

# WELS: A local government guide to Australia's water efficiency labelling scheme

## What is WELS?

The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme is a cooperative Commonwealth, state and territory government regulatory system to help reduce household water consumption.

It came into force in January 2006 and replaces the previous voluntary AAAAA water rating scheme.

Under the WELS Scheme, product suppliers are required to label clothes washers, dishwashers, showers, taps, toilets, urinals and flow controllers (optional) with water efficiency information and star ratings to enable consumers to choose the most water efficient product for their needs.

## Selecting water efficient products

Choosing WELS high star rating products will not only save water, but money as well. If you are planning to buy or specify WELS products you can search the WELS product database at <http://search.waterrating.com.au> and compare star ratings and water efficiency information for more than 9600 WELS rated product models.

## What does the WELS label mean?

The WELS water rating label provides water efficiency information for water-using household products. It is similar in appearance to the energy rating label (which clothes washers and dishwashers must also carry).

The label shows two important pieces of information to help the consumer to compare products:

- a star rating – **the more stars the better** and
- a figure showing water usage – **the lower the number the better!**

## WELS and WaterMark

What's the difference? In a nutshell:

- **WaterMark** confirms the product complies with the requirements of the Plumbing Code of Australia and is fit for purpose for installation under that Code.
- The **WELS** label relates only to the water efficiency of the product.

WELS products must carry a WELS label, but may not necessarily have the WaterMark and therefore installation under state and territory legislation may not be allowed.

## Is your council offering rebates?

If you are offering rebates to your ratepayers on their purchases of water efficient products, then using the WELS rating in your criteria will provide you with a simple and recognised water efficiency benchmark for potential applicants.

A number of existing rebate schemes already use a three or four star WELS rating as a minimum standard for rebate applications (see SA Water's H2OME rebate).

If you would like to provide further information on the WELS water efficiency rating to your ratepayers, you can:

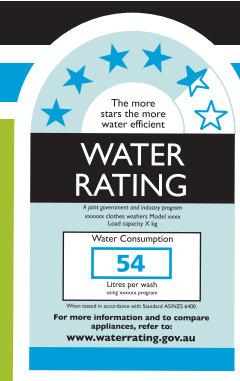
- download the WELS information brochure (<http://www.waterrating.gov.au/publications/wels-brochure.html>)
- order brochures by contacting WELS ([wels@environment.gov.au](mailto:wels@environment.gov.au)) or by calling 1800 803 772 or
- refer them to the WELS website at [www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au).



[www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au)



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## Is your council offering retrofitting or water efficiency auditing services?

Some local governments, water authorities and state governments are offering to audit and retrofit selected households with water efficient products such as showerheads, taps and flow controllers.

In selecting products to replace inefficient domestic items, a three or four star WELS rating should be your minimum standard in order to save more water. All WELS products – clothes washers, dishwashers, showers, taps, toilets and urinals – are required by law to carry a WELS rating. Labelling is optional for flow controllers.

For these products to be registered and rated they must undergo rigorous testing at accredited laboratories.

## Improving your council's water efficiency

Public facilities which provide toilets, urinals, showers and taps can draw substantially on local water reserves.

Replacing inefficient and potentially leaking fixtures can make a significant difference to financial and environmental balance sheets.

When buying new products remember the more stars the more water efficient the product. The WELS label will also tell you the product's water consumption or water flow rate.

## How much water are you saving?

You can calculate how much water you are saving if you know the WELS rating of the products you have installed and those you replaced. WELS products are labelled with water consumption or water flow figures.

## Top 10 tips

1. **Audit** – look at your current water consumption, particularly through public facilities such as amenities blocks, recreation facilities, childcare centres and administration buildings. Identify if and where savings can be made.
2. **Research** – before you choose a product, check its star rating and performance by going to the WELS product database. If you are relying on your contractor for advice, check first that they understand the WELS ratings and requirements.
3. **Retrofit** – replace leaking taps, old single flush toilets, inefficient shower heads with WELS rated products (the more stars the better!).
4. **Record** – keep records of any WELS product you install to enable you to calculate water savings over time.
5. **Monitor** – check water usage after installation of products and compare with pre-installation figures.
6. **Publicise** – let the community know what you are doing to safeguard the environment.
7. **Influence** – set an example in your community and consider educating and regulating.
8. **Advise** – put a domestic water-saving tips page on your council's website – for domestic water savings link to [www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au).
9. **Inspire** – provide case studies of local best practice in water efficiency to inspire others to do the same.
10. **Explore** – look at what other councils are doing such as showerhead exchange programs or household water efficiency audits. Is there anything more you can do?

## What else can local governments do?

To find out more about water initiatives for local government, go to *ICLEI – Local Governments for Sustainability Water Campaign* - [http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=water\\_home](http://www.iclei.org/index.php?id=water_home). ICLEI is an international association of local governments and associated organisations that have made a commitment to sustainable development. ICLEI's Water Campaign aims to build the capacity of local government to reduce water consumption and improve local water quality.

## More information?

For more information go to the WELS website at [www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au) or email [wels@environment.gov.au](mailto:wels@environment.gov.au) or call **1800 803 772**.

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