Welcome to your September 2021 Newsletter.

John Lane

WELL, WE REMAIN IN LOCKDOWN IN NEW SOUTH WALES, ACT AND VICTORIA. HERE IN NEW SOUTH WALES, WE SEE AN EARLY SIGN TO QUOTE THE COMMENTATORS; THE CURVE SHOWS AN EARLY SIGN OF A BEND IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. HOWEVER, WE NOW HAVE FAR LARGER DAILY DEATHS THAN A MONTH AGO, DISTRESSING FOR THEIR LOVED ONES. ALL I CAN SAY IS, PLEASE HANG IN AND LIVE WITHIN THE HEALTH REGULATIONS, AND I AM NOT EMBARRASSED TO SAY HAVE YOUR COVID-19 VACCINATION. HOPEFULLY, WE WILL BE NEAR NORMAL IN TIME FOR CHRISTMAS.

TRIP AWAY

I must start with some bad news; the committee has formally cancelled our trip away to the *Murray Valley*. As I mentioned in the August newsletter, it was likely that health restrictions would prevent us from travelling on a bus to the region. We are not even permitted traveling further than 10km from our homes. The committee held a special meeting on the 23rd September to examine an alternate date for the trip away early in 2022. However, we identified several barriers to this alternative. The *Murray Valley* region is sweltering in January and February. We have Easter in the first quarter of the year, and daylight savings ends at the start of April.

I am now booking the trip away to the *Murray Valley* in October 2022. The committee has asked me to explore the possibility of a short trip away *(two to three days)* in early 2022. I need to do some work on this; however, I am looking at a location close to Sydney and its surroundings; perhaps you may even use your Opal Card to get there. I will keep you informed. Further, I will write to each person who had planned to go on this trip away.

Vale Vera Douglas

John Davies contacted me to inform the passing of *Vera Douglas*. Vera was the wife of member *Ken Douglas*. John reminded me that Vera would sometimes attend reunion functions for the *Technician in Training "Class of 1946"*. John was the organiser for the reunions.

Indeed, I had the privilege of meeting her at a *"Class of 1946"* reunion to which John had invited me to attend. I also remember meeting with Ken and Vera who were having a meal at the Castlereagh Club, where I was having drinks with fellow RMA members. After their meal, Ken and Vera were off to the SCG to see the *Edinburgh Tattoo*, the first held outside Edinburgh. They were both very excited about the event. Vera was a joy to meet and impressed everyone with her warm and friendly nature.

Vera was a long time piano and singing teacher, and she was an accomplished performer in both. Our sincere condolences go to Ken, his Son Keir, who lives in Brisbane, and Marion, who lives in Forster. A little more on John and Ken. I recall at the time that John had been organising the *'Class of 46'* reunions for the first Thursday in February in the Masonic Club, Sydney. At one reunion, John joined our Association. He also realised he could simplify the event's logistics, encouraging all his 1946 classmates to join. Then he would advertise the reunion in our newsletter. We were pleased to assist and to have John and Ken as members.

Many of the *"Class of 46"* lived in the country regions. However, this never prevented them from travelling to Sydney for their special reunion get together. I presume this would have been the time that Ken Douglas also joined the RMA. Ken was the NSW State Manager from 1980 to 1988. He was the last State Manager in NSW because, after 1988, Telstra changed from a State-based to a national structure based primarily around products and services. *Don't you just love a bit of history!*

Retired Members Association

WE ARE HAVING A MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

THE RETIRED MEMBERS ASSOCIATION WILL HAVE A MEMBERSHIP DRIVE OVER THE COMING TWO MONTHS. OUR OLDER AGE DEMOGRAPHIC TELLS US OUR MEMBERSHIP WILL DECLINE LONG TERM. HOWEVER, THERE ARE STILL FORMER TELECOM AND TELSTRA EMPLOYEES WHO MAY NOT KNOW OF OUR ASSOCIATION BUT MAY KNOW YOU.

Soon we will have an easy to complete New Member Application form for a prospective new member to fill-in on their PC and return via email to us. Also, there will be a paper version for you to give them.

Suppose you do not have an application form on you. In that case, we will have available an easy to remember email address, allowing a prospective member to make inquiries.

We will have more information in our next newsletter; we look forward to your support.

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Welcome to your September 2021 Newsletter (Cont'd)

I have another story from the *"Class of 46"* reunion for you inside this month's newsletter.

Membership Recruitment Drive

In last month's newsletter, you may have noticed that we intend to have a membership recruitment drive over the coming months. The committee believes many former PMG, Telecom, and Telstra employees are unaware our Association exists.

We have plans to reach out through many former Teleco groups who are on Facebook. Also, we are redesigning our membership application form that you can email to a prospective member who can complete the form on their PC or fill out a paper version. Also, we will produce a brochure that tells others about our Association. Finally, we will have an easy-to-remember email address available, allowing a prospective member to make inquiries.

We ask if you meet someone who you may have worked with, to ask if you can email them an application form and brochure. Another, suggestion, forward them our emails that include the newsletter. This may help understand more about us. We will soon have the material for you.

Name Change

Last month, I wrote about a proposed name change for our Association, and the newsletter featured an article on the subject. I received a further new name proposal. We are now at the stage where we will survey members for their opinion on:
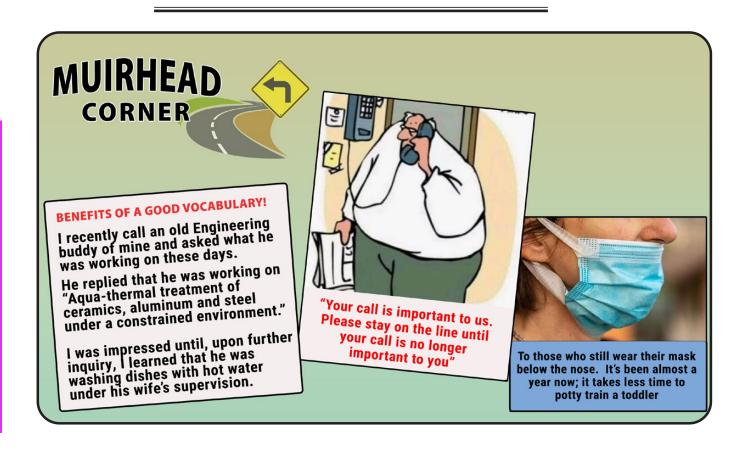
- *Whether they want the Association to have a name change.*
- *A preferred new name: you can select from several suggested names.*

We will email you a form, asking for your opinion. You can complete the form and submit the form with a few mouse clicks. We have a software programme that will quickly tabulate the result.

We also intend to mail the same form to members who receive their newsletter via post.

Finally

Please stay safe, and hopefully, the lockdown will end soon. Remember vaccination can help us get us there.

MUIRHEAD CORNER

BENEFITS OF A GOOD VOCABULARY!

I recently call an old Engineering buddy of mine and asked what he was working on these days.

He replied that he was working on "Aqua-thermal treatment of ceramics, aluminum and steel under a constrained environment."

I was impressed until, upon further inquiry, I learned that he was washing dishes with hot water under his wife's supervision.

"Your call is important to us. Please stay on the line until your call is no longer important to you"

To those who still wear their mask below the nose. It's been almost a year now; it takes less time to potty train a toddler

Allan Stuart Towart

The Association is sad to report the passing of member Allan Stuart Towart.

Allan Towart peacefully passed away last Sunday, 12TH September 2021. Allan was in care for close to three years because of illness. Allan was 78 years old. Allan's funeral service was on 17TH September 2021.

Allan was a member of the Retired Members Association for many years. He and his wife, Barbara, attended our functions and trips away. Allan and Barbara were married for fifty-eight years. They had three children, Bronwyn, Kirsten and son Guy.

Allan was fifteen when he began his five-year apprenticeship with the PMG while working as a bicycle-riding telegram boy out of Randwick Post Office.

Allan trained at the Alexandria PMG training school for twelve months in 1959 Technician in Training. Mr Arthur Clarke was his supervising technician. Sixty trainees commenced at the same time as Allan. However, each year some would drop-out. When Allan qualified as a technician in 1963, just thirty remained.

In his second year as a Technician in Training, older staff mentored Allan. For the last three years of his traineeship, Alan worked alone. Occasionally, he worked at Coogee and Randwick telephone exchanges. Allan also undertook on-the-job training at Kings Cross, Garden Island, City South exchanges and finally with the general public.

When Allan commenced his training, he had to walk everywhere or ride his bike; finally, he drove a PMG mini-minor. Following his qualification, the PMG management posted Allan to the City East District area. He remained there for many years but moved to Plessey at Meadowbank and trained in his early days on computer cabling. He became a specialist in the early days of the computer industry. Next, he was sent to Santa Clara (Chip Valley) to train in all aspects of the industry.

Allan travelled all over Australia and New Zealand, involved with major projects.

After 21 years with Plessey, Allan joined Krone, first at North Sydney, then Gosford. He was trained up in International Telecommunications Standards, learning first in Canada, then the UK.

Allan then travelled all over the Asia Pacific, training at universities, colleges, and he also ran training programmes across Australia and New Zealand. However, Allan always remained a PMG boy at heart.

The Retired Members Association extends its deepest sympathy and condolences to Allan's wife Barbara, children, Bronwyn, Kirsten and Guy, his extended family, and many friends.

Following the news of Allan Towart's death, Chris Cartledge from Wollongong writes:

In 1959 I was in Section 6 at Alexandria together with Allan Towart. We were a bunch of young teenagers drawn from all over NSW getting to know each other and as Aussies do, soon allocated good-humoured nicknames.

'Dubbo' was the name given to Brian Leary who came from – you can guess. John Mulligan also from country NSW was known as 'Tex' (sticks to this day), Bob Irving came from the Snowy and had a very rosy complexion, we called him 'Bambi' (in those days Bob was pulled over numerous times by the police because he looked too young to drive).

Allan Towart's nickname was 'Bloke'. To this day, I don't know why he was given this tag, but I do know 'Bloke' was a bloody good bloke!

Welfare **News**

Peter Hack

I start my welfare report this month to inform you that **Dena Livingstone's mother, Esme Lunney** passed away on the 31st August 2021. Esme had recently celebrated her *100TH birthday*. Our condolences to Dena, Terry and family.

Lionel Lyneham has had a long-standing white cell disorder. Unfortunately, his current treatment is causing joint pain and numbness in his extremities.   However, Lionel continues to pursue his interests actively

Keith and Pam Macrae are settling into their new abode and are enjoying their daughters' visits

Dan Wright has recovered from his surgery

Alan Fairbairn is back home recovering from his heart valve replacement and giving cheek. He is under instructions to not exert himself, so Barbara must use the remote to change channels.

Kath Hickey is subject to a 14-day lockdown and in-room confinement. A staff member tested positive for *COVID-19*

Irene Clifford is disappointed that there is no trip away to *Wentworth and Murray Valley*. She was very much looking forward to the trip.

Jim Spencer has spent a day in hospital having a complete check-up. Jim was back home at 6 pm.

Dick Orchard and Barry Forbutt still enjoy the sun and all the freedoms that come with living in Queensland.

I spoke with **Christine Keys; Ross** was having a nap and her dad was in lockdown

I talked to **Peggy Trompf. Col Cooper** impressed them all, answering one of the staff's questions about his dinner. The first time Col has spoken in about two years. Peggy is slowly on the mend; she gets to visit Col once every week

Diane Cutting had a visit with husband **Ian**. The first time since he has been in care.

Bob Hamblion reckons COVID is great. It only took him twenty minutes to take **Carol** to *St Vincent's Hospital* for a visit. Where have all the cars gone?

Flu Vaccination Reminder

Now we are in the flu season together with a Covid-19 pandemic; it is important to continue with the flu vaccine.

For seniors to experience both the flu and Covid-19 virus within a short timeframe of each other; a weaken immune system could have a serious consequences for you such as pneumonia or longer recovery times from both infections.

Australia's First Automatic Telephone ?

By Chris. Cartledge

About the author:

Chris. Cartledge was part of the P.M.G.'s 1959 technician-in-training intake, initially studying at Alexandria Training School. He was made redundant in June 1999 after 41 years, during which time he was based in Wollongong working at both local and national levels.

Feedback welcome: *cartledge@outlook.com*

Figure 1 - Telephone 137AWH

In 1963, I was a fifth-year technician-in-training taking my turn on a six-month roster as one of two area technicians in the Wollongong Exchange District. I was sent to investigate a fault report at a North Wollongong residence, it turned out the 1930s bungalow was being renovated and to my surprise the telephone that was reported faulty was a 137AWH *(an auto wall handset with timber case, Bakelite mouthpiece with inset transmitter and Bell receiver).* **It was covered in paint and in a poor state.**

The subscriber had heard about the PMG's new Colorfones (800 series) that had been launched the year before and was very keen to match her new decor with a white telephone. Before the 800 series telephones became available, you could have any colour you liked as long as it was Bakelite black (although I did see a white 300 series telephone handset once – imported from England I believe).

As it happened, I had a stock of 801s in the various colours in the van and was able to satisfy the customer's wish with an ivory table handset. She was not interested in *"that antique phone on the wall"* and was more than happy for me to take it away there and then so the painter on site could patch the wall. Now, I know it should have gone to the *Sifting Room at the Sydenham Workshops* together with a *Form S7*, but I know what would have happened to it there. By the way, as a 3RD year trainee, I worked on the sub-station equipment transformation from magneto to auto in the Stanwell Park district *(Helensburgh exchange)* where we took ute loads of superseded magneto handsets direct to the local tip – *the Sifting Room were not interested in this quantity of 'junk'.*

Figure 2 - Colorfone 800 Series

Before I continue, 1963 was a notable year in several other ways. My first born arrived in that year *(he's now 58 and retired!)*, in fact, he was born on the 11TH of November, Armistice Day. The 11TH of November was also the day *Labor PM Gough Whitlam* was sacked (1975) and the day they hung *Ned Kelly in Old Melbourne Goal (1880)*.

At the *Alexandria Training School (1959)* we were told the **37AWH** was Australia's first automatic telephone. The 37AWH had a solid back carbon transmitter, whereas the **137AWH** had a Bakelite mouthpiece with an inset transmitter. A major first year exercise was rewiring one of these wall sets, first creating a wiring loom using a template which consisted of a plywood board with nails and holes strategically placed to reflect the location of the various components within the telephone case. In those days, the wire we used was colour-coded silk and cotton covered enamelled copper.

This small box wall phone was based on a *British Post Office pattern, their Telephone No. 121*. They were supplied by a number of overseas manufacturers including *Peel Conner, British General Electric and British Ericsson*. A variety of local manufacturers also produced parts for the PMG (Sydney) Workshops assembled instruments. *Much of the timber used for the cases is of local Australian variety and is the reason for the wide range and variations in colour and grain found in these telephones.* In a final modification a handset was added on a modified switchhook and the model re-designated the **Telephone No. 237AWH.** (1)

Australia's First Automatic Telephone ? *(cont'd)*

But was the **37AWH** *Australia's first automatic telephone in public use?"*

Australia's first automatic exchange was installed in the GPO in Sydney, in 1911, for internal use. But the first automatic exchange for public use was opened at Geelong in Victoria in the next year - in July 1912. *The Geelong exchange was the first automatic exchange in the Southern Hemisphere and the second in the then British Empire — it was preceded only by the Epsom Exchange in England."* (2)

"Melbourne's first auto-matic exchange was opened in the suburb of Brighton in 1914; the first public auto-matic (sic) exchange in NSW began operating at Newtown, Sydney in 1915; and Queensland's first was installed at South Brisbane in 1925. 1929 saw the opening of Tasmania's first automatic exchange in Hobart." (2)

"The PMG Type 35 Automatic Electric, this instrument was known locally as the 'Geelong' telephone because many were imported to work in association with Australia's first automatic Strowger exchange in Geelong, Victoria in 1912. Built of timber which is always painted black and generally have cheap construction, the sets were fully imported from the United states over a long period". (3)

In appearance these imported wall sets were very similar to the **37AWH** and its other derivatives the **137AWH** and **237AWH** except the 'Australian' phones had polished timber boxes and in many cases were made of local native timbers.

I've been unable to unearth which phones were used for Australia's first automatic exchange at the Sydney GPO (1911) however, in a way that is academic as it was not a public telephone exchange.

So, it would appear the first automatic telephone in use by subscribers in Australia was the so called 'Geelong' telephone, the PMG Type 35 Auto Electric wall phone. There were 800 subscribers in Geelong so it can be assumed around that many Type 35 wall handsets were in use at the time.

The 37AWH takes its place as the first Australian assembled/manufactured automatic telephone to be in public use in Australia.

--ooOoo--

What happened to the faulty 137AWH recovered in 1963? I made a template for the loom and rewired the unit using plastic colour-coded wiring. Fortunately, all the component parts were still workable. The paint splattered cedar case was stripped and French polished for a second time and the bell gongs, switchhook and transmitter case brackets re-chromed. It still works well today, although the chrome fittings are once again tarnished after almost 60 years on the wall since its last refurbishment (See Fig 1)

References:

1. *Australian Post Office - Telephone No. 37AWH https://www.britishtelephones.com/aus/37.htm*
2. *Vintage Telephones https://www.vintagephones.com.au/ccp0-display/history-of-the-telephone-exchange-in-australia.html*
3. *'History of the Telephone in New South Wales' by Jim Bateman, an ATCS Inc Reprint. This book is available from the Australasian Telephone Collectors Society Inc at https://telephonecollecting.org/*
4. *Bob's Old Phones http://www.telephonecollecting.org/Bobs%20phones/index.htm*
5. *Old Australian Telephones https://oldaustraliantelephones.weebly.com/*

The Main Exchange for the Y Prefix

Member Brian Kirkby has written to the Retired Members Association asking whether members recollect **Y main exchanges** in the old "*step x step*"telephone network. Brian was talking with a friend who said in the old days; his phone number was YX *nnnn*. His friend lived out Lidcombe way.

Just to jog memories, the *"step x step"* numbers and their main exhanges were:

1	
2	*City Co-mains Dalley, City North, City South, York, Haymarket?*
31	*City East with its branch exchanges 32, 33, 34, etc*
41	*Chatswood etc*
51	*Newtown etc*
61	*Redfern etc*
71	*Ashfield etc*
81	*Drummoyne etc*
91	*North Sydney etc*
0	

Brian commenced as a 1960 technician-in-training. After his first year, Brian worked at the Coogee Subscriber Installation Depot. The prefix for the depot was **ML**.

Brian had extensive knowledge of the telephone network, in particular the *crossbar* technology. After Brian left Subscriber Installation in 1966, he went to the drafting section. One of his jobs was producing grading diagrams, junction relay set allocations for the old "*step by step*" equipment and *crossbar* exchanges and crossbar strappings. Therefore, Brian has a good knowledge of the telephone exchange network but may have either forgotten or does not know all about the bi-motional "*step by step*" switching network.

Brian is asking if they know the main exchange (if it exists) for the Y prefix. There is a wager on the outcome. If you can help Brian, his email is ***bdkirkby@bigpond.com***.

If it's long enough and straight enough ...

John Lane

I would like to offer more history following on from my other article in this month's newsletter.

I mentioned that John Davies would invite to the reunion people he knew in days on the job and were not in the *'Class of 46'*. One of the most memorable to me and it may interest members while we are in the midst of the NRL finals series. I was introduced me to **Frank Hyde**; most members will recall that Frank called the rugby league for radio station *2SM* for many years. Frank was also an ex-PMG employee working at the training school.

I came involved in a long conversation with Frank reminiscing about the good old days. Members may recall Frank Hyde had a famous description of a goal kick. Frank told me the background as to the way he described a goal kick. Frank received a phone call one day from someone who first apologised how he got Frank's phone number by underhanded means. However, he had to let Frank know he appreciated his call of the match, particularly his description in the lead up to a try. However, there was nothing in Frank's call of the game for him with the *kick at goal*. The problem was that the caller was a blind person.

Frank told us that from that day onwards, he would describe the *kick at goal* in more detail. First, he would say to the radio audience how far the kick in yards was from the side-line and distance from the posts. Then tell the audience when the player was scratching up the dirt to make a mound for the ball, placing the ball on the mound, stepping back, and running-in to take the kick. The description would always end with **"if it's long enough and straight enough, etc."**.

But wait there is more; Frank told me how much he loved it when Great Britain toured out here. He explained that many of the British players were ex-coal miners and had started in the game as a recreation pursuit after their days of arduous coal mining tasks. He told me how much he loved their cheeky half-backs. A prompt for me to contribute to the conversation, I told Frank of an occasion at the *SCG* when *NSW* played *Great Britain.* I told him how I was a few rows back from the fence at the *SCG* when, right in front of me; I saw *Noel Kelly* receive a pass and begin his run with the ball. *Tommy Bishop* jumped on his back with no intention of tackling the big man. Instead, he put his hands over *Noel Kelly's* eyes. This frustrated Noel Kelly big time; Noel placed the ball on the ground and shrugged Tommy off his back. He then took a swing at Tommy, who tried to respond to Kelly with an uppercut.

I mentioned to Frank that the next day, the Sunday newspapers featured seven pictures of the two having swings and misses. **Frank told me he was glad I remembered that incident because it was his 89th birthday next Monday, and Noel and Tommy were coming for lunch.** So, the two foes were now great mates.

But wait, there's still more! Frank stood up to explain that he had to leave because he had another appointment a little while later. I told John Davies of Frank's coming birthday. John made a speech concluding with all of us singing happy birthday. Frank was not to be outdone. He said, *"you've sung for me, so it's my turn to sing for you".* Y**ou've probably guessed by now that Frank sang a song he was famous for, "Danny Boy". Everyone else in the club gathered round to listen.** It amazed me he could still carry a song at 89. I hope this story brings back memories to John, and those left from his *"Class of 46".*

I hope you enjoyed my reminiscing.

PHILLIPS CPAP DEVICES EXPOSE USERS TO CANCER RISK

Continuous positive airway pressure (CPAP) device delivers a common treatment for obstructive sleep (APNOEA). A CPAP (Continuous Positive Airway Pressure) device uses a hose and mask or nosepiece to deliver constant and steady air pressure. The device allows sleep apnoea suffers to get a better night's sleep.

Philips is one of the global companies that manufactures a range of CPAP devices on the 26TH April 2021, Phillips issued a global recall notification related to sound abatement foam within the air pathway of the device is carcinogenic (cancer forming).

The respiratory devices are,

- *Continuous Positive Airway Pressure (CPAP)*
- *(BiLevel PAP)*
- *and Mechanical Ventilators.*

Phillips' recommnedation within their recall notice is not to use their ventilator devices unless your doctor deems it essential. *So the dilemma for users is to continue to use their **CPAP** device, risking cancer or discontinue and suffer significant health risks associated with restricted airways while they sleep.*

The manufacturer's advice to seek the opinion of your doctor is sound. However, the *Sydney Local Health Network* has written to me, and I assume other **CPAP** users should continue using our **CPAP** machine as the risk is low. Not aligning with the manufacturer's advice in their recall notice.

The same letter acknowledges that:

- *The foam may degrade into particles, which may enter the device's air pathway, and*
- *The foam may off-gas certain chemicals.*
- *Reports of some long-term effects (including carcinogenic effects (Cancer) and toxicity to liver, kidneys and nerves).*

If you go to the **TGA** (*Therapeutic Goods Administration*) website, the **TGA** only quotes *Phillips* on the health risks assocaited associated with foam in the foam in their respiratory devices. The **TGA** has mentioned no independent risk assessment. *Phillips* states, *"To date, there is no definitive evidence of long-term harm to patients, and there have been no reports of death".*

The TGA also advises that *CPAP* users continue to use their devices, warning, stopping treatment suddenly could have an immediate and detrimental effect on their health. However, you probably need to consult with your doctor.

As of July 2021, TGA advised some consumers were having difficulty contacting Philips about the safety concerns with their devices. As a result, Phillips has advised the TGA that additional resources are being put in place to help with the high level of calls.

Phillips is still to publish a timeline for either the repair or replacement for their CPAP devices. Also, Phillips has not made a public statement on its refund policy for the devices. Although, Phillips has confirmed that replacing the entire device or the foam within will be done at no cost to the owner/patient.

As consumers, I would like to remind *you that you have rights under the Australian Consumer Law, which are entirely separate from any remedy Philips may provide as part of this recall action.* You can find more information on the *Australian Competition & Consumer Commission (ACCC)* website with regard to your consumer protections. You should first request a refund from *Philips Electronics Australia Ltd support hotline on 1800 009 579.* If the response is unsatisfactory, remind them, you will be contacting the **ACCC**.

Finally, you need to register your device at: *www.philipssrcupdate.expertinquiry.com/?ulang=en* This information is required so the company can plan the repair or replacement program efficiently.

When you register, you should receive a reference number. If unsure whether you have registered correctly, register again. *Philips* is now sending a confirmation email with each new registration. If unable to complete your registration online, call *Phillips* on **1800 009 579**.