



Standard Guide



Choose GECA for better recycled products

Making products from recycled content keeps materials out of landfill and groundwater, minimising the consumption of virgin resources saving water and energy and reducing pollution. This is a significant step to shifting our economy from linear to circular.

However, not all recycled products can be considered equal when it comes to the environmental, health and social impacts generated during their manufacture, use and disposal. So, GECA has developed the **Recycled Products standard** to define sustainable performance benchmarks for these products throughout their entire life cycle.

Benefits for manufacturers

According to [Planet Ark's research](#), 70% of Australians would be more likely to purchase a product containing recycled materials and 64% of councils rate implementing a 'buy recycled' policy as a high or mid priority. Sustainability is becoming an increasingly important driver, particularly for the public sector, and **GECA's ecolabel makes it easier for consumers and procurement teams to identify your leadership**. You will be ahead of the game to win over more business!

Benefits for procurement

Procurement teams have a significant role to play in growing Australia's circular economy. When creating requests for tenders and developing contracts, specifying GECA certification is an easy way to prompt the market to reassess its manufacturing methods and work towards best practice. The GECA ecolabel also means that **you can rest assured you are purchasing a third-party verified recycled product!**

Green Building Scheme Recognition



Green Building Council of
Australia's Green Star at
Level A



The Infrastructure
Sustainability Council's IS
Rating Scheme





What products does the standard cover?

This standard's scope applies to products manufactured partially or entirely from recycled content and sold on the Australian or international market. The standard applies to the following categories of recycled or reused content products: glass, plastics, rubber, timber, fill and foundation materials such as sand and gravel. The product must be made up of a minimum of 50% (by weight) of one or a combination of these materials.

Other products that do not fit the above categories may be considered for certification, provided the product satisfies all relevant requirements.

GECA certified is better for people and planet

When a product is certified against a GECA standard, you can be sure that it has been independently assessed to meet **environmental**, **human health** and **social impact** criteria, and has proven to be **fit for purpose**.



* In 2020, the Victorian Government announced its Recycled First program designed to boost the use of recycled and reused materials in construction projects.

One ecolabel says it all



Environment

Recycled Content

Reuse and recycling of materials fully or partly avoids the need for raw material extraction and the disposal of waste materials to landfill. However, the quantity of recycled material must be significant to be recognised as being environmentally preferable to virgin materials. There are also sometimes limitations to recycled content use due to strength and other requirements.

GECA Standard: Within the standard, minimum recycled content level requirements per material have been set, with minimum 90 per cent for plastic and rubber and 100 per cent for other materials such as timber.

Material Requirements

Unsustainable practices in the extraction of raw materials can result in a wide range of environmental issues, such as threatening biodiversity in adjacent areas, erosion in coastal areas and riverbanks, or pollution of waterways. As a percentage of non-recycled content can be included in the product, these materials may have an impact on the environment.

GECA Standard: Adhesives used in the manufacturing of the product must not contain alkylphenol ethoxylates or other alkylphenol derivatives, phthalates or halogenated volatile organic compounds (VOCs).



Environment

All virgin wood fibre must be covered by valid sustainable forest management or chain of custody certificates issued by an independent third-party certification scheme. Virgin mined and quarried raw materials must come from operations with environmental management plans, which must be implemented.

Cement production is both resource and energy intensive. Significant amounts of carbon dioxide are released from the limestone during the calcinations process and from the combustion of fuels in the kiln. The binder used in the cement component in the product shall consist of at least 20% supplementary cementitious materials. Mineral addition to the cement can also be counted towards Portland clinker reduction.

Emissions to Air

Volatile organic compounds (VOCs) are present in some polymer additives or in the coatings of some products. They can trigger allergic reactions, headaches, eye irritation, and asthma problems. Therefore, VOC emissions are strictly restricted.

GECA Standard: If products are intended for indoor use, they must not produce Total VOC (TVOC) emissions greater than 0.5 mg/m²/hr.

Waste Management

Overconsumption of resources and the generation of waste can have a significant impact on the environment. Discharge of wastewater and damaging substances can threaten the health of aquatic ecosystems.

GECA Standard: The manufacturer must have effective policies and procedures to minimise waste, including measures to recycle waste materials from the production process.

Packaging and End of Life

Inefficient use of packaging can result in greater transportation needs, natural resource depletion and increased burden on landfills. Product packaging should be as efficient and recyclable as possible across the product's life cycle. Also, product stewardship programs are likely to increase the actual recycling rate of the product at the end of its life and decrease contribution to landfill.

GECA Standard: We require that packaging must contain recycled material or be derived from plant-based materials. Manufacturers must accept their product without additional cost (excluding transportation) for further recycling in a specialist recycling facility; or have arrangements with a local recycler to accept the product; or have an established product stewardship program; or have contractual arrangements with a third-party who can recycle or refurbish the item.



Health

Hazardous Substances

Certain substances or compound classes, including carcinogens, have been identified as particularly harmful to human health. Toxic heavy metals and their compounds such as mercury, arsenic, selenium, cobalt, tin and antimony are also detrimental to the health of manufacturing staff and users of the finished product.

GECA Standard: No known endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, mutagens or teratogens are allowed. All substances of Very High Concern listed on the [REACH Candidate List](#) are banned.



Social

Human Rights and Modern Slavery Reporting

Nothing is truly sustainable if it only looks at the impacts on the environment and ignores the treatment of people. Exploitation can occur in many ways, such as unsafe work conditions or little to no pay. Modern slavery is a term used to cover a range of exploitative practices, including slavery, human trafficking, child labour and forced labour. The construction, manufacturing and mining sectors appear to be modern slavery hotspots.

GECA Standard: An annual Modern Slavery Statement in alignment with the [Australian Modern Slavery Act \(2018\)](#) must be published. This includes manufacturers of any size and is not restricted to any annual revenue threshold. If risks are identified in the report, they will have to be addressed in the next annual report and improvements will have to be documented. We also require evidence of workplace safety, fair pay and equal opportunity. The manufacturer must also show compliance to all lawful conduct.

Transparency

Manufacturers can make false or misleading claims about their environmental performance which can create consumer confusion or 'greenwash' in markets.

GECA Standard: GECA needs to see evidence that all environmental claims about a product undergoing certification are true and substantiated.



"Growth in demand for recovered and recycled materials will drive improved resource recovery in Australia" ~ 2018 National Waste Policy



Fit for Purpose

Fit for Purpose

On top of all these essential environmental, health and social criteria, the product must also be fit for purpose. That is, it must do what the manufacturer claims it does. There's no use having a product if it doesn't deliver on its promise.

GECA Standard: To become certified, the product must meet or exceed the requirements of the relevant Australian Standards or equivalent international standard.

Let's Talk!

We would love to hear from you! Contact us via info@geca.org.au or +61 2 9699 2850 for further information on how we can help. You can also find us at www.geca.eco



Click the arrow to download the full [Recycled Products standard](#) for free

This standard contributes to the following [Sustainable Development Goals](#)

