

Communities of Practice

Stimulating demand for and facilitating trade in energy efficient products

Commission for Sustainable Development 15 Learning Centre

Sponsored by the Australian Government, this learning centre showcased a new form of international cooperation developed specifically to foster common requirements for internationally traded, energy-using appliances and equipment. Around 40 participants had the concept explained using several cases studies, notably the successful International Compact Fluorescent Lighting Harmonisation Initiative (CFLI).

Communities of Practice are a public private partnership empowering interested experts in a specific technology and those responsible for managing national standards programs to improve product energy efficiency through developing consensus proposals. *Communities of Practice* can overcome many of the impediments that constrain the current development of national standards programs.

Kevin Keefe, Leader of the **Australian Delegation to CSD 15**, opened the learning centre explaining that the Australian Government favoured the use of practical and effective approaches to international cooperation. He encouraged participants to use the opportunity presented by the learning centre to question those involved in these endeavours and explore its application to other specific end-use technologies. He spoke of Australian Government's continuing commitment to work with not only like-minded governments but other stakeholder groups that can contribute to the '*Communities of Practice*' concept.

Adam Hinge, of **Sustainable Energy Partnerships** identified the learning centre objective as informing participants about '*Communities of Practice*'. He defined a '*Community of Practice*' as an innovative approach for global cooperation that unleashes opportunities for reducing the environmental impact, improving product energy efficiency, enhancing trade and conserving energy resources used by appliances and equipment.

Mr Hinge outlined the explosive growth in the use of national standards and labeling systems around the world. Useful though these programs are, his presentation also highlighted the immense amount of work necessary to underpin an effective national standards and labeling program. He explained that if schemes did not completed all these necessary steps the long-promised benefits of energy efficiency failed to materialize. He spoke of the opportunity to avoid wasting and duplicating available resources in many of these national debates in favour of a globally applicable scheme. He also spoke of the need for national and regional programs to avoid unintentionally creating trade barriers through misalignment of testing methods and performance requirements.

Shane Holt, of the **Australian Greenhouse Office** introduced the concept of '*Communities of Practice*' as an integrated product-specific multi-national approach. He saw it as a solution for globally traded products that overcomes many of the problems of the existing paradigm. *Communities of Practice* work by mobilising representatives from different stakeholder groups from around the world. They target key manufacturers, regulators, consumer groups and efficiency advocates, in a scheme to agree aligning test methods and performance levels over time.

Once engaged, these stakeholders work together to develop globally acceptable methodologies for testing the efficiency and performance of a product and to align international measures of product performance. The outcome should be acceptable on a global, regional, national or sub-national level. All stakeholders benefit though:

- Reduced production and testing costs leading to lower production costs for suppliers;
- Such economies of scale leading to cheaper, better quality products for consumers;
- Increased levels of market supervision and enforcement protecting manufacturer investment and consumer confidence for program managers,

Mr Holt identified a number *Communities of Practice* already making significant progress for globally traded products.

Stuart Jeffcott the facilitator of **International Compact Fluorescent Lamp Harmonisation Initiative** (CFLI) presented this highly successful case study of a *Community of Practice*. CFLs are a globally traded product made predominantly in Chinese manufacturing facilities (80-90% of world production) subjected to at least 39 different sets of performance measures, often using differing testing methodologies.

In the last two years, over 300 stakeholders from around the globe have met seven times under the CFLI banner. They have achieved an agreed method for testing the performance and efficiency characteristics of CFLs and submitted this testing methodology to the appropriate international bodies. Further, by mapping existing standards, they had identified similar groupings of performance requirements and categorized them into a smaller number called *Tiers*. He reported that the China Association of Lighting Industry (on behalf of global lighting associations) has agreed to finalise the exact definitions of the gateways between these performance *Tiers* in the next few months. Regulators and programme managers around the world have agreed to consider adopting these proposals to harmonise their schemes. Furthermore, testing of the new method in facilities around the world is well underway and discussions proceed on sharing product data at the national and international level. The sharing of data will increase confidence in the quality of CFLs and provide appropriate protection to participating manufacturers and the public. CFLI is well on the way to achieving all of its goals.

A panel of participants in the CFLI or supporters of the *Community of Practice* concept provided their insights:

CHEN Yansheng, President of the **China Association of the Lighting Industry (lighting manufacturing sector)** reported on his members' endorsement of the value for manufacturers in participating in the CFL *Community of Practice*. He said the mechanism brought increased rationality to existing testing and standards systems to which manufacturers have to comply. The results are in improved product quality and market satisfaction.

Diane Lindsley, CFL Buyer for **Wal-Mart (lighting retailer)** noted her company's public commitment to sell 100 million CFLs over the next year. With its obvious environmental benefits, she also spoke of how Wal-Mart saw cooperation between retail stakeholders as essential to that goal and how such cooperation does not undermine but can enhance the normal competitive retail environment.

Russell Loane, Chairman of **Lighting Council Australia (lighting importing sector)** echoed Mr Chen's comments on the value for industry of participation in *Communities of Practice*. The challenge for his members has been to source good quality product from Chinese manufacturers and the CFLI is a means to achieve that end.

He highlighted the added benefits of stakeholders working cooperatively by noting that the relationships developed between the Australian lighting industry and the Government through the *Community of Practice*. This interaction was a factor in the Australian Government decision to phase-out incandescent lighting products from their market; a move that has industry support in his country.

Steve Wiel, Board President of the Collaborative Labeling and Appliance Standards Program (a WSSD type 2 partnership and NGO working in this field) fully supports the *Community of Practice* especially as an effective means of harnessing the talents of a range of stakeholders to address a specific technology. He pointed out that the Communities of Practice initiative is greatly enhancing efforts to promote energy efficiency standards and labels by reaching across national borders and focusing attention regionally and globally on particular appliances or commercial equipment.

John Mollet, Vice President of the International Copper Association (a private funder of this work) observed that these kind of Public/Private partnerships were exactly the types necessary to build effective and economically sustainable energy efficiency and environmental solutions. He added that voluntary actions can only be successful if there is a level playing field, a foundation, created by mandatory minimum energy performance standards. Business cases show the economic benefits of efficiency, including for the poor.

Marcel Alers, Climate Change Manager for the United Nations Development Programme (a public funder of this work) noted that the *Communities of Practice* currently underway and planned are fully in line with, and provide the necessary technical support for, a number of UNDP and the Global Environment Fund priorities. Further, by engaging such a diverse group of stakeholders, Communities of Practice give a voice to the needs of developing nations when developing international testing methodologies and measures of performance.

The panel membership demonstrated how various interests can operate within a *Communities of Practice*, and all supported the continued work of the CFLI example of a *Community of Practice*. As a means of engaging with the audience at the Learning Centre, participants designed a *Community of Practice* for computers. One participant, **Katherine Kaplan**, of the **US Environment Protection Agency** and manager of the Energy Star program for computers, commented favourably on the concept's application to this product type.

The session concluded with questioning from participants and a general call by many participants for the *Community of Practice* concept to be endorsed by CSD15. It was agreed that the CFLI will register as a partnership for sustainable development following this learning centre.