

## Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme

### Outcomes from Stakeholder Forum Tuesday 11 March 2008 Rydges Lakeside, Canberra

The Department of Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts (DEWHA) hosted a WELS Scheme Stakeholder Forum in Canberra on 11 March 2008. The purpose of the Forum was for stakeholders to receive updates on current Scheme projects and to provide feedback on the operation of the WELS Scheme. About 90 people attended. Outcomes from the Forum were as follows:

- DEWHA advised that it is developing a new and improved registration system. The new system is expected to operate from July 2008. In response to requests from participants, DEWHA said it would welcome suggestions on how that current system could be improved and that there would be the opportunity for applicants to trial the new system prior to implementation.
- DEWHA advised that it is currently reviewing the *Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Act 2005* and that any proposed amendments would be made available for public comment.
- DEWHA advised that it has commissioned KPMG to prepare a report on the extent to which the WELS Scheme is recovering its costs. Following on from that, a Cost Recovery Impact Statement will be prepared and released for public comment by mid 2008.
- DEWHA advised that work has begun on the Government's response to the 2007 Parliamentary inquiry, "Managing the Flow".
- DEWHA advised it is undertaking a program of work to examine possible expansion of the WELS Scheme to include additional products and to introduce minimum water efficiency standards. This will involve developing a series of Regulation Impact Statements on the following issues:
  - expanding the Scheme to include water-using dryers and introducing minimum water efficiency standards for washing machines, water using dryers and dishwashers
  - introducing minimum water efficiency standards for taps, showers, urinals and raising the minimum water efficiency standard for toilets
  - expanding the Scheme to include instantaneous gas hot water heaters, hot water circulators, domestic irrigation controllers and evaporative air conditioners, and introducing minimum water efficiency standards for these products.

These Regulation Impact Statements will be released for public comment through 2008.

- DEWHA advised that it has commissioned a number of technical research studies that will assist in its consideration of expansion of the WELS Scheme to include additional products and the introduction of minimum water efficiency standards. These studies will be posted on the WELS website ([www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au)) as they are finalised.
- DEWHA advised that it has commenced a program of compliance inspections and will commence check-testing in 2008, and that it has been working with online exchanges, such as EBay to ensure products sold comply with the WELS Scheme.
- DEWHA advised that it is moving towards stronger enforcement actions.

- With respect to compliance and enforcement, participants requested consideration be given to:
  - DEWHA producing a “scorecard” on its compliance efforts
  - providing feedback to the person making an allegation
  - ensuring compliance through the whole supply chain in addition to at point of sale
  - increasing inspection capacity in the field, including by enlisting state inspectors.
- Participants also encouraged DEWHA to making better use of technical experts and to use standards committees to provide input to WELS work.
- DEWHA advised that it planned to use its InkWELS e-mail newsletter to communicate with stakeholders and encouraged participants to register on-line ([www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au)) to receive InkWELS.
- DEWHA advised it intended to pursue partnership approaches with individual organisations/manufacturers to provide targeted and appropriate information to different groups.
- Participants also requested that DEWHA consider working with water utilities and state governments to increase consumer awareness of WELS and understanding of the merits of purchasing water-saving equipment.
- Participants requested that the product search function in the current registration database be improved.
- It was agreed that there was merit in holding a Stakeholders Forum in 2009.
- Participants requested consideration be given to:
  - holding the forum in one of the major capital cities
  - commencing the forum later in the morning to better accommodate interstate attendees, and
  - inviting participants to submit questions before the forum.