

Survey of Energy Efficiency Labelling of Air Conditioners

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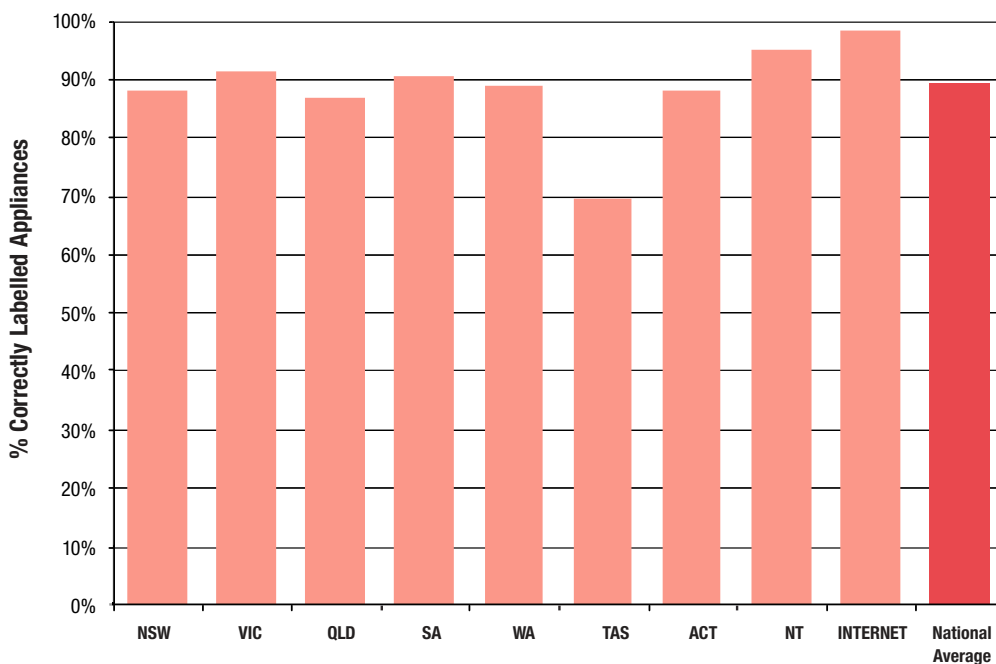
A mixed picture on compliance

A national in-store survey of air conditioners conducted in May-September 2009 found 89.1% of the 3,115 products surveyed were found to be compliant with laws requiring products to display a mandatory energy rating label.

The survey included a total of 321 stores in capital cities, suburban locations and in rural areas throughout Australia and was undertaken by the Australian Refrigeration Council Ltd (ARC) for the Equipment Energy Efficiency (E3) Committee under the National Framework for Energy Efficiency.

Energy labelling compliance rates were found to vary across jurisdictions, as shown in Figure 1. Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and the Northern Territory had results that were better than the national average, while the ACT (88.0%), New South Wales (87.7%), Queensland (87.0%) and Tasmania (69.4%) had lower compliance rates than the national average. The results for the ACT, the Northern Territory and Tasmania were from relatively small sample sizes which may account for the extremes within the range of findings.

Figure 1: Rate of labelling compliance by jurisdiction in Australia 2009



Compliance with labelling requirements across brands and retailers was highly variable. While there are stores of all sizes with 100% compliance, smaller sized outlets tend to have higher rates of incorrectly labelled stocks when compared to larger stores. Non-compliance in small stores (with 5 or less units on display) was 18.4%; medium sized stores (with 6-19 units on display) was 10.6%; and large stores (with 20 or more units on display) was 9.9%.

The rates of non-compliance amongst 'Product Specific Retailers' and 'Trade Suppliers/wholesalers' were found to be nearly twice the national average.

Nearly 40% of brands included in the survey were found to have 100% of their products correctly labelled. While brands supplying only a small number of surveyed air conditioners showed varied rates, the survey brands with a higher representation in the survey were more likely to be correctly labelled.

Figure 2 shows the compliance rate with labelling requirements for each of the 19 brands with more than ten samples included in the survey. The results for the 28 brands with fewer than ten surveyed samples are inconclusive due to the small sample size.

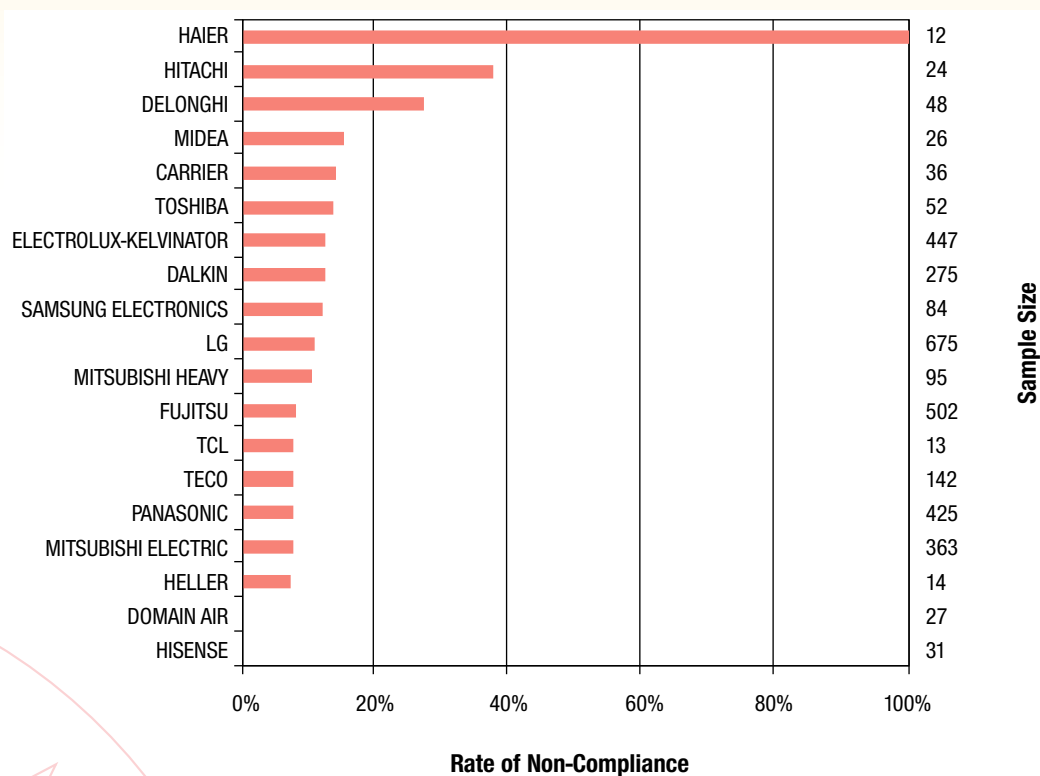
In contrast to the 89.1% national average for labelling compliance, the survey found that the vast majority (98.9%) of air conditioners inspected were registered – a result that is in keeping with surveys of comparable products and previous air conditioner survey findings.

The overall rate of correctly labelled air conditioners (89.1%) found in this latest survey is an improvement on the previous survey conducted in 2005 which found 8 out of 10 air conditioners carried an accurate label¹.

However, Australian regulators regard the latest results as relatively poor compared with the 98% result achieved by a national whitegoods survey² conducted in 2009, involving many of the same stores. Since both air conditioners and whitegoods have been subject to mandatory national labelling since 1992, the results suggest that there is still room for substantial improvement in the energy labelling of air conditioners.

One possible reason for the lower than acceptable labelling compliance rate may be that 'swing tag' labels, which are susceptible to accidental removal, are still used on air-conditioning equipment (as compared to the adhesive labels on whitegoods).

Figure 2: Rate of non-compliance by brand in Australia 2009



¹ See <http://www.energyrating.gov.au/library/pubs/200910-labelling-compliance-survey.pdf>

² See <http://www.energyrating.gov.au/library/details200910-labelling-compliance-survey.html>