

Environmental Classification Scheme (ECS)

Background

In 2004 the Carpet Institute of Australia (CIAL) was awarded a grant from the Federal Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources to carry out a strategic planning study entitled 'Towards Environmentally Sustainable Flooring Systems.'

Through a process of extensive consultation with industry stakeholders, the project developed an action plan that was endorsed by an industry workshop held in February 2005. The key elements of the action plan:

- An Environment Policy for the Carpet Industry has been developed
- An Environmental Training Program for the Carpet Industry will be completed by the end of October 2006
- An Independent Life Cycle Study of Environmental Impacts of Carpet will be completed by the end of November 2006
- Investigation of Re-use and Recycling Opportunities for Manufacturing and Post Manufacturing Wastes is ongoing
- An Environmental Classification Scheme (ECS) for carpet as an extension of the Australian Carpet Classification Scheme (ACCS) has been established.

Australian Carpet Classification Scheme (ACCS)

The ACCS, administered by the Carpet Institute of Australia, is a voluntary industry labeling and grading scheme for textile floor coverings manufactured in Australia or imported for use in Australia.

There are currently 3,200 graded carpets on the ACCS database, making it one of the largest grading schemes of its type in the world.

The ACCS grades carpet according to its suitability for use in residential and/or contract installations in any given traffic environment. The gradings are awarded by a Panel of industry experts on the basis of carpet performance tests carried out by accredited laboratories.

The ACCS is a registered Certification Trademark Scheme, which means that it has been reviewed by relevant Government authorities and found to comply with the requirements of the Trade Practices Act.



Environmental Classification Scheme (ECS)

The ECS introduces three new technical criteria covering Volatile Organic Compound (VOC) emissions, noise reduction and thermal insulation properties that relate to environmental performance.

The VOC criteria were set taking into account the results of a series of trials on Australian made carpets by CETEC, an independent testing organization.

The ECS criteria are more stringent than those of the US Carpet and Rug Institute's synthetic carpet based 'Green Label Plus' Scheme.

ECS VOC emission limits have been set at, or lower than, the equivalent Green Label Plus limits, and additional VOC's have been added to the CRI list of 13 'chemicals of concern.'



The acoustic criteria for impact and reverberation noise reduction were determined taking into account the results of CSIRO testing on a range of residential and commercial carpets. The selection of the ECS performance criteria for thermal insulation was based on existing research.

Overall, the ECS performance criteria are more stringent than other standards set for environmental certification in the Australasian marketplace.

Manufacturers Code of Environmental Practice

Another important feature of the ECS is that carpet manufacturers must comply with an Environmental Code of Practice. The Code of Practice includes provisions relating to:

- Good environmental practices in manufacturing
- Bans on the use of environmentally hazardous materials (such as dyes with toxic residues) in line with European Union requirements for textile products;
- Product stewardship; and
- Reporting of resource usage efficiencies.

Companies must satisfy the above requirements to be licensed to use and display the ECS label. These companies will be independently audited to verify performance claims.

It is also important to note that access to the ECS is not restricted by high annual license fees and throughput royalties.

Status of the ECS

The Board of the Carpet Institute of Australia endorsed the Scheme after extensive consultation with industry.

A request to incorporate the ECS in the Certification Trademark Agreement has been lodged with the Australian Consumer and Competition Commission and a decision is expected before the end of the year.

The Green Building Council of Australia has been asked to officially recognize the ECS as an independent product certification scheme for textile floor coverings. The request will be considered in the context of GBCA's annual review of rating tools, and decision will be announced in January/ February.

Further Information

Copies of the ACCS/ ECS Technical Guidelines, Rules of Operation of the Scheme and the results of commissioned research conducted by CETEC and CSIRO, may be obtained by contacting Allan Firth on 03 9804 5559 or email: allan@carpetoz.com.au



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About the Carpet Institute of Australia

The Carpet Institute of Australia Limited (CIAL) is the lead industry association for Australia's \$1.6 billion carpet industry. CIAL represents carpet manufacturers accounting for 95% of Australian carpet production, as well as retailers and suppliers of goods and services to the industry.