Andrew Bell:

Hello there, wherever you are, and welcome to this webinar about WELS, that's the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards scheme. My name's Andrew Bell, and I'm here to guide us through the next little while.

Andrew Bell:

We're in Canberra, and from here in the language of the Ngunnawal people of this land, may I say Yumalundi, welcome. And in the spirit of reconciliation, the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, acknowledges the traditional custodians of country throughout Australia, and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respects to their elders past and present, and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people today.

Andrew Bell:

Yumalundi, welcome.

Andrew Bell:

Well, with me to talk about WELS here in Canberra, we've got David Jongeneel and Tom Roberts. David is, well, he's numero uno when it comes to WELS. He's responsible for national compliance operations of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards scheme. As for Tom, well, he knows all about plumbing, because he's actually been a plumber. So he knows what it's like on the ground floor.

Andrew Bell:

We're in Canberra as I said, in Perth we're joined by Dr. Ursula Kretzer. Ursula is Senior Manager Water and Environmental Policy at the Department of Water and Environmental Regulation over there in WA, and she's been involved with WELS for quite a while too, indeed for getting on for seven years.

Andrew Bell:

Mike Read's also joining us, he brings 40 years of experience to this conversation, and he's been a plumbing inspector, he's also held a plumbing contractor's licence. So we're going to hear about the rules, the regs, the compliance, but also what it actually means to all of you people.

Andrew Bell:

Right, let's get right underway with WELS. David, a quick overview, why are we here and why are we talking about WELS now?

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So it's a good opportunity here to talk to, in particular, the Western Australian building and plumbing industry about what the WELS scheme is about, and what the obligations and requirements are for the plumbing and building industry to meet WELS obligations in their day-to-day activities.

David Jongeneel:

So WELS stands for the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards scheme, the scheme is enforceable across Australia wherever a WELS product is supplied and/or offered for supply. WELS products includes taps, showers, washing machines, dishwashers, urinals, flow controls. And the program is a joint industry government program, it's funded 80% industry, 20% through the government's, commonwealth and the states and territories. And it requires consumers to be provided with water efficiency and general performance information when products are offered for supply. It allows consumers also then to make informed decisions on water use when they're buying products.

Andrew Bell:

And we want to make water use as efficient as we possibly can, so what kind of savings are we getting and might we get in future from the WELS scheme?

David Jongeneel:

Okay, very good question. So nationally, we currently are saving around 122 giga litres per year. And putting in context of say, Olympic swimming pools, which is 2.5 mega litres, this is 48,800 Olympic swimming pool's worth of water.

Andrew Bell:

That's an awful lot of swimming pools.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. And by 2036, the savings are expected to be 230 giga litres, or equivalent to 92,000 Olympic pools, $2.6 billion in household utility bills, and also from a greenhouse gas perspective, we're actually saving 55 million tonnes in carbon dioxide equivalent. Locally, for Western Australia, just for this year, is expected savings of 17.3 giga litres, that's just shy of 7,000 Olympic swimming pools, and $152 per four-person household in their utility bills.

Andrew Bell:

That's an awful lot of Perry Lakes swimming pools-

David Jongeneel:

It is.

Andrew Bell:

... for those over in WA. And I guess WA, being a pretty dry climate, the more water we can save the more important it is.

David Jongeneel:

Oh, absolutely. And as you'll be aware, over in the west, WA has a drying climate, water is precious as there's less water coming into the dams. Therefore, any water savings reduces pressure on scheme water and ground water aquifers.

Andrew Bell:

So, where does this all fit? We're going to now talk about the link between the plumbing code of Australia, the WaterMark scheme and WELS, and this is going to be a one-two kind of a show now between Tom here in Canberra and Mike in Perth. Let's start with you, Tom, and the National Construction Code, how does that all fit in with what we're talking about today?

Tom Roberts:

So, firstly, the Australian Building Codes Board are responsible for the management of the National Construction Code, and the Plumbing Code of Australia is volume three of the code of the National Construction Code, with volumes one and two pertaining to the Building Code of Australia.

Tom Roberts:

The PCA has been part of the NCC now for 10 years, so it's its 10-year birthday this year. So that's something we're celebrating. It's amended every few years as part of the three-year amendment cycle, with the next edition coming into effect in 2022, next year.

Tom Roberts:

The PCA is important, because it sets the policy level for the minimum water efficiency requirements for onsite construction. The WELS scheme and the PCA really work hand-in-hand in this, in providing practitioners with the advice of how much... what water efficiency levels different products are offering, and whether they meet the requirements of the PCA.

Tom Roberts:

In addition, the NCC in 2022, as I mentioned, is coming out next year, but the public comment draft for this next edition will come out next month, on the 10th of May. So I encourage everyone to log in, review the new draft, and provide any comments on that.

Andrew Bell:

So across that, we can now go across the Nullarbor to you Mike, and specifics as you see them, and also the local impacts of this in WA.

Mike Read:

Yes, indeed, a little bit of background. So the ABCB released the performance-based codes, the PCA in October 1996. It wasn't until 2004, that the Plumbing Code of Australia was written and developed as a performance-based code, and it was set out to be compatible in its structure of operations with the PCA, the performance-based codes. So it was adopted by most states and territories by 2011, but in Western Australia however, the PCA wasn't adopted until the 1st of May, 2015.

Mike Read:

So we've been in debt to the code under Regulation 48 of our plumbers licencing standards and regulation of 2000, but they only pick up certain parts of the PCA in it's regulated plumbing work. So these parts are B1 and B2, cold and heated water services, part B5, which is cross-connection control, and part C1 and C2, which is sanitary plumbing and drainage systems. So they regulate the plumbing work in WA. The divisions of part A of the PCA also apply, so we pick up part A 5.3, and the WaterMark certification scheme, which applies also to selected WELS appliances.

Mike Read:

And a plumber should always check for the WaterMark and WELS appliance with the logos. The WaterMark scheme rules and other information available on the ABCB homepage, where all current WaterMark products are listed.

Andrew Bell:

Thanks Mike. And obviously, the technology we've all got to used with hearing you, loudish and clearish, but the message is pretty clear. Let's talk about the WaterMark scheme back here in Canberra with you Tom. How does that again fit into this bigger jigsaw puzzle?

Tom Roberts:

Yeah. So as Mike mentioned, Section A of the Plumbing Code of Australia requires certain plumbing products and materials to be certified, to be authorised for use in plumbing installations. So this is achieved generally through the WaterMark certification scheme. This is a national scheme, it's managed again by the ABCB office on behalf of the states and territories who are responsible for the enforcement of the scheme.

Tom Roberts:

WaterMark, is a point of installation scheme. So it means that, when a product is installed, that's the point at which it's regulated, so it's picked up [enforced] by the states and territories at that point of installation. What WaterMark does is provide assurances to the consumers that the plumbing and drainage pipes are going to be fit-for-purpose, the systems are going to work properly, and the water's going to be safe for consumption. To hold WaterMark certification, products need to be tested and evaluated to specific product specifications, and certified and tested by accredited laboratories and WaterMark conformity assessment bodies, or WMCABS.

Tom Roberts:

The product's captured the WELS scheme, such as taps, toilets, showers, all must have WaterMark to be WELS registered. This means that, through both the WaterMark scheme and the WELS scheme, they really work hand-in-hand in that, being able to be WELS registered and legally sold, means that those products hold WaterMark certification.

Andrew Bell:

So that WaterMark is all important. Mike, have you got any additional points in this area, particularly obviously we've got WA upper most in our mind today, anything else you'd like to add?

Mike Read:

I would just like to reiterate that the water shortages in Western Australia, and water is so precious, so anything we can do to conserve water is good, and the WELS scheme does have that effect.

Andrew Bell:

Thanks, Mike, I think we all agree with that. Back to David now, and the WaterMark as a prerequisite to WELS registration. As Tom's just said, the two of them hand-in-hand, dovetail, whatever we want to call it, they cover the water front. I had to get that in. So tell us more about the WaterMark and where it fits in, and its importance.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So with the WELS scheme, as opposed to the WaterMark scheme, which is point of installation, the WELS scheme is about the point-of-supply. So consumers make a decision, they need to be provided with the information at the point-of-supply on the packaging when they're actually going to make a purchasing decision. That also then equally applies to when a consumer is going to buy a new dwelling, they're provided with information to guide their purchasing decision for when they choose their inclusions for their new dwelling, they choose the carpets and the tiles and the curtains, they also then get to choose what is the type of product that I'm going to get and what is the water efficiency that I'm actually going to get when I go and purchase that unit. And hopefully they'll be provided with a choice of items that they can actually get.

David Jongeneel:

So as Tom's... Andrew, you've actually pointed out, that WaterMark is a prerequisite to WELS registration. If there is no WaterMark, the product can't actually be registered, so therefore it can't be offered for supply. So therefore, if there's any products which actually have not been labelled with WaterMark or WELS, the assumption basically would be then, that those products aren't actually legal for supply as well.

David Jongeneel:

So one of the things about the commonwealth scheme... or about the WELS scheme, it is as mentioned before, a joint government industry program. Each of the states and territories have their own complimentary WELS legislation, and us as the common Australian government, we actually then administer that on behalf of all of the jurisdictions, which also ensures that as the commonwealth regulator we can adopt a consistent approach with the administration and the enforcement of the Act.

Andrew Bell:

And talking of consistent, a question for you Tom. There's some work going on I understand, behind the scenes to sort of get WELS and the National Construction Code better aligned. What's going on there?

Tom Roberts:

Yes, there's a bit of work going on in the background, and it will appear in the public comment draft which will be released next month. So what we're looking to do is, just make it clearer to the plumbing practitioners where those linkages are between the WELS scheme and the minimum water efficiency requirements of the PCA, and make easier identifiable products, which then meet those requirements. So again, I encourage everyone to review the public comment draft and provide comments next month.

Andrew Bell:

Yeah, that's out next month, which is almost here. May is almost here. Back to you, David. Our next topic is supply. What is supply to the people watching today, how relevant is that to them?

David Jongeneel:

Okay, a very good question, thanks Andrew. So with supply, historically it was relating to just for say for example, retailers providing products to consumers in stores. The definition of supply was extended a number of years ago, to include supply as part of another thing, which in this case includes the supply as part of a new dwelling, refurbishment, and that sort of thing. So that's basically where builders and plumbers come into the side, if they're actually supplying WELS products as part of the sale of a new dwelling. That could be a unit, multi-unit, single residential dwelling, they've still got obligations there to provide information.

David Jongeneel:

And essentially, the same principles apply then to your commercial sector there as well.

Andrew Bell:

Right, the nitty gritty. Compliance, what do builders and plumbers, what do they need to do to comply and have to do?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So when a product is being offered for supply, the clients should be provided with information to guide their decision on providing choice, water efficiency labelling information. Now, the other part then as well is, when the builder or plumber has the box of products, they should also then be doing a registration search through the registration database, and that's available at www.waterrating.gov.au. They can then provide the model information into the database, and then determine whether or not they can actually find the registration of the product.

David Jongeneel:

And once they've looked at that, they should also then do a cross check with the labelling information, to make sure that the labelling information matches the registration and what is actually on the packaging as well.

Andrew Bell:

I don't want to preempt anyone whose typing a question, but I imagine some people are saying, "So why do we have to do this?" So why is it important that you check registration labelling information?

David Jongeneel:

So essentially to trace the registration of products, this also then protects consumers from non-compliant, or potentially non-conforming products being supplied and installed, and then creating a world of pain for consumers-

Andrew Bell:

Which can get-

David Jongeneel:

... at the end too.

Andrew Bell:

... more and more painful as we move through the process. So do all the products have to have this labelling on the box?

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So all taps, showers and toilets have to have the labelling information on the packaging. Washing machines and dishwashers are a little bit sort of differently. They are normally affixed to the front panel of the actually product themself.

Andrew Bell:

You can't miss those.

David Jongeneel:

You can't miss those, so yeah.

Andrew Bell:

So that's there. So if you're a builder or a plumber and you come across a box and there's no label, or there's no registration when you check it, where does that leave you, what do they have to do?

David Jongeneel:

So they should actually then report that to us as the regulator, and they can do that through welscompliance@awe.gov.au. The email will also then be shown at the end of the webinar as well.

Andrew Bell:

So compliance. We've talked about the nitty gritty of supply, now we come to if what you have is not what you should have, compliance and the E-word, enforcement. And that's a pretty interesting-looking pyramid we've got there. It looks like it's a system where you go through steps and you eventually end up literally, at the pointy end. So can you talk us through that pyramid, Dave?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So for those who can't see the diagram, it's a pyramid with four levels. At the bottom is the education sort of phase, that's where obviously we like as a regulator to work in. We're certainly happy to work with people who we want to tell what the obligations are and those businesses, and working to voluntary compliance. As you pointed out, it does then provide that escalation pathway. So for those businesses who make a conscious decision not to want to comply, we're then forced to then go up that sort of escalation pathway and get to the point of like coercive powers and all that sort of stuff.

David Jongeneel:

There's obviously a lot more time that we need to invest in that, and we certainly prefer to work in that education sort of phase. But ultimately, if all those measures don't work, then we are sort of left with that final option then on civil and criminal action.

Andrew Bell:

And you've got some amounts of money presumably. Are they fines or how does it-

David Jongeneel:

Yeah, so-

Andrew Bell:

... in the red zone.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah, so in that sort of zone, there are infringement notices. And these are per product for individuals. They can face infringements of $1,320 per product, and companies then at $6,660. Now, in the event that those amounts aren't actually paid, then we can go down to the legal option then, and court imposed penalties can go then up to $66,600 per product.

Andrew Bell:

And you did say it could lead to a world of pain. That's a very painful number.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So I guess-

Andrew Bell:

$66,600 for each-

David Jongeneel:

For every product.

Andrew Bell:

That's a lot.

David Jongeneel:

And just to look at an example, if you're a builder building 100 units, there's going to be around about five products in each unit on average, do the math on that, it can get potentially quite expensive as well.

Andrew Bell:

So say I'm a plumber, that's sort of hard to imagine, but say I'm a plumber and I'm given a blank box of taps, no labelling, am I going to get into trouble for that?

David Jongeneel:

So-

Andrew Bell:

What should I do in that case, practical case?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So, if you've actually been given the product by your builder, and you're not actually getting the money from the consumer to actually put that in and supply it, then you're not who we will be looking at. We'll be certainly wanting the information from who actually supplied you with the product.

Andrew Bell:

And you supply that information through that web address?

David Jongeneel:

And you can supply that through the... Yeah, the email address.

Andrew Bell:

So Mike over there, and Tom here in Canberra, I mean, you've been practically in the industry, have you anything to add? Let's start with you Mike, in Perth. Anything to add with that compliance issue?

Mike Read:

Yeah, just a couple of things. So, it's important to just bear in mind that, under our regulations the WaterMark scheme's mandated, so plumbing inspectors can take action for non-WaterMark products plumbing installations, [inaudible 00:20:38] plumbing installators. Whereas WELS is not under our regulations, so for instance a domestic washing machine, if the plumber comes and [inaudible 00:20:49] it has to be watermarked. So, if it hasn't got a WELS label on it, that's not something that comes to us as important, so he's able to take action against. I think we'll just clarify that. Is that all? Yeah.

Andrew Bell:

Thanks Mike. Anything you've got to say from your perspective having worked in this space, because practically on the ground, these things are almost inevitably going to happen, aren't they?

Tom Roberts:

Yeah, it does happen from time to time, but this is a similar situation. For WaterMark, if there's no labelling there that should be a red flag, and prompt you to investigate a bit more details through both either the WELS database, or the WaterMark database.

Andrew Bell:

If in doubt, ask. Well, questions have been asked about WELS in WA, and that's where Dr. Ursula Kretzer comes in. Hello there, Ursula, you've been doing a survey, what can you tell us about that?

Ursula Kretzer:

Hi, from Perth. Yeah, as David was saying, the WELS legislation is a Commonwealth Act, and the regulator is based in Canberra. But Western Australia has its own mirror legislation of the WELS act, so it is compulsory across Western Australia as well. And we worked quite closely with the regulator to make sure that there's a good understanding of WELS and WELS obligations, because we're keen to see people complying with the scheme, because it does have some tremendous benefits in terms of water efficiency improvements across the industry.

Ursula Kretzer:

So when we were told by the regulator, that they were picking up that there was a general lack of awareness across some of the building sector, including new developments and display suites and that sort of thing, we were quite keen to find out what the level of awareness across the WA building and development industry was. And so last year in August, we carried out an online survey of the industry, just to sort of test awareness of what the WELS scheme was and what people's compliance obligations were. And we sent that out through quite a wide network of peak bodies and departments, through DMIRS, which Mike works for, they regulate the plumbing side of things, and also peak industry bodies such as the Housing Industry Association, and the property council, and the planning institute, just trying to get a really big reach for the survey.

Ursula Kretzer:

So it would've gone out to potentially 28,000 people through the various newsletters and email networks, and out of that we got 259 responses to our survey, which we were pretty happy with because that gives a good random snapshot of what the... Yeah, of the industry. Could you go to the next slide please?

Ursula Kretzer:

So 60% of the respondents to our survey were plumbers, and 17% were developers. And we found that overall, there was quite a high level of awareness of WELS, the scheme itself, and also which products are regulated under the WELS scheme. Over 90% of respondents understood that. Most of them also knew that it's compulsory for WELS products to be WaterMark certified, and that if you don't supply... if you supply a display or install WELS products that aren't properly registered and correctly labelled, that that can attract penalties. There was a good understanding of that.

Ursula Kretzer:

Also, people understood generally that plumbers who install and supply WELS products, that they are responsible for checking that that product is registered with the correct information, and that that information is displayed. And people also were quite well-aware of the registration website that they need to use in order to register the WELS products. Next slide.

Ursula Kretzer:

There was one question that most people got wrong. We included a little case study where in which case, a developer supplies a product but contracts a plumber to install it. Some dishwashers in a new townhouse development. And the question was, who in that situation is responsible for checking that the dishwashers are registered with WELS, and that they're correctly labelled? Most people thought it was the plumber, whereas it is actually the developer. If the developer has supplied that product and it's not the plumber that's supplying it, they're just doing the installation, then it is actually the developer that's responsible.

Ursula Kretzer:

So that told us that there is a little bit more education that we need to do across the industry, about the WELS scheme and the compliance obligations, and where the responsibility lies.

Andrew Bell:

And of course, this session today is all part of that education process. Thanks, Ursula. Coming back here to Canberra, and David, let's move onto labelling. You were talking earlier on about you can't miss the labels on the front of a dishwasher or washing machine, how about are there changes in the way we label buildings? I mean, that's as big as you can get really, and check lists?

David Jongeneel:

So it's about labelling of products that are being installed in new building developments. So it's a mandatory requirement under the Act. What we're actually doing at the moment, is working through a revision to our Australian standard, to clarify what those labelling requirements are to make it really crystal clear to the industry, and provide a practical and workable solution. So an example for what we're looking at for buildings where the products are not known, there's a table which will be on the screen, and that's just providing what's the minimal information that we want.

David Jongeneel:

So at this sort of point it's like, "Right, here are the products, and here are the actual star ratings." So getting a commitment to what the star rating is for a product, that should generally mirror what is actually provided along the development application for the project in any case. But that information is also then required to be provided to the prospective purchaser as well, when they're actually making a decision to put down their deposit on the new property as well.

Andrew Bell:

So it's physically displayed. This draft standard, I mean, you were saying there's a little bit of flexibility here. Input from the industry, helpful? Can people comment on the draft standard?

David Jongeneel:

So yes, certainly people can comment on the draft standard. It hasn't actually been released yet, we're expecting that that will actually be released in the second half of this year, and certainly industry feedback will be very important and welcome. This would ordinarily be provided as well through the HIA, MBA as well to provide that facility.

David Jongeneel:

Now, just to clarify that one point there about physically displaying the information. We're not seeking that the display will actually physically have it, so when you actually go into the showroom, but that the information should be available through inclusions lists or a bit more sort of information of what the dwelling-

David Jongeneel:

... what the consumers personally get.

Andrew Bell:

... that you go through.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah.

Andrew Bell:

So here we are with products not known. So we've got no unknowns in a way, now it's the known knowns, which is labelling requirements for new buildings. That's another little graph we have here and a little few more columns there. So what does this table show us, David?

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So this table then provides exactly the same products, but some information. Now, a builder or developer will have made a decision on what products are actually going to be offered for supply to go into a new development, whether that is there's only one option or whether there are going to be numerous options, which might then be available for a consumer through a selection centre, or something like that, the consumer then can make a decision on what product am I going to buy, on the basis of the star rating and the water efficiency. But also then from a traceability perspective, we've got the registration number, we've got the organisation licence number, which is the organisation number for the WELS registration, as well as then the star rating and the water consumption information.

David Jongeneel:

And so that information as well, then needs to be provided to the consumers at the point when they're actually making their purchasing decision.

Andrew Bell:

And we were talking just now about displaying or availability, what's the case in this particular table? Is that the same thing, it's available?

David Jongeneel:

So it needs to be available. So a consumer asks for the information, they should be provided it, they should be getting it as well when they're actually making their decision, they can then compare one product against the other.

Andrew Bell:

So in that case, what do builders and developers need to do to make sure that this information is available to those prospective buyers?

David Jongeneel:

Well, having a table such as this populated with that information, the hard work will have been done. There are also businesses that we're aware of, who are already providing a service to developers and builders, by providing completed tables of all the products that are being offered for supply, or being supplied to new developments as well. But the obligation is still up for the builder and developer to check the registration and labelling information as well, because that's an obligation that's required at each point of the supply chain.

Andrew Bell:

And I guess in time, you just get used that that's just part of what you do?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah.

Andrew Bell:

Right. Now, we've talked about compliance and penalties and regulations, stuff like that. We've got another slide here, about general levels of compliance, which is basically how do we go about doing this. So if you could talk to that, David?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So part of our sort of compliance activities is also, we spent a lot of our time looking at online supply, so your E-commerce platforms, other online shops, manufacturers, as well as rolling out inspections through the building industry. Back in 2017, 2018 when we undertook our first stage of our new building inspection program, there was pretty close to 100% non-compliance across the industry. So in that time we've undertaken a lot of work to try and increase the knowledge and understanding, as well as trying to make compliance as easy as possible as well for the industry.

David Jongeneel:

And one of those measures as well, with what Ursula was talking about, is undertaking a survey to find out what information gaps there might actually be with the industry, as well in terms of their understanding of what their obligations are.

Andrew Bell:

So you're discussions are ongoing, and I see you're going to be visiting Perth. Can WELS visit during the current situation? Well, I guess you can visit in various ways, but compliance as we can see there is mandatory. I guess that's a message you want people to understand.

David Jongeneel:

So yes, compliance is mandatory, and at the moment, yes we are still planning on being in Perth next week as well to meet with a number of builders and developers as well as part of our program. We've recently visited Adelaide, and they've actually shown that their levels of compliance have actually increased as well, so that's a good tick in terms of industry understanding and their willingness to voluntarily comply with WELS requirements.

Andrew Bell:

Yeah, you used the term knowledge and understanding, so I guess in return, what can the people out there do to help you in this as they know more and understand more?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So part of that is checking the registration of products, checking the labelling of products, and it could even be undertaking a flow test at the point of a product being installed. If the flow rate is excessive, then certainly report that through to us. Only buy products that are labelled, don't remove the flow controllers, and don't substitute parts for inferior products.

Andrew Bell:

So apartment developments, that's something you mentioned earlier on. That could have a big impact if you don't follow the rules and don't get it right?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah, no very, very good point. So if we're looking at a multi-high rise development, and as an example, the flow controllers are actually removed out of products, that can also then impact on the actual building hydraulics. Buildings have been designed through hydraulic engineers to ensure that certain flow rates and pipe sizes and that are done in the design phase. If certain parts in that construction phase are then altered, that can then impact how a building and the water supply actually performs.

Andrew Bell:

A ripple effect indeed. WELS regulator busy this year, what's going on this year? What are they up to? What are you up to?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So at the moment we're working through the third independent review of the WELS scheme. We're expecting that to be finalised in the second half of this year as well. We're updating the Australian standard to clarify the labelling requirements for the building developments. As mentioned before, we're expecting that a draft for public comment will actually be submitted, or be available in the second half of this year as well.

David Jongeneel:

We're working on a proposal to develop an in-service test standard for products, continuing our national inspections of the building industry. Continuing to monitor and enforce compliance in E-commerce platforms. And also exploring opportunities to introduce WELS into the national education training package, and continuing practising development for builders and plumbers.

Andrew Bell:

You were talking about that proposal to develop an in-service test standard. What quite is that about? How are you thinking about that?

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. So what that's about is, to look at a flow rate or a volumetric test. Something that could be easily undertaken by a plumber after he or she has installed a product, such as a tap or a shower, or a plumbing inspector as well doing their certification. So what that... And it ensures compliance then of that product with the PCA requirements, so for example, it doesn't exceed more than nine litres per minute.

David Jongeneel:

The new test would be used to evaluate the level of risk to the objectives of the scheme, and non-compliant products or non-compliant installations. So if the risk is significant, then we could also then look at undertaking further tests, and they would be undertaken through a NATA accredited laboratory. So the tests that a plumber or another regulator, a plumbing inspector would undertake, would not be substituted for a NATA test. It's only an indicator of compliance.

David Jongeneel:

So as an example of a flow rate test, would be something using a flow rate cup like this, where you would alter the-

David Jongeneel:

alter your flow.

Andrew Bell:

Ah-ha.

David Jongeneel:

And you would adjust that to meet what the flow rate of what is on the packaging, and to see whether or not it's actually performing at the flow rate that's actually displayed.

Andrew Bell:

A lot of information in the last 40 minutes. We're coming towards the end, we'll get to a couple of questions in just a minute. But there are some places people can go, David, to find out, and also more importantly probably, contact you with questions, suggestions, such like, what are they?

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So number of ways, they can go through the email welscompliance@awe.gov.au. We've also got a direct 1-800 number. There's our website, which is www.waterrating.gov.au. As well as we provide a lot of information in our scheme updates, which is through our InkWELS newsletter.

Andrew Bell:

Yeah, what will people see in that if they subscribe? They should subscribe, I guess.

David Jongeneel:

So certainly, we can't automatically add people onto the list, so people need to say, "Yes, we want to be on the list." So it will be updates of the scheme. So updates to the standards. If we're doing a specific thing in relation to the building/plumbing industry, we'll be putting those things in the newsletter as well. So having subscription to that, enables access to that information as well.

Andrew Bell:

So that's a good one-stop-shop, otherwise keep an eye on the website. But you're better off with InkWELS by the look at it, because that's going to keep you right up to date.

David Jongeneel:

Exactly.

Andrew Bell:

We have at the moment, a trifecta of questions. The first one is, how are the water savings calculated? Who can speak to that?

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So I'm assuming that the... So the water savings, you're saying?

Andrew Bell:

Yeah.

David Jongeneel:

Okay. So there are some-

Andrew Bell:

Your Olympic-sized swimming pools, I think.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah, so... Well, there was some economic environmental work done a number of years ago, which then undertook using a fair bit of information which is available through various sources. And as a result of that, the modelling provided the information of what our savings were from consumers, for the various sort of sectors and that as well. So I can't talk necessarily to the nitty gritty of that, but-

Andrew Bell:

Well, there's something there. And sort of flowing on from that from another-

David Jongeneel:

Sorry, I'd probably just add another point then.

Andrew Bell:

Yeah.

David Jongeneel:

So that actual report is available on our website as well.

Andrew Bell:

So go have a look at that. Sort of flowing on from that, what program does WELS have in place to ensure products marked with a nominated flow rate, actually perform at the rate that they say they are? The box and the... What's in the box and what's on the box are the same thing, I guess is the question.

David Jongeneel:

Yeah. No, that's a really good question. So part of that is, if we're undertaking compliance activities, we can actually purchase products and we can then take those products then to a NATA accredited laboratory, get those tested for the flow rate to ensure that they are performing as they are prescribed on the label on the product.

Andrew Bell:

And another one-

David Jongeneel:

Or again, if consumers are concerned about the products, then they can certainly provide information as well to us.

Andrew Bell:

So a watchful eye is being kept on that. I don't know who would answer this, I don't know if it's Tom. When will the ABCB list, the current AS3662/2013 in the ABCB WaterMark schedule of products? I've read the words out, I don't know what they mean, do you know what they mean?

Tom Roberts:

Yeah, yeah. So I know that it's currently being considered at the moment, but I don't have an update on where that's at. But I know that both WELS and ABCB are aware of that issue, and we're working through it.

Andrew Bell:

Okay. Well, thanks for that. Keep asking questions, you've got email addresses, you've got the website, you've got the 1-800 number, 1-800-372-746.

Andrew Bell:

Well, well, I think we've just about come to the end of our session here. And thank you very much for joining us wherever you are. It's been a pleasure to have you. And if you have given up your lunch hour, thank you so much. To David and Tom here in Canberra, to Ursula and Mike in Perth, thank you very much. Thanks to you for being there for us. And don't forget, any questions at all, please forward them through to welscompliance@awe.gov.au.

Andrew Bell:

The conversation will continue, and keep in touch with it. Don't forget to subscribe to that newsletter, it makes it all the easier.

Andrew Bell:

Thank you for your time this Thursday, and have a very good day. Thank you.