

Media release

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Qualmark says work will now get underway to develop new tourism grading and certification systems

Tourism classification and grading company Qualmark says work will now get underway to develop a new quality assurance framework for the tourism industry, following the announcement of a \$2.5m government funding package.

Chief executive Fiona Luhrs says plans will be implemented quickly on various fronts and she expects a number of milestones will be reached from mid 2002.

- Trials with some South Island horse trekking and sea kayaking businesses - using generic and sector specific Quality Tourism Standards developed over recent years by the Adventure Tourism Council - will now get into full gear.
- Plans for a Charter Boat classification and grading system will be rolled out in conjunction with the marine transport industry, with trials scheduled for March and a launch of the system prior to the start of the Americas Cup regatta later in 2002.
- Qualmark's classification and grading systems in the accommodation sector will be extended with the addition of a Guest & Hosted category by mid next year, to cater for bed & breakfasts, home and farm stays, guest houses, inns, country hotels and mid range lodges.
- In addition the hotel grading system developed in 1997 will undergo review, and a further accommodation category for Luxury Retreats is planned for 2003.

In addition to these activities, Qualmark will undertake significant enhancement of its administrative and customer information systems to support expansion into new sectors of the tourism industry; produce a generic business certification system that can be easily adapted to the needs of different sectors; and prioritise and commence implementation on a number of other sector-specific programmes.

“Some of these initiatives have been the subject of discussion and preparations between ourselves and industry organisations for some time, so we’re not starting from scratch,” says Ms Luhrs.

“In its New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2010, the industry has identified quality management systems as a building block for enhancing the capabilities of the tourism sector, and creating sustainable growth.

“There’s recognition that businesses certified under robust, national quality assurance systems will become more attractive in the eyes of international and domestic customers, so there’s a real sense of urgency to create and build momentum.”

Ms Luhrs says Qualmark will work closely with industry wide organisations like the Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand, the Adventure Tourism Council and Tourism New Zealand, as well as groups and individual operators in different sectors.

Qualmark is a joint venture between Tourism New Zealand and the New Zealand Automobile Association, first established in 1994. Its core activities have been in the accommodation sector and, in addition, it has operated a retail certification system since 1998. Participation in Qualmark grading and certification programmes is voluntary and based on payment of an annual licence fee.

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