

Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Scheme - Water Division - opening statement:

- Good afternoon committee members and thank you Chair for the opportunity to make a short opening statement as the WELS Regulator.
- The national Water Efficiency and Labelling Standards Scheme, or the WELS scheme, is a success story.
- The scheme was established to reduce Australia's water consumption by promoting more water efficient products.
- This year alone, the scheme is estimated to have saved 141 gigalitres of water, and that is expected to continue to increase each year until at least 2036.
- This scheme has delivered benefits to the national economy – and at the household and business level.
- It's keeping \$1.2 billion in the pockets of many Australians this year from cheaper utility bills, at such a difficult time.
- Most consumers rely on the WELS labels – the star rating - to inform purchasing decisions which makes it a useful tool for businesses to use to help promote their efficient products.
- The star rating label for water efficiency is displayed on dishwashers, washing machines, taps, showers, urinals, flow controllers and toilets.
- The WELS registration and compliance programs help businesses, large and small, compete for purchasing power on a fair playing field.
- The scheme also benefits other Australian business sectors, such as, for example, the water utilities and businesses advising on sustainable buildings.
- And it's a world leading scheme.

- It was introduced in 2005 following a range of voluntary schemes that had limited uptake, and produced a limited reduction in water demand.
- To improve confidence a decision was made by the Australian and New Zealand Governments that a trans-national mandatory water efficiency labelling scheme was needed.
- The scheme is so well regarded that we are now leading the development of a standard for water efficiency labelling programs internationally.
- Reviews are built into the scheme to make sure it stays fit for purpose and world leading.
- Earlier this month, on 16 October, Minister Pitt announced the panel for the 2020 independent review to consider the effectiveness and efficiency of the scheme.
- The panel will also review the WELS Intergovernmental agreement and will be looking for opportunities for how the scheme can continue to mature.
- The last independent review, in 2015, concluded that:

The WELS Scheme has achieved, and is likely to continue to achieve, much in the three main areas it sets out to – specifically to reduce water consumption, ensuring water efficiency information is available for consumers, and promoting more water efficient technologies.

- We look forward to receiving the findings of the review in 2021.
- Thank you.