

Information standards

What are information standards?

Information standards regulate the type and amount of information provided to consumers about goods and services.

The Commonwealth minister responsible for administering the Australian Consumer Law (ACL) can:

- make new information standards
- declare an existing state or territory standard as a national information standard.

An information standard for goods or services can:

- require particular information to be provided, or not
- set the form or manner of this information
- give a certain meaning to information.

The ACL recognises the following mandatory information standards:

- fibre content labelling of textile products - labels must state the various percentages of different fibres, such as wool or cotton, in the textile;
- care labelling for clothing and textile products - labels should include appropriate instructions to help consumers care for the item
- ingredient labelling of cosmetics and toiletries - labels must state the ingredients to help consumers compare products, identify ingredients and avoid adverse reactions.

Australian governments can also regulate consumer goods or product-related services by imposing mandatory safety standards. For more information, visit the Product safety page on the Fair Trading website.

Business responsibilities

You must:

- ensure goods and services you supply comply with relevant information standards, if sold within Australia
- be familiar with information standards relevant to those goods and services.

Example- complying with mandatory information standards

A retailer sold imported dresses not properly labelled with instructions for washing, dry-cleaning and ironing. The retailer was fined because the labels did not contain all instructions required by the information standard.

Obtaining information standards

Information standards are made by the relevant Commonwealth Minister.

TIP - Businesses can buy information standards from Standards Australia - standards.com.au or by telephoning 1800 035 822.

Penalties

Supplying goods and services that do not comply with an information standard is an offence.

The maximum penalty is \$1.1 million for a body corporate and \$220,000 for an individual. Criminal penalties for the same amount may apply.

Breaching an information standard can also lead to injunctions, personal damages, compensatory orders, corrective advertising orders and adverse publicity orders.