

WELS: A plumber'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).

WELS and WaterMark

What's the difference?

- **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.

What does WELS mean for plumbers?

Plumbers play an important role in encouraging Australians to use water more efficiently.

They are often in a position to recommend, supply or install products to clients. The WELS Scheme can make a plumber's job easier because it provides labels which identify the water efficiency of a range of products and give each product a star rating – the more stars the better, the lower the water consumption or flow figure, the better too!

Plumbers are also bound by law to ensure that they are supplying WELS rated products.

They need to ensure that any WELS products they supply:

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

Plumbers 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 plumbing/building codes and state and territory regulations.

Are you 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 selling products if you are only involved in installing a WELS product that:

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

How can you check if a product is registered?

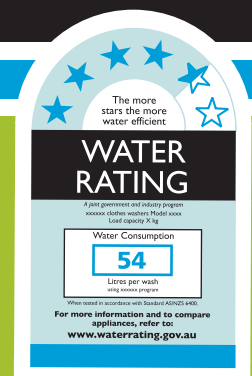
All products with a WELS label should be registered. You can search for registered products on the WELS product search database at <http://search.waterrating.com.au/default.shtml>.



www.waterrating.gov.au



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



How do you register a WELS product?

To register a product you will need to:

- test your products at an independent and accredited laboratory
- submit your documentation and fee to the WELS Regulator *and*
- apply for registration through the WELS online registration system at www.waterrating.gov.au.

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 sold 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 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.

If you are not sure that you are complying with the Act, contact WELS at wels@environment.gov.au or on **1800 803 772**.

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**.

August 2008

