

## **The Australian Ecolabel Program** **Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard**

# **Recycled and Reclaimed Timber**



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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

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### Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements of recycled and reclaimed timber for the Australian Ecolabel Program. 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

**CCA Treatment:** refers to copper-chrome-arsenic biocidal treatment.

**Reclaimed Timber:** Collected timber that would have otherwise been disposed of as waste or used for energy recovery. For the purposes of this report, reclaimed timber may only be sourced from urban salvage operations. Sources of timber not recognised as reclaimed include: pre-industrial, post-industrial, and rural salvage. Reclaimed timber does not include logs left over from forestry and land-clearing operations.

**Rural Salvage:** The practice of removing native trees that have been abandoned or felled as a result of other land uses, such as mining, forestry, agriculture, and clearing, outside metropolitan boundaries.

**Urban Salvage:** The practice of removing timber from within metropolitan boundaries. This may be a result of perceived risk from the tree or a change in land use.

**Recycled Timber:** Timber that has been previously processed and used in a given application, then subsequently removed and made available for re-use in a similar or altered form.

**Native Forest:** A forest in which the tree species are predominantly native to the locality, typically where natural regenerative processes operate, either fully or in part, for the recovery of canopy structure following natural or artificial disturbance.

## **1 INTRODUCTION**

### **1.1 Purpose**

The primary purpose of this standard is to define environmental performance criteria for recycled and reclaimed timber. The standard refers to the manufacturing of timber as well as its sources. This standard specifies requirements for treatment or coatings that would restrict further recycling. The standard also specifies the requirements for coatings and hazardous treatments with environmental and human health impacts.

### **1.2 Background**

Recycled and reclaimed timber is environmentally preferable because it reduces the demand for virgin timber, reduces the amount of waste going to landfill, and diverts timber from being burnt and releasing CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere.

Although a renewable resource, timber extraction from native forests poses an environmental burden during timber extraction, processing, and disposal. Destruction of native forests is a threat to Australia's biodiversity. Every year in Australia more than half a million hectares of bush-land are cleared, which in turn affects the habitats of Australia's native species. Australia clears more native vegetation than any other developed nation.

Excessive land clearing is a significant contributory cause of dry-land salinity and the degradation of farmland, rivers, and water supplies. Burnt and rotting timber releases greenhouse gases, adding to the problem of climate change. About 15 % of Australia's greenhouse gas emissions are created by land clearing.

One million tonnes per annum is a conservative estimate of the amount of waste wood that goes into landfill in Australia. The annual extent of wood expended through incineration as a method of disposal is unknown at present. If wood can be diverted from the waste stream back into the economic system as an input, it can replace virgin timber and reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the short term. Similarly, it can reduce the burden on landfill sites.

## **2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE**

This standard is applicable to any product that contains 100% recycled and/or reclaimed timber as defined in this standard. This percentage does not include non-timber components of the product.

Recycled and reclaimed timber may include raw timbers, cut timbers, treated timbers, and timber oversize.

This standard excludes logs, manufactured wooden articles, plywood and veneer sheets, sawdust and wood chip products, and reconstituted wood products.

### 3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

#### 3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. The label implies certain standards of product performance. The manufacturer of the product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose, and:

- The product has an F rating from an accredited assessor, if intended for structural purposes.
- The product has specified dimensions, moisture levels, and error margins.
- The manufacturer shall offer a commercial guarantee of five years on the quality of the product, provided the product is used according to its intended use. The guarantee shall be valid from the date of delivery to the consumer.

#### 3.2 Raw Material Requirements

##### 3.2.1 Acceptable Timber Sources

Manufacturers must be able to provide suitable documentation stating that the timber used in certified products comes from one of the timber sources listed as acceptable below. As recycled and reclaimed timber are virtually indistinguishable from virgin timber, the full chain of custody for sources must be established. The manufacturer must maintain a tracking system for all sources and quantities of recycled and reclaimed timber in the last six months and subsequent volumes of sales during the same period. Archives shall be kept for a minimum of 2 years and will contain the information outlined in Appendix 1 as a minimum.

The following requirements in Table 1 are for each type of timber that is acceptable for classification as recycled and reclaimed timber.

**Table 1:** Recycled or reclaimed timber sources

Timber Category	Source	Conditions	Environmental Considerations
Post Consumer Recycled	Varied, including deconstruction of buildings, bridges, and other structures	None	Primary alternative use would be landfill
			Used in place of virgin timber
			Processed, has no habitat value
Urban Salvage	Within metropolitan boundaries	Not felled for timber value	Primary alternative use would be landfill or wood chipping
		Not be from historically valued site	Used in place of virgin timber

##### 3.2.2 Unacceptable Timber Sources

The following timber sources are not suitable for certification under this standard:

- Timber left over from the milling of logs, abandoned or stored timber, as well as trim and scrap wood from the milling process.
- Timber from any land-clearing operations, including, but not limited to, agriculture and mining.
- Timber from forestry operations. This includes rural salvage and commercial logging remnants.

### **3.3 Hazardous Substances**

#### **3.3.1 Prohibited Substances**

Halogenated organic binding agents; halogenated organic flame retardants; phthalates; aziridine and polyaziridines as well as pigments and additives that contain lead, tin, cadmium VI, mercury, or their compounds, shall not be added during the production of recycled and reclaimed timber.

Manufacturers and retailers of recycled or reclaimed timber must not use timber recognised as being CCA treated.

Existing paint must be stripped and safely disposed of in a hazardous waste stream, if applicable.

#### **3.3.2 Adhesives**

Adhesives must be certified by the Good Environmental Choice Label, carry another ISO 14 024 based ecolabel acceptable to GECA.

### **3.4 Storage Requirements**

Timber storage operations should maximise the life of the timber. The applicant is required to have systems in place to achieve the following:

- A reduction of load-induced warping, twisting, bending, or cupping. This should be a load-spread, straight, flat timber stacking method or better.
- Less likelihood of moisture absorption and attack by termites and ground-dwelling fungi. This should be achieved with an air gap of 300mm between the ground and clean timber stack or better.
- Reduced impact of moisture and sunlight. This should be achieved by storing stacks in enclosed buildings and, when this is not possible, wrapping them in water proof plastic or an equivalent method.

The applicant must have suitable waste-management procedures on site. A manufacturer wishing to store waste generated during the production of recycled or reclaimed timber must:

- Have a waste storage permit from the local council where amounts are above 30 tonnes;
- Not locate the waste pile within a gully or within 50 metres of a natural waterway;
- Not store treated or painted timber in the same waste pile as untreated timber;
- Not store treated or painted timber on-site for a period longer than 12 months.

### **3.5 Product Information**

Recycled or reclaimed timber must specify the following information to the customer on corporate material or on the product:

- Confirmation that the timber is recycled or reclaimed;
- Information on how to maximise the life of the timber;
- A valid certificate number or equivalent identification (e.g., the Good Environmental Choice Australia Label), showing that the timber comes from acceptable sources and from a certified timber recycler.

#### **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 EVIDENCE OF CONFORMANCE**

### **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 19 011.

### **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 an ISO 17 025 registered laboratory, or a similarly independent accreditation agent who can conduct the relevant tests and/or provide documentation detailing environmental performance against the criteria of 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.

**APPENDIX 1 – MINIMUM RECORD KEEPING REQUIREMENTS**

**Table A1:** Minimum data required to establish chain of custody for recycled or reclaimed timber.

Date	Quantity	Species	Source Site	Sourced By	Sourced From