



# Ecotourism Australia

## Standards and Benchmarking

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**EcotourismNZ Conference 07**  
*Tai Poutini Polytechnic*  
**West Coast**  
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# What is Nature and Ecotourism ?

**Ecotourism is ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that fosters environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation**

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# Strong Industry Growth

- Ecotourism and nature tourism industries are displaying strong growth
- Real need to maintain high standards within the industry for success and to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future
- Federal Government initiative: Quality Tourism website is designed as an online resource to assist tourism businesses in growth and development
- Certification: a tool to assist in developing best practice standards for the industry

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[www.qualitytourism.com.au](http://www.qualitytourism.com.au)

**Business Improvement  
and Accreditation Portal**



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources**

Powered by

**decipher**  
tourism business knowledge

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**Qualitytourism.com.au is a portal that offers centralised online information for the tourism industry**

**It is an online gateway to business improvement information and tools and provides online accreditation / star rating systems to enable you to improve your business' profitability, credibility and sustainability**

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**When you first enter the site, it will ask you a series of questions, such as:**

- **Your region ie. State**
- **Your sector ie.  
Accommodation**
- **Your special interests ie.  
Indigenous Tourism**
- **If you require business  
improvement or accreditation /  
quality systems information**

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**Based on your selection, the Portal will return suitable information from one of the following sections:**

- **Business Improvement**
- **Quality Systems (Accreditation / Star Rating Systems)**
- **Success Stories**

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**In the Business Improvement section, information is provided to assist you with:**

- **Get Started with the basics of the industry**
- **Get Assistance with training schemes, licensing requirements and funding**
- **Get Known by learning how to promote your business effectively**
- **Get Informed with statistics on your industry, consumers and competition, and help you determine a winning strategy.**

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**Under Quality Systems, visitors are provided with a range of 18 quality accreditation / star rating systems offered by various industry organisations**

**The benefits of accreditation are:**

- **Gaining quality recognition to make ecotourism businesses more **credible****
- **Discovering ways to make ecotourism businesses more **profitable****
- **Developing a strategic plan to make ecotourism businesses more **sustainable****

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**In Quality Systems assist ecotourism businesses to identify which tourism accreditation / star rating schemes are most relevant to their business**

**They establish industry-recognised **minimum standards** that must be met in various areas of ecotourism businesses**

**The process allows businesses to register, pay and complete the application process all online, at their own pace and in their own time**

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In **Success Stories**, you can learn the secrets of some of Australia's most successful tourism operators – the challenges they faced, the solutions they came up with and the results they enjoyed

**Success Stories** shows how Business Improvement and Quality Systems can contribute to Ecotourism Business success

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# Background of Ecotourism Australia



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# Ecotourism Australia

- **The Peak National organisation for the Ecotourism and Nature Based Tourism sector**
- **Formed following Australia's first Ecotourism conference in 1991**
- **Non-profit organisation-Company Limited**
- **Diverse National membership of Tourism industry stakeholders**

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# Our Primary Mission

The Ecotourism Australia Vision is

*To be leaders in assisting Ecotourism and other committed tourism operations to become:*

- 1. Environmentally Sustainable*
- 2. Economically viable, and*
- 3. Socially and Culturally responsible*

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## Our Main Priorities

- **Promoting** Ecotourism to the general public, decision makers in government, and the wider Tourism industry
- **Shaping** Ecotourism through ECO Certification, EcoGuide Certification, contributions to training and research
- **Developing** Ecotourism through Quality, Growth and Innovation
- **Advancing** cause of Best Practice approach to Sustainable Tourism

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## Diverse Membership Base

- Ecotourism Accommodation, Tour and Attraction Operators
- Tourism Planners
- Protected Area Managers
- Academics and Students
- Tourism, Environmental, Interpretation and Training Consultants
- State, Regional & Local Tourism Organisations

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# Ecotourism Australia

- **Voluntary Board of 12 Members**
- **Chief Executive Officer**
- **Administrative & Media Staff**
- **ECO and EcoGuide Assessment Team**
- **ECO Auditing Team**
- **Visiting International Intern Students**

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## Our Board

- **Chairman: Alastair McCracken**
- **Deputy Chairman: Duncan MacKenzie**
- **Vivienne Clare – Dept Sustainability Environ, VIC**
- **Lois Peeler – Aboriginal Tourism Australia, VIC**
- **Rick Murray – Savannah Guides, Northern Territory**
- **Anne Sellar – SA Tourism Commission, SA**
- **Paul Wittwer – Ningaloo Reef Retreat, WA**
- **Lisha Mulqueeny – GBRMPA, Queensland**
- **Andrew Fairley – Alpine Resorts CC, Victoria**
- **Tony Charters – T. Charters & Assoc, Queensland**
- **Gary Smith – Tourism Leisure Corp, Queensland**
- **Ross Dowling – Edith Cowan University, WA**

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## Strategic Alliances

- **Formal Memorandum with UNESCO World Heritage Centre**
- **Appointment by Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA) as a provider of Marine Park Certification in Queensland**
- **Appointment by Department of Environment & Conservation WA as a provider of Ecotourism Certification in Western Australia**

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# Strategic Alliances

- **Approved as a TAAL License provider of the National Business Accreditation Program**



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# Our Products – ECO Certification



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## Our Products - EcoGuide

**ecoguide**  
**AUSTRALIA**  
**CERTIFIED**  
**GUIDE**

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# Annual National Conference

- Average 200 – 300 Delegates
- 2005 – Hobart and Regional Tasmania
- 2006 – Townsville, North Queensland – International
- 2007 – Melbourne and Regional Victoria

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## ECO Certification A Tool for Business Improvement

- The ability to assure Customers of the continued quality of services provided leading to improved customer relationships
- Certification contributes to a more sustainable and competitive Tourism industry for Australia and protects our Tourism assets for the future
- Criteria for operators to determine the degree to which their products represents best practice
- Framework to measure improvement
- Improved ability to meet consumers needs
- Pride in the Business

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## Benefits of ECO Certification

- Marketing of the ECO brand and ECO operators at International and National trade and consumer events such as Australian Tourism Exchange, ITB in Berlin, Japan Australia Mission in Japan.
- Cooperative attendance at Consumer Events in partnership with operators.
- Inclusion of the organisation in the National ECO Directory - a publication that is distributed nationally and internationally
- Ability to display globally recognised Certification logo at point of business and on all promotional materials – marketing edge
- Listing on Ecotourism Australia website and searchable databases

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# Principles of ECO III

## Triple Bottom Line Approach:

1. Economic Sustainability
2. Environmental Sustainability
3. Social Sustainability

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## ECO Program Principles

1. Business Management & Operational Planning
2. Business Ethics
3. Responsible Marketing
4. Customer Satisfaction
5. Natural Area Focus
6. Environmental Management
7. Interpretation & Education
8. Contribution to Conservation
9. Working with Local Communities
10. Cultural Respect & Sensitivity

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## Assessable Products

1. **Accommodations** – a facility located in a natural area that includes infrastructure and services designed to house visitors overnight
2. **Cruises and Tours** – activities in which one or more guides take an individual or group of people on an excursion to one or several places in a natural area.
3. **Attractions** – facilities that combine a natural area with fixed infrastructure designed to help people explore and learn

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## Three Levels of Certification



### **Nature Tourism:**

Must meet 100% core criteria Chapters 1 – 6

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## Ecotourism

Must meet 100% core criteria Chapters 1 – 10

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## Advanced Ecotourism

Must meet a 100% core criteria Chapters 1 – 10 *plus*  
75% of Advanced Criteria (or bonus points)

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# Online Application

- **ECO Online launched 3<sup>rd</sup> July, 2006**
- **Eliminates superfluous criteria for operators**
- **Maximizes efficiencies within program**
- **Save application & utilize it for recertification every four years**
- **Incorporates recent review of criteria**

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### G Natural Area Focus

Nature tourism and ecotourism focuses on directly and personally experiencing nature.

Nature tourism and ecotourism occurs in and relies on, the use of the natural environment. It includes a focus on its biological, physical and cultural features.

#### Core Criteria



Nature tourism and ecotourism focus on directly and personally experiencing nature.

Product information, operational records and customer feedback demonstrate that:

- the majority of each customers activity time is spent within a natural area or with a natural area focus;  
Product 1
- the prime focus of the product is presentation of the natural values of the local area;  
Product 1
- the product helps customers to directly and personally experience nature and do so without causing damage; and  
Product 1
- if in an urban or "rural" area, the applicant must justify how the product has a natural area focus in the supporting information space below.

- Application Introduction
- A Business Details and Prerequisites
- B Business Management and Operational Planning
- C Business Ethics
- D Product Criteria Notice
- E Responsible Marketing
- F Customer Satisfaction
- G Natural Area Focus
- Page 16
- H Environmental Management
- I Interpretation and Education
- J Contribution to Conservation
- K Working with Local Communities
- L Cultural Respect and Sensitivity
- M Declaration

**Legend**

- Mandatory
- ✓✓ Mandatory Complete
- ✓✓✓ All Complete

You must have at least one tick for each page and section before you can submit your application.

PRINT

Include Attachments


Quality Tourism :: Application - Microsoft Internet Explorer

File Edit View Favorites Tools Help

Back Forward Stop Refresh Home Search Favorites

Address [http://www.qualitytourism.com.au/default.aspx?page\\_id=164](http://www.qualitytourism.com.au/default.aspx?page_id=164) Go Links

### Advanced Criteria



75% of time is spent directly experiencing natural areas or receiving nature interpretation.

Product 1

Each non vehicle-based section of the tour (eg. guided walking, horse riding, snorkelling) has no more than 15 customers per guide.

Product 1

Each non-vehicle based tour uses a route and operating practice that keeps customers encounters with other groups to a minimum (preferably less than three encounters per day). NOTE: This only applies while the tour is in a natural area.

Product 1

There is an opportunity for each customer to personally experience nature in relative solitude through the provision of a feature such as:

- a designated part of the development that is provided for the purpose of comfortably resting and observing the natural environment;

Product 1

- a walking trail that takes customers away from development and general visitor activity, or

Product 1

Done Internet

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# The Assessment Process

- **ECO assessors analyse the completed manual and determine core and bonus points applicable. Award Certification**
- **Consultation with operators if required, and Certification awarded**
- **Ecotourism Australia Audit Panel schedules 100% audit of all Eco Certified products every 3 years**

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## The Audit Process

- **Two forms of audits may be undertaken**
  - **Desk audits:** based on telephone and submission of substantiating paperwork.
  - **On-site audits:** One third of all operators Audited every year during 2004, 2005, and 2006.
- **Visit sites and accompany tours**
- **Interview management, front of house, technical and guides**
- **Review substantiation records - permits, licences, training etc**

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# ECO Certification Fees

Turnover \$	Application fee \$ once every 3 years	Annual fees Pro-rata period				Total Eco Cert fees \$	Eco Cert Plus (optional) \$	Total fees \$
		1 year	¾ year	½ year	¼ year			
<100,000	200	220	165	110	55	115		
100,000 - 250,000	260	280	210	140	70	115		
250,001 - 1,000,000	330	460	345	230	115	165		
1,000,001 - 5,000,000	430	680	510	340	170	225		
5,000,001 - 10,000,000	530	840	630	420	210	375		
>10,000,001	730	940	705	475	235	750		



**More Information...**

**[www.ecotourism.org.au](http://www.ecotourism.org.au)**

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