

WELS: A builder's guide to Australia's water efficiency labelling scheme

What is WELS?

The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme is a joint Commonwealth, state and territory regulatory scheme requiring a range of water-using products to be labelled for water efficiency. It is designed to help Australian households save water, energy, greenhouse gas emissions and money.

Under the scheme, product suppliers are required to provide water efficiency information, and star ratings, to consumers for the following products:

- clothes washers
- dishwashers
- showers
- taps
- toilets
- registered flow controllers *and*
- urinals (not waterless urinals).

What does WELS mean for builders?

Builders incorporating water-using products into domestic and commercial building projects are bound by law to ensure that the products meet the WELS Standard.

They need to ensure that any products they supply:

- are WELS registered and labelled *and*
- have the labels clearly visible to the customer when offered for supply.

Builders do have some legal obligations under the *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005* although the WELS Scheme does not mandate installation requirements – these are specified under relevant state and territory plumbing/building codes and regulations.

When is a builder supplying a product?

You **are** considered responsible for supplying a product if you:

- include product supply as part of tendering or offering work in building and construction projects or in building refurbishment and renovation *and/or*
- supply products as part of installation or repair work, or for any other purpose.

You **are not** considered to be supplying products if you are only involved in installing a WELS product that:

- someone else has supplied to a customer *or*
- has been bought by the customer.

Obligations for building developments and display homes

For building developments and display homes which include WELS products:

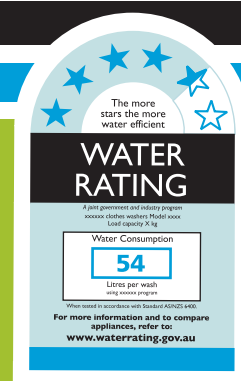
- all inspection homes/units must display WELS labelled stock (as this is considered to be the point of supply) *and*
- must contain stock which is WELS compliant.



www.waterrating.gov.au



Australian Government
Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts



How do you know if a product is registered?

All products with a WELS label should be registered. You can search for registered products on the WELS product search database at <http://search.waterrating.com.au/default.shtml>

For registration support email wels@environment.gov.au or call 1800 803 772.

How do you label a product?

The WELS Standard – *AS/NZS 6400:2005 Water efficient products – Rating and labelling* outlines how products must be labelled. All labels have required minimum dimensions. The WELS Standard can be purchased through Standards Australia at <http://www.standards.org.au/cat.asp?catid=4>.

Whitegoods

The label needs to be fixed (e.g. glued) to the upper front portion of dishwashers or clothes washers.

If fixing the label directly on the machine will damage the finish (e.g. permanently mark or stain finishes such as stainless steel) the label can be attached to the machine by a doubled-sided swing tag or single-sided non-rotating swing tag.

Plumbing and sanitary ware

For products displayed for sale in packaging

The label needs to be fixed (e.g. glued) to packaging so that it is clearly visible on the front portion of the package when it is hung from a rack or placed on a shelf.

For products displayed for sale outside of their packaging

There are four options:

1. the **correctly-sized label** fixed to the product itself or
2. a swing tag showing the **correctly-sized label** on both sides securely attached to the product or
3. a **correctly-sized label** fixed next to the product so it is obvious that the product and the label are linked or
4. a **tag** (e.g. price tag) fixed next to the product showing WELS star rating and the water consumption figure (e.g. WELS 3 Star, 9L/min) so long as there is a clear and obvious connection between the tag and the product.

When a product is supplied after being selected from the above forms of unpackaged display items, the product must be provided labelled.

How can you prove that you have supplied WELS compliant products?

Point of sale receipts/invoices/tendering documentation should identify the WELS products supplied and their star rating and water consumption information. These documents could form evidence of due legal supply.

What happens if you are found to be non-compliant under WELS?

If you are non-compliant you could face fines. Under the WELS Act penalties apply for:

- failing to meet registration and labelling requirements
- failing to meet minimum efficiency and performance requirements *and*
- misusing WELS standards and information.

WELS inspectors with significant monitoring and investigation powers are in the field checking that manufacturers, suppliers and retailers are complying with the WELS Act.

Strong enforcement powers under the WELS Act include the ability to:

- impose significant fines
- compel the withdrawal of a product or products from supply
- deregister products *and*
- advertise convictions.

More information?

For more information go to the WELS website at www.waterrating.gov.au or email wels@environment.gov.au or call 1800 803 772.

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