

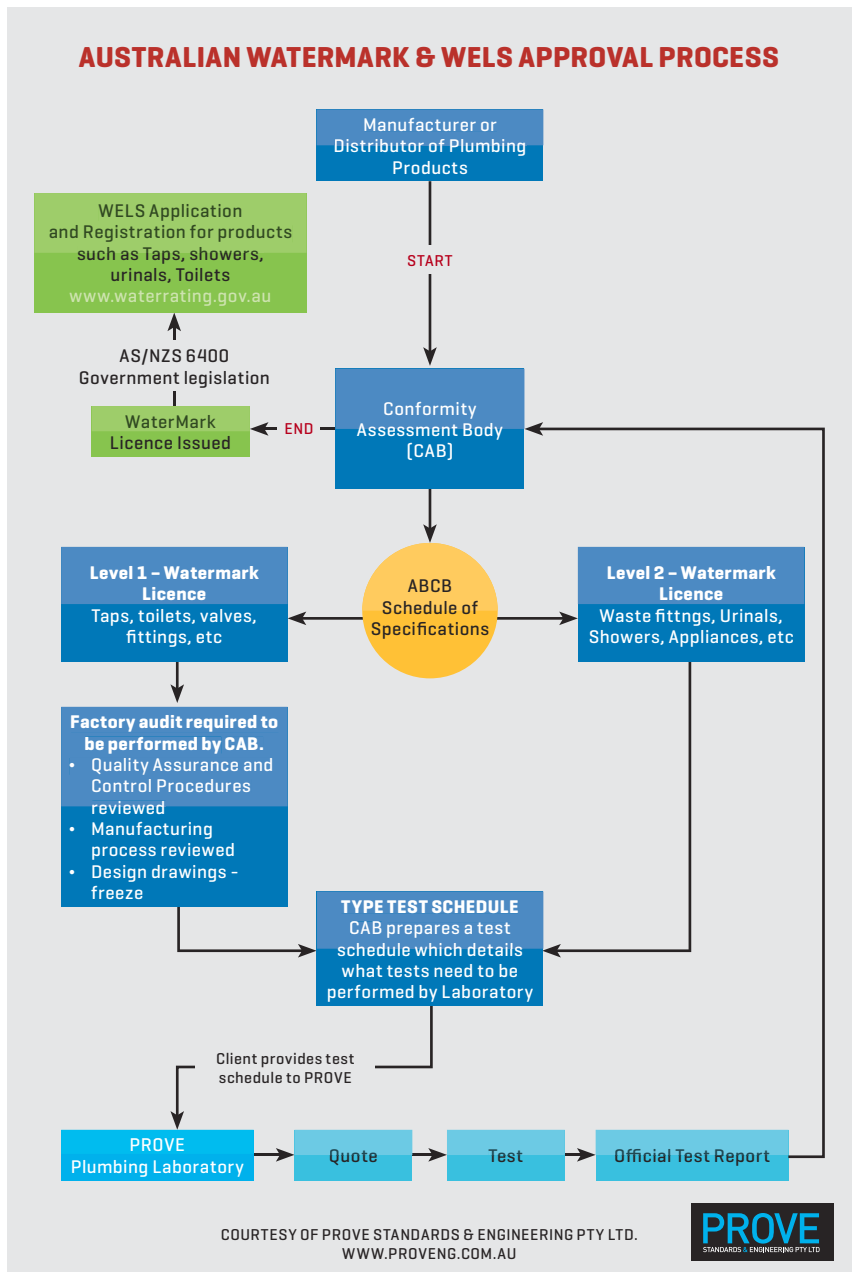
UNDERSTANDING THE WATERMARK PROCESS

THE WATERMARK CERTIFICATION SCHEME PROVIDES A NATIONALLY CONSISTENT, RISK BASED CERTIFICATION SCHEME FOR ENSURING THE QUALITY OF CERTAIN MATERIALS AND PRODUCTS USED IN PLUMBING AND DRAINAGE INSTALLATIONS. **TERRY NGUYEN**, PLUMBING PRODUCTS ENGINEER FOR PROVE STANDARDS & ENGINEERING, EXPLAINS THE WATERMARK PROCESS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS.

The WaterMark Scheme is the Australian approval process governing the certification requirements for plumbing and drainage products. The scheme was introduced and exists primarily as a safeguard to protect the community from health and safety risks associated with plumbing products and fixtures. For this reason the process is rigorous and utilises many Australian Standards which are designed and tailored for our specific and unique needs.

The simple flow chart (right) attempts to provide a brief illustration of the process required to have a product WaterMark certified in Australia. The WaterMark Conformity Assessment Body [WCAB] is ultimately responsible for assessing each individual product and providing the WaterMark certification once all requirements have been successfully fulfilled. Products are categorised as WaterMark Level 1 or Level 2, depending on their risk and consequence of failure. Level 1 (high risk) products must be subjected to the additional requirement of an annual surveillance audit at the manufacturing facility. Products defined as requiring WaterMark certification are then assigned a type test schedule from the WCAB. These detail all tests needed to be performed based on how the specific product falls within its relevant Australian Standard.

PROVE Standards & Engineering Pty Ltd. receives the prepared test schedule from the manufacturer



seeking WaterMark certification ready for the testing stage. PROVE is often asked to provide technical expertise in many situations, particularly where new innovative products do not always fit perfectly within Australian Standards that have yet to catch up. Testing does not always go entirely to plan and in many instances liaising between the manufacturer, WMCAB and PROVE is required to ensure compliance of products while tracking all relevant design changes of the product. The testing stage plays a vital role for the WMCAB, who rely heavily on technical expertise, provided by PROVE during testing, for them to cast adjudication on the product and its suitability to the Australian public.

“ PRODUCTS NOT INSTALLED BY A LICENSED PLUMBER ARE AT RISK OF INCORRECT INSTALLATION AND UNLIKELY TO BE COVERED BY WARRANTY AND/OR INSURANCE SHOULD ANY DAMAGES OCCUR FROM FAILURE. ”

Once the WaterMark certification process is finalised the product is granted WaterMark certification and registered on the WaterMark Product Database [WMPD] which is administered by the Australian Building Codes Board [ABCB]. In accordance with Section G1.4 of the PCA, a product not listed on the WMPD is not authorised for use in a plumbing or drainage installation.

As defined in Part A2 of the PCA, only after the WaterMark process is completed in full is the product entitled to be legally installed and used under Australian legislation. It is also a legal requirement that WaterMark products be installed by a licensed practitioner. Products not installed by a licensed plumber are at risk of incorrect installation and unlikely to be covered by warranty and/or insurance should any damages occur from failure.

The WaterMark process at initial glance appears long and sometimes unnecessary. However, the ability to consume clean, safe and palatable water from the water mains, and have all waste water cleanly and hygienically removed is a luxury very few in the world enjoy, and is a true testament to the effectiveness of the WaterMark scheme. ■

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