



1 September 2008

WELS INSPECTORS CAN NOW FINE SUPPLIERS

Stronger action to enforce compliance with the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme will begin across Australia today.

WELS Regulator and Secretary of the Australian Government Department of the Environment, Water, Heritage and the Arts, David Borthwick said compliance activities with the WELS Scheme until now has focussed on working cooperatively with manufacturers and retailers.

“Educating businesses and individuals about the Scheme and working cooperatively with them has been our initial focus,” Mr Borthwick said.

“Offences can include failure to label a product correctly; failure to register a product with the Government for its water efficiency; and providing incorrect information to the public about the water efficiency of a product.

“WELS inspectors have the authority to issue an infringement notice where there are reasonable grounds to believe that a person has committed an offence in the supply of WELS products. The fine for each offence by a corporation can be up to \$6,600, and for each offence by an individual up to \$1,320.

A corporation or an individual may choose not to pay the penalty and instead have a court hear the matter. A court may impose a higher penalty than that in the infringement notice – to a maximum \$33,000 per offence by a corporation and to a maximum \$6,600 by an individual.”

The Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards (WELS) Scheme is a star rating system that lets the consumer know how much water certain household products use. With labels similar to the energy rating labels, more stars mean greater water efficiency.

The WELS Scheme is paving the way for all Australians to be able to do their bit to save our valuable resources. By 2021 we could save more than \$600 million through reduced water and energy bills by simply choosing more efficient products.

The products currently included under the WELS Scheme are clothes washing machines, dishwashers, tapware (over sinks, but not over baths), showers, toilets, flow controllers (optional) and urinal equipment.

It is also estimated that by using water efficient products, by 2021 domestic water use will be reduced by five per cent, or 87,200 megalitres each year, and save about 610,000 megalitres—this is more water than in Sydney Harbour.