawn on the effectiveness of the communication strategy and recommendations made on opportunities for improvement which may be applied to future programs.

The remainder of this report is structured as follows:

- *Program Objectives* – presents the overall aim and objectives of the communication strategy relating to the various target audiences;
- *Strategic Approach* – outlines the approach taken by The Phillips Group to achieve the transition program objectives;
- *Communication Activities* – provides a summary of the activities undertaken during the implementation of the communication strategy;
- *Evaluation Methodology* – describes the evaluation activities undertaken both during and following the transition period;
- *Evaluation Findings* – presents the results of the evaluation activities;
- *Conclusions/recommendations* - presents conclusions and recommendations which can be drawn from the program evaluation ; and

- *Appendices* – includes copies of all the communication materials produced during the transition program and evaluation surveys completed by industry representatives.

The overall goal of the communication strategy was to:

Minimise consumer misunderstanding and maximise compliance amongst suppliers with the new regulation by clearly and simply informing consumers, retailers and manufacturers of the transition to the revised label, the timetable for the transition, and the implications of the change on energy ratings.

The objectives for the various audiences were as follows:

Suppliers

- Inform and educate suppliers about the transition to the revised label, the timetable for the transition, the advantages of the revised label, and the implications of the change for product energy ratings.
- Ensure the label changeover occurs quickly and within the set timeframe. Minimise the length of time the previous and revised labels appear on the shop floor concurrently and minimise the length of time products carrying old labels will be delivered from warehouses directly to customers.
- Encourage compliance to avoid supplier prosecution, and minimise the cost of the transition to manufacturers and retailers.

Consumers

- Bridge understanding from the original to the revised label. Create awareness of the reasons for the change, and minimise consumer confusion and complaint.
- Build and maintain the awareness and credibility of the energy rating label.
- Raise awareness of the benefits of purchasing efficient appliances, including utility account savings and environmental benefits.

General Public

- Highlight the cooperative efforts of the Federal, State and Territory Governments and the appliance industry to bring about this positive change for the consumer and the environment.

The communication strategy for the transition program focused on the **regulation** and **function** aspects of the transition to the revised label. As such, the majority of activity was directed towards the supply side of the market – with manufacturers, buying groups and retailers – as this is where compliance falls. Raising consumer awareness of the label and the benefits of purchasing efficient appliances was a secondary objective. A ‘top down’ approach was adopted whereby information was provided to retailers to enable them to inform and educate consumers.

The communication strategy was developed following extensive research and consultation with industry to identify information needs and preferred ways of receiving information. A written survey was completed by the seven major buying groups and department stores, providing attitudes towards proposed communication tools. Face-to-face and telephone interviews were conducted with store managers and floor staff of seven retail chains. Interviews were also held with manufacturers, industry bodies and industry media. Feedback provided during the consultation process helped to develop key messages and identify a suite of communication tools to be used during the campaign.

The target audience was segmented as follows, with key messages and communication tools tailored for each group:

- retailers and sales staff;
- manufacturers/importers;
- buying groups;

- consumers;
- interest groups; and
- general public.

Key messages focused on the regulation and function issues: notifying target audiences of the revision to the label, the transition timetable and the implications of the change. This was to compliment the *Reach for the Stars* program which aims to raise consumer awareness and understanding of the label and its benefits.

The communication activities undertaken during the transition program are listed in the table below and described in detail in the next section.

ACTIVITY	TARGET AUDIENCE
<i>Label Update</i> (newsletter)	Manufacturers, buying groups, retailers, interest groups
Education kit (booklet, poster, video)	Retailers/sales staff
Point-of-sale material (flyer, sign)	Consumers
Telephone hotline	All
Website	All
Catalogue/advertising inserts	Consumers
Presentation material	Manufacturers/retailers
Media relations	All

Following is a description of the communication activities undertaken during the transition program. Copies of all materials are included in the appendices.

Label Update Bulletins

Three editions of a newsletter entitled *Label Update* were published and distributed to a mailing list of 5000 manufacturers, buying groups, retailers and other interested parties nationwide. The purpose of these bulletins was to raise awareness of legal requirements, build momentum for the transition program, emphasise deadlines, encourage cooperation and support, provide feedback and thank stakeholders for their participation. They were distributed in April, June and September 2000.

Industry Education Material

A retail staff education kit was prepared and distributed to approximately 1800 retail outlets Australia-wide. The kit was developed as a tool to train shop floor staff on key aspects of the transition program and the changes to the label. Ensuring sales staff could explain the label changes would help to minimise customer confusion.

The education kit comprised of the following material:

- *'Your Guide to the Appliance Energy Rating Label'* – a detailed information booklet which included background information about the transition, changes to the label, key dates and supplier responsibilities;

- An A4-size staff poster outlining key messages. This was to be used in 'back-of-house' areas; and
- A short video that explains the changes.

The booklet was also distributed to manufacturers, industry groups and interested government agencies.

Point-of-Sale Material

Point-of-sale material was also prepared to assist sales staff in explaining the label changes to customers. While the education kit provided resources to be kept by retail outlets so they could train staff, the point-of-sale material was available for customers to take home.

This material comprised of:

- DL sized information flyers explaining why and how the label has changed; and
- a self-supporting A4 sign for display in retail outlets.

A total of 1783 information kits and point-of-sale material were distributed to retail outlets nationwide via the following major head offices and buying groups:

- Betta;
- David Jones;
- Harvey Norman;
- Kleenmaid;
- Coles Myer;
- Retravisio;
- Narta; and
- Vox.

Direct contact was made in advance with a senior representative of each organisation to explain the program and seek their cooperation in distributing the material to their retail outlets. A

follow up call was also made to ensure they received the material and distribution had occurred as planned.

Some kits were distributed directly to the stores, as head offices were unable to assist with distribution. Copies of the education kits and point-of-sale material can be found in Appendix B.

Telephone Inquiry Line

A '1800' inquiry line was established by the Australian Greenhouse Office to answer questions from manufacturers, retailers, sales staff and the general public. The inquiry line was managed by a call centre on behalf of the AGO. A standard question and answer document was developed by The Phillips Group to assist inquiry line staff respond to common questions, and to ensure that consistent responses would be provided. The telephone number was included on all communication materials including the booklet, staff poster, consumer brochure and the website.

Website

A dedicated website was established by the Australian Greenhouse Office, providing detailed information on the label transition. The website was divided into three main sections providing targeted information for consumers, retailers and manufacturers.

A review of the website was conducted by The Phillips Group before the site went 'live' to ensure the site was user friendly and that the information provided was consistent with the communication materials developed as part of the communication strategy .

Catalogue/Advertising Inserts

Retailers undertaking large-scale print advertising were offered small icons on disk or bromide to alert consumers to the fact that the label has changed. The stylised icon contained very brief messages. The availability of the icons was publicised via *Label Update*, as well as direct contact with buying groups and major retail outlets. A copy of the icons can be found in Appendix C.

Presentation Material

A PowerPoint presentation was prepared and offered to retailers and manufacturers to help them explain the label changes to sales staff during sales meetings. Manufacturers were also provided with a two page fact sheet in question and answer format to help them respond to questions from retail staff.

Copies of the PowerPoint presentation and fact sheet can be found in Appendix D.

Media Relations Activities

An extensive media relations campaign was also implemented as part of the strategy. The campaign targeted the following media:

- industry;
- environmental;
- consumer; and
- ethnic.

Media releases were issued at key milestones in the program, each tailored specifically to the different media markets. A copy of each release issued can be found in Appendix E.

Industry Media

To support communications with retailers and manufacturers, The Phillips Group liaised considerably with industry publications in order to re-enforce messages relating to the label transition. Publications targeted included:

- Appliance Retailer;
- Counterpoint;
- Celsius;
- Retail News;
- Inside Retailer;
- Australian Refrigeration Air Conditioning & Heating; and
- Australian Retail Business.

Label Update was sent out as an insert with *AEEMA News*. The June and September issues of *Label Update* were distributed electronically to the *AEEMA News* database.

Environmental Media

Media which focuses on environmental issues was provided with media releases and background information tailored to suit the audiences of each particular publication.

Publications in this category included:

- Renew;
- Grass Roots;
- Australian Energy News;
- Earthgarden;
- Australian Environment Review;
- Environment Business; and
- Greenhouse Living.

Media releases were also sent to environmental writers for all the metropolitan dailies nationally.

Consumer Media

A media kit including a media release, fact sheet, booklet and a copy of the revised label design was distributed to consumer and lifestyle media who would be interested in information on the revised label.

Media targeted included:

- Metropolitan media shopping and lifestyle sections e.g. *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*.

- High circulation suburban media e.g. *Manly Daily, Monash Post*.
- High circulation regional media e.g. *Border Mail, Newcastle Herald, Illawarra Mercury*.
- Specialist media e.g. *Choice Magazine, Our House, Better Homes & Gardens, House & Garden*.
- Women's Magazines with 'Shopping Sections' e.g. *New Idea, Woman's Day*.

Ethnic Media

A media release regarding the transition was translated into the five most popular non-English language groups and sent to the major language group newspapers around the country. Media placement, management and monitoring was conducted by Cultural Perspectives, an ethnic media specialist consultancy.

The five language groups included:

- Greek;
- Italian;
- Arabic;
- Chinese; and
- Vietnamese.

The print publications targeted were:

Greek

Greek Herald, O Kosmos, Greek National Vema (Sydney)
Ta Nea, Neos Kosmos (Melbourne)

Italian

Il Globo (Melbourne), La Fiamma (Sydney)

Arabic

An Nahar, El Telegraph, Al Bairak (all Sydney-based with national distribution)

Chinese

Australian Chinese Daily, Sing Tao, Chinese Herald, Independence Daily (all Sydney dailies with national distribution)
Australian Chinese Age and The Tide (Melbourne weeklies)

Vietnamese

Chieu Duong, Viet Luan, Dai Viet (Sydney)

Tivi Tuan San (Melbourne)

The communication strategy was evaluated both during and on completion of the transition program. An outline of evaluation activities is provided below and evaluation findings are presented in the next section.

During the transition program

PRE-TESTING

Content and design concepts for the education kit were pre-tested with target audience representatives prior to finalisation. This was done by sending draft material to select retailers and asking for their feedback through telephone interviews.

MEDIA MONITORING

Media Monitors was engaged to monitor print media throughout Australia during the transition phase from June through to September. The aim of media monitoring was to assess the extent to which media releases were resulting in articles, to see whether key messages were being accurately conveyed and to identify any emerging issues.

HOTLINE MONITORING

The Phillips Group provided an ongoing review of reports from the Energy Rating hotline to monitor the enquiries being received, identify any emerging issues and suggest alternative approaches which may be required mid-program to address these.

IN-STORE VISITS

Twelve retail outlets in Canberra, Brisbane and Sydney were visited by members of the communication strategy team who posed as customers to test sales staff knowledge of the label transition. They also checked to see whether the customer point-of-sale material was on display.

The following outlets were visited:

- RT Edwards & Sons, Ipswich, QLD
- Retravisio, Ipswich, QLD
- Big White Furniture Stores, Ipswich, QLD
- Harvey Norman, Everton Park, QLD
- Bing Lee, Bondi Junction, NSW
- Retravisio, Bondi Junction, NSW
- Harvey Norman, Woden, ACT
- Betta, St Leonards, NSW
- Grace Bros, Chatswood, NSW
- Retravisio, Chatswood, NSW
- Harvey Norman, Chatswood, NSW
- David Jones, Chatswood, NSW

TELEPHONE INTERVIEWS

Telephone interviews were held with buying groups and major retailers in early September to ensure they had still had sufficient information materials, and to gain qualitative feedback on the education kits and point-of-sale material.

Groups contacted included:

- Vox;
- Betta;
- Coles-Myer;
- Harvey Norman;
- David Jones; and
- Retravisio – West Australia and Victoria.

End of Program

EVALUATION SURVEY

A self-completion evaluation survey was sent to just over 400 manufacturers, buying groups, major retail outlets, government agencies and relevant interest groups to gain feedback on the perceived effectiveness of the communication materials and suggestions as to how the transition program could have been improved. Survey findings are presented in Chapter 7. A copy of the survey pro-forma, tabulated results, data analysis and each completed survey form can be found in Appendix F.

EVALUATION FINDINGS



Evaluation Survey

Sample

A total of 25 respondents completed and returned the evaluation survey. The majority of respondents were manufacturers. A breakdown of the respondent categories is provided below:

RESPONDENT TYPE	NUMBER
Manufacturer	17
Retailer	2
Manufacturer/Retailer	1
Interest Group	2
Consultant	2
Government Organisation	1

A complete listing of organisations which responded to the survey is provided in Appendix F.

Key Findings

EDUCATION KIT

Seventy two percent of respondents said they received the education kit and 28 percent did not receive the kit. All respondents who said they received the education kit indicated that they found it useful to very useful.

“Very full explanations and absolutely no excuses for any lack of understanding.”

“Very good and clear – we copied this to our sales staff.”

LABEL UPDATE	Seventy two percent of respondents recalled receiving <i>Label Update</i> and, of these, 100 percent found the publication to be useful to very useful.
BOOKLET	As with <i>Label Update</i> , seventy two percent of respondents recalled receiving the booklet and, of these, 100 percent found the publication to be useful to very useful.
TRAINING VIDEO	Just less than half of the respondents had seen the video. Of these, 92 percent of respondents indicated they found it useful to very useful.
STAFF POSTER	Forty four percent of respondents recalled seeing the staff poster. Of these, 96 percent indicated they found it useful and above.
SIGN	Forty percent of respondents recalled seeing the self supporting sign. Of these 96 percent indicated they found it useful to very useful.
CONSUMER FLYER	Forty four percent of respondents recalled seeing the point-of-sale brochure and, of these, 92 percent found it useful and above.
TELEPHONE HOTLINE	Twenty eight percent of respondents reported using the Energy Rating Label Hotline during the transition period. Of these, 57 percent said they had not obtained the information they were seeking from the service. The following comments were made in relation to the telephone hotline:

“...Rang on three occasions. Unable to talk to anyone. Message taken by operator and still have not received a reply.”

“...Very poor response. Lack of understanding.”

“...incorrect information regarding air conditioner transition was being issued. Had to contact AGO to correct...”

WEBSITE

Sixty eight percent of respondents visited the Energy Rating website during the transition period. Of these, 82 percent said they had found the information they were seeking. The following comments were made in relation to the website.

"...not all models were listed..."

"...very little technical details on the site..."

"... still needed to communicate directly with individuals responsible..."

General Comments

Respondents were asked to provide comments on the transition program as a whole and suggestions on how it could have been improved. Comments are summarised under key headings below.

TIMING

A number of comments were made in relation to the timing of the transition period.

"...The transition period between the release of the revised standard was too short, both for the use of the "dual" rating label and the final label. The transition period should be 12 to 18 months.."

"...More time should have been given to manufacturers to supply the new labels..."

"...The timeframe for the transition should not commence until the standard is issued. Manufacturers do not accept draft standards..."

"...Warehouse clearance time could have been made shorter..."

COST

One manufacturer expressed dissatisfaction at the costs associated with the label transition.

"...At \$150 per label we had a total cost in excess of \$2000, and a large amount of time spent on application forms merely for a new label. I hope this won't happen again for a long time..."

There was a mixed response to the effectiveness of education material provided during the transition program.

"Our own survey of retail staff showed extremely poor knowledge of label transition. Clearly the message did not get through to the right people."

"Good job, well done."

"Although I have not seen any promotional/educational material around the transition there appears to be a reasonable level of awareness among other stakeholders."

"...Very good and clear. We copied this for all our sales staff..."

"...Very full explanations and absolutely no excuses for any lack of understanding..."

"Quite simply, more information and better communication."

"All considering, things went smoothly during the transition period."

"Could have been more information for state/territory governments implementing transition, although this was found on website."

Conclusions

The survey revealed that the most popular communication materials were the booklet, *Label Update* and the website. These three items had the highest recall among respondents and everyone said they found them useful. All other materials rated well in terms of usefulness, but fewer people had seen them. The only initiative which received a negative response was the telephone hotline, with more than half the respondents who used

the service saying they did not find the information they were seeking.

The timing of the transition period was the most commonly raised issue in the survey.

A full copy of the survey results and analysis has been included in Appendix F.

Media Relations

Changes to the energy rating label generated a large amount of media coverage in industry media, environmental media and ethnic media. A total of 22 articles were identified by Media Monitors during the transition period. Some regional media covered the official introduction of the new label on 1 July, however few metropolitan daily newspapers covered the story. Given that the primary focus of the communication strategy was on industry, the strong support provided by industry media helped the campaign to achieve its objectives.

Articles appeared in the following publications:

INDUSTRY MEDIA

Celsius
Appliance Retailer
Retail News

ENVIRONMENTAL MEDIA

Environment Business
Australian Environment Review
Australian Energy News
Greenhouse Living

ETHNIC MEDIA

The Tide (Chinese)
Daily Chinese Herald
Al Bairak (Arabic)
The Greek Herald
La Fiamma (Italian)
El Telegraph (Arabic)
Dan Viet (Vietnamese)
Neos Kosmos (Greek)
Extra Informativo (Spanish)

The Advertiser (South Australia)
Yorke Peninsula Country Times
Ballarat News
Highlands Post (Bowral)
The Sunday Tasmanian
Sunday Mail (Brisbane)

The majority of articles were taken directly from the media releases, which ensured that key messages were accurately conveyed. All articles presented either a positive or neutral stance towards the revised energy rating label initiative.

A comprehensive media analysis chart can be found in Appendix G, and copies of all the media clips sourced have been included in Appendix H.

Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were held with representatives from buying groups and major retail outlets to ensure they had sufficient materials and to gain feedback on the effectiveness of these materials.

All representatives confirmed during the interviews that they had enough education kits and point-of-sale material. Most had not received feedback from retailers on the materials, but felt this was a positive sign. They expressed the view that they are more likely to hear from retailers if there is a problem than if things are running smoothly.

Four out of seven interviewees said they had used the material to place reminders in their newsletters about compliance dates, or brought the topic up at meetings and conferences.

One respondent was concerned that insufficient time was allowed to distribute education kits and point-of-sale material to retail outlets. The same person also expressed the view that point-of-sale material could have looked more professional if it was expected to appear in retail outlets.

A copy of the interview notes can be found in Appendix I.

Telephone Hotline

The Phillips Group monitored the activity reports from the telephone hotline throughout the label transition program to identify any emerging issues. A total of 178 calls had been recorded over a seven month period between mid April and mid November 2000. Of these calls:

- 88 were from retailers;
- 18 were from manufacturers;
- 41 were from the general public;
- 4 were from an importer; and
- 27 were from various interest groups such as government agencies, environmental organisations and the media.

A breakdown of requests is provided below:

- 22 percent of the calls were requesting information kits, point-of-sale material and fact sheets;
- 9 percent of callers wanted to know the compliance dates, especially for air-conditioners;
- 13 percent of calls were from retailers who were unable to obtain new labels from manufacturers and required advice on how to ensure they receive them before the end of the transition period; and
- 3 percent of retailers were under the impression that there had been an extension of the compliance dates.

Findings of the evaluation survey revealed a reasonably high level of dissatisfaction with the standard of service provided by the telephone hotline, with 57 percent of people who had used the hotline indicating they had not been able to obtain the information they required from the service. Key issues included:

- lack of understanding and knowledge of the subject matter; and
- telephone calls not returned.

A copy of the activity reports has been included in Appendix J.

In-store Visits

A number of random in-store visits were conducted during early August to test sales staff knowledge of the label changes and to ensure point-of-sale material was on display. Members of the communication strategy team visited twelve retail outlets in Sydney, Canberra and Brisbane.

The degree to which the retail outlets were visibly using the training and point-of-sale varied considerably. Of the twelve stores:

- 7 had some, if not all point-of-sale material on display (usually on top of dryers and washing machines);
- 1 had new labels on appliances;
- 1 had a good understanding of the label changes.
- 6 sales staff had some understanding of the label changes; and
- 4 had no awareness or understanding of the label changes.

While this was a small sample of retail outlets nationwide, the results indicate that:

- Approximately 58 percent of retail outlets were using the point-of-sale material; and
- 58 percent of sales staff were aware of changes to the energy rating label. It can be assumed that this was a result of communication materials prepared for the transition program.

A copy of the research notes can be found in Appendix K.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS



Conclusions

Outcomes

Anecdotal evidence from buying group representatives during telephone interviews indicated that retailers were generally aware of the changes and the transition program was seen to be running smoothly. This was supported by the evaluation survey conducted at the end of the program.

The random store visits revealed almost 60 percent had material on display and 60 percent of staff were informed of and communicating the label changes to their customers. This may be a result of gaps in the distribution chain or stores deciding not to use the information provided. Given that distribution depended entirely on co-operation from buying groups and major department stores, which distributed all education and point-of-sale materials on our behalf, the demonstrated reach of materials may be regarded as reasonably effective.

Two emerging issues were identified in reports from the telephone hotline, the first being that some retailers were unable to obtain labels from manufacturers before the compliance dates, and the second that some retailers had been informed that compliance dates had been extended. It is difficult to trace the source of misinformation regarding the compliance dates.

Effectiveness

The use of multiple communication channels during the transition program – media, printed materials and website – helped to ensure the target audience received key messages.

The media relations program reached all of the target audiences, including industry and consumer. Changes to the energy rating label generated a large amount of coverage in industry, environmental and ethnic media. There was limited coverage in daily metropolitan newspapers, however this may have been due to the introduction of the GST around the same time.

The evaluation survey revealed a high level of satisfaction with the communication materials provided during the transition period. The booklet, *Label Update* and the website appeared to be the most popular sources of information, with all respondents rating these materials as useful or very useful. The survey also revealed a high level of awareness and positive response to the education kit as a whole.

The only initiative which received negative feedback was the telephone hotline. Respondents complained of slow response times and not being provided with answers to their questions.

The timing of the transition period was the most commonly raised issue in the survey. This is beyond the scope of the communication strategy.

Appropriateness

The positive response to the information materials can be attributed in part to the extensive consultation undertaken with industry during the strategy development phase to identify their information needs and preferred information delivery mechanisms. As a result, the communication strategy was well tailored to their requirements. Market testing design concepts and content during the preparation of materials also contributed to this positive response.

Recommendations

A number of lessons can be learnt from this project, drawing on initiatives which worked well and also opportunities for improvement. The following recommendations are made for future communication strategies.

CONSULTATION

The importance of research and consultation with industry during the development of the communication strategy cannot be overemphasised. This was beneficial for a number of reasons:

- It ensured that communication tools and key messages were appropriate for the target audience, increasing the likelihood that they would be well received;
- It ensured that potential issues were identified early in the process and could be managed accordingly; and
- It enabled the team to establish and build relationships with useful contacts, which in turn helped during the implementation phase.

TELEPHONE HOTLINE

The telephone hotline is the link between the AGO and the target audience, so it is critical that callers are satisfied with the service provided. Poor service can undermine the credibility of the AGO and the program itself. There are a number of opportunities to improve the service provided by telephone hotlines.

- Ensure all hotline staff are well briefed and able to answer as many calls as possible on the spot rather than referring the caller to alternative information sources.
- Where questions are unable to be answered, ensure telephone hotline staff have immediate access to senior executives so that a response can be sourced quickly.
- Introduce standards of service, including maximum response times. Hotline staff should be responsible for ensuring that all messages have been responded to within the required timeframe.

MEDIA

- When planning a media launch, try to schedule it for a “slow news day” and ensure it does not clash with any other major

events. This will increase the likelihood of coverage in metropolitan daily newspapers.

- Ensure that media releases are well tailored to the audience of each publication, so journalists can see the news angle that is relevant to them.

DISTRIBUTION

There are risks associated with relying on a third-party, in this case buying groups and major department stores, to distribute information materials which are the central focus of the campaign. On this occasion it was necessary due to the disparate nature of the target audience and the difficulties involved in trying to identify all relevant retail outlets Australia-wide.

If distribution must occur through a third-party, the following initiatives will increase the likelihood of a successful outcome:

- Ensure that plenty of lead time is allowed to seek co-operation from the organisation. Once agreement is reached, ensure materials are provided with sufficient time for the organisation to arrange distribution;
- Ensure the benefits to the organisation are clearly stated; and
- Call the relevant contact prior to materials being dispatched to ensure they know when to expect them, and can provide specific delivery instructions. Then conduct a courtesy call following distribution to ensure materials were received in a satisfactory manner.

APPENDIX



Label Update Newsletters

April

June

September

B

Education and point-of-sale materials

Folder

Cover letter

Booklet – “Your Guide to the Revised Appliance Energy Rating Label”

Staff Poster

Flyer

Self-supporting sign

APPENDIX

C

Catalogue / advertising inserts

APPENDIX



Presentation Material

APPENDIX



Media releases

Environmental release – 1 July 00

General news release – 1 July 00

Consumer release – 18 May 00

Trade release – 28 January 00 (Appliance Retailer only)

Trade release – 23 March 00

Trade release – 22 May 00

Trade release – 1 September 00



Evaluation survey

Survey

Survey results

Survey analysis

Completed survey forms

APPENDIX



Media analysis

APPENDIX

H

Media clippings

APPENDIX

I

Telephone interview notes

APPENDIX

J

Telephone hotline reports

APPENDIX

K

Retailer in-store visit notes