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**Exit report for the  
Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme  
a joint project of the  
Australian Car Wash Association and the  
Victorian Smart Water Fund**

Submitted to Diane Ross  
Australian Car Wash Committee  
December 2005

Revised and Updated  
May 2006

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Separate to this report, the Scheme has a number of documents which are subject to copyright and are confidential to members of the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme. They have been provided to the Smart Water Fund and are held by the Fund as “Commercial in Confidence” submissions.

The documents include:

Invitation to Join

Invitation to Join – Major Players

Application Kit incorporating

Self-Assessment

Agreement and Code of Practice

Welcome Kit incorporating

Water Conservation Plan

Best Practice Guide

Style Guide – for use of Scheme logo, rating sign and promotional signage

## **Introduction**

The **Australian Car Wash Association (ACWA)** was established in 1994 to provide information, support and a communal linking for car wash owners and operators who otherwise could be quite isolated. The Association is run by a volunteer national committee with a part time paid administrative officer. The association offers its members technical support, facts sheets on a wide range of topics, organisation of promotional events, and member open forums and other meetings.

ACWA represents more than 70% of all car wash sites in Australia. As the peak national body, it can speak with government and other related organisations on behalf of the members and the industry.

In May 2004, ACWA received a grant from the Victorian Smart Water Fund to develop, test and launch a car wash water saver rating scheme. The initial scope of the project was confined to the Victorian market. If the project was successful in Victoria, ACWA would then initiate a national roll out of the scheme.

Mendleson Communication was contracted in June 2004 to develop a water rating scheme for commercial car washes on behalf of the Australian Car Wash Association (ACWA).

This exit report provides a summary of the project requirements and the processes used to complete the project. It aims to capture some of the observations we have made and what we have learned through the experience of developing the documentation. We believe that this may prove useful for future projects when consulting with similar target audiences and producing resource kits.

The report contains three sections:

- a summary of the project requirements and processes used to complete the project
- observations on how the process could be improved in future, similar projects
- an appendix which contains key reports and documents developed during the project which contain the key learnings and outcomes of the project.

## **Project Aims**

The primary aims of the car wash water saver rating scheme project are to:

- help protect the viability of the car wash industry in times of water shortages through the creation of responsible water standards
- educate consumers to make informed decisions about commercial car washes.

The car wash water saver rating scheme project is aimed at reducing the volume of potable (drinkable) water used at commercial car washes by promoting efficient water use and practices.

It is envisaged that the scheme will drive the market to develop cost-efficient technologies to support the needs of the car wash industry. It is also expected that the scheme will educate current car wash customers to demand efficiency in water usage. A side effect of the project will be the general public gaining an increased understanding of the water efficiency of commercial car washes.

The car wash rating scheme will be self regulatory and will establish industry standards for water consumption and the methods to achieve it.

## **Key Phases**

The project was split into five key phases:

- 1a. Planning
- 1b. Feasibility (initial market research)
2. Development
3. Testing (pilot scheme)
4. Launch and Marketing
5. Review and Evaluation – to follow 6-12 months after project completed.

### ***1a. Planning***

In the planning phase Mendleson Communication developed a detailed project plan which set key actions, milestones and a budget for the project.

### ***1b. Feasibility (initial market research)***

In order to assess the feasibility of developing and implementing a water rating scheme for car washes, market research was conducted to develop an understanding of the target audiences attitudes and perceptions.

#### *Market Research Purpose*

The primary purpose of undertaking the initial market research was to determine if a car wash rating scheme would influence consumer and industry behaviour and result in potable water savings. The project plan was then adjusted to reflect the market research findings.

#### *Research Methodology*

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods were used to achieve the market research objectives:

- telephone survey of 200 car owners in the general public conducted by the Market Research Agency.
- survey of 200 current car wash customers on-site conducted by car wash managers/staff. This was split between a mix of regional and metropolitan car washes in different areas as determined by the Project Manager in conjunction with the project committee.
- 20 in-depth interviews with individual car wash owners conducted by the Project Manager comprising:
  - split of 8 face to face interviews and 12 telephone interviews
  - split of 10 rural and 10 metro car wash operators
  - mix of small and large car wash operators.

#### *Research Results*

Market research concluded:

- The proposed water efficiency rating scheme has the potential to affect about a third of vehicle owners in their choice of commercial car washes, and could become an important factor influencing their choice of car wash. Hence the proposed scheme is likely to encourage the use of more water efficient car washes by a significant proportion of car wash users.
- Informing and convincing existing car wash users that commercial car washes are water efficient and having environmental benefits will be worthwhile as this could cause up to 15% of existing customers to use commercial washes more often in the future.

- There is also considerable potential to increase the number of car owners using commercial car washes, which would reduce water wastage from home washing. Only about a third, 35%, of car owners currently use commercial car washes for the majority of their vehicle washes and only 40% of car owners are aware that commercial washes can be more water efficient. If car owners can be informed of the water efficiency of commercial car washes, this could influence up to a further 8% of car owners in their decision to use commercial car washes in the future.
- Operators need to be made more aware of the threat to their operations from water shortages and that self-regulation of the car wash industry is more likely to obtain the support of the water industry during these times. 20% to 30% of operators accept supplier or industry figures as the basis of their water consumption rather than measuring and evaluating it themselves, which indicates that water consumption is not being taken seriously enough in some parts of the industry.
- The ability of many operators to adjust their water consumption may be relatively limited, particularly for self-serve facilities. The use of recycled water needs to be further examined and the reality of quality and business barriers to adopting recycling determined. These issues could affect the technical potential of car wash operations to achieve water efficient standards, and hence limit the viability of the scheme.
- Measurement of water consumption may be an issue for the proposed water efficiency scheme. The majority of operators are not accurately measuring their water consumption per wash. There will be a need to establish a reliable and straightforward way of measuring water consumption for all types of car wash facility and to train operators in its use.
- The research indicates that the proposed scheme would be joined by the majority of operators and the fact that 75% wish to participate in the scheme trial is a good sign.

The Summary of market research findings is Attachment 1 to this report.

## **2. *Scheme development***

Scheme development tasks included:

- engaging technical consultants
- finalising rating scale
- developing, documenting and finalising accreditation criteria
- determining self funding fee structure
- finalising audit and compliance structures
- engaging scheme auditors
- launching the scheme to the Victorian car wash industry.

It took a full twelve months to develop and test the methodology and documentation which would form the basis of the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme. The underlying aims were:

- to build a rating system which would be easily understood by customers
- to develop an assessment process which could be undertaken by the owner/operator, in order to save time and costs, and to keep the assessment current with upgrades and changes to the site
- to ensure that the assessed rating was accurate and independently auditable, so that both water regulators and the public had confidence in the scheme and the signage displayed

The Invitation to Join the Scheme is Attachment 4. The Scheme documents are copyright and confidential to members of the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme. They are contained in the folder submitted with this Exit Report – see Index on Page 2 for the list.

### **3. *Testing (pilot scheme)***

The scheme was then tested using 5 sites, with a mixture of metropolitan and regional sites. The pilot went from June to November 2005 and tested the following elements:

- signage
- market research amongst consumers that tested their reaction to the scheme. This was very positive and strongly reflected the market research conducted during the feasibility stage.
- a focus group with car wash operators testing their reaction to the scheme, including overall concept, proposed fees, signage and logos. Generally, the results were supportive of the scheme. They also indicated that open meetings with the operators could be the best way to promote the concepts and value of the scheme, including correcting false ideas (for instance this is an industry scheme not an ACWA scheme, open to all).

The focus group report is included as Attachment 2 to this document.

Pilot sites and a number of additional sites were also asked to thoroughly test and comment on the self assessment procedures designed so that car wash owners can calculate their own preliminary rating, which would later be confirmed by the scheme manager and auditors.

### **4. *Launch and Marketing***

As the scheme was developed, the industry was kept informed by articles in the national ACWA Newsletter and the Australian Convenience Store News. In September, a 4-page newsletter (Attachment 3) was prepared by the project manager and sent to all car wash owners nationally, informing them about the scheme, how it would work and the benefits of joining.

The scheme was officially launched on 18 October 2005. Mendleson Communication coordinated a picture opportunity which featured people from ACWA, water authorities and the Smart Water Fund and circulated a media release. Coverage was obtained in local and water industry media.

In November, a direct mail Invitation to Join was sent to all Victorian car wash owners encouraging them to join the scheme and offering them free signage if they applied for the self-assessment test by mid-December. In response to this mailing, ACWA received approximately 20 registrations prior to the end of the calendar year.

Additionally, in December, members of the project committee met with representatives from Mobil, Caltex, Coles Express and BP. All meetings have been positive and all are considering joining the scheme. Caltex intends to start with their Victoria sites early in 2006 and the other three have further meetings set up to work towards a schedule of joining.

The water regulators were also kept informed during the development of the project, both by a series of letters and information flyers and in a national workshop convened in Queensland at the time of the ACWA Convention in early August. These communications have been followed up by on-going meetings and correspondence with water regulators all over Australia.

## 5. *Review and Evaluation*

This review covers progress to early April 2006. A second review and evaluation will take place in December this year.

### 5.1 **Progress with small operators**

As the water situation is no longer as critical in Victoria as in 2003-2004, and regulators are not enforcing water reductions in other states, the small operators have largely taken the view that the need to promote and advertise water efficiencies is not a priority cost at this point in time – though verbally they still support the concept. To counter this view

- the focus is being directed at self-serve facilities who do not have to invest thousands of dollars in recycling equipment which does not yet have widespread market support;
- a series of “social” meetings has been started with ACWA members to promote the concept of using the scheme to grow their customer base – this is a good selling tactic as most carwashes have reduced turnover from the peak of two years ago.

### 5.2 **Progress with major players**

The dialogue is continuing with the majors, adjusting the financial structures to eliminate large up-front fees and working out a process for self-assessment by their major equipment suppliers.

It seems that at least three of the companies feel that they must be part of the scheme and that the process of joining is reasonable. We believe that they will sign up by 30 June 2006, each starting with a minimum of twenty sites. Caltex has already committed and submitted a list of sites in Victoria and south east Queensland. All four companies are in the process of upgrading and will only bring in sites that can achieve at least a four star rating.

### 5.3 **Comments on how the process could be improved in similar projects in the future**

In this section, we have noted some of our thoughts on the project process and aimed to supply practical comments as to how the process of developing an Industry Association based scheme could be improved in the future.

#### *Key challenges*

One of the key challenges throughout the project was **the technical challenge faced in developing a credible, fair and auditable scheme**. Car washes vary hugely across the industry in terms of:

- equipment used and how it is set up
- size of operations, from very small individual operators to large chains
- staffing and the technical skills of staff.

The scheme will have to continue to work with operators across the industry to refine the whole technical side of the scheme, i.e. auditing and self assessment.

Another key challenge was being able to **engage the car wash operators**. This proved very difficult, even among the pilot sites who had committed their interest. A lot of time was spent by the project manager chasing and liaising with the pilot operators and additional operators who had agreed to comment on the self assessment test. Finding effective ways to engage the operators will be absolutely fundamental to the success of the scheme. The state of water restrictions is very much a driving factor in terms of attracting their interest and commitment.

The **results of the market research** held both at the beginning of the project and during the pilot process have been very positive – both in terms of the overall concept of the scheme and the rating system used. There are strong indications that a larger percentage of the wider population will be interested in using commercial car washes if they believe that this will save water, and this can be used as a second selling point for the scheme to the industry.

The **structure of the water rating scheme committee** worked very well and this was absolutely key to the success of the project. The combination of having representatives from ACWA (including both small and large operators), the Smart Water Fund and regulators was an excellent combination.

Overall, the project was a much more complicated exercise than originally anticipated. It was a **much more expensive and extensive process** to undertake to do it properly and to create a truly viable scheme. Part of this was because there was no one who could give us a lot of information on how to construct the scheme. Other ratings schemes exist, and we were able to draw some information from them, however no precedents could be found for the technical challenges found in assessment and auditing processes.

ACWA felt that the **Smart Water Fund was too inflexible** at the end as far as being open to extending the grant. We needed at least \$20,000 extra to be able to market the scheme effectively as was originally planned as part of the project. This will not be able to happen as, in spite of a huge voluntary time commitment from members of the project committee, all the funds granted were used in the development process and bringing the project to completion. We recommend that the Smart Water Fund has a contingency available to projects to allow for overruns where they believe that the money has been well spent.

#### **5.4 Evaluating the future success of the project**

At the commencement of the project, the following targets were set as part of the initial project plan. At this stage, it is too early to report on whether these objectives have been achieved, however, we have noted them here to report back in December 2006..

*The project will be successful if it achieves credibility in the eyes of consumers and car wash operators, majority participation by operators, and increased awareness of the water efficiency of commercial car washes. The following objectives are measurable factors of success of the project:*

- *120 Victorian car wash sites to join the scheme in FY 05/06. This represents a 60% take-up.*
- *Existing car wash users display increased awareness of the water efficiency of commercial car washes: increase from 70% to 85% (Measures awareness)*
- *50% of car wash customers state water efficiency is as important as other factors in their choice of car wash (Measures behaviour)*
- *Win approval to use the Smart Approved Water Mark for the rating scheme. This may be a stretch target for the project, however the mark provides independent and credible assessment of water efficiency and a national endorsement of the scheme.*



## Attachment 1 – Summary of Market Research

Conclusions that can be drawn from the results of the market research include:

- There is considerable potential to increase the number of car owners using commercial car washes, given that only about a third, 35%, of car owners currently use these services for the majority of their vehicle washes. Car owners and especially car wash users are interested in water efficiency and consider this when using a commercial car wash but only 40% of car owners are aware that commercial car washes can be more water efficient.
- If car owners can be informed of the water efficiency of commercial car washes, this could influence a further 8% of car owners to use of commercial car washes and potentially reduce water wastage from home washing.
- Even informing and convincing existing car wash users that commercial car washes are water efficient and have environmental benefits will be worthwhile as this could cause up to 15% of existing customers to use commercial washes more in the future.
- Operators need to be made more aware of the threat to their operations from water shortages, and if this is done they are more likely to support the move by the industry to self-regulate. The fact that about a quarter of operators do not know their per wash water consumption indicates that water consumption is not a major consideration in some parts of the industry.
- The use of reclaim systems needs to be further examined and the reality of quality and business barriers to adopting recycling determined. These issues could affect the technical potential of car wash operations to operate in a water efficient manner, hence to viability of the scheme.
- Measurement of water consumption may be an issue for the proposed water efficiency scheme. There will be a need to establish a reliable way of measuring water consumption and to train operators in its use, otherwise they will not be able to assess if they are improving their water efficiency.
- The proposed scheme would be joined by the majority of operators and the fact that 75% wish to participate in the scheme trial is a good sign.
- Operators should be supplied information about the scheme by newsletter and email and kept up to date with information about reactions by the responses from public/customers and how the scheme was to be implemented, measured and audited.

### *Car owners: key findings*

- Only about a third, 35%, of vehicle owners use commercial car washes for the majority of their vehicle washing.
- Saving water/being better for the environment were reasons mentioned by about a third of respondents (32%) for using a commercial wash and water restrictions by a quarter (27%).
- The majority, 57%, of vehicle owners that used commercial car washes for the majority of their vehicle washes already knew that commercial washes were more water efficient but only 30% of less frequent users knew this.
- Of those that did not know that commercial washes were more water efficient, 66% of respondents who used the commercial washes for the majority of their vehicle washes

stated they would be influenced by this knowledge but only 12% of less frequent users stated they would be affected. This means 8% of car owners who currently are not regular users of commercial car washes could be influenced by the knowledge of that commercial car washes are more water efficient to use commercial car washes more in the future.

- The majority (54%) stated that knowledge of a car wash's water efficiency rating would affect their choice of car wash. More females, 61%, than males, 45%, stated that knowledge of a car wash's water efficiency rating would affect their choice of car wash.
- Of the respondents who said they would be affected by a car wash's water efficiency rating, a large majority, 79%, stated that the water efficiency rating would be as important as the convenience, cost and quality of the car washes in their choice of a car wash.
- The majority of respondents suggested the use of the mainstream media - radio, television and daily newspapers - as the media to inform people, while a third also mentioned promotion of the scheme at the car washes themselves.

#### *Car wash users: key findings*

- The majority of car wash users interviewed, 75%, washed their vehicle at least monthly at a commercial wash.
- The majority of car wash users, 69%, mentioned the water efficiency/environmental advantages of commercial car washes as one of the reasons they used commercial car washes. However, this proportion might overstate the case as the result in the telephone survey was much lower. Nevertheless, a significant proportion and possibly the majority of car wash users are at least partially motivated to use commercial washes due to their water efficiency/environmental benefits.
- The present level of knowledge in car wash users is high concerning the greater water efficiency of commercial washes, with 70% knowing this fact. These results are supported by the telephone results. However 30% of car wash users are not aware or convinced of this fact but half of these would be more likely to use a commercial car wash in the future if they knew this. This indicated building awareness in the existing customer base could contribute to up to 15% of existing customers choosing to use commercial car washes more in the future, hence reducing water wastage through home washing.
- Around a third of car wash users, 36%, stated their choice of car wash would be affected by the proposed water efficiency rating of car washes and for about a third of car wash users the water efficiency rating might be an important or very important consideration in their choice of a car wash. This proportion is lower than that indicated by the telephone survey, but it is probably a more realistic result. It still suggests the proposed scheme could have an impact on very significant proportion of car wash customers.
- The majority of respondents suggested the use of radio, suburban newspapers and the promotion of the scheme at the car washes as the methods to inform people about the proposed water efficiency scheme.

#### *Car wash operators: key findings*

- All operators displayed a good level of knowledge about local water restrictions, however the knowledge of the potential threat of their water being cut off by water authorities is not sufficiently well understood by the industry.

- They are very positive about the industry taking the initiative to regulate its own water consumption rather than have it imposed by water authorities.
- The operators' ability to measure their water consumption varied, with between 70% and 80% believing they know their per wash potable water consumption.
- Operators achieving savings greater than 41% in automatic or conveyerised sites are doing so through using rainwater, borewater or using a reclaim system.
- A variety of methods to achieve proportionally small savings in automatic sites were proposed by operators.
- The majority of operators are recycling the discarded water from the reverse osmosis function but this achieves less than 10 litres per wash savings.
- Just under 30% of operators with automatic car washes (i.e. conveyerised hand wash, brushes and touchless) are using reclaim systems to recycle water, and all using them are recycling more than 41%.
- About 30% of operators have the plumbing to use recycled water but have decided not to do so. Operators not recycling water are doing so due to quality concerns and also the lack of a business imperative.
- Operators recognise that water efficiency in car washes is important to their customers, and have perceptions regarding the importance of this to customers which are broadly in line with the results of the telephone and car users surveys.
- The majority of operators would participate in the water rating scheme if it was introduced and the proposed fees appeared acceptable to the majority.
- Operators want information about the scheme by newsletter and email and are especially interested in information about reactions by the responses from public/customers and how the scheme was to be implemented, measured, audited.
- 75% of the operators are interested in participating in any trial of the scheme.

## **Attachment 2 – Focus Group Report**

**Held 12- 1.30pm**

**October 25, 2005**

**Focus group took place at Mendleson Communication premises.**

Present were: Paul Morris ACWA; Rob Bassett-Smith Carwash Springvale; Tony Stephens, Washbusters South Yarra; Rick Turner, Ezy Wash Ferntree Gully; Daryl Bedar, Suds, Ormond; Gary Lewin, Supa Car Wash, Glen Waverley.

Facilitated by: Anne Connor, Mendleson Communication

Notes taken by: Jen Perry, Mendleson Communication

### **General feedback:**

The people around the table thought the scheme was a good idea and most of them supported it. However, the general consensus was that the average car wash owner needs to be educated as to the benefits of buying into the scheme and that the \$1,000 fee could be difficult for some. They also felt that it may be especially difficult to sell the scheme considering that we are not on water restrictions at present.

All agreed that it should be mandatory that if you buy into the scheme, you must become a member of the association. Otherwise, ACWA should make the fees for non members five times higher than the fees for members.

It was also agreed that the consumer needs to be educated as to what the scheme is and what the star ratings mean.

The general consensus was also that the committee is on the right track, has done a good job, there just needs to be fine tuning of some of the details.

### **Proposed Water Saver Rating Scheme**

**The purpose of the scheme is to encourage:**

- **awareness of water use by car wash customers and by the car wash industry, and**
- **reduction in the amount of drinking water used for car washing.**

The general opinion was that the public needs to be educated as to what the star rating means, as many customers already think that they are washing their cars with recycled water. Not many customers know that they are washing their cars with drinkable water.

Also, the public may interpret that less stars mean a cheaper wash, as in the star rating system for accommodation.

Also the question was raised that, as a car wash operator, why would you buy into the scheme if there aren't any water restrictions on at present?

### **Levels of Ratings**

**Participants were presented with logos and what the water efficiency meant**

The general opinion was that it is hard to distinguish what the stars mean. They are too hard to see. There was also concern that the costs will go up for the consumer because of the re-structure of equipment and costs to buy into the scheme, to qualify for a star rating.

A general discussion took place about the assessment for a star rating as every carwash has a different PSI and litre measurement is relevant to time.

It was also mentioned that it wouldn't be viable to buy into the scheme if you were a two star rating, because when stages two and three of the water restrictions were on you wouldn't be able to stay open.

### **The star logos were held up for the group to view and give their thoughts**

There was a mixed reaction from the group. Some said they liked the logos and others said they meant nothing. One person said the logos weren't acceptable. One person said that the customer is used to star ratings from accommodation promotion. But the public would need education as to what the logos relate to.

It was agreed by those who liked the logos that the minimal wording is best.

### **3 1/2 star hand wash**

The group were shown two logos. One had three and half stars coloured in, the other logo had three stars coloured and just the surrounds of the fourth star coloured, so that most of the star was not coloured in.

The general consensus was that the three and half stars coloured in was the best as it gives a clearer message.

The group also thought a bigger size would be better.

### **2 Star**

The general consensus was that a two star rating was negative and it could mean poor equipment.

### **5 star**

The general consensus was that it looked fine, but there needs to be marketing attached to it to sell its meaning to the consumer and the carwash operator.

### **Fees**

Only one person said the fees were too high, all the others didn't think so, as they are fairly committed to the scheme. However, they do think that generally car wash operators would need to be educated as to what the fees were for and where they will be going.

General consensus was that the fees were acceptable to the people around the table, but the general car wash owner would find another \$1,000 too much, especially if there weren't any water restrictions.

It was suggested that the some of the fees be hidden in the association fee, eg: association fee goes up to \$500, and \$200 goes towards the scheme. Then reduce scheme fees so that members can pay them over a couple of years, eg:

- \$500 first year
- \$500 second year
- \$300 third year.

General consensus also that the scheme needed to be marketed to the car wash owners; once people realise the benefits, then it was felt they would come on board easier.

All agreed that it should be mandatory that if you buy into the scheme, you must become a member of the association. Otherwise, ACWA should make it very difficult by making the fees for non members five times higher than the fees for members.

All agreed to have a fixed price on three or four bays not five bays, as not many people have five bays in their site.

The question was asked how the committee came up with the price and why so expensive the first year. Paul Morris relayed the committee's rationale for the fees. The response to this was that if a big component of the fees went to auditors, then instead of having auditors, have self-assessment and then spot checks by association. If the car wash does not rate with the star rating then you have the opportunity to bring your business into line, if you are spot checked again and fail to qualify then you are disqualified.

All agreed that the breakdown of the fees needs to be fed back to association members and potential members so that they know where their fees are going.

### **Self-assessment Test**

There was a lot of discussion about this subject, mainly about the variation in assessment. Some said it will depend at what pressure your gauge is set at, depending on the PSI. If a more efficient tip and pressure were used then there is more chance of gaining a higher star rating. Then customers might complain that pressure is not as good if a lower pressure was used to get that rating.

It was agreed, that depending on the pressure, anything from 40-50 litres per wash can be saved.

One person did not accept the committee's opinion on rating and wanted to put his own star rating on it. He thought the committee had made a mistake. This was mainly to do with the amount of bore water he was using in each wash.

It was mentioned by another member of the group that there should be a measure rating of what type of water used, eg bore water, tap water, rain water and stars attributed accordingly.

One car wash may use one bucket of bore water per wash and another may use a tank of bore water per wash, yet both would receive the same rating! This needs to be changed to reflect the amount of bore water used.

After much discussion about at what stage in the assessment process do you measure the water, it was agreed that it is logical to measure at the water meter because the rating scheme is on drinkable water

Some of the comments from around table were:

- You could just change the pressure to get a good rating and then change it back to suit.
- You could lose customers because of the PSI pressure, if it's too low.
- The time it takes to wash a car varies from car wash to car wash and quality of equipment could affect the test.
- What is the time frame for the duration of test and who will pay for it?

## Messages

Members of the group were asked to give their opinion on two messages:

- 1. Be part of the future of the car wash industry.**
- 2. Added security in times of water shortages.**

The group wasn't very impressed with either one of the messages, but agreed that the number one message was the better one. However, in times of water shortage stages one and two, then the second message was best.

There were other suggestions for messages including:

- Save our rivers, save our dams.
- Change the wording of number one to read: 'Car wash industry future.'

## Conclusion

As outlined at the beginning of this report, the focus group thought the scheme was a good idea and most of them supported it. The general consensus was that the group was appreciative of all the committee's hard work, and that the committee was on the right track. There just needs to be a bit of fine-tuning at this stage. The meeting concluded with strong messages to the committee, such as:

- the average car wash owner will take the scheme negatively as there are no water restrictions at the moment, so there is no perceived benefit from being in the scheme
- if authorities want this to get through they need to make it fairer in terms of testing and pricing
- no reason to join the association if it isn't mandatory to be in the scheme
- the scheme would be better if it was self-regulated
- if you don't comply, pay for your own audit.



## New rating scheme makes water conservation your competitive edge

**"Australia will never return to an age where we carelessly and wastefully wash the car in the backyard on a Sunday morning thinking that water was available in a never-ending supply. Those days are gone."**

The Prime Minister John Howard, May 2005

A new water rating scheme to be launched this month by the Australian Car Wash Association (ACWA) will give commercial car washes a competitive edge in these times of drought.

To be launched on October 18 during National Water Week, the scheme is designed to allow water efficient car washes to continue operating during some levels of water restrictions, even when washing cars at home is not permitted.

### Water wise consumers

Around Australia, water restrictions are becoming commonplace and people are changing their attitudes to water. Recent market research shows that consumers would prefer to use a water wise car wash than wash their cars by hand at home.

In response to this increasing community awareness of the need to conserve our drinking water supplies, ACWA, the peak body for the car wash industry, has developed the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme.

"This new rating system measures and advertises the amount of drinking water used by commercial car washes. The scheme is an investment in the future of the car wash industry. It aims to meet consumer needs and the requirements of water authorities as pressures on Australia's water reserves continue to grow," says Geoff Logie-Smith, Chairman, ACWA Water Strategy Committee.



see attached .pdf file for rest of this document....



## Attachment 4 – Invitation to Join the Scheme

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX  
XXXXXXXXXXXX xxxxxxxx xxxx

xx xxxxxxxxxxxx 2006

Dear xxxxxx,

### CAR WASH WATER SAVER RATING SCHEME

Every week, water grows as an important issue for businesses, government and communities in Australia. Water shortages are commonplace and people are changing their attitudes towards water use.

*The Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme has been developed so that responsible car wash operators can demonstrate their high environmental standards in both water use and the disposal of waste water to sewer.*

#### **As a member of the scheme you will benefit by:**

- **attracting new customers** - our market research tells us that many customers will prefer to use rated car washes that they know are using a minimum amount of water to wash their cars.
- **using the star rating signage to promote your car wash** – with eye catching standardised signage and a nationally recognised logo
- **linking with national and State advertising of the scheme** – promoting a good corporate image when you are praised as an environmentally caring business
- **gaining more security of continued operation** - when rainfall is so low that water restrictions are declared. The water rating scheme is already aligned with the new water restriction guidelines across Victoria and has been accepted as part of new water restrictions coming into other States.

The Scheme is voluntary but we urge you to join and support this most worthwhile industry program, which has been developed to help secure the future of commercial car washes.

Enclosed is a form to fill in and send back to us to register your interest. An Application Kit will then be sent to you to complete which will begin the assessment process to join the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme. Once the site assessment is accepted and the Agreement is signed, your car wash will receive its star rating and signage and can begin to enjoy the benefits of being part of this exciting Scheme.

Yours sincerely



Paul Morris  
Rating Scheme Manager  
ACWA Water Strategy Committee



Greg Boston  
President  
Australian Car Wash Association

see attached .pdf file for the rest of this document



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Dear xxxxxx,

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## Scheme Membership Fees

The Australian Car Wash Association (ACWA) is operating the Car Wash Water Rating Scheme as a non-profit program for the industry. Fees are levied per car wash site and are higher if there is more than one type of equipment on the site. Fees include signage, a design portfolio, administrative costs, national marketing, and an independent audit of each car wash in the first year and thereafter once in every 24mths.

In recognition of the significant voluntary contribution made by members of ACWA in developing the Scheme, members of ACWA will receive a discount on scheme fees. Owners of more than 5 sites also receive a special discount per site.

The signage comprises a 600x750mm rating decal for each type of car wash on the site and a 300x450mm laminated information poster. Other promotional signage can be supplied at extra cost, or the artwork can be downloaded from the carwashwater website and used in accordance with a detailed style guide.

FEES PER SITE	One type of equipment		Two types of equipment	
	ACWA members	Non-members	ACWA members	Non-members
<b>First Year Licence Fees**</b>				
Initial Registration Fee				
Balance of 1st year fee, including signage and first audit				
<b>Subsequent Year Licence Fee**</b>				
Annual charge including bi-annual audit				
<b>Multiple Sites</b> (more than 5)	22.5% discount on all above rates per site			

\*\*all fees are quoted GST exclusive

## Registration Order Form

To become part of the Scheme, fill in the required details on this order page and send with your Initial Fee of \$xxx per site (including GST) to the Car Wash Water Rating Scheme.

We will then send you an Application Kit for each of your nominated sites. The Application Kit includes the self-assessment guide that you need to complete for each car wash so that we can rate it. Return your completed self-assessment/s to the Scheme Manager with the balance of the first year's membership fees.

Contact name: .....

Business name: .....

Postal Address: .....

.....

Telephone number(s): .....

ACWA Member: Yes / No If "no", an ACWA membership kit will be sent to you with the Application Kit

Number of sites ..... Total amount payable @\$xxx per site (including GST): .....

Payment can be made by cheque to Car Wash Water Rating Scheme, or by credit card (only those listed)

NAME ON CARD:.....SIGNATURE:.....

Please circle VISA MASTERCARD Card No:..... Exp Date:.....

A tax invoice will be supplied on receipt of fees.

Send this Registration Order page to: The Scheme Manager  
Car Wash Water Rating Scheme  
PO Box  
XXXXXXXXXX, Victoria xxxx

# HOW THE WATER RATING SCHEME WORKS

The Car Wash Water Rating Scheme measures the amount of drinking water used by car wash equipment in a defined standard wash, and then rates that equipment on its water efficiency. If one site has two or more types of equipment, they will each be rated separately.

The rating Scheme uses the well-understood star rating system – five stars being the best result, which indicates the lowest amount of drinking water used per wash.

Initially the amount of water used is assessed by the owner/operator of the site using a detailed self-assessment guide provided to them. This is backed by an Agreement and Code of Practice document which the owner/operator signs.

To give the Scheme credibility with the public, water authorities and regulators, a newly-rated site must be independently audited within 12 months of being accepted into the Scheme. Ecowise, a national and experienced audit firm, has been appointed as the Scheme's auditor.

Member car washes

- receive rating signage and an information poster
- are backed by a national promotional and marketing campaign, and
- are taking a significant step to secure their operations in times of severe water shortages.

After the first audit, subsequent audits will take place once in every two years, thereby reducing costs to Scheme members.

## Rating Levels

Star rating	Number of litres per wash
not-rated	over 200
1	151-200
2	101-150
3	71-100
4	41-70
5	up to 40
The rating scale is valid for at least 3 years	

## What happens after I complete and return the Registration form

Once we receive your Registration form and initial fee, you will:

- receive an Application Kit which includes a water rating self assessment guide, Agreement form and Code of Practice for each of your nominated sites
- follow the instructions in the self assessment guide to measure your site/s preliminary water rating/s
- send a membership application back for each site, including self-assessment results, completed agreement form/s and the balance of your first year's annual membership fee/s

The site self assessment results will be reviewed by the Water Rating Scheme manager and confirmed for acceptance into the scheme at the assessed rating level. If necessary you will be contacted for further information about your self-assessment and/or other details.

## What happens after I am accepted into the Scheme?

Once your sites have been accepted into the Scheme you will:

1. receive a Welcome Kit which includes a design portfolio with style guide, marketing advice, a Best Practice Guide for water conservation, and a Water Conservation Plan template.
2. receive your rating signs which must be displayed in an approved manner
3. choose from an additional range of promotional signs that are designed to attract customers
4. undergo an independent audit of each rated car wash site within 12 months of joining
5. after the first year of membership, pay a reduced annual licence fee to remain part of the Scheme.

## New rating scheme makes water conservation your competitive edge

**"Australia will never return to an age where we carelessly and wastefully wash the car in the backyard on a Sunday morning thinking that water was available in a never-ending supply. Those days are gone."**

The Prime Minister John Howard, May 2005

A new water rating scheme to be launched this month by the Australian Car Wash Association (ACWA) will give commercial car washes a competitive edge in these times of drought.

To be launched on October 18 during National Water Week, the scheme is designed to allow water efficient car washes to continue operating during some levels of water restrictions, even when washing cars at home is not permitted.

### **Water wise consumers**

Around Australia, water restrictions are becoming commonplace and people are changing their attitudes to water. Recent market research shows that consumers would prefer to use a water wise car wash than wash their cars by hand at home.

In response to this increasing community awareness of the need to conserve our drinking water supplies, ACWA, the peak body for the car wash industry, has developed the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme.

"This new rating system measures and advertises the amount of drinking water used by commercial car washes. The scheme is an investment in the future of the car wash industry. It aims to meet consumer needs and the requirements of water authorities as pressures on Australia's water reserves continue to grow," says Geoff Logie-Smith, Chairman, ACWA Water Strategy Committee.



## Benefits of a water saver rating

By participating in the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme, your car wash will:

- > be recognised as a responsible corporate citizen through efficient environmental practices
- > gain increased operational security under any future water restrictions
- > have access to nationally recognised star rating signage
- > be able to use your star rating to promote your car wash
- > attract new customers and retain existing customers, and
- > be part of the future of the commercial car wash industry.

## Helping you become more water efficient

In Victoria, as part of the new Uniform Water Restriction Guidelines, water authorities will require all commercial car washes across the state to submit a Water Conservation Plan.

All participants in the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme will receive a template and a step-by-step guide to help them create a Water Conservation Plan for their car wash business.

Car washes across Australia will find the plan a very useful tool to help reduce their water consumption and it will be a ready resource should water authorities in other states require similar plans in the future.

36 per cent of car wash users would prefer to use a car wash with a water efficiency rating

## You will soon be invited to join

The Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme is voluntary and all commercial car washes will be invited to join.

Because the scheme is designed to save water and the environment, only car washes that dispose of their waste water responsibly will be accepted into the scheme. Waste water should be sent into the sewerage system, not into the stormwater system where it ends up in our waterways.

Car washes that use more than 200 litres of drinking water for each "average" or "standard" wash will not be rated.

Look out for more information coming your way soon.

## Scheme pilot a success

Five car washes in Victoria tested the principles and practicalities of the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme:

- > Apco Easy Wash  
239 Thompson Road, North Geelong
- > BP Richmond  
282 Swan Street, Richmond
- > Clean Bay Carwash  
500 Pascoe Vale Road, Strathmore
- > Shine Hand Car Wash and Café  
8-10 Mercer Street, Geelong
- > Wizard Wash  
11-13 Regency Drive, Narre Warren

# How the rating system works

The more stars the better



An **excellent** level of water efficiency



A **very high** level of water efficiency



A **high** level of water efficiency



A **good** level of water efficiency



A **moderate** level of water efficiency

Using guidelines supplied by ACWA, car wash operators will self-assess their water rating and this will be confirmed by independent audits.

Once accepted into the scheme, participants receive star rating signage that advertises the amount of drinking water used by their commercial car wash in its "standard" wash or "average" wash. The signage is designed to be placed in a prominent position on site so that the rating sign becomes a valuable marketing tool for the car wash.

In Victoria, stages of water restrictions will be aligned with the star ratings of the scheme. For example, during stage two restrictions car washes rated three stars or better may continue to operate, however people will not be permitted to wash their cars with a garden hose.

ACWA is currently liaising with water authorities in other states to try to align the star ratings with their water restriction levels.

## Bonus half-stars for rainwater and groundwater

The scheme is planning to award bonus half-stars to car washes that:

- > use a rainwater tank of 45,000 litres or bigger
- > draw from a groundwater bore.

The additional half-star for rainwater or groundwater use recognises the site's investment in an alternative water source.





## About this newsletter

This newsletter is published by the Australian Car Wash Association to inform the car wash industry about the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme.

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Glen Huntly Victoria 3163  
[www.carwash.org.au](http://www.carwash.org.au)

Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme  
PO Box 1440  
Narre Warren Victoria 3805  
[www.carwashwater.com.au](http://www.carwashwater.com.au)

## Thanks to the Smart Water Fund

The Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme has been made possible by a grant received by the Smart Water Fund – an initiative by Melbourne’s metropolitan water businesses, City West Water, Melbourne Water, South East Water and Yarra Valley Water together with the Victorian Government.

Established in 2002, the fund encourages innovation in water recycling, water conservation and biosolids management. Projects such as the Car Wash Water Saver Rating Scheme will help support the Victorian Government’s targets to cut Melbourne’s water consumption by 15 per cent by 2010 and increase recycling by 20 per cent.

For more information on the Smart Water Fund, visit [www.smartwater.com.au](http://www.smartwater.com.au)

