

COUNTRY GUIDE – Australia

(20 December 2013, last updated in ~~April 2014 and January 2019~~January 2022)

Important notes: *This guide does not override the Rules and is not a substitute for legal, regulatory, tax, financial or any other advice from qualified professional advisers. If there is any conflict or inconsistency between this guide and the Rules, the Rules prevail. You may consult the Listing Division on a confidential basis for an interpretation of the Rules, or this guide.*

The information contained in this guide on foreign laws, regulations and market practices is based on that provided to us by potential listing applicants, listing applicants, listed issuers, their respective advisers or officials from the relevant jurisdiction. We have not separately verified this information nor have we updated this information since its receipt. ~~We will revise this guide to reflect changes in this information only when notified of these changes.~~

~~*A new applicant for listing that is incorporated in Australia must confirm to the Exchange, with its initial application for listing, that the Australian laws, regulations and market practices contained in this guide are still applicable, or provide us with details of any changes, and inform us of any other Australian laws, regulations and market practices that are relevant to its circumstances.*~~

Subsequent Development (Updated in January 2022)

In November 2021, the Exchange introduced a new listing regime for overseas issuers which covers, among other things, that all issuers are required to comply with the core shareholder protection standards under the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules (where applicable) (the “Core Shareholder Protection Standards”). The amended Listing Rules are effective as from 1 January 2022. Information in this country guide may be outdated upon the introduction of such listing regime. Issuers and their advisers are advised to exercise caution when reading the guidance in this country guide.

A new applicant that is incorporated in the jurisdiction of this country guide should refer to the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules (where applicable) for the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards required by the Exchange.¹ Should there be any changes in the laws, regulations and market practices described in this country guide which might or would adversely affect a new applicant’s compliance with the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards or any applicable Listing Rules, such new applicant should inform the Exchange of any such changes. A new applicant is also encouraged to consult the Exchange at the earliest opportunity if there is any enquiry on the guidance or requirements in this country guide.

¹ *Including codification with modification of certain requirements under the Joint Policy Statement regarding the Listing of Overseas Companies published on 27 September 2013 (amended on 30 April 2018), which was superseded and no longer effective as from 1 January 2022.*

Purpose of this Guide

This guide is one of a series that gives guidance on our treatment of listing applications from overseas issuers incorporated in a particular jurisdiction. The aim of this guide is to enhance applicants' understanding of our expectations, practices, procedures and the criteria we consider when applying the Rules for overseas issuers.

This guide should be read in conjunction with the [Joint Policy Statement Regarding Listing of Overseas Companies \(27 September 2013\)](#)², [Listing Rules, in particular, the Core Shareholder Protection Standards, Chapter 19 of the Main Board Rules \(Chapter 24 of the GEM Rules\) \(for primary listing applicants\) and Chapter 19C of the Main Board Rules \(for secondary listing applicants\)](#). All issuers incorporated in Australia can apply for one or more “common waivers”³ and those with, or seeking, a secondary listing⁴ do not need to apply for waivers of certain Rules which are automatically waived for them⁵ [\(Updated in January 2022\)](#).

Summary of our Approach

~~Subject to~~ Australia incorporated companies ~~meeting the conditions set out in this guide, we do not consider Australian shareholder protection standards to be materially different to our own.~~ must demonstrate how the Australian laws and regulations and their constitutional documents, in combination, provide the Core Shareholder Protection Standards [\(Updated in January 2022\)](#).

The statutory securities regulator in Australia, namely, Australian Securities and Investments Commission (“ASIC”), is a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU⁶ and Australia meets our international regulatory co-operation requirements because it already has adequate measures in place with Hong Kong’s Securities and Futures Commission [\(Updated in January 2022\)](#).

We are prepared to accept financial statements that conform to ~~Australian Generally Accepted Accounting Practices of Australia~~ Australian Accounting Standards from issuers with, or seeking, a primary listing in the same jurisdiction as the standard setter that have, or are seeking, a dual primary or secondary listing on the Exchange. This is on the condition that the issuer includes ~~These must contain~~ a reconciliation statement of setting out the financial effect of the material differences (if any) from either Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards or International Financial Reporting Standards [\(Updated in January 2022\)](#).

² Available on the HKEx website at:

http://www.hkex.com.hk/eng/rulesreg/listrules/listsptop/listoc/Documents/new_jps_0927.pdf

³ Primary Listing: Main Board Rule 19.58 (GEM Rule 24.25); Secondary Listing: Main Board Rule 19C.11B

⁴ JPS, Section 5.

⁵ Main Board Rule 19C.11 JPS, paragraph 88.

⁶ [IOSCO Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Consultation and Cooperation and the Exchange of Information](#)

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1. Background

- 1.1 Australia’s equivalent to the Hong Kong Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) and the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32) is the Corporations Act 2001, which sets requirements for Australia incorporated companies. In addition, companies listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (“ASX”) are bound by the ASX Listing Rules. The ASX is regulated by the Australian Securities and Investments Commission (“ASIC”), which reports to the Australian government annually on the ASX, and the ASIC’s role is to enforce and regulate company and financial services laws to protect investors (*Updated in April 2014*).

2. Application of this Country Guide

- 2.1 This Country Guide applies to primary and secondary Main Board listing applicants and primary GEM listing applicants incorporated in Australia. We do not accept applications for secondary listing on GEM.

3. International Regulatory Co-operation Measures

- 3.1 ~~Our Joint Policy Statement Regarding the Listing of Overseas Companies (27 September 2013) (“JPS”) states that the statutory securities regulator of an overseas issuer’s jurisdiction of incorporation must have adequate arrangements with the Securities and Futures Commission (“SFC”) for regulatory co-operation⁷. Main Board Rule 8.02A states that each of the statutory securities regulator of an issuer’s jurisdiction of incorporation and the statutory securities regulator of the place of central management and control must be a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU. This is to enable the Securities and Futures Commission (the “SFC”) to seek regulatory assistance and information from overseas statutory securities regulators to facilitate the SFC’s investigations and enforcement actions where an issuer has its records, business operations, assets and management outside Hong Kong. This requirement is met for issuers incorporated in Australia as the Australia Securities and Investments Commission (“ASIC”) is a full signatory of the IOSCO MMOU⁸. In addition, the ASIC has signed a memorandum of understanding with to provide mutual assistance on exchange of information in relation to securities matters with the SFC (*Updated in January 2022*).~~
- 3.2 If a listing applicant is incorporated in Australia but its place of central management and control⁹ is elsewhere, ~~similar international co-operation arrangements must generally also be in place with that jurisdiction the statutory securities regulator of that jurisdiction must also be a full signatory to the IOSCO MMOU (*Updated in January 2022*).~~

⁷ ~~JPS, paragraphs 42 to 44.~~

⁸ ~~International Organisation of Securities Commission’s Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding Concerning Consultation and Cooperation and the Exchange of Information.~~

⁹ ~~JPS, paragraph 45. Main Board Rule 8.02A~~

4. **JPS-Core Shareholder Protection Standards**

- 4.1 ~~Subject to Australia incorporated issuers demonstrating¹⁰ how their practices, as set out below, conform to the JPS requirements, we do not consider Australian shareholder protection standards to be materially different to our own¹¹. Australia incorporated issuers must demonstrate how the domestic laws, rules and regulations to which they are subject and their constitutional documents, in combination, provide the Core Shareholder Protection Standards. (Updated in January 2022)~~

~~Based on submissions by a potential applicant, We-we have set out below details of the differences between these practices in Australia and the then JPS requirements in the Joint Policy Statement Regarding the Listing of Overseas Companies (“JPS”) (repealed as of 1 January 2022). Where we have in the past accepted a practice and it is still relevant for assessment under the new listing regime for overseas issuers, we have stated this below. Australia incorporated applicants should amend their constitutional documents to address the shortfall in compliance with the Core Shareholder Protection Standards. (updated in January 2019/2022)~~

~~The information contained in this guide on Australian laws, regulations and market practices is based on submissions by a potential applicant. We have neither separately verified this information nor have we updated this information since its receipt. Issuers and their advisers are advised to exercise caution when reading the guidance in this country guide. Should there be any changes in the laws, regulations and market practices described in this country guide which might or would adversely affect a new applicant’s compliance with the expected Core Shareholder Protection Standards or any applicable Listing Rules, such new applicant should inform the Exchange of any such changes. (Added in January 2022)~~

Proceedings at general meetings

- 4.2 Timing of an annual general meeting: Under the ~~then~~ JPS, an overseas company is required to hold a general meeting each year as its annual general meeting, and generally no more than 15 months should elapse between the date of one annual general meeting and the next¹².

Under Australian law, an Australian company only has to hold its first annual general meeting within eighteen months after its registration. The Exchange has previously accepted the timing for convening annual general meetings under Australian law (Updated in January 2022).

Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022

¹⁰ ~~We list the key shareholder protection standards with which applicants must demonstrate equivalence in Section 1 of the JPS.~~

¹¹ ~~Notes to Main Board Rules 19.05(1) and 19.30(1) and JPS, paragraphs 27 and 28.~~

¹² ~~JPS, paragraph 36.~~

This then JPS requirement was codified with modification in paragraph 14(1) of the revised Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules, which provides that an issuer must hold a general meeting for each financial year as its annual general meeting and generally, an issuer must hold its annual general meeting within six months after the end of its financial year (*Updated in January 2022*).

- 4.3 Notice of general meetings: Under the then JPS, an overseas company must give its members reasonable written notice of general meetings⁺³.

Under Australian law, any annual general meeting shall be convened upon a notice of not less than 28 days.

The Exchange has previously accepted the notice requirement for convening general meetings under Australian law.

~~In determining the “reasonableness” of the notice period for general meetings, the Exchange will take into consideration (i) the provisions under the Hong Kong Companies Ordinance (Cap. 622) and the Companies (Winding Up and Miscellaneous Provisions) Ordinance (Cap. 32) as from time to time in force as applicable to Hong Kong incorporated companies, (ii) the shareholding structure of the company, and (iii) company and transaction specific facts and circumstances (*Updated in April 2014*).~~

Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022

The requirement comparable to the then JPS requirement was codified with modification in paragraph 14(2) of the revised Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules. (*Updated in January 2022*)

- 4.4 Right to speak and vote at general meetings: The then JPS requires that all members must have the right to speak and vote at a general meeting, except in cases where members having a material interest in a transaction or arrangement are required, by the Rules, to abstain from voting to approve the transaction or arrangement⁺⁴.

Under the Australian Corporations Act, members as a whole at the general meeting are allowed a reasonable opportunity to ask questions about or comment on the management of the company. The Exchange has previously accepted the requirements for the right to speak and vote at general meetings under Australian law (*updated in January 2019*).

Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022

The requirement comparable to the then JPS requirement was codified with modification in paragraphs 14(3) and 14(4) of the revised Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules. (*Updated in January 2022*)

⁺³ JPS, paragraph 37.

⁺⁴ JPS, paragraph 38.

Other Core Shareholder Protection Standards

- 4.5 Compared to the then JPS and the previous Appendix 3¹⁵ to the Listing Rules, two new shareholder protection standards, namely, members' right to appoint proxies and corporate representatives¹⁶ and inspect Hong Kong Branch Register¹⁷ are added to require the applicants to demonstrate conformity. Applicants incorporated in Australia might not meet these two new Core Shareholder Protection Standards and may have to amend their constitutional documents accordingly. Issuers and their advisors should refer to the revised Appendix 3 of the Main Board and GEM Listing Rules for the complete set of Core Shareholder Protection Standards. (Added in January 2022)

5. Practical and Operational Matters

- 5.1 Reference is made to Guidance for Overseas Issuers (HKEX-GL111-22)Section 4 of the JPS which contains guidance on an overseas issuer's ability to comply with Hong Kong's rules and regulations; the eligibility of securities; cross-border clearing and settlement; Hong Kong depositary receipts; taxation; and stock name identifications. Applicants are encouraged to notify the Listing Division if they envisage difficulties in complying with such matters, where applicable (Updated in January 2022).

Requirement to destroy documents of title in respect of repurchased shares

- 5.2 Under Section 257H(3) of the Corporations Act, shares that are repurchased by an Australian company are cancelled immediately after the registration of the transfer of repurchased shares to the company. However, an Australian issuer with shares held in Australia in uncertificated form (i.e. paperless) is unable to comply with the Rule requirement¹⁸ to destroy the documents of title if the shares are repurchased in Australia, since there are no shares to destroy.

Our Approach

- 5.3 Having considered that (i) it is a statutory requirement to cancel immediately any shares repurchased by Australian issuer, and (ii) the documents of title are held in uncertificated form which cannot be "destroyed", we have granted a waiver to an Australian issuer in a previous case.

¹⁵ The previous version of Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules that was in effective on or prior to 31 December 2021

¹⁶ Appendix 3, paragraph 18

¹⁷ Appendix 3, paragraph 20

¹⁸ —Main Board Rule 10.06(5) requires that the listing of all shares which are purchased by an issuer (whether on the Exchange or otherwise) shall be automatically cancelled upon purchase and the issuer must apply for listing of any further issues of that type of shares in the normal way. The issuer shall ensure that the documents of title of purchased shares are cancelled and destroyed as soon as reasonably practicable following settlement of any such purchase.

6. Constitutional Documents

- 6.1 Australian laws and regulations do not have equivalent provisions ~~for all our Rules on the contents of constitutional documents to comply with all Listing Rules relating to the relevant shareholder protection.~~¹⁹ We set out in the Appendix our approach on each of the items required to be included in an Australia incorporated issuer's constitutional documents in order for it to meet ~~our the Listing Rule~~ requirements (Updated in January 2022).

7. Accounting and Auditing Related Requirements

- 7.1 We normally require the accountants' reports and financial statements of overseas issuers seeking a primary or a secondary listing on the Exchange to conform to the Hong Kong Financial Reporting Standards ("HKFRS") or the International Financial Reporting Standards ("IFRS")²⁰ (Updated in January 2022).

Our Approach

- 7.2 ~~As set out in the JPS, We are prepared to accept financial statements that conform to the generally accepted accounting principles of Australia ("Australian GAAP") Australian Accounting Standards²¹ and Australian Auditing Standards²² are acceptable to the Exchange²³. We will therefore allow are prepared to consider an Australia incorporated issuer with, or seeking, a primary listing in the same jurisdiction as the standard setter that have, or are seeking, a dual-primary or secondary listing on the Exchange to use Australian GAAP Accounting Standards for its accountants' reports and all subsequent financial statements, and for these to be audited to Australian Auditing Standards, provided that the issuer includes. However, this is on the condition the issuer includes a reconciliation statement of setting out the financial effect of the material differences (if any) from either HKFRS or IFRS, in its accountants' reports and subsequent financial statements²⁴, and it must revert to HKFRS or IFRS if it is no longer listed in a jurisdiction that allows Australian GAAP.~~ (Updated in January 2022).

¹⁹ ~~Appendix 3 to the Rules.~~

²⁰ ~~—Main Board Rules 4.11 to 4.13, 19.13, 19A.25A, 19C.10D, 19C.23 and Note 2.1 to paragraph 2 of Appendix 16 (GEM Rules 7.12, 18.04 and 24.18A), 19.39 and Notes 2.1 and 2.4 to paragraph 2 of Appendix 16.~~

~~See also JPS, paragraphs 56 to 62.~~

²¹ ~~A list of alternative overseas financial reporting standards that are considered comparable to HKFRS and IFRS is published on the Exchange's website, as amended from time to time.~~

²² ~~—A list of alternative overseas auditing standards that are considered comparable to the standards required by the Hong Kong Institute of Certified Public Accountants or by the International Auditing and Assurance Standards Board of the International Federation of Accountants is published on the Exchange's website, as amended from time to time.~~

²³ ~~JPS paragraphs 50 and 59.~~

²⁴ ~~Primary Listing: Main Board Rule 19.14 and GEM Rule 7.14 (accountants' reports) and Main Board Rule 19.25A and GEM Rule 24.18A (annual/ interim/ quarterly financial statements). Secondary Listing: Main Board Rules 19C.10D (accountants' reports) and 19C.23 (annual/ interim financial statements).~~

Please note the important notes on the front page of this country guide regarding Australian laws, regulations and practices.

**Our Approach to Differences between Our Constitutional Document Requirements ^(note)
and Australian Laws, Rules and Practices**

Note: Some of the Constitutional Document Requirements stated herein were either (i) repealed on 1 January 2022 because they were not considered to be fundamental to shareholder protection or they overlapped with the requirements in the Listing Rules; or (ii) codified with modification as Core Shareholder Protection Standards in the Listing Rules. For details, please see the column headed “Subsequent Development since 1 January 2022”. New applicants shall assess whether it can comply with the relevant Listing Rules or seek waiver from compliance. (Added in January 2022)

Rule Paragraph	Rule Requirement	Australian Laws, Regulations and Practice	Our Approach <u>Prior to 1 January 2022</u>	<u>Subsequent Development Since 1 January 2022</u>
<u>(not effective after 31 December 2021)</u>				
Appendix 3, 4(4)	The minimum length of the period, during which notice to the issuer of the intention to propose a person for election as a director and during which notice to the issuer by such person of his willingness to be elected may be given, will be at least seven days.	In a previous case, an Australia incorporated issuer followed the ASX requirements and provided in its constitutional document that nominations for directors can be made at any time during the year after the last general meeting but other than after the notice of meeting has been dispatched.	The ASX requirements conflicted with the articles provisions in Appendix 3. We considered that the combined effect of the ASX and the applicant’s constitutional requirements provided acceptable protection. A waiver of this articles provision was granted. Under the JPS, an eligible secondary listing applicant is entitled to an “automatic	<u>This articles provision was repealed on 1 January 2022.</u> <u>Secondary listing applicants shall apply to the Exchange for a waiver of compliance from the relevant Listing Rule if it considers necessary.</u>

Please note the important notes on the front page of this country guide regarding Australian laws, regulations and practices.

<p>Appendix 3, 4(5)</p>	<p>The period for lodgment of the notices referred to in subparagraph 4(4) will commence no earlier than the day after the despatch of the notice of the meeting appointed for such election and end no later than seven days prior to the date of such meeting.</p>		<p>waiver” for this item.</p>	<p><u>This articles provision was repealed on 1 January 2022. The note to Rule 13.70 contains the comparable requirement.</u></p>
<p>Appendix 3, 6(2)</p>	<p>The quorum for a separate class meeting to consider a variation of the rights of any class of shares must be the holders of at least one-third of the issued shares of that class.</p>	<p>In a previous case, an Australia incorporated applicant’s constitutional documents required the quorum for the meeting of members holding shares in the class to be constituted by not less than 25% of the issued shares of the class.</p>	<p>On the basis that (i) the applicant would be subject to the ASX requirements and Australian law, and (ii) the difference in the constitutional document provisions was immaterial, we granted a waiver of this articles provision.</p> <p>Under the JPS, an eligible secondary listing applicant is entitled to an “automatic waiver” for this item.</p>	<p><u>This articles provision was repealed on 1 January 2022 and was relocated to note 1 to paragraph 15 of Appendix 3 of the Listing Rules.</u></p> <p><u>Secondary listing applicants shall apply to the Exchange for a waiver of compliance from the relevant Listing Rule if it considers necessary.</u></p>