

The Australian Ecolabel Program

Good Environmental Choice Australia Standard

IT 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

Information Technology Services

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Abstract

This Standard specifies environmental performance requirements of environmentally managed IT 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 by service providers, 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 compliance 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**.

Recycled Content is defined as "post-consumer" material generated by households or by commercial, industrial and institutional facilities in their role as end-users of a product, which can no longer be used for its intended purpose. This includes returns of material from the distribution chain.

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 service providers responsible for information technology based 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 output and approximately 80 % of total employment. The information technology sector provides direct support to almost everything that Australia produces, and is becoming increasingly integrated with many other sectors. IT services are an important and growing part of the global economy.

While the importance of the IT services sector continues to increase, the environmentally damaging effects of the 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. Information processing and other high-technology applications may be expected to account for a significant proportion of total energy use, and contribute greatly to hazardous material disposal problems arising from end-of-life equipment.

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 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 the offices in which IT service providers are often housed, 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.

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 information technology service providers:

- Data management and storage services,
- Internet service providers (ISPs),
- Communications and data transfer centres.

This standard is not applicable to:

- Technical support for a particular product range,
- Electronic component or equipment manufacturers.

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 the existing built environment is not expected to be responsible for facilities that are outside the control of the contractor, but is expected to make whatever behavioural and procurement changes are possible to ensure the minimisation of environmental impact resulting from their activities.

This standard is applicable to all IT services provided by the applicant. Distinction will not be made between “ecolabelled services” and “non-ecolabelled services” that may be offered.

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 IT service provision of the organisation seeking certification. The Label must not be associated with goods 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. The GECA label for IT services does not in any way constitute GECA endorsement of products serviced, procured or supplied by the certified provider.

Physical goods (e.g., computers and IT equipment) 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 IT services under this Standard include:

- Tender applications for projects requiring services certifiable under this Standard.
- Advertisement of services specifically certified under this Standard.

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 Energy Measurement

Total energy use for the whole company must be measured and recorded on a minimum quarterly basis. Total energy use must be broken down into categories including, as a minimum: electricity, gas and fuels. This energy data must be auditable by viewing receipts from energy suppliers.

Energy consumption due to specialist IT systems must be separately measured and recorded as above. Calculation may be made where it is not possible to measure energy consumption separately.

3.1.2 Energy Source and Offsetting

This section applies to all electricity consumed by the organisation.

For grid electricity consumed in the administrative function of the organisation, 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 carbon credit provider acceptable to GECA.

For grid electricity consumed by data centres or other specialist IT systems, either:

- All electricity must be sourced from a government approved Green Power provider, or
- 100% 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, (i.e., gas cogeneration systems):

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

3.1.3 Maintenance

Regular maintenance must be undertaken in order to optimise energy efficiency of all major equipment and systems.

3.1.4 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 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.

3.1.5 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 in offices must not use a static thermal comfort model maintaining less than $\pm 3^{\circ}\text{C}$ tolerance, and not set thermostats outside the following ranges:

Summer: acceptable temperature range 22 – 26°C,

Winter: acceptable temperature range 18 - 22

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.

3.1.6 Hot Water

Instantaneous 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.

3.1.7 Power Management

All appliances 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 'sleep' mode.

All computers used in administrative functions must be switched 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.

3.1.8 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).

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

3.2 Waste

This section applies to all activities undertaken by the service provider.

3.2.1 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, date, disposal method and cost (e.g., recycling, landfill, specific waste collection service) must be used for waste management purposes.

3.2.2 Specific Waste Collection

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

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

3.3 Procurement

3.3.1 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

- IT equipment and printing consumables,
- Paper products, including office and sanitary paper,
- Cleaning services or supplies,
- Lighting.

All paper purchased must contain at least 50% environmentally preferable fibre (recycled or FSC certified) and be Elemental Chlorine Free (ECF or TCF) or be certified by GECA. Exceptions may be made in cases where the intended function of the paper cannot be performed by this type of paper (e.g. archival).

Preference must be given to IT equipment for which the manufacturer provides a product stewardship program with verifiable chain of custody throughout the recycling process. In conjunction with such a product stewardship offer, certification by GECA or a silver rating by the Electronic Product Environmental Assessment Tool (EPEAT) may be used as a minimum indicator of environmental preferability. See <http://www.epeat.net> for more information.

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.

3.3.2 Environmental Preference

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

3.4 Cultural Programs

3.4.1 Environmental Manager

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

3.4.2 Environmental Goals

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

3.4.3 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.

3.4.4 Environmental Prompts

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

3.5 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

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.