

MEDIA RELEASE



Monday 4 August 2008

All systems go for Qualmark Green

From today, tourism operators seeking Qualmark accreditation will be assessed on environmental and social criteria.

Qualmark Green – the enhancement and extension of environmental criteria in Qualmark’s quality accreditation system – means that now all Qualmark assessments include Responsible Tourism Operations criteria.

The initiative, referred to as Qualmark Green, was unveiled to the tourism industry by the Minister of Tourism on 27 May 2008. The introduction of the criteria marked a ‘world first’.

New Zealand is the first country to have a fully integrated quality and environmental performance tourism assurance system.

“Now that we have developed the criteria, unveiled it to the industry, and provided a range of supporting material to tourism operators, Qualmark assessors are from today conducting quality assessments that include the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria,” said Qualmark Chief Executive Geoff Penrose.

This means that environmental and social actions will contribute towards the star gradings that Qualmark accommodation providers have. Visitor activity, service and transport providers with Qualmark ‘endorsed’ licenses will also be assessed on the criteria.

Qualmark Chief Executive, Geoff Penrose, says the industry has responded positively to the initiative so far.

“Qualmark is describing the criteria and support material under the ‘Responsible Tourism’ concept. It is about tourism businesses running their businesses in an environmentally and socially responsible way.”

Qualmark’s Responsible Tourism initiative is partly about ensuring that quality assured tourism businesses are meeting a number of minimum requirements in this area.

“These minimum requirements are designed to reflect sound environmental practices and visitor expectations. Equally important though is that the new criteria is also about recognising actions, behaviours, programmes, monitoring etc. that are under way in tourism businesses and making these part of the quality assurance system,” said Mr Penrose.

Development of the criteria started in 2006. It included working with tourism industry associations, environmental experts and Government stakeholders. In addition to referring to international best practice, research on visitor expectations of environmental performance also played a part in developing the criteria.

High performers will be eligible to apply for the use of a logo that represents three levels of environmental performance – Enviro-Gold, Enviro-Silver and Enviro-Bronze.

The five key areas that the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria recognises are in energy, waste, water, conservation and community activities, initiatives, programmes and monitoring. This is on top of the set of minimum requirements that represent the ‘must haves’ in this area.

Put into practice, tourism businesses will find opportunities to introduce and enhance environmental performance in their premise, in their product (offering to guests/customers), in their transport, in their office, in the wider natural environment surrounding their business, and in their local community.

For more information:

Visit www.qualmark.co.nz

Carolyn Gibson, Communications Manager, Qualmark New Zealand, Phone 64 9 377 7153, Mobile 027 687 8993, carolyn@qualmark.co.nz

Environmental performance standards and branding

Once operators have met minimum requirements, additional scoring in the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria will contribute to their overall Qualmark score. Qualmark is working on a range of activities that will promote and leverage this aspect of the Qualmark criteria, including marketing communications and website information. Part of this work has included the development of additional branding (logos) available to operators to score above 3 out of 5 in the criteria. There are three levels of logos for this (shown alongside the existing Qualmark identity as an example):



Example only - the three levels of Qualmark’s environmental verification are shown above. Based on scoring a certain level within the Responsible Tourism Operations criteria, operators can apply to use the applicable logo once they are assessed from August 2008. The relevant logo is designed to be used alongside (not in place of) existing Qualmark star grading and Endorsed logos on websites and in collateral such as brochures. Electronic versions available for media on request.

Operators who score above 3 out of 5 in the criteria are eligible to apply for the use of the Enviro-Bronze logo; those that score 4 out of 5 can apply for use of the Enviro-Silver logo; and the highest performers (achieving 5 out of 5) can apply for the use of Enviro-Gold. The logos have been tested on international visitors staying in a range of accommodation categories.

Background on Qualmark

Qualmark is New Zealand tourism's official mark of quality. All accommodation and tourism businesses that carry the Qualmark means they've been independently assessed as professional and trustworthy, so travellers can book and buy with confidence.

The Qualmark can help travellers identify quality places to stay, things to do and ways to get around no matter where you are in New Zealand. From the North Island to the South Island, Auckland to Christchurch, Rotorua to Queenstown, Wellington to Dunedin – Qualmark® assured businesses can be found across the country

Qualmark is jointly owned by Tourism New Zealand and the AA.