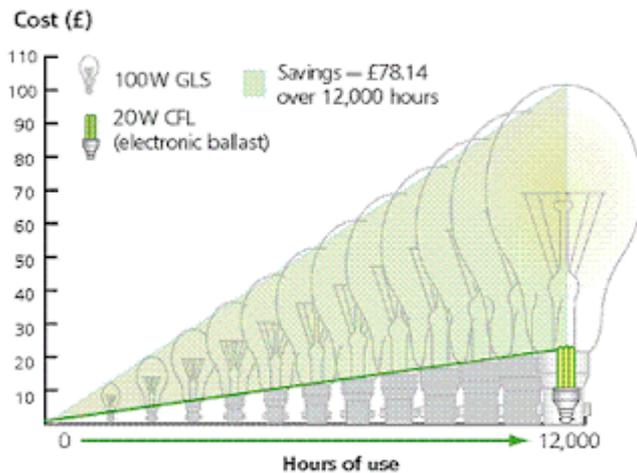


Australian boldness



There's something very pleasing about the Australian government's announcement of its intention to ban incandescent light-bulbs: [World First! Australia slashes greenhouse gases from inefficient lighting...](#) with much press coverage following world wide: [Sydney Morning Herald](#), [Independent](#), [Guardian](#), [BBC](#).

The microeconomics of switch from an [incandescent bulb](#) to a [compact fluorescent](#) are **amazing**: see my [Google spreadsheet here*](#), showing a cost of carbon dioxide saved to be -25p/tonne (ie. win-win) and a benefit-cost ratio of 19. The graphic to the left from [a flyer on cost-benefit for CFLs](#) by the [Energy Saving Trust](#) gives it from the consumer perspective - showing a £78 cash saving for a £3.70 outlay..!

What's particularly good about this is the following:

1. A great example of where regulation is the right answer... the technology is now good enough [[GE lighting's FAQ](#)] with softer colours and models that work with dimmer switches. When people use these bulbs, they save money, reduce CO2 and other emissions, save time (changing bulbs), improve service (lower outage time), reduce risk (fires, falls during changing) etc. Nonetheless it has been remarkably difficult to get people to change - just too much hassle and distrusts. A regulation cuts out all the fuss of economic instruments, the effort of making people understand the advantages, need to overcome unfamiliarity.... it goes directly to the better result.
2. It's a fine example of that fashionable idea: *choice editing*... deliberately restricting the available choices to those things that are less damaging - an approach that can sometimes be justified as a form of [soft paternalism](#). See [Looking Back, Looking Forward: lessons in choice editing for sustainability](#), by the [Sustainable Consumption Round Table](#).
3. They have just done it! (Well, they've said they will). I can't help thinking

in Britain we'd have had a consultation, a green paper, another consultation a white paper, EU single market complications, a pressure group and petition against which would have been taken too seriously, a working party on dimmer switches, calls for compensation, a new Lighting Trust to help pensioners fit the new bulbs, then a voluntary agreement with lightbulb makers to reduce incandescent emissions by 10%...

It's just a pity Australia is so poor at so much else to do with climate change.