

# *Ensuring Product Safety for Consumers*

## *APEC Capacity-Building Workshop*

### **Background**

In 2007, APEC Leaders agreed on the need to develop a more robust approach to strengthening food and consumer product safety standards and practices in the region, using scientific risk-based approaches and without creating unnecessary impediments to trade.

While APEC established in 2007 an APEC Food Safety Cooperation Forum, it has not focused specifically on consumer product safety. Australia, with the cooperation of Malaysia, has agreed to take the lead in developing and presenting an APEC capacity-building workshop (self-funded), as an initial step towards ensuring product safety for consumers in the APEC region. It is envisaged that the workshop will be held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia on 10-12 November 2008. Australia encourages member economies involvement in the project and will keep the SCSC informed of progress of the proposal. The Workshop has been funded by AusAID's Public Sector Linkages Program (PSLP) which provides funding for two participants from each of the six APEC developing economies: China, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. Standards Australia, Australia's Peak Standards body, has also provided a significant contribution to the Workshop, by providing expert facilitation and policy guidance to the Workshop program.

The globalisation of the consumer product market has been growing over recent years and its impact was brought home in 2007 by several incidences of unsafe products reaching markets all over the world. Goods are increasingly supplied worldwide and information about unsafe goods is now being communicated very rapidly across the world, via the internet and media. This is increasing the demand for preventive and responsive action by economies.

A number of product safety forums are established on the international front and are increasingly active. Australia, via the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC), Department of Treasury and Standards Australia, participates in these.

Along with Standards Australia, the ACCC has agreed to participate and also contribute to the workshop program. Both are active in managing Australia's interests in extending national reach by working with key international organisations and operational consumer protection activities.

### **Objective**

The broad objective of the workshop is to expose participants to the latest thinking and best practices on managing generic consumer product safety regulation, including products bans, recalls, and safety standards. In particular, it will address the challenges posed in managing global production networks and the development of

effective tools to identify and mitigate the impacts of hazardous consumer products, which are not covered by industry specific regulation (such as chemicals and food).

## **Workshop**

With the cooperation of Standards Malaysia, Australia will host a 2 ½ day workshop in Kuala Lumpur on 10 - 12 November 2008. In particular, the workshop will consider all aspects of managing a product from design, through to the development, manufacture and distribution phase. [Other areas of interest might include: intellectual property/counterfeit products; certification schemes; codes of practice; the role of legislation and product recalls.]

The workshop will bring together key stakeholder groups in consumer product safety, standards and practices drawn from industry, consumer organisations, regulators, manufacturers, importers and government and non-government representatives. Workshop participants will be encouraged to share expert knowledge and to review existing product safety standards, regulations and approaches, and identify challenges and impediments to international trade, in their respective Economies.

Workshop sessions and presentations could include:  
**[could be changed once agenda finalised)**

- Designing safety into the product
- Role of standards, including ISO
- Issues associated with the nature of supply chains (now more complex, more disparate and remotely located than in the past)
- Testing and quality assurance regimes
- Hazard assessment
- Product safety regimes in member economies
- Market surveillance

## **Outcomes**

The workshop will provide information to assist participants to design and implement generic consumer product safety regulatory systems that are appropriate for their Economies. The presentations and discussions may contribute to the development of a set of guidelines/framework to guide APEC economies to better address their respective product safety issues and to better manage and assess associated risks of consumer products in and emanating from the APEC region.

The sharing of the latest information from recent international fora on consumer product safety, in particular for those APEC economies that do not have the capacity to attend such meetings will also constitute a core outcome of the workshop.