

## Summary

In some fields, the dry economics of (full) cost recovery becomes a main aim, and destroys the purpose for which the enterprise was created. For this, the PC can take some blame.

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I have spent many days per month for years, serving on consumer standards committees in the 1970s and 1980s. Many of the committees were initiated by our action as consumer activists. Examples with which I was involved are laundry detergents, sunscreens and sunglasses (as a result of experiments carried out in the Chemistry department at ANU).

I also chaired committees on soaps, dishwashing detergents, sunscreens (introducing the sun protection factor as a world first).

Some committees I was involved in went on for years (household detergents 4 years, sunglasses (for ever), sunscreens 6 years, plastics for food contact, children's toys, household paint etc. etc

Consumer representatives were all volunteers and had only their travel expenses paid. I was also the first consumer representative on the Food Standards Committee of the NMHRC (1973 -75) that set Australian Food Standards. I have served on the governing council of the Australian Consumers Association for two periods of six years. I also presented cases on behalf of consumers to the "Prices Justification Tribunal" and the "Tariff Board".

I have also been Chair of the Board of a standards setting organization, The National Registration Authority for agricultural and veterinary chemicals. So I have been a 'gamekeeper' as well as a 'poacher'!

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It is sad to see the whole area of consumer standards degenerate. In a recent example, Ray Lehrer and I have both written to AS many times in regard to light globes, which is a disaster area and all we receive is sweet PR from Standards Australia.

"We are waiting for international standards", which I think translates into "We enjoy the overseas junkets more than getting results for Australian consumers".

Sure, globes are a very cheap item, but not if they fuse and you can't tell which globe has blown, so you have no lights anywhere on that circuit. I had a near miss a week ago when a globe came hurtling down. It was from a twin fitting with one Italian and one Hungarian globe. It was the Italian that blew itself loose from the ferrule. Not a pretty sight. You can see on the dead globe, how poor the adhesive holding the glass to metal is. In an early incident, the dead globe jammed in and needed a pair of long-nosed pliers to remove the screw ferrule.

That one triggered one of my monthly features (in Burke's Backyard Magazine, April 2005), attached. Even this article did not move [Lack of-] Standards Australia, to do anything.

I think that organization has degraded from an enthusiastic, lean, caring body, able and willing to work effectively with volunteers to a self-serving arrogant cost recovery driven set of bureaucrats. I have had correspondence left unanswered or answered in a superficial and supercilious manner. I certainly would not again work with them, nor encourage others.

- As the glossiness of Standards Australia magazine has increased, so the performance has decreased.
- Standards Australian and NATA have always disliked each other but at least that gave us some competition.

Surprise us all and achieve change.

Ben S.

*[Text from article in Burke's Backyard Magazine, April 2005]*

### SEEING THE LIGHT

*Faced with the choice of halogens, fluoros, LEDs, long-life types and incandescent globes, you'll probably need Ben Selinger's handy guide to light the way, because the wrong light globe could cause a hot spot of bother!*

Our house wiring is rated to cope with 75°C, and the light fittings themselves are designed to cope with 105°C. This latter figure is what should set the limit on the maximum wattage of the light globes I can use in those fittings. The problem is that the (mostly voluntary) Australian standards for globes and light-fittings are very old, and forever awaiting an update.

For example, there are no mandatory standards for how hot a globe is allowed to get, so by using a high-wattage globe it's possible that the heat from the light could melt the insulation on the house wiring, shorting it out and maybe cause a house fire.

To make matters worse, those little warning stickers saying '60 watts maximum' tend to fall off light-fittings very easily, so owners often use a higher wattage globe without realising the danger.

Globes regularly melt out of their sockets, seize fast or fall out with dire consequences to those in the room at the time. Removing a dead globe often means breaking the glass and inserting a pair of needle-nosed pliers to remove the leftover socket. No reliable statistics are collected of the accidents caused, never mind the frustration!