



## Guidelines for Pool Cover Applications

### Introduction

The Smart Approved WaterMark scheme has recently received a significant number of applications from the manufacturers and sellers of pool covers. There is little doubt that a pool cover used in the correct way will reduce evaporation from a swimming pool and hence save water. There is a lot of evidence, however, that suggests that amount of water saved varies greatly from cover to cover, depending on factors like the thickness of the material, the type of material and way in which the cover is attached to the pool. The Expert Panel of the Smart Approved WaterMark scheme has considered these issues and established the following guidelines for pool cover applications. To be awarded the Mark, pool cover applications need to follow these guidelines.

### Guidelines

**A) Water saving.** As the main aim of the scheme is to reduce water use, applications must include a demonstration of the water saving potential of the product. Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the specific product that is the subject of the application has saved water. Acceptable evidence includes:

1. A test by any independent agency such as a consulting engineer, university, CSIRO, testing facility or any other testing agency which has no commercial interest in the product. There is a standard test, American Standards Test Methods; E96-2000<sup>1</sup>, which has been specifically written to test the transmission of water vapour through a material. It is a relatively simple test that can be carried out by any competent testing laboratory. The standard states:
  - a. *“These test methods cover the determination of water vapor transmission (WVT) of materials through which the passage of water vapor may be of importance, such as paper, plastic films, other sheet materials, fiberboards, gypsum and plaster products, wood products, and plastics. The test methods are limited to specimens not over 11/4 in. (32 mm) in thickness except as provided in Section.... Two basic methods, the Desiccant Method and the Water Method, are provided for the measurement of permeance, and two variations include service conditions with one side wetted and service conditions with low humidity on one side and high humidity on the other. Agreement should not be expected between results obtained by different methods. The method should be selected that more nearly approaches the conditions of use.”*

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<sup>1</sup> The standard can be purchased online from the American National Standards Institute and it may be available from Standards Australia.

The Panel believes that the Water Method is the most appropriate method to use when determining the water saving capabilities of pool covers and blankets.

2. Once the test has been done a product must be able to demonstrate a minimum water saving of 40% compared with the open water vessel which is used as a comparison in the test. This minimum will ensure that there is a better than even chance that normal use of the cover will result in some water savings.
3. A detailed case study which demonstrates that the installation of a cover resulted in water savings will also suffice. If a detailed case study is available then testing according to ASTM E96 is not necessary. The case study should detail water use (or loss) prior to the installation of the cover and water loss following installation of the cover. The results should be verified by an independent party.
4. The evidence must be directly applicable to the product which is the subject of the application. As an example the panel will not accept a case study which relates to another product sold, manufactured or distributed by the same company.

General information downloaded from websites, such as water authority websites, which state that pool covers can save water is acceptable. The evidence must relate specifically to the product that is the subject of the application.

If a product is made from material which is supplied by a third party and the material has been awarded a Mark, there must be clear documented evidence that the material is the same and that its water saving characteristics have not been altered in any way. In this case the product will still be the subject of a separate application fee and subject to separate licence fee because it is deemed to be a different product.

**B) Fitness for purpose.** The product should be backed by appropriate warranties that demonstrate that the product is fit for purpose. The product must be in the final form in which it is available to the public. It may be cut, shaped or modified for a particular installation but the material itself should be the same as in the application.