

The Australian Ecolabel Program

Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard

Cleaning Services



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Use of This Standard

This voluntary environmental labelling standard may be used by competent environmental assessors to establish cleaning service providers' compliance with 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 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 cleaning services provided on the Australian market can meet in order to be considered as good "environment practice". Service providers 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 cleaning 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

Cleaning Services

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Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements of environmentally managed cleaning 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 chemicals and cleaning products by a cleaning service provider, as well as the systems that 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 that consume energy and perform a function.

Label means the Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) Label for ecolabelling of service providers.

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.

Hard Flooring in this standard refers to most hard or polishable flooring types, including wooden floorboards, vinyl flooring and concrete floors.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. Purpose

This Standard seeks to define good environmental performance benchmarks for service providers responsible for the provision of cleaning services. 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 economic activity 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.

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 cleaning services, in particular the environmental impacts resulting from activities undertaken by service providers. In many cases, service provider themselves or lessees of premises have 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 contracted cleaners 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, 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 cleaning services. This includes the following categories:

- Domestic (household) cleaning
- Commercial cleaning (e.g., offices, schools, shopping centres, public buildings)
- Window cleaning

This Standard is not applicable to:

- Industrial cleaning (e.g., environmental remediation, manufacturing process cleaning)

This Standard applies only to the extent that the applicant has control over the service being certified. For example, a contractor with no control over existing infrastructure is not expected to be responsible for facilities that are subject to the cleaning work, 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 service and licence number 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 cleaning service of the organisation seeking certification. The Label must not be associated with goods (e.g., cleaning products) or with other services excluded by the scope that are provided by the organisation, or as part of advertising material for those goods or services.

Physical goods (e.g., cleaning products) may be certified by Good Environmental Choice Australia under the relevant product category standard and may only then carry the GECA Label for goods.

Examples of appropriate use of the Label for cleaning services under this Standard include:

- Tender applications for projects requiring services certifiable under this Standard.
- Advertisement of services specifically certified under this Standard.
- Inclusion in advertising on vehicles used solely for provision of the certified service.

3 ENVIRONMENTAL PERFORMANCE CRITERIA

3.1 Operational Requirements

Company-wide standard operating policies and procedures must be in line with minimum legal requirements, be included in the training of all new staff, and be readily available to all staff upon recruitment and later request.

3.1.1 Standard Operating Procedures

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

Cleaning service providers must have in place written guidelines that define the standard operating procedures. These must, as a minimum, include suitable directions on:

- Storage and use of chemicals,
- Procurement of environmentally preferable cleaning products,
- Equipment inspection and maintenance,
- Communication protocols,
- Training requirements (see criteria 6),
- Quality assurance procedures,
- Record keeping.

These guidelines must be available to all cleaning personnel and clients in both English and their first language.

3.1.2 Hazard Control

The cleaning service provider must have in place procedures for dealing with hazards as they may arise on a work site. These procedures must include, as a minimum, directions for operating in:

- Schools, around young children, or any other sensitive populations,
- Potentially hazardous environments, such as building sites,
- Environments containing hazardous substances (e.g., asbestos),
- High traffic areas, such as corridors and entrances,
- Special conditions that may affect the frequency of cleaning or negatively impact human health or the environment. (i.e., public areas, hospitals)

These procedures must be made freely available to all cleaning staff and incorporated in regular training.

3.1.3 Accident Control

The cleaning service provider must have an appropriate accident control policy governing the procedure to be followed in the case of an accident. Accident report forms must be kept on all work sites and be readily accessible to all staff.

A basic first aid kit (as a minimum) must be provided for each work site.

3.1.4 Equipment Use

The cleaning service provider must maintain a plan for the use of powered cleaning equipment which maximises efficient use. Cleaning service providers must include a plan on the phase out of equipment that does not meet the following requirements:

- Vacuum Cleaners must meet, at minimum, the requirements of the Carpet and Rug Institute (CRI) Green Label Program (see <http://www.carpet-rug.org/commercial-customers/cleaning-and-maintenance/seal-of-approval-products/vacuums.cfm>) and operate at an average sound power level less than 70 dB when measured at a distance of 10 m.

- Powered floor maintenance equipment (i.e., polishers) must be equipped with controls or other devices for capturing and collecting particles and operate at an average sound power level less than 70 dB when measured at a distance of 10 m.
- Propane powered or other combustible fuel burning floor equipment must not be used,
- Powered scrubbing machines must be equipped with a control mechanism for varying the dispensing rate of cleaning fluids in order to optimise their use.

This plan shall also incorporate a minimum quarterly logged maintenance plan for powered cleaning equipment, or as recommended by the equipment manufacturer.

All powered equipment must be used in a way that is energy efficient, and be switched off when not in use.

3.1.5 Vacuum Cleaner Use and Maintenance

Vacuum cleaners must be equipped with controls or other devices for capturing and collecting particles and shall operate at an average sound power level less than 70 dB when measured at a distance of 10 m.

Vacuum cleaners shall be equipped with the appropriate filter or bag, and these shall be changed or cleaned as per the manufacturer's recommendations.

Precautions shall be taken to minimise worker exposure to dust and other particles when cleaning or replacing bags and filters. This may include providing workers with dust masks.

Workers using vacuum cleaners must be provided with hearing protection.

3.1.6 Hard Flooring Maintenance

When cleaning, polishing or restoring hard floors, the cleaning service contractor must make all appropriate arrangements to ensure adequate ventilation both during and after the procedure.

Spray application must be avoided when restoring floors using chemicals. Exceptions may be granted in circumstances where no other means are available.

Reasonable notice must be given to the building manager prior to the commencement of non-routine floor maintenance operations.

Adequate signage must be placed around the work area to alert building occupants to the hazards associated with the work being carried out.

3.1.7 Transport

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

3.2 Requirements for Cleaning Products and Supplies

3.2.1 Procurement System

A procurement policy in general conformance with the “GECA Green Procurement Guidelines in Brief” must be established which includes the majority of products purchased, including, as a minimum:

- General purpose floor cleaners, bathroom cleaners, glass cleaners and carpet cleaners
- Floor strippers and finishes (cutting and polishing compounds)
- Liquid hand soap
- Toilet tissue
- Facial tissue, paper towels, napkins and other sanitary paper products
- Cleaning Equipment.

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.

Plastic garbage bin liners must not contain phthalates or halogenated plastics and must contain a minimum of 10% recycled content.

The packaging of cleaning products must not contain chlorinated plastics.

3.3 Chemical Use Requirements

3.3.1 Chemical Record Keeping

A register of all chemicals and cleaning products must be maintained for each work site. This register must include material safety data sheets (MSDS) for all listed chemicals and be freely accessible to workers at all times during cleaning operations.

Cleaning service providers must:

- Maintain records of the quantities of chemicals used on a minimum quarterly basis,
- Undertake to reduce, minimize, or eliminate the need for chemical use wherever possible.

3.3.2 Chemical Use

Cleaning service providers must:

- Train all staff in the proper handling of chemicals, and special considerations for any hazardous chemicals used, including the use of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), if required.
- Provide easily understandable instructions on the dilution of cleaning chemicals,
- Provide a system for diluting chemicals that minimises worker exposure.
- Provide appropriate applicators for all cleaning chemicals that do not result in over-application of cleaning products.
- Provide instruction on cleaning, rinsing, re-use and recycling of used applicators.
- Provide instruction on rinsing, recycling or disposal of used chemical containers.

The expected exposure of staff to 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.

3.3.3 Disinfectant Use

Disinfectants used must be EPA-registered, certified by GECA or comply with the requirements of Criterion 3.3.4. Product label directions must be followed for preparation of disinfecting solutions (e.g., dilution rate) and cleaning method (e.g., prior preparation or dwell time).

3.3.4 Restricted Chemicals

Cleaning products must be certified by the Good Environmental Choice Label or carry another ISO 14 024 based eco-label acceptable to GECA. Exemptions may be granted for cleaning products that do not contain any of the following substances:

- Alkylphenol Ethoxylates (APEO) or their derivatives (APD).
- Ethylene diaminetetraacetic acid (EDTA) or its derivatives.
- Ingredients classified as Class 1, 2a or 2b carcinogenic by the IARC, see: <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Classification/index.php>
- Ingredients carrying any of 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.
- Cleaning products containing more than 1% reactive chlorine compounds (eg. sodium hypochlorite) or active chlorine carriers (e.g., benzalkonium chloride, triclosan).

3.4 Water and Waste Requirements

3.4.1 Waste Requirements

Cleaning service providers shall, as a minimum:

- Purchase chemical products and supplies in quantities that minimise the amount of packaging waste generated.
- Make use of re-usable cleaning cloths in lieu of paper and other disposable items, wherever possible.
- Clean or launder re-usable cleaning cloths before re-use.
- Separate recyclable items from waste, including paper, cardboard, glass, plastics and chemical containers that are acceptable for recycling.

3.4.2 Specific Waste Collection

IT equipment, office equipment, printing ink, toner refills, fluorescent tubes or any other materials with hazardous content must be collected for reuse, recycling or collection for appropriate disposal by the manufacturer.

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

3.4.3 Water Use

All water output fittings used by the cleaning service provider must have a minimum 3 star water conservation rating as set by the Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA).

A policy governing efficient use of water in cleaning operations must be in place, including the non-use of hoses for cleaning pathways.

Slippery when wet signs must be used where water or cleaning materials may pose a risk to the public.

3.5 Staff Training

All staff must be trained in cleaning procedures, correct operation of equipment and chemical handling. A functioning policy must be in place indicating the appropriate training required by staff before they may commence each aspect of operation.

A copy of the training policy must be signed by a management representative and each cleaning staff member.

All workers shall receive continuing training and/or education on a minimum annual basis, to maintain knowledge of correct procedures for safety, equipment, techniques and pertinent environmental standards.

3.6 Ethical Activity Requirements

Many aspects of service provision are not covered under this standard, namely the ethical operation 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

The 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.

The 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 the applicant is from an overseas jurisdiction, the applicant shall demonstrate 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.

The 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.