



## **Ecotourism NZ Conference 2007 Report**

## Delegate feedback

A conference questionnaire was developed to gather information to assess the conference as well as finding out about what delegates would like for future conferences and what kind of services that they would like to receive from Ecotourism NZ.

A total of 58 responses were received from delegates, a 44% response rate.

Here are the results:

### ***Keynote speakers***

Ron Mader

Average	5	12%
Good	20	47%
Excellent	18	42%
Total	43	100%

Comment: Ron Mader received some excellent feedback on the simple approach he took with his presentations.

Ross Dowling

Poor	4	10%
Average	13	31%
Good	17	40%
Excellent	8	19%
Total	42	100%

Ross was a late replacement for Alistair McCracken the Chairman of Ecotourism Australia. There were some comments from respondents wanting to have more of a focus on Ecotourism in New Zealand rather than looking at the Australian and global perspective. However others mentioned *“keep up the international speakers. Great to have a different perspective”*

### ***Sustainability and environment***

Sustainability and environment -

	Presentations		Workshops	
Average	2	5%	3	8%
Good	12	29%	8	22%
Excellent	27	66%	26	70%
Total	41	100%	37	100%

Sustainability issues were popular topics throughout the conference and this session provided an industry perspective on sustainability. The sustainability workshops were well received with 70% of respondents regarding the workshops excellent. The clear set of questions established by the presenters before the conference contributed towards its positive feedback.

Comments from delegates on sustainability included *“focus on how sustainability can be aimed at...the actual business operator level”*

## **Operator Issues**

Operator issues provided the opportunity for delegates to hear from operators about their business. Most of these sessions had two speakers, an industry expert such as a consultant and an operator to talk about the reality of running a business.

Operator issues-

	Strategy and vision		Online marketing	
Average	2	10%		
Good	10	50%	3	18%
Excellent	8	40%	14	<b>82%</b>
Total	20	100%	17	100%

The session run by Lawrence from Cabbage Tree interactive received an excellent rating of 82%. Comments from delegates include *“online marketing workshop useful with real tools thank you”* and *“Cabbage Tree excellent, very valuable”*.

Joeron’s input into the strategy and vision session was well received as a business success story and a business approach with flexibility.

Operator issues -

	Managing a business		Growing business through partnerships	
Good	11	11%	5	35%
Excellent	15	43%	12	65%
Total	16	38%	17	100%

Operator case studies were popular with a number of people commenting that they wanted to hear more about New Zealand success stories. *“White Heron and Dive Tutukaka...excellent to hear honest stories of the reality of tourism business”* and *“Craig and Mark were excellent. Great theory and awesome practical content. Very motivational”*.

## **After dinner speaker - Cam McLeay**

After dinner speaker - Cam McLeay

Average	2	6%
Good	8	22%
Excellent	26	72%
Total	36	100%

Cam’s after dinner speech was a highlight for many of the delegates who found that it had the right balance at the end of the first day. *“The after dinner speaker was perfect, interesting and not too intellectual!”*

## **Standards and benchmarking**

### Standards and benchmarking

	Speakers		Workshop	
Average			2	9%
Good	10	53%	8	36%
Excellent	9	47%	12	55%
Total	19	100%	22	100%

People found that the standards and benchmarking sessions did not have enough time to adequately discuss the issues of ecotourism standards. The speaker session tended to take a narrow perspective into existing product offerings rather than deliver options for how the sector can attempt to resolve the standards dilemma. Difficulties also included not having established one or two key issues to discuss or the time to break up the group into smaller groups. The session is summed up by a delegate *“many feet in different camps-confusion”*.

## **Concessions and land management**

### Concessions and land management

	Speakers		Workshop	
Poor	1	4%	1	5%
Average	1	4%	5	24%
Good	14	61%	12	57%
Excellent	7	30%	3	14%
	23	100%	21	100%

Some interesting discussions came out of the concessions and land management session however again, a number of delegates commented on the lack of direction achieved at the conclusion of the session *“I felt we went around in circles”*.

## **Interpretation**

### Interpretation basics

Poor	1	3%
Average	3	10%
Good	12	41%
Excellent	13	45%
	29	100%

Fergus’s presentation received positive feedback on his approach to interpretation. Unfortunately due to limited time a number of people missed the whole session and had to leave for one of the field trips and this caused some disruption to the cohesiveness of this session.

## **Pub quiz**

### Pub quiz

Average	1	5%
Good	2	9%
Excellent	19	<b>86%</b>
	<hr/> 22	100%

The pub quiz at the Paroa Hotel received the highest level of feedback from conference delegates. Overall the social functions were regarded as one of the highlights for delegates at the conference, *“very relaxed and lots of time for networking”*.

## **Cultural tourism**

### Cultural tourism

	Presentation		Workshop	
Good	4	20%	3	21%
Excellent	16	80%	11	79%
	<hr/> 20	100%	14	100%

A number of delegates would have liked to have seen a greater focus on the cultural perspective of ecotourism with comments such as “I thought cultural ought to have had a more central place in the conference, both conceptually and literally”. Speakers Joe Dougherty - a late replacement from the NZ Maori Tourism Council - and Amanda Symon from Ngai Tahu Maori Rock Art Trust received excellent feedback.

## **Ron Mader**

Good	3	43%
Excellent	4	57%
	<hr/> 7	100%

A group of delegates were taken into TPP for Ron Mader’s workshop however, it may have been less disruptive if it had been delivered at Shantytown.

## **Field Trips**

The field trips received varying levels of feedback with positive feedback on the Woods Creek, Shantytown and Arahua field trips, but disappointment at both the lack of interpretation for the Point Elizabeth walk, and at the inability to get into Paparoa National Park due to the size of the bus at Punakaikai.

In general delegates enjoyed getting out seeing the local area; however the field trips continue to be difficult both to organise and to find adequate guides as hosts.

### Overall conference rating

In general the feedback on the conference has been extremely positive with 92% of the respondents interested in attending the next ecotourism conference and 65% rating the conference as excellent.

Content and networking were the main reasons given for why people attended the conference, followed by the line-up of speakers.

Word of mouth, as well as electronic media, email and the web site were the main ways people heard about the conference.

#### Overall conference rating

Good	13	35%
Excellent	24	65%
	37	100%

#### Will you come again

Yes	46	92%
No	1	2%
Maybe	3	6%
	50	100%

#### Reasons for attending

Content	36
Networking	33
Speakers	32
Study	12
Work	1

#### How did you hear about the conference?

Word of mouth	34
Web site	8
Email	15
Brochure	7
Poster	1
Newspaper	1

Total of 55 responses  
(multiple responses)

#### Where should the conference be held next year?

West Coast	16	44%
Nelson	14	39%
Marlborough	4	11%
Southland	1	3%
Queenstown	1	3%
	36	100%

#### What do you think of the conference pricing?

About right	37	80%
Too cheap	5	11%
Too expensive	4	9%
	46	100%

#### Size of conference is:

About right	39	81%
Too few	8	17%
Too many	1	2%
	48	100%

## Feedback about Ecotourism NZ

	Be a part of Ecotourism NZ	Financially support	Receive services: accreditation	training	business reports
Yes	35	21	16	19	20
No	7	13	7	6	6
Total	42	34	23	25	26
<b>Yes</b>	<b>83%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>70%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>77%</b>
No	17%	38%	30%	24%	23%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

A high number of respondents are interested in being a part of Ecotourism NZ with fewer prepared to financially support the organisation. Respondents were very interested in receiving newsletters, market research information, networking opportunities and an online directory of ecotourism operators as services delivered by Ecotourism NZ.

	Marketing	Networking	Online directory	Newsletters	Market research
Yes	18	27	28	31	29
No	6	4	5	4	4
Total	24	31	33	35	33
<b>Yes</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>88%</b>
No	25%	13%	15%	11%	12%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

## Industry best practise

All 39 respondents are interested in adopting industry best practice standards, indicating the need to continue to develop the discussions around benchmarking and standards for ecotourism operators.

Discussion tended to support using existing structures, with comments such as “we already have structures such as TIANZ, Qualmark, Greenglobe; let’s be sustainable and use these to greater advantage”.

## Suggestions for next conference

The majority of respondents to the survey provided helpful written comments about the conference, and suggestions on what they would like for next year’s conference:

### Content

- kiwi success stories
- the “how to” on starting an ecotourism business
- sustainability at the operator level
- more cultural tourism
- focus on domestic tourism
- climate change and emission related issues
- different workshops for industry - e.g. RTOs/DoC/Government - and operators
- focus on practical, hands-on; not theory
- less talk, more decisions

## Logistics

- displays for operators
- more operators
- local government involvement
- bigger name tags
- continue with workshops and repeat workshops
- car pooling options
- online dialogue before, during and after event
- conference to display standards for best practice
- take the conference to the next level and out of region
- strong facilitators needed for workshops

### ***Conference feedback next steps***

Delegate feedback will be used towards planning the next conference in 2008. It is recommended that additional feedback is gathered from operators and industry participants by an online survey to provide input to the content and structure of the Ecotourism NZ conference 2008.