



Stuart Henry MP



A strong voice for the people of Hasiuck.

Submission No:	12
Date Received:	17/8/07
Secretary:	<i>[Signature]</i>

DR MAL WASHER MP  
 CHAIR STANDING COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE  
 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
 PARLIAMENT OF AUSTRALIA  
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Dear Dr Washer

**INQUIRY INTO THE REGULATION OF PLUMBING PRODUCT QUALITY IN AUSTRALIA**

I was very pleased to see the Minister for the Environment and Water Resources seek to have your standing Committee carry out a broad ranging inquiry into the regulation of plumbing product quality in Australia.

Since the introduction of the Water Efficiency Labelling and Standards Bill into the House of representatives I have had a number of plumbing industry product manufacturers, industry associations and plumbing merchants raising concern about the possibility of the WELS accreditation process creating conflict with the pre-existing Watermark, a matter that I foreshadowed in my speech in support of the Bill on Thursday 9 December 2004, and I quote:

*"It happens to coincide with some other national initiatives that have been introduced and developed by the National Plumbing Regulators Forum, which is made up of all the state and territory bodies involved in the regulation of plumbing in Australia. That organisation has been meeting this week and has agreed nationally to introduce, accept and take into regulation the Plumbing Code of Australia, which has a plumbing product approval system.*

*I note the Water Efficient Labelling and Standards Bill 2004 does appoint a regulator from the appropriate Commonwealth department, and that person will be responsible for the regulation and the policing of this process in terms of accreditation for a product and making sure that it is used in the appropriate way.*

*It seems to me that there could well be some sort of duplication between that particular authority and regulator and the National Plumbing Regulators Forum. It may well be that that responsibility could be delegated to that body looking after plumbing across Australia. For all intents and purposes, the majority of the products that are going to be involved in this water efficiency rating program are plumbing products which will be installed by plumbers in various buildings and properties across Australia.*

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This is the first time that the Plumbing Code of Australia has been adopted, and it will go a long way to addressing a number of issues with respect to water efficiency, energy efficiency and environmental efficiency where there is practical application to plumbing installations. There will also be an element of third party certification, which is very important in verifying manufacturers' claims of compliance, thus ensuring protection of the consumer.

I will take some time to look at the objectives of this scheme, which is very much parallel to what this bill intends to achieve. The objective of the new scheme is to establish an efficient product approval process for plumbing and drainage products in Australia. As I mentioned, a number of products listed to be covered by this labelling process with respect to water efficiency are plumbing products. State and territory governments have responsibility for regulating plumbing and drainage installations in order to protect public health and safety of the environment and consumers. As I said, there are a number of parallels between this bill and these initiatives.

**Australia has had plumbing product approval since about 1920, so it seems to me appropriate for those people who are associated with those sorts of programs to be involved with the water efficiency labelling process."**

Perhaps in my speech I should have used much stronger language about the potential for serious conflict regarding the compliance requirements between jurisdictions whose only regard, since these points of conflict have arisen, seems to be for themselves rather than for an industry that as led all others across Australia in addressing mutual recognition and national consistency. It is my view that the WELS compliance unit at the Department of Environment and Heritage established to police the WELS program have been less than co-operative with industry, indeed seem to have been more intent on frustrating any orderly and quick resolution to the concerns raised over a long period of time.

There is no doubt in my mind that this matter could have been resolved expeditiously by a simple amendment requiring the Watermark as a pre-requisite for the application of the WELS rating.

I have an interest in this matter as for nearly twenty years I have worked in and for the plumbing industry, and over that period have developed a keen interest in and appreciation of the huge contribution this industry has made to our society and societies successful development in combating water borne disease such as typhoid, cholera and dysentery.

Much of this has occurred over the last 150 years or so when it was first discovered that human health and safety was directly related to a number of water borne organisms that had serious consequences for mankind. Examples of this are also given in my speech of 9th December 2004.

During the twenty years or so of involvement with the plumbing industry I was the executive director for the Master Plumbers and Gasfitters Association of Western Australia; a Director of Master Plumbers Australia; Vice Chairman and Chairman World Plumbing Council. Over this period I initiated Directions 2000.

A Water Efficiency Strategy for the Plumbing Industry, developed a submission "Living with Water & Energy" for the WA State sustainability strategy; Spoke at various conferences around the world on water and energy conservation; and promoted grey water re-use as a sustainable strategy for domestic housing among other things.

If appropriate I would be delighted to expand more fully on my submission before your Standing Committee when you are conducting your public hearings.

Yours Sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Henry", with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Stuart Henry MP  
Member for Hasluck  
17 August 2007