

Media release

For immediate use

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Star grading system for Guest & Hosted accommodation to roll out from July

A new official quality star grading programme for Guest & Hosted accommodation providers has moved into trial phase, and is on track for gradual implementation to the industry from July.

The trials follow two months of consultation by the tourism industry's official quality assurance agency, Qualmark, which included meetings in Auckland, Rotorua, Wellington, Nelson, Christchurch and Queenstown attended by more than 150 people, and considerable feedback on draft criteria by a wide cross-section of proprietors.

The introduction of the Guest & Hosted accommodation category complements Qualmark's other accommodation star grading systems for Hotels, Self Contained & Serviced (motels and apartments), Holiday Parks and Backpackers. The Guest & Hosted category is to encompass B&Bs, farm and home stays, guest houses, boutique lodges, inns and country hotels.

"This sector is an important growth area of visitor accommodation and the role of independent and official quality assurance and star grading is every bit as strong as in other sectors," says Qualmark chief executive Fiona Luhrs.

"New Zealand is marketing itself overseas as a world class visitor destination, and industry leaders have identified strong and independent quality assurance as a vital means by which New Zealand can deliver on that promise.

“From the traveller’s viewpoint, an official star grading system enables them to make informed decisions about where to stay.”

Qualmark’s project manager, Craig Wilson, says the assessment criteria will continue to be refined as trial assessments are completed on Guest & Hosted properties during May and June. He says the consultation process has given rise to a number of key points:

- Agreement that the grading system measures an appropriate mix of “hard” attributes such as facilities and “soft” attributes such as hosting and guest care.
- Agreement that the system is flexible enough to recognise outstanding accommodation experiences that are a blend of property, location and services individual to each establishment.
- General agreement that a high percentage of the overall score should apply to the hosting and guest care section of the assessment, although the quality of the property and surrounds remains important.
- Greater emphasis needed to be placed on environmental and business management practices.

The assessment criteria use the same methodology that has been applied to Qualmark’s other accommodation categories. The onsite assessment confirms that guests’ minimum requirements of comfort, cleanliness, safety and security are met, then a score is given in each quality area. These scores are multiplied by their importance weighting to determine the star grade, from one star (Acceptable) to three star (Very good) up to five star (Exceptional, among the best available in New Zealand).

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