



Media release  
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## **Appeal of independent quality assurance prompts Mainstay Hotels to sign up with Qualmark**

The Mainstay chain will soon be the biggest hotel group in the Qualmark quality assurance programme, after deciding to sign-up all its member properties.

Nineteen Mainstay New Zealand Hotels are already Qualmark star graded. The remaining properties in the 41-hotel group will join Qualmark during May.

Anton Wilke, General Manager of Mitchell Corp – the company that operates Mainstay – says a big factor in the move was feedback Mitchell Corp had received from inbound tour operators and buyers in connection with its Golden Chain group that made Qualmark grading mandatory 18 months ago. “The message has been very clear from offshore that they want a credible, independent quality assurance.”

Another factor was Qualmark’s new hotel assessment system to be launched in July.

“We had a concern that the old assessment system was driven by a perception that hotels were located in central business districts or were part of big international chains. The new system takes a more flexible view of what a hotel is, and recognises the special factors that are a feature of many Mainstay properties, whether they’re in city, suburban or regional locations.”

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Mr Wilke says the individuality of each Mainstay property is a key characteristic of the chain but also makes it difficult to provide a service benchmark for customers.

“Qualmark grading will now provide us with that customer benchmark.”

“Mainstay is recognized for providing geographic spread that’s second to none in the hotel market, we’re kiwi owned and managed, and we’re anchored around providing value for money. Qualmark’s independent quality assurance will be a strong new string to the chain’s brand.”

Mr Wilke expects the great majority of Mainstay properties to be in the 3 star to 4 star range, underlining its mid range hotel market positioning.

Qualmark Chief Executive Fiona Luhrs says independent quality assurance is becoming increasingly important for international travellers. “New Zealand is a long way from many of our big tourism markets. Before they book, travellers want reassurance that what they’re buying isn’t going to let them down. Mitchell Corp’s experience with the Golden Chain motels is absolutely consistent with what we hear from all over the market.

“The size and regional spread of the Mainstay group has particular significance because it means, for the first time, an international visitor or buyer can book star graded hotel accommodation pretty much anywhere in the country based on authoritative and independent quality assessment.”

Fiona Luhrs says Qualmark’s new Hotel assessment criteria are being trialled this month and will be rolled out to the hotel industry in July, replacing the existing assessment system introduced in 1997. “Feedback to date is that the new criteria enable the star grade to better reflect the overall hotel experience rather than the more rigid facilities focus of the old system.”

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