

# The Australian Ecolabel Program

## Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard

### Retail Services



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## Use of This Standard

This voluntary environmental labelling standard may be used by competent environmental assessors to establish goods and services conforming to the Australian Ecolabel Program. Services that are certified with the mark of conformity, the "Good Environmental Choice Australia Services Label" have been independently assessed 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 goods and services. This encourages the demand for, and supply of, those goods 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 goods and services provided in Australia can meet in order to be considered as good "environment practice". Service providers that have been certified as conforming 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 goods and service providers to guide their environmental programs by using the environmental criteria as key performance benchmarks to reduce the environmental loads resulting from their activities. The standard is necessarily restricted in its identification of environmental loads under the direct control of the service provider. Providers should consider other environmental measures, which are not included in this standard, in their activities and aim for even higher levels of environmental performance where technically possible.

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## GOOD ENVIRONMENTAL CHOICE AUSTRALIA STANDARD FOR SERVICES

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### Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements of a broad range of environmentally managed services for the Australian Ecolabel Program. The 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.

This Standard specifies requirements for the use of energy and water by a service provider as well as the systems which should be in place to support waste management and product procurement. Requirements for the arrangement of cleaning, maintenance and cultural programs exist as well as compliances with regulatory bodies concerning the environment and occupational health and safety.

### Definitions

**Appliance** includes: all items from kitchen, bathroom, meeting and work areas which consume energy and perform a function.

**Label** means the Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) Label.

**Product** is a broad term covering both **goods**, which are physical objects, and **services**.

**Renewable Energy** is an energy resource that is rapidly replaced by natural processes. Examples include: biomass, geothermal, hydro, solar, tidal and wind.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Purpose

This Standard seeks to define good environmental performance benchmarks for retail service providers. It is a voluntary environmental labelling standard administered by Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) which specifies minimum environmental performance criteria for the sector. Members of the sector who adhere to the standard will demonstrate environmental preferability over their peers.

### 1.2. Background

Services dominate economic activity in Australia. They account for more than three-quarters of national output and for four out of every five jobs. Services also provide essential inputs, such as energy, communications and transport, into nearly everything that Australia produces. Services are an important and growing part of the global economy, accounting for the dominant share of output and employment in most industrialised countries.

Over the past four decades, the share of GDP accounted for by services has continually and significantly increased. Growth in the sector's share of employment has been even stronger – increasing by almost 20 percent from the mid 1960s.

The largest service industry, in terms of output, is property and business services. In 2000-01, it accounted for 14 per cent of the Australian economy's output (roughly the same size as the manufacturing sector) and around 12 per cent of total employment.

At the same time, the environmentally damaging effects of the commercial sector have become more apparent. The 2001 State of the Environment Report points out that the commercial sector contributes significantly to energy use and waste volumes.

The primary purpose of this standard is to define environmental performance criteria for the provision of services, in particular the environmental impact resulting from activities undertaken by retail service providers. In many cases the lessee of premises has no control over the environmental impacts of the built environment itself, however, a significant environmental impact is attributable to the energy, waste and water consumption habits of tenants and their procurement and consumption of materials. This Standard is limited to activities that are directly controlled by the service provider without imposing requirements on the built environment.

The Green Building Council of Australia provides comprehensive environmental performance criteria for buildings and structures, including retail centres, and defines environmental performance benchmarks for the built environment. The Green Star Rating Scheme administered by the Green Building Council of Australia provides the appropriate framework for encouraging environmentally preferable building design, construction and renovation. More information may be found on the Green Building Council website: <http://www.gbcaus.org>

An environmentally efficient commercial sector is preferable because it reduces the demand for virgin raw materials at the same time as limiting the emission of various wastes. While direct impacts such as these are most obvious, there are also indirect impacts such as those on human health and wellbeing.

## 2 STANDARD CATEGORY SCOPE

This Standard is applicable to the following categories of retail service provider:

- Supermarkets and grocery stores
- General retail stores
- Sales of a product or service
- Business shopfronts.

This Standard is not applicable to:

- Accommodation
- Administrative services
- Cafes and restaurants
- Transport and distribution services
- Manufacturing facilities
- Petrol stations
- Public Services
- Utilities providers (e.g., electricity, gas and water).

This Standard applies only to the extent that the applicant has control over the facility being used. For example, a tenant with no control over existing infrastructure is not expected to be responsible for hardware or furnishings that are provided under the lease, but is expected to make whatever behavioural and procurement changes are possible to ensure the minimisation of environmental impact resulting from their activities.

Developers and building owners may wish to consider using the Green Star rating tools provided by the Green Building Council of Australia to assist in the environmentally conscious design and construction of new facilities or refurbishment of existing facilities.

### Use of the GECA Label

The Label must be used appropriately by certified organisations in line with the licensing agreement offered to successful applicants. This includes specification of the certified retail site alongside any display of the label. The Label must not be used to over-represent the extent and scope of certification under this Standard.

Certification under this Standard applies only to the administrative function of the retailer seeking certification. The Label must not be associated with goods or with other services excluded by this scope that are provided by the retailer, or as part of advertising material for those goods or services.

Physical goods may be certified by Good Environmental Choice Australia under the relevant product category standard and may only then carry the GECA Label for goods. The GECA label for retail services does not in any way constitute endorsement of products provided by the retailer.

### 3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

#### 3.1 Energy Use

##### 3.1.1 Energy Measurement

Energy use must be measured and recorded on a minimum quarterly basis. Total energy use should be broken down into categories including, as a minimum; electricity, gas, renewable electricity. These energy data must be specific to the applicant (i.e., separately metered in multiple tenancies) and able to be audited by viewing receipts from energy suppliers.

##### 3.1.2 Energy Usage

This section does not include fuel use from company vehicles.

For grid electricity, either:

- A minimum of 20% renewable electricity must be sourced from a government approved Green Power provider, or
- A minimum of 20% of the total electricity used from non-renewable sources must be offset by a carbon credit provider acceptable to GECA.

For other non-renewable energy sources, (e.g., gas):

- A minimum of 20% of the total energy used from non-renewable sources must be offset by a carbon credit provider acceptable to GECA.

##### 3.1.3 Lighting

This section may not apply where a tenant can prove they have no control over the systems in place after a written request to the property owner or manager.

All non emergency lighting must be switched off after hours.

No incandescent light bulbs (including halogen) may be installed. An exception is made for applications where there is no low-energy bulb on the market for the fitting, or where equal fitness for purpose cannot be demonstrated using a low-energy bulb.

##### 3.1.4 Heating and Cooling

This section may not apply where a tenant can prove they have no control over the systems in place after a written request to the property owner or manager.

Cooling and heating systems must have their thermostats set no lower than 20°C for summer months and no higher than 24°C for winter months.

All heating and cooling systems must be switched off after hours. Exemptions may be granted where energy usage measurements demonstrate improved overall efficiency from continuous operation.

##### 3.1.5 Hot Water

Hot water systems involving hot water storage (e.g., urns) must not be installed. Existing systems may be used, but may only be replaced at end-of-life with energy efficient alternatives, such as gas-preheaters or non-storage-based systems.

##### 3.1.6 Power Management

All appliances including computers capable of power management must have these features switched on. Where possible a maximum time of 15 minutes should be set for an appliance to be inactive before it enters 'suspend' or 'sleep' mode.

All computers must be turned off after hours. Computers performing a constant business function, such as servers, are exempt from this requirement if display devices that are able to be turned off are switched off when not in active use.

## **3.2 Water Use**

This section may not apply where a tenant can prove they have no control over the systems in place after a written request to the property owner or manager.

All water output fittings must have a minimum 3 star water conservation rating as set by the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA). Hoses must be equipped with automatic trigger mechanisms to minimise water use.

No apparent water leaks (from taps or bathrooms) may be present on site.

## **3.3 Waste**

Waste shall be sorted from recyclable material prior to disposal.

### **3.3.1 Data Collection**

At least 98 % of waste by volume must be recorded and disposal receipts maintained. A spreadsheet containing, as a minimum, categories for waste type, weight or volume, date, disposal method (e.g., recycling, landfill, specific waste collection service) and cost must be used for waste management purposes.

### **3.3.2 Specific Waste Collection**

IT equipment, office equipment, cleaning chemicals, fluorescent tubes or any other materials with hazardous content must be collected for reuse, recycling or appropriate disposal by the manufacturer.

Chain of custody evidence must be available for all hazardous waste streams.

### **3.3.3 Recycling**

Provision must be made to ensure that recycling facilities are capable of handling recyclable waste during peak times (e.g., stock replenishment).

All paper and cardboard packaging must be recycled.

Prompts must be placed around waste collection areas informing staff and customers regarding the recycling facilities available.

## **3.4 Procurement**

### **3.4.1 Procurement System**

A procurement policy in general conformance with the "GECA Green Procurement Guidelines in Brief" must be established which includes all goods and services specified in Section 3.5 (Specialist Requirements) and the majority of products purchased, including, as a minimum, IT equipment, cash registers and printing consumables, paper products, sanitary papers, lighting, cleaning products, furniture and display cases, vehicles, tyres and coolants. This system should maintain receipts and define the product, source, quantity, cost, end of life options and environmental credentials for procurement decisions. The procurement system should also specify all materials designated as hazardous.

### **3.4.2 Environmental Preference**

Procurement policies must give preference to environmentally preferable products. Environmentally preferable products are those credited by GECA or other third party environmental certification schemes delivered by non-profit, non-industry entities.

At least 2% of products (by turnover) sold by the retailer must be environmentally preferable. Measures must be taken by the retailer to ensure environmentally preferable products are regularly promoted in preference to mainstream products.

### 3.5 Specialist Requirements

#### 3.5.1 Packaging

Retailers must offer alternative packaging to regular plastic shopping bags. This packaging must be clearly promoted to customers at the point of sale.

Packaging applied by the retailer or on the retailer's own brands must not contain halogenated plastics and be recyclable in mainstream local recycling systems.

#### 3.5.2 Transport

Company or fleet vehicles must be serviced regularly and log books maintained according to the vehicle manufacturers recommendations.

Where the retailer is responsible for organising the transport of goods, a functioning policy must be in place to minimise void space and maximise utilization of the cargo volume.

#### 3.5.3 Cleaning and Facilities Maintenance

Cleaning and maintenance requirements only apply when a tenant has control of the relevant contract or arrangements.

A facilities maintenance policy must be in place. Any contract/arrangement must comply with Commonwealth Cleaning & Hygiene Standards.

Cleaning products used by staff or cleaning contractors must either:

- Be certified by GECA or another ISO 14 024 based ecolabelling program acceptable to GECA, or
- Not contain any of the following substances:

Any ingredient carrying the risk phrases:

- R42 – May cause sensitization by inhalation.
- R43 – May cause sensitization by skin contact.
- R48 – Danger of serious damage to health by prolonged exposure.
- R50 – Very toxic to aquatic organisms.
- R51 – Toxic to aquatic organisms.
- R53 – May cause long-term adverse effects in the aquatic environment.
- R58 – May cause long-term adverse effects in the environment.
- R68 – Possible risk of irreversible effects.

Any ingredient classified as Class 1, 2a or 2b by the IARC, see:

<http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Classification/index.php>

Where retailers sell or handle hazardous goods, provision shall be made for staff to allow safe cleaning of any spills that may occur. This includes provision of training and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Adequate cleaning equipment must be kept on site.

The expected exposure of all staff to cleaning or other chemicals must be lower than the requirements set for OH&S by the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) or another relevant regulatory body.

#### 3.5.4 Refrigeration Systems

Refrigeration systems with a capacity greater than 20kW must meet the minimum mandatory requirements of GECA Standard 39 – Supermarket Refrigeration Systems.

Stand alone refrigeration systems must use refrigerants that meet the requirements of GECA Standard 26 – Refrigerants.

### **3.5.5 Food and Fresh Produce**

At least 5 % of fresh product lines must be certified organic by a certification body accredited under the IFOAM umbrella or acceptable to GECA. See <http://www.ifoam.org> for more information.

At least 5 % of chocolate and coffee product lines must be certified by Fairtrade or a certification body accredited under the IFOAM umbrella or acceptable to GECA. See <http://www.fairtrade.net> for more information.

Bakeries (including in-house supermarket bakeries) must be equipped with some form of heat recovery system.

### **3.5.6 Paper Products**

At least 5 % of paper (including sanitary paper) product lines must contain at least 50 % environmentally preferable fibre. Environmentally preferable fibre is defined as recycled content, FSC certified virgin fibre, products certified by GECA or products carrying another ISO 14 024 based ecolabel acceptable to GECA.

### **3.5.7 Customer Information**

Ecolabelled, Certified Organic or Fairtrade endorsed products must be clearly marked in order to aid consumer choice. Alternative displays must be arranged if the mark is not clearly visible on the packaging as displayed to customers in store.

## **3.6 Cultural Programs**

### **3.6.1 Environmental Manager**

An individual must be responsible for environmental management. GECA must be notified if this individual changes during the certification period.

### **3.6.2 Environmental Goals**

Clearly defined environmental goals of the organisation, as a minimum established by this standard, must be readily accessible to staff and clients.

### **3.6.3 Education of Staff**

All current staff, including cleaning contractors, must be educated about how to use the environmental systems in place for this standard.

New staff must be educated about how to use the environmental systems as a part of their introduction to the workplace. Education must be followed up to ensure that workers understand and use the environmental systems in place.

### **3.6.4 Environmental Prompts**

Where temporary staff or customers come into contact with environmental systems, prompts must be in place to explain their use.

## **3.7 Ethical Activity Requirements**

Many aspects of service provision are not covered under this standard, namely the ethical nature or indirect environmental or social impact of the service itself. It is expected that significant social impacts or environmental loads are managed by the service provider. If an aspect of the service provision is grossly mismanaged or the service provision directly supports socially or environmentally damaging activities, which are not directly covered by the above environmental performance criteria, assessors may recommend against certification under this Standard.

#### 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. Retailers are required to adhere to the Building Code of Australia with regard to fire safety and emergency lighting requirements.

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 a 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, including minutes of meetings, policy documents and receipts.
- 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 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.