

Good Environmental Choice Australia Ltd
Managers of the Australian Ecolabel Program

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The Australian Ecolabel Program Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard

International Eco-labelled 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

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Abstract

This Standard specifies requirements for products certified by select GEN member ISO 14 024 based programs in order to establish compliance to the requirements of the Australian Ecolabel Program using the eco-labelling standard they have been assessed under. The Australian Ecolabel Program complies in general terms with ISO 14024: "Environmental labels and declarations – Type 1 environmental labelling – Principals and procedures" which requires environmental labelling specifications to include criteria that are objective, reasonable and verifiable. Where products are traded internationally and are of a similar form and function it is desirable that similar standards are used between countries. GEN members seek to meet the requirements of the WTO Technical Barriers to Trade Guidelines by allowing equity of access to overseas manufacturers as a desirable objective.

This standard outlines the procedure for the use of eco-labelling standards by select GEN member programs for compliance to the overseas recognition requirements of the Australian Ecolabel Program. Only a select number of GEN member programs have been included as suitable counterparties in this first standard with a view to expanding this range after ongoing due diligence and investigation of the methodologies of different GEN member programs.

Definitions

Australian Ecolabel Program is the Type 1, ISO 14 024 compliant eco-labelling program operated by Good Environmental Choice Australia.

GEN is the acronym for Global Ecolabelling Network, the international environmental product labelling association.

Label means the Environmental Choice Australia Label.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

This Standard seeks to define requirements for the case by case use of standards by select GEN member programs where no similar standards have been developed in Australia and for the acceptance of products with overseas GEN member eco-labelling certification for the Australian Ecolabel Program.

This voluntary environmental labelling standard specifies criteria for the assessment of these products allowing them to be assessed for the Good Environmental Choice Label under the overseas standard that they have been accredited to by a select GEN member program. This standard stipulates requirements for overseas certified products only and does not extend to a mechanism for automatic introduction of Australian eco-labelling standards based on overseas standards.

1.2 Background

Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) is the Australian member of the Global Eco-labelling Network (GEN). GEN seeks to enhance the use of life cycle based environmental declarations throughout world markets. GEN member programs undertake substantial investments in technical and scientific research and stakeholder consultation in order to establish minimum environmental performance criteria for products as the basis of environmental performance measurement.

In some cases, where GECA has confidence in the environmental stringency, accuracy and procedures used by overseas GEN member environmental labelling organizations there is efficiencies to be gained by accepting these standards as a useful interim measure until an Australian standard is created on a product by product basis. GECA has established mutual recognition agreements with a select number of GEN member programs demonstrating confidence in these programs.

This standard has been developed to allow an agreed methodology for acceptance of overseas products certified by select GEN member countries prior to the establishment of an Australian environmental labelling standard under the Australian Ecolabel Program. It is envisaged that this standard will deliver a greater selection of environmentally preferable products in the Australian market., enhance the range of products that are available for assessment under the Australian Ecolabel Program, achieve environmental benefits by allowing environmentally preferable products to be recognised on the Australian market and encourage greater investment in the development of comprehensive Australian eco-labelling standards in the future by demonstrating a market demand.

2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE

This standard is applicable to products and services seeking accreditation by the Australian Ecolabel Program which have already been accredited by an overseas eco-labelling organisation subject to all of the following restrictions:

2.1 No Australian Standard

The product must fall into a product or service category that is currently not covered by an existing voluntary environmental labelling standard by Good Environmental Choice Australia. This decision is made by a GECA accredited assessor and the Business Manager.

2.2 ISO 14 024 based and GEN Member

The overseas eco-labelling organisation that has provided the accreditation must be a current member of the Global Eco-labelling Network and its program must conform to the principles of ISO 14 024.

2.3 MRA with GECA

The overseas eco-labelling organisation that has provided the accreditation must have an existing Mutual Recognition Agreement with Good Environmental Choice Australia.

Current MRA signatories are:

- South Korea - KOECO
- USA – Green Seal
- China – CEC
- Thailand – Thailand Environmental Institute
- Taiwan - GreenMark

2.4 Intent for Sale in Australia

The program must have established plans for sale in Australia within the next 12 months.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

3.1 Fitness for Purpose

Certified products should be good performers in their intended application. The manufacturer of the product must ensure that the product is fit for its intended purpose.

3.1.1 Australian Standards

The product must meet the performance requirements of the relevant Australian Standard for its intended application; or

The product must meet the performance requirements of the relevant internationally accepted standard if it is to be exported; or

The product should demonstrate sufficient quality by providing testing reports from an independent organisation or case studies that demonstrate market suitability and quality.

3.1.2 Commercial Guarantee

The manufacturer shall offer a commercial guarantee of five years on the quality of the product, provided the product is used for its intended purpose. The guarantee shall be valid from the date of delivery to the consumer.

3.2 Evidence of Overseas Current Application

Manufacturers of certified products shall fill in an application form for the GEC label and attach their current overseas eco-labelling certificate and their most recent eco-labelling body test report (not necessarily in English).

3.3 Additional Environmental Considerations

The overseas environmental labelling standard that the product was assessed under shall be provided in order for an assessment to be made as to the suitability of the standard on the basis of the following criteria:

- a. Comprehensiveness from an LCA perspective.
- b. Performance criteria that are in general conformance to the objectives of the Australian Ecolabel Program.

Where emission or material tests benchmarks are different between the overseas country and Australian national standard and the product appears not to meet Australian standards additional tests shall be undertaken to establish conformance to Australian testing procedures and performance requirements.

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.