

ISO Unit Pricing Committee Meet in Japan

Contributed by John Furbank and Dr Clinton Weeks

A unit price may be displayed on the shelf adjacent to the goods, on the package, in printed catalogues, in-store promotional material and on-line advertising. For example, for a 500ml carton of milk offered at \$1.95 the unit price would be \$3.90 per litre.

Many Australian consumers are familiar with and regularly use unit pricing. In Australia Unit Pricing Regulations came into effect in July 2009. However, some unit prices are not easy to read and in other countries there is no unit pricing legislation and unit pricing is not provided or provided in an ad hoc manner.

In 2015 the International Standards Organisation (ISO) established a committee ISO/PC 294 *Guidance on unit pricing* with a view to developing an international guidance standard. CSA Secretary John Furbank was appointed Chair.

The sixth meeting of ISO/PC 294 Guidance on unit pricing was held in June in Tendo, Japan to examine the draft international standard that had been circulated to Committee members. CFA Executive member Ian Jarratt represented Consumers International.

The meeting successfully focused on ensuring that research-informed recommendations were incorporated into the standard, including those that show current Australian unit pricing legislation could be improved by modifying existing requirements and supported through consumer education programs.

Dr Clinton S. Weeks, Senior Lecturer, Queensland University of Technology (QUT) presented a paper outlining recent results of unit pricing research conducted by QUT.

Recent results of unit pricing research conducted by QUT revealed benefits for both consumers and retailers.

The research showed that consumers report a significantly greater ability to process price information and have significantly higher confidence in their price judgements when unit prices are presented consistently within stores.

Additionally, the research indicated that standardised unit price presentation was associated with more favourable attitudes toward retailers.

The work showed that while actual product choice is often based on a range of factors such as brand reputation, product quality, and past product preference, for those people who want to judge the best value across similar products, unit price information is important.

The research suggests that effective provision of unit price information will not simply drive consumers to buy the cheapest product, but rather it allows them to make more informed choices – something that appears to reflect positively on retailers.

The Committee resolved to submit the draft ISO/DIS 21041:2018 to ISO for circulation as a Final Draft International Standard with a view to publication as an ISO guidance standard.

