

# WELS: A wholesaler'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 and money.

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

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

## Do wholesalers fall under the WELS Scheme?

If you wholesale clothes washers, dishwashers, toilet equipment, urinals, tapware, showers (and flow controllers – optional for registration) you have product labelling responsibilities under the WELS Scheme. This includes supplying products through shops, showrooms and warehouses, by auction, mail order, over the internet and by providing products as part of new buildings or plumbing services.

## What labelling responsibilities do wholesalers have?

If you are responsible for point of supply labelling then you must ensure that:

- labels or water rating information are properly attached to the product at point of supply
- labels or water rating information remain fully visible on products while they are offered for supply *and*
- advertising and promotional materials display the WELS information for products.

## How do you label a WELS 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.

### 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.

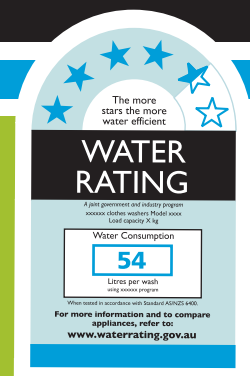
When a product is supplied after being selected from the above forms of unpackaged display items, the product must be provided labelled. See the *How to label a WELS product* fact sheet for help.



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## Does the WELS label need to appear in product advertising or promotional material?

Yes. The WELS legislation requires that the WELS label (or free text information) must be:

- prominent when WELS products are displayed, promoted, marketed, sold or supplied at any point in the supply chain *and*
- included on any product specification, brochure, advertising, magazine, catalogue and website where a registered product is profiled.

As an alternative to using the WELS label in promotional activities, **free text** may be used to describe a product's water efficiency star rating and the associated water consumption figure (e.g. WELS 3 Star, 9L/min).

While the size of labels and free text may be scaled to fit the promotional medium, the label information must remain readable with normal or corrected vision. Annex B of the WELS Standard sets out colour and size specifications for labels. To see sample labels visit the WELS website at <http://www.waterrating.gov.au/publications/labels.html>

## Do products have to be labelled if they are supplied via the internet?

The labelling requirements for WELS products still apply if products are being provided or supplied over the internet.

## Do wholesalers need a copy of the WELS Standard?

Yes. This standard contains labelling specifications including requirements for packaging, swing tags and product displays, publicity and product specification paperwork.

A copy of the standard can be purchased through Standards Australia at <http://www.standards.org.au/cat.asp?catid=4>.

## How is WELS being enforced?

WELS inspectors with significant monitoring and investigation powers are in the field checking compliance with the WELS Act.

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.

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](mailto:wels@environment.gov.au) or 1800 803 772.

## Where can wholesalers go for more help?

For help on:

- registration – see *How to register WELS products* fact sheet
- labelling – see the *How to label a WELS product* fact sheet.

Both are available on the WELS website (publications) at [www.waterrating.gov.au](http://www.waterrating.gov.au).

## 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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