

Media Release

8 July 2002



## **Hosts and industry keen on new accommodation star grading category**

Fifteen accommodation providers have already signed up for tourism's official Guest & Hosted star grading system after its first week.

The Qualmark Guest & Hosted grading system officially got underway on 1 July following around six months of consultation and testing with the industry, during which nearly 200 proprietors took part.

The Qualmark Guest & Hosted category caters for bed and breakfasts, home stays, farm stays, guest houses, boutique lodges, inns and country hotels that provide "character" or "home-like" accommodation.

Qualmark chief executive, Fiona Luhrs says Qualmark has had very positive response from members of some of the leading groups in the sector - New Zealand Association of Farm & Home Hosts (NZAFHH), Heritage & Character Inns and Superior Inns – as well as independent proprietors.

"Professional operators are saying the star grade system is long overdue and they're keen to be part of the industry's official quality programme. By one means or another we've had nearly 200 businesses provide input into the development of the new system by attending meetings or commenting on draft criteria.

"The category was officially available from Monday of last week and 15 properties are already on the books. Our aim is for several dozen properties to go through the assessment process over the next few months."

### **Diverse sector**

Qualmark estimates more than 1800 accommodation properties around New Zealand would fit the Guest & Hosted category, offering a very diverse range of options for travellers in terms of property type, facility and service quality, and tariffs.

“You only need to look at the purenz.com web site to see the challenge that travellers face in finding hosted accommodation,” says Ms Luhrs. “Purenz has listings for 650 B&Bs, 140 home stays, 120 farm stays and over 100 boutique properties – how can a traveller confidently decide what’s going to best meet their needs faced with that kind of choice?”

“And it’s an equally big challenge for proprietors wanting to demonstrate that they’re a professional and trustworthy establishment, and where they sit in the market relative to others. They want an independent and authoritative endorsement of their service that travellers recognise and value.”

### **Popular with i-sites**

The Guest & Hosted star grade system is also being welcomed by Visitor Information Centres whose staff are frequently asked to recommend hosted accommodation.

“Travel consultants are unable to physically visit every property, so a star grade will give them the assurance they need to sell the product,” says Tourism Auckland’s Fiona Cameron. “The consultants find star graded properties are easier to sell to international travellers.”

“Star grades make it easy for consultants to identify low, mid and upper level standards of product to match up to their customers needs,” says Latitude Nelson’s Paul Davis.

Annual licence fees for proprietors entering the new star grade system start at \$440 excl GST for 1 and 2 guest room establishments, up to \$700 excl GST for 7-14 guest rooms.

Meanwhile, Ms Luhrs says the official quality assurer’s new quality mark, first unveiled at TRENZ in May, is now officially in use. Qualmark hopes up to 800 licencees in the self contained, holiday park, backpacker and hotel sectors, as well as the first licensees in the Guest & Hosted category, will be using the new Qualmark™ fern-based logo by October 2002.

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