

Performers Applaud Ecoglo

Ecoglo has received a warm reaction from performers at the Christchurch Town Hall in New Zealand. Before installing Ecoglo, Richard Maffey, the Building Services Manager of NCC (New Zealand) Ltd, which manages the Town Hall, subjected a test installation of the photoluminescent path-finding system to rigorous scrutiny from both users and audience. "If a performer doesn't like what they see, we would have a major problem," he says. "I had to be absolutely sure there were no visual distractions from the stage." Maffey's testing on one aisle found that the five-foot stage fell within a critical angle that enabled Ecoglo to do its work for the audience but not distract performers.

His criteria for the Ecoglo installation included:

- whether or not it worked for path-finding and illuminated what patrons needed it to illuminate
- performing to specification
- patrons accepting the look, feel and performance of Ecoglo
- minimal harm if people tripped, for instance from a non-path-finding related fall
- not compromising the aesthetics and architectural integrity of the space
- Ecoglo's usefulness to elderly and disabled patrons.

He didn't stop there. After using Ecoglo for a month, he sought feedback from staff, members of the public, an elderly advocacy group, performers and stage production people, as well as testing the view himself from a number of perspectives and different conditions. Staff and customers applauded Ecoglo because they could see their way in the dark. "Adverse comment from performers was nil, which means it was accepted, and likewise with stage managers. Production people thought it was great. I can't think of a negative comment about it," Maffey says. Ecoglo was installed in the Town Hall Auditorium, and later a different type of installation went into the adjacent James Hay Theater. Ecoglo is now being trialed to outline obstructions at the back of the theater that get in the way of latecomers. Maffey says darkness in an unfamiliar environment, throws the human brain "out of gear" somewhat. There is also a psychological context, especially when patrons are running late.

Bumps in the night. In a typical scenario, late patrons could be flustered because they have had trouble finding a car park; they are stressed because they know the show has started and they are upsetting other patrons; and they get escorted quickly into a blackout situation. Sometimes holdout restrictions from performers mean they might have to stand for a length of time at the back of the theater until a break occurs, and they might not be shown to their seats by torchlight. "Even totally able-bodied people have problems in those conditions. With Ecoglo, the nosing outlining the edges of steps allow



Staff and patrons of the Christchurch Town Hall applauded Ecoglo because they could see their way in the dark. Ecoglo products were subjected to rigorous testing to ensure staff, patrons and performers were happy with their performance.

them to establish a relativity of direction and angle, get a sense of comfort and assurance of safety; quite simply they can walk in total blackout and not trip."

Elderly. In a venue serving a lot of elderly patrons, Maffey says NCC takes its "duty of care" very seriously - not only because of potential harm, but to maintain high satisfaction and patronage by customers. Ecoglo is one of a set of alterations made by the venue to accommodate the needs of the elderly and disabled. Maffey says he has been very impressed by the degree to which Ecoglo Ltd is prepared to customize the product to his needs, believing this has in turn made an impact on Ecoglo's ability to respond to the wider international industry. Ecoglo and NCC have worked closely together to critique Ecoglo and ensure it remains a world-class product. "Ecoglo works, it's aesthetically pleasing, costs us nothing to run, it's easy to clean and maintain and it lasts," says Maffey. "I'm really happy with it."

"It doesn't seem to stop people coming in late though," Maffey adds ruefully. Ecoglo will be in the limelight at the forthcoming Venue Managers' Association trade show and conference, to be held at the Town Hall from April 20-23, 2002, Christchurch, New Zealand, where Ecoglo was developed.