

# ADMIN 3.4 STYLE GUIDE FOR STANDARDS

VERSION 6

Sudha Niles  
GM Products and Innovation

28 November 2025

## 1 Purpose

The purpose of this document is to provide internal and external authors of RISSB Standards and Codes of Practice (CoP) with supporting information that regulates and assists the creation and development of RISSB Standards.

Writing style varies between writers. However, there are certain protocols that should be followed to ensure that all writers are consistent in their approach to producing technical documentation.

This document shall be read in conjunction with Standards Australia Standardisation Guide 006: Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards (SG-006) and the RISSB SDM Handbook.

For consistency in style and format, the development and review of RISSB CoPs shall conform to the same requirements that are imposed on Standards by SG-006.

This document underpins the RISSB document templates and contains a comprehensive body of material to assist in the preparation of Standards and CoPs.

## 2 Responsibilities

Responsibility is summarised in the subsequent table.

Position	Responsible for:
Standard Development Managers	Ensuring Standards and CoPs are developed in accordance with this document
QA Lead	Ensuring that all published Standards and CoPs meet the requirements of this document
GM Products and Innovation	Maintenance and endorsement of this document Approval of this document

## 3 Application

This document shall be used when drafting new and reviewing existing Standards and Codes of Practice in conjunction with –

- RISSB's document templates
  - The Standard and CoP templates consist of a Microsoft Word template to use as a basis for all RISSB Standard and CoP development. The template is pre-formatted to be compliant with both RISSB and Standards Australia's requirements (as per SDAC's [‘Style Manual for Accredited Standards Development Organisations \(SDOs\)’](#)).
  - Document templates are available on RISSB DEPOT

- Standards Australia Standardisation Guide 006: Rules for the structure and drafting of Australian Standards (SG-006)
  - SG-006 describes Standards Australia's rules for the structure and drafting of both Australian and joint Australian/New Zealand Standards. All RISSB Standards developments are required to comply with the requirements contained within SG-006 to be considered for publication as an Australian Standard. For consistency, RISSB CoPs also follow SG-006

SG-006 is available from Standards Australia's website.

These documents provide the basis for all RISSB Standards and CoP developments and shall be used by authors during products development.

Deviations from this guide are not permitted unless under exceptional circumstances. Any author requiring a deviation from the resident styles or structure of the templates, the documented requirements of SG-006, and/or ADMIN 3.4 shall discuss the need for a deviation with the Senior Standards Development Manager. Deviations may need to be approved by the RISSB QA Lead and GM Products and Innovation.

## 4 Style Guidance

---

### 4.1 Voluntary Standards / Performance Based Requirements

#### 4.1.1 Standards

A Standard is a set of requirements that seek to achieve at least the minimum objectives of safety, quality or performance of a product or service.

Standards, on their own, have no legal status and no requirement for compliance by manufacturers, operators, consumers or the public. Legislated standards have additional requirements as shown below. See Section 4.9 for more specific details.

Voluntary Standards may however be subject to citation in legislation, or within the context of a commercial contract, having the effect of making the standard mandatory.

RISSB Standards are normative in so much as it is necessary to conform to the requirements for a user to be able to claim compliance with the Standard.

Performance based Standards have their requirements expressed in terms of performance, i.e. outcomes to be achieved. This approach leaves freedom for the development of innovative technical methods to meet the requirements of the Standard.

Performance based Standards consist of –

- Requirements – criteria to be fulfilled if compliance with the document is to be claimed and from which no deviation is permitted. Requirements are identified within a Standard using the verb form “shall”. Negative requirements (i.e. “shall not”) should be avoided where possible.

- Recommendations – criteria which conveys that among several possibilities, one is recommended as particularly suitable without mentioning or excluding others, or that a certain course of action is preferred but not necessarily required. Recommendations are identified within a Standard using the verb form “should” or “should not”.
- Options and permissions might also be contained within the Standard. These informative criteria are identified within the Standard using the verb form “may”. Where a possibility exists, the verb “can” or “could” shall be used.

RISSB Standards shall be written in the form of voluntary/performance-based Standards.

#### 4.1.2 Requirements usage

Requirements shall not be used in the same sentence as recommendations. Requirements shall not appear in informative elements of the document, including footnotes, notes to text, informative tables, figures and informative appendices. Informative appendices may contain optional requirements using the verb form “may”.

If “shall” is used in the introduction to a list, that list shall contain requirements only; a recommendation may be included in a note only, inserted under the appropriate list item or at the end of the list.

If a list comprises recommendations and requirements, that list shall have a non-restrictive introduction, for example, “the following provisions apply:”

#### 4.1.3 Codes of Practice

Codes of Practice (CoP) are industry accepted documents which detail good practice in safety, design, and operations. Whilst CoPs can be enforced by legislation, RISSB CoPs are voluntary.

CoPs are normative in the same manner as Standards.

For consistency, RISSB CoPs follow the same wording conventions and document formats as RISSB Standards.

CoPs are not subject to the same level of rigidity in their content as Australian Standards, allowing the author flexibility to provide more context and description. For example, whereas content in a Standard needs to be direct and to the point, content in a CoP can include context, background information, and instruction on how to meet a requirement.

#### 4.1.4 Verifiable requirements

Requirements shall be able to be assessed and/or verified as being achieved by calculation, inspection, demonstration or test. How or when a requirement is to be verified should only be stated if it is appropriately prescribed in the requirements source document.

Where it is not possible or unclear how conformance might be verified, the criteria cannot be expressed as a requirement (i.e. use of the verb form “shall”). For example, considerations should not form any part of a requirement. Similarly, terms such as

maximise, minimise, adequate, suitable, appropriate, easy, user friendly, and high quality should also not form part of any requirements. Terms such as “assess” indicate that documented evidence has been generated and can be produced during an audit to demonstrate compliance.

#### **4.1.5 Performance versus prescriptive requirements**

A performance requirement is a measurable statement of an outcome without stating how it is to be achieved. A prescriptive requirement is a statement of how to do something.

Performance requirements are preferred over prescriptive requirements.

Prescriptive requirements may be used where there:

- are requirements which need to match exactly to a standard/proprietary item;
- has been a well-developed history of doing something a certain way (as detailed in existing standards for example); or
- is difficulty in coming up with a suitable performance requirement.

For legislated standards, prescriptive standards are described as 'deemed to comply' technical specifications. Performance-based legislated standards shall be very clear on what the performance requirement is and how the performance can be tested or measured. Where both performance and prescriptive requirements are legislated, it will be necessary to clearly separate these into separate sections or provide two standards.

#### **4.1.6 Allocation of roles**

Standards and CoPs should avoid allocating requirements or recommendations to specific roles. Where it is necessary to allocate a role (e.g., where a verification needs to be carried out by a person other than the designer), the requirements of that role should be clearly defined in an appendix.

### **4.2 Writing style**

Standards and CoPs shall read as if produced by a single writer. While the style and look of the Standard or CoP will contribute to this, it is important that the writing be consistent. Where content is derived from different sources, the text shall be reviewed and amended so that tone, meaning and flow is consistent throughout the document.

### **4.3 Expression**

To define clear and unambiguous provisions, a Standard shall:

- be as complete as necessary within the limits specified by its scope;
- be consistent, clear and accurate;
- not be verbose;
- provide a framework for future technological development; and
- be comprehensible to the reader who has not participated in its preparation.

## 4.4 Paragraphs and sentences

Generally, a paragraph should not attempt to explain more than one concept or idea. Paragraphs should contain no more than three or four sentences.

Each sentence shall have only one identified requirement or recommendation to ensure unambiguous referencing of requirements and recommendations within a Standard.

Sentences may be structured into paragraphs to assist the readers understanding however each paragraph should not consist of multiple requirements and/or recommendations. Sentences should be formed by a clear topic expressing the requirement then followed by supporting or explanatory sentences. Paragraphs should express a single topic or theme.

Sentences should not be longer than 15 words.

Sentences that contain more than two items should be formatted as a list or split into separate sentences.

Where requirements or recommendations are expressed in the form of a list, such lists shall not contain both requirements (i.e. “shall”) and recommendations (i.e. “should”) where the shall or should statement is provided in the opening proposition. Where both requirements and recommendations are required to be in a list, it is preferable that two different lists are used.

## 4.5 Language

RISSB Standards are required to be accessible to a wide audience with diverse background, and varying degrees of technical experience. Notwithstanding the need to use appropriate technical or industry terms, all RISSB Standards shall be written in clear, plain English terms and with equivalence to an Australian grade 10 level of education.

Authors and DG members engaged in RISSB Standards development should not use the following:

- Gender specific and/or other discriminatory language.
- Role-specific references. Where a role is referred to, the most suitable generalised term should be used, e.g. designer, tester, verifier.
- Unnecessary or excessive use of technical jargon or terminology.
- Non-English words and phrases, such as ‘laissez-faire’ or ‘ad hoc’.

## 4.6 Referencing

Where the whole referenced document is applicable and changes to the content of that document is unlikely to affect the intent of the reference, then only the document identifier shall be used. For example, where the whole of a Standard is applicable then the reference would be AS 7715 (the date is not added).

If:

- clauses or pages are referenced;

- reference is made to specific requirements;
- reference to specific testing methods;

then the date shall be added to the reference e.g. AS 7715:2025 (date added).

When cross-referencing within the document the following applies:

- Do not use page numbers.
- Use the term 'this document'
- Use 'section' when referencing Level 1 headings, 'clause' for all other heading references.
- Use 'item' for specific list references.

Example cross referencing:

- 'In accordance with section 3'.
- 'According to clause 3.1'.
- 'As specified in item 3.1(b)'.

## **4.7 Source materials & copyright**

Authors and DG members may provide industry source documents to assist with development of RISSB Standards and CoPs. Where such source material is provided, the Standard Development Manager or author shall ensure that any material put forward for inclusion does not infringe upon a third party's copyright. Permission shall be obtained from the copyright holder prior to the draft being released for public consultation. Evidence of permission to use the material shall be recorded.

Requirements taken from source documents shall be reworded/revised so that they are consistent with the style and structure required of RISSB Standards and CoPs.

Other content used from source documents should be paraphrased/reworded where possible.

All source material should be reviewed before acceptance into the Standard or CoP being developed. Authors ensure subject applicability and language style of the source material is consistent with the content under development.

Where content is used from countries other than Australia, the author shall ensure that any requirements do not pose a barrier to trade. For example, the use of a requirement from a USA-based Standard may prevent Australian manufacturers from being able to comply with that requirement.

## **4.8 Images and drawings**

Images and drawings shall be clear and easy to read.

Images and drawings shall not rely on colour to provide information relating to requirements or recommendations.

Images and drawings should use the minimum amount of explanatory text needed to clearly convey the required information. Paragraphs of text should be placed into the body text. Notes and commentary boxes may be used for this purpose.

## **4.9 Notes and commentary**

Notes are used for giving additional information intended to assist the understanding or use of the text of the document. Notes provide explanatory information. The document shall be usable without the notes.

Commentaries are a means of providing additional guidance through information that is supplementary. The document shall be usable without the notes or commentaries.

For legislated standards, advisory notes and informative appendices should be avoided where possible so as not to confuse what is a requirement and what is information. If used, they shall not provide alternatives or exemptions to requirements.

Commentaries for legislated standards should be provided in a separate informative supplement rather than in the Standard. Normative clauses in legislated standards shall not reference commentaries.

## **4.10 Legislated Standards**

### **4.10.1 Overview**

Standards intended for legislative adoption shall comply with the requirements specified in SG-009 in addition to the requirements of this document.

### **4.10.2 Alignment with legislation**

Legislated Standards shall not include any requirements stated in legislation. Definitions shall align with definitions in the legislation.

It may be necessary to arrange the contents so that requirements intended to be adopted in legislation are separate to those which are not, as it may not be the intention of the legislation for all parts of the Standard to be mandated. Non-legislated requirements may be placed in a separate section or normative appendix.

### **4.10.3 Legislative statements**

Legislation may state 'shall be complied with' or may call out the standard as a benchmark. Legislation can call out the whole standard or specific sections or provisions of the standard. In the latter case, any amendments need to be carefully managed so as not to change the intent of the legislation.

### **4.10.4 Use of practicality terms**

It shall be possible to interpret the requirements in a legislated standard in precise and unambiguous terms. Terms like 'reasonably practical' shall be avoided where possible.



#### 4.10.5 Advisory notes and informative appendices

Advisory notes and informative appendices should be avoided where possible so as not to confuse what is a requirement and what is information. If used, they shall not provide alternatives or exemptions to requirements.

Where notes are used, they shall use a smaller font size and be indented from the main text, not in a box. The following text is recommended in the objective or preface: "Notes used in this Standard are of an advisory nature only and are used to give explanation or guidance to the user on recommended considerations or technical procedures, or to provide an informative cross-reference to other documents or publications. Notes to clauses in this Standard do not form a mandatory part in order to conform to this Standard."

#### 4.10.6 References to procedures or bodies

A Standard for Legislative Adoption shall not:

- duplicate legislative requirements,
- specify or define the respective rights, responsibilities or obligations as between the Standard user and any manufacturer, supplier or purchaser,
- specify or define the responsibilities of any person or of any authority or other body,
- require the submission for approval of any material, component, form or method of work to any person, authority or body,
- specify that a material, component, form or method of work shall be submitted to any person, authority or body for an expression of opinion, or
- permit a departure from a code, rule, specification or provision at the discretion of the manufacturer or purchaser, or by arrangement or agreement between the manufacturer and purchaser.

#### 4.10.7 Cross referencing

Care shall be taken if cross referencing other Standards as part of a requirement.

## 5 Document Style and Structure

---

### 5.1 Headers and footers

Headers and footers are supplemental elements in a document that routinely appear at the top and bottom of the page to provide information about the document's properties. The following elements are incorporated:

- Corporate logo
- Standard designation and/or title
- ABN
- Page Numbering

The header and footer shall be maintained as per the format provided within the document templates.

## 5.2 Sections

### 5.2.1 Applicability

The following information applies to Standards. However, the same elements can be applied to CoPs.

### 5.2.2 Section numbering

Identification of each section of text within each Standard and CoP shall be by numbering in the form of 1, 1.1, 1.1.1 and 1.1.1.1.

The sectional numbering scheme is established within the template and applied using the built-in styles (i.e. RISSB Heading 1, RISSB Heading 2, etc).

### 5.2.3 Hanging paragraphs

A hanging paragraph is created by including text between ascending level headings. Hanging paragraphs shall not be included in Standards or CoPs.

For example:

#### Section 1    Heading 1

---

##### 1.1            Hanging paragraphs

These are easily to spot. If you have text between different level headings like this then it's a hanging paragraph.

##### 1.1.1            Not all is lost

The easiest way to remove a hanging paragraph is to create a new heading like below.

##### 1.2            No hanging paragraphs

##### 1.2.1            General

This way there is no text between the level 2 and level 3 headings

##### 1.2.2            Detail

So to avoid hanging paragraphs don't put text between different levels of headings.

### 5.2.4 Introductory Section

All Standards shall consist of the following Introductory sections (as established in the template):

- Preface – This is a standard paragraph that is pre-populated in the template.

- Objective – The objective shall be written in compliance with SG-006. The objective shall provide the objective of the document and statement of significant technical changes.
- Compliance – This is a standard paragraph that is pre-populated in the template and shall not be modified.

The Preface (objective) shall include a statement of significant technical changes from the previous version.

### 5.2.5 Section 1 Scope and General

All Standards shall contain the following sections (as provided in the template):

- Scope – Section 1.1 shall contain the scope. The scope shall be written in compliance with SG-006.
- Normative references – Section 1.2 shall contain a list of all normatively referenced documents within the Standard; Compliance with all or part of the normatively referenced document is a requirement of this Standard. Note that informative references are contained in the bibliography which is always the final appendix of the document.
- Defined terms and conditions – Section 1.3 shall contain a list of the technical terms and definitions used within the Standard.

Where Notes to Entry are included to help explain a term, the Note to Entry shall be contained within a box.

Terms found in the Macquarie Dictionary or the RISSB Glossary shall not be included in the Defined terms and abbreviations section unless the definition in the dictionary or glossary is unsuitable due to the context in which the term is used. Report any deviations from the RISSB Glossary to the Senior Standards Development Manager for review.

### 5.2.6 Main Section

All remaining sections of each Standard shall comprise the main body of the document and detail normative and informative elements pertinent to the subject matter. The structure, section headings and broad-based content of this section are developed by agreement between the author and Development Group to best express the requirements of the Standard.

### 5.2.7 Appendices

Appendices are added to the document where additional information is valuable to the reader and pertinent to the main body of material.

The following should be used as guidelines for the inclusion of material as an appendix:

- Is the material to be appended, relevant or related to the main document's material?
- Does it complement the main document?

- Can it be used to gain a better understanding of the main document?
- Is it compatible with the published format of the main document?

Do not copy unnecessary text from source materials – critically review source material.

## 6 Record Requirements

---

The following records are retained as evidence of compliance to this procedure:

- Draft Standards and CoPs
- Records of Copyright permissions (if applicable)