



## Ecolabel builds trust around sustainable consumption for Boral construction sector.

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**Thanh Huynh**

Building Systems Manager  
Boral Construction Sector

### Customer Objectives:

- Simplified for Boral's customers to obtain a Green Star rating if they use a GECA certified product during construction.
- Cut down on paperwork to meet environmental requirements.
- Eco-labelled products are easily recognisable for Green Star ratings
- More credibility as a third-party audit, providing an independent assessment.

### Customer Benefits:

- Access to customers looking for eco-friendly products.
- Streamlining the supply chain process and ensures sustainable manufacturing processes.
- Gives Boral a creditable point of difference in the marketplace.

### What is the GECA Label?

GECA is an independent, not-for-profit environmental standards setting body that manages Australia's only national multi-sector ecolabel. Over the past 11 years it has developed credibility as the original Australian eco-labelling program, and it's in high demand – especially in the construction sectors.

It applies ISO 14024 guidelines to the local Australian environment, aligning standards to federal and state legislative requirements.

GECA's unique approach specifically designs the standard around a product's environmental performance, rather than an entire management system as ISO 14001 does.

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## Why certification?

With increasing awareness of the importance of reducing demand on our natural resources, many manufacturers are adapting their processes to make environmentally preferable products.

For building developers, architects or consumers who'd prefer to buy green, the GECA (Good Environmental Choice Australia) ecolabel indicates a product or service meets recognised environmental performance standards.

"It's an assessment specific to the product that is certified," says Sam Guindi, Division Manager Construction & Manufacturing at BSI Group. "A company may have just one product or range that is GECA certified, rather than a whole site or system. You may have green credentials, but without a GECA licence, it's not a given"

## Benefits

Many organisations, including Boral, have seen the benefits of meeting the GECA's standards. It gives them access to customers looking for eco-friendly products, and a credible point of difference in the marketplace. And as well as streamlining the supply chain process, it ensures they're working towards more sustainable manufacturing processes.

Companies are looking for ways to show they're doing the right thing by the environment. GECA is an independent verification that shows that," says Sam. "We also need to make sure the product is fit for purpose during the audit, so it's a third-party quality benchmark as well."

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Manufacturers are also looking to source certified materials as part of their supply chain process, which again makes it simpler to prove compliance for the end product.

"We publish multi-criteria standards, so products need to meet eight performance areas covering the entire lifecycle, from materials and component sourcing to end of life disposal," says Rupert Posner CEO at Good Environmental Choice Australia. "That means people can be assured the environmental impact has been verified from end to end, against a widely recognised and robust environmental standard."

Above all, an ecolabel builds market trust. "You know that if you buy a product with an ecolabel it has been independently assessed," Rupert emphasises. "Ours is a well-known and established program, so the label has recognition and this gives assurance for businesses and their customers about the standards of their goods and services."

That assurance also has a positive long term impact on our environment, encouraging manufacturers to continually improve their sourcing and processes to reduce the demand on natural resources, and lower the risks to the community and the environment.

"Like many other businesses in this sector, Boral aims to be a good corporate citizen and do the right thing by the environment," says Thanh Huynh, Building System Manager at Boral Construction Sector. "This is one way we can demonstrate this commitment."

## BSI's Role

GECA has been well-received by the construction sector, and until 2010 it was the only recognized scheme for the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA).

"The GBCA has made our built environment the most progressive sector in sustainability, principally through its Green Star rating system," says Rupert. When architects, specifiers and procurement professionals use interior products that are eco-labelled, the GBCA offers points towards the Green Star rating of the building project. Building materials that satisfy other Green Star criteria can also earn credits under the program.

In Australia, approximately 30 percent of landfill waste is construction and demolition

waste, and a significant proportion of this includes panel boards.

Boral developed a GECA-certified plasterboard range in 2009, and has found the standard streamlines environmental documentation for each project.

"All substantial commercial projects now aim to have a Green Star accreditation," says Thanh. "Likewise, domestic builders aim to build homes with a lower environmental impact and more energy efficiencies."

"It's simpler for our customers to get a Green Star rating if they use a GECA certified product during construction. It also cuts down on paperwork - we don't need to supply extensive documentation with each job to meet environmental requirements. So it smoothes the process at both ends."

Thanh says his customers are also more comfortable because it's a third-party audit, providing an independent assessment.

Boral had its first audit through BSI last year, assessing one site in Sydney and one in Brisbane.

"Most processes were already in place, as we already ran an established quality management system," says Thanh. "When we first certified this range of plasterboard we increased the recycled content to meet the standard's requirement for a higher level. We also needed to get some Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) testing done."

"In general it is a two-step process. The first step involves review of evidence submitted by the applicant, such as Bill of Material (BOM), Safety Data Sheets (MSDS), Detail of Chemicals with CAS Numbers, Test Reports and Declarations," says Sam.

The second step involves an on-site assessment, where the auditor further verifies and validates the adequacy of the information supplied. This may involve (but is not limited to) verifying the source of supply and manufacturing process, interview with site personnel, sampling the delivery dockets and batch reports as well as conforming the products and the material used in the products.

"Licensees undergo a renewal or a surveillance audit initially within 12 months from the certification date and every two years thereafter," says Sam. "Modification of certified products and addition of new products to the licence can be carried out at any time."



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