

Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd
Managers of the Australian Ecolabel Program

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The Australian Ecolabel Program Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard

Environmentally Innovative Products



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Use of This Standard

This voluntary environmental labelling standard may be used by competent environmental assessors to establish product compliance to the Australian Ecolabel Program. Products that are certified with the mark of conformity, the “Good Environmental Choice Label” have been independently tested and demonstrate compliance to the environmental and social performance criteria detailed in this standard. The overall goal of environmental labels and declarations is the communication of verifiable and accurate information, which is not misleading, on environmental aspects of products and services. This encourages the demand for, and supply of, those products and services that cause less stress on the environment, thereby stimulating the potential for market-driven continuous environmental improvement.

This standard identifies environmental, quality, regulatory and social performance criteria that products sold on the Australian market can meet in order to be considered as good “environment practice”. Products that have been certified as complying to this standard may gain greater market recognition and a marketing advantage in government and business procurement programs, as well as broad consumer preference.

This standard can be used by Australian producers to guide their designs for environment programs by using the environmental criteria as key performance benchmarks to reduce the environmental loads of their product. The standard is necessarily restricted in its identification of environmental loads from the product life-cycle. Producers should consider other environmental measures along the product cycle, which are not included in this standard, in their environment program designs for and aim for even higher levels of environmental performance where technically possible.

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GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICE AUSTRALIA STANDARD

Environmentally Innovative Products

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Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements for the award of the Australian ecolabel to products that may objectively be classified as environmentally innovative and are outside the scope of any other Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard. The Australian Ecolabel Program complies with ISO 14024: "Environmental labels and declarations - Guiding principles" which requires environmental labelling specifications to include criteria that are objective, reasonable and verifiable.

Definitions

Label means the Good Environmental Choice Australia Label.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This Standard seeks to provide a framework for the recognition of good environmental performance for environmentally innovative products. Voluntary environmental labelling standards implemented by Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA), as managers of the Australian ecolabel program, aim to specify environmental performance criteria for the environmental loads of products and services throughout the major aspects of their life cycle.

1.2 Background

The production and consumption of products and services invariably generates a number of environmental loads, many of which result in the degradation of our natural environment. The purpose of this Standard is to define the environmental load reduction requirements for a diverse range of products for the Australian market which can be classed as “environmentally innovative” products.

There is a growing public awareness of the need for sustainable consumption and a concomitant increase in consumer demand for products and services that reduce the environmental burden of day to day life. Product designers are increasingly aware of the environmental impact of their choices, and continuous technological innovations are creating opportunities for significant environmental gains by allowing the redesign of previously environmentally harmful products or the invention of new functional products with a greatly reduced ecological footprint.

Good Environmental Choice Australia uses this Standard to recognise and support truly environmentally innovative products where there is clear evidence of strong environmental load reductions compared to competing products performing the same function in the Australian market, and where the product would not otherwise receive recognition based on an existing or planned GECA Standard category.

2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE

This standard is applicable to the full range of products on the Australian market that are not addressed by other voluntary environmental labelling standards.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. Certain standards of quality and product performance are implicit in the Label. The manufacturer of the product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose and:

3.1.1 Applicable Standards

The product meets or exceeds the requirements of the relevant Australian Standard for its intended application, or the product meets or exceeds the applicable and accepted standard in its target market if it is to be exported, or

3.1.2 Other Evidence of Fitness for Purpose

Where there is no suitable industry standard governing fit-for-purpose, the product can demonstrate sufficient quality by providing testing reports from an independent organisation or case studies from installations demonstrating market suitability and quality.

3.2 Environmental Load Reduction

The product shall exhibit an environmental improvement or have innate properties that demonstrate a significant reduction of environmental load compared to products that meet the same consumer need. This reduction must be related to the primary environmental loads of the product and not be limited to small or insignificant improvements. The principles of Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) outlined in ISO 14 040 shall be used to identify the primary loads of a product. Environmental innovation may be demonstrated in one of two ways:

- The product shall exhibit an environmental load reduction of at least 30% on a primary environmental load during the product life cycle,
or,
- The product shall exhibit environmental load reductions of at least 20% in each of the top four primary environmental loads of the product life cycle via a comparative analysis with products meeting the same consumption need

and,

- Environmental load reductions must not result in an increase in environmental loads at a different stage along the product life cycle (i.e., non-transference). Exceptions may be granted if a life cycle assessment of the product clearly demonstrates that a transferred load is insignificant compared to the major load reductions outlined above.

Applicable environmental loads are only those that can be determined or influenced by the product designer or manufacturer. Loads that cannot be influenced by the manufacturer are not considered under this Standard.

3.3 Material Requirements

Individual components, such as adhesives, textiles, refrigerants, timber or natural fibres that fall under an existing GECA Standard category, must fulfil the requirements of the relevant Standard.

Products shall not contain carcinogenic substances in IARC categories 1 or 2A as classed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer – <http://www.iarc.fr> at levels which expose the user to a maximum level of one

twentieth of the allowable limit determined the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) and/or the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS).

Products containing or using environmental toxins or pollutants in the finished product or manufacturing process shall have a policy in place to test environmentally preferable alternatives that claim to provide equal fitness for purpose. Manufacturers must commit to adopting suitable alternatives if they are found and fitness for purpose is verified. This requirement includes but is not limited to:

- Elemental halogen use (e.g., chlorine bleaching).
- Chelating agents or surfactants that are not readily biodegradable.
- CFC, HCFC, HFC, methylene chloride or other halogenated organic compounds (including halogenated organic flame retardants).
- Ozone depleting substances.
- The phthalates DEHP, DBP, BBP or DAP.
- Polybrominated biphenyl ethers (e.g., flame retardants).
- Persistent environmental pollutants, heavy metals or radionuclides at levels greater than half the allowable limit set by the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission (NOHSC) and/or the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS).

3.4 Post-Consumer Recycling

Certified products must not be impregnated, coated or otherwise treated in a manner that would prevent recycling in Australia or in the country where the product is used. Exceptions may be made where a coating imparts a very long life span to the product that cannot be achieved in any other way.

3.5 Packaging Requirements

Chlorinated or halogenated plastics must not be used in product packaging.

Used packaging shall be able to be recycled by local recycling systems.

The manufacturer must provide written information to the consumer, either on the product packaging or in a separate document supplied with the product, clearly stating:

- The intended use of the product.
- Instructions for correct installation, use and storage so as to maximise the product lifetime and energy efficiency.
- Maintenance instructions, if applicable. Maintenance instructions must not specify the use of any chemical or coating limited by any part of this standard.
- Product stewardship arrangements, recycling or preferred disposal instructions for the product end-of-life.

4 COMPLIANCE TO ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATIONS

The applicant is required to comply with relevant environmental legislation and government orders at the Local, State, and Commonwealth levels, if these have been issued. An applicant's compliance with these criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks; and/or by gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents from approved assessors as evidence to support compliance during the verification. Where an applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, that jurisdiction's environmental regulations apply. Where the applicant is subject to a guilty verdict by a legally constituted court in the last 24 months on the basis of a breach of any environmental legislation or permits, there must be evidence of corrective action.

5 COMPLIANCE TO LABOUR, ANTI-DISCRIMINATION AND SAFETY REGULATIONS

An applicant shall demonstrate that all employees are covered by a Federal or State award or a certified industrial agreement or a registered workplace agreement as determined by the Industrial Relations Commission, the Employment Advocate or a State or Territory Workplace Relations Agency or a workplace agreement in compliance with Workplace Relations Act 1996 Part 7 – The Australian Fair Pay and Conditions Standard.

An applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to the terms of State or Territory Legislation concerning Occupational, Health and Safety and/or the *Commonwealth Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*, where applicable. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency, or a guilty verdict by an Australian Court within the last 24 months, on the basis of a breach of State, Territory or Commonwealth Occupational, Health and Safety Legislation, there must be evidence of corrective action.

The applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to the requirements of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975, Sex Discrimination Act 1984, Disability Discrimination Act 1992, Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999, and complementary State Legislation. Applicants cannot be in the list of 'named' or non-compliant employers under the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency, or a guilty verdict by an Australian Court in the last 24 months on the basis of a breach of these Acts, there must be evidence of corrective action.

Where an applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, the applicant shall demonstrate general compliance to that jurisdiction's anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensations regulations. Where the applicant is subject to a breach order by a government agency, or a guilty verdict by a legal court in their respective country within the last 24 months on the basis of a the breach of anti-discrimination, occupational health and safety, and workers' compensation regulations, there must be evidence of corrective action.

An applicant's compliance with these criteria may be established by undertaking a series of random checks; gathering samples of applicant operational procedures and documents from approved assessors; and/or by providing a self-declaration document signed by an executive officer of the applicant organisation as evidence to support compliance during verification.

6 COMPLIANCE TESTING

6.1 Audit Methodology

Conformance with this standard shall be demonstrated by undertaking an assessment under the above criteria by an approved assessor, following the certification and verification procedures detailed in the Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd Documented Quality Management System, which generally follows the environmental auditing requirements of ISO 14 011 and 14 012.

6.2 Assessor Competency

The Australian Ecolabel Program classifies approved assessors as:

- a. Assessors registered by Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd as environmental professionals that hold expertise relevant for an assessment, and who have undertaken training in the procedures of the Australian Ecolabel Program; or
- b. Environmental auditors accredited with the RABQSA.

6.3 Suitable Sources

Audit evidence should be of such a quality and quantity that competent environmental auditors, working independently of each other, will reach similar audit findings from evaluation of the same audit evidence against the same audit criteria.

Suitable sources of information to establish compliance may be, but are not limited to:

- a. Technical specification of the product.
- b. Obvious characteristics of the product under examination.
- c. Scientific test results and reports.
- d. Environmental management system and audit reports and results.
- e. Life-cycle assessment of each stage of the product life-cycle via a physical audit and examination.
- f. Life-cycle assessment via scientific testing.
- g. A statement of confirmation by an executive officer.
- h. An assessment of company or government records.
- i. Other material that can be considered objective evidence.

6.4 Laboratory Testing

New testing shall be undertaken by a laboratory accredited by the National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA), or similar overseas accreditation agents who can conduct the relevant tests and/or provide documentation detailing environmental performance against the key indicators for this standard. The test results should be presented on NATA-endorsed reports or from a laboratory acceptable to Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd.

If test results or environmental auditing results are not available, and/or there is insufficient data to establish full compliance with the criteria required by this standard, then certification cannot be awarded.