

Media Release

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Six new sectors to enter tourism industry's quality programme

Six new sectors will enter the tourism industry's quality assurance programme from 1 July 2002.

They are horse trekking, sea kayaking, all terrain vehicles, charter boats, tourist flights and the Guest & Hosted sector of the accommodation industry. Two existing sectors – retail and Hotel accommodation will also be re-launched on 1 July with updated assessment systems.

These are the first of many new sectors that will be added to tourism's quality programme following the government's January announcement of \$2.5 million funding over three years to set up a single quality assurance framework to span the tourism industry.

The horse trekking, sea kayaking, all terrain vehicle, charter boat, tourist flight and retail sectors will be piloted from 1 July using a new type of quality endorsement system developed by Qualmark in conjunction with associations and operators in each sector. A small number of businesses will be invited to participate in the pilot schemes, with full go live from 1 October 2002.

Qualmark chief executive Fiona Luhrs says the endorsement model provides the basis for many other adventure tourism, visitor transport, attractions and activities to enter the industry programme and qualify to use the Qualmark™ quality mark.

“The endorsement system doesn't provide a star grade. Instead, businesses are assessed against their sector's quality standards on a pass or fail basis.

“Standards for all endorsed tourism operators will include customer service, facilities and equipment, people, environmental and cultural aspects, general safety and welfare, and overall business operations. Additional standards – such as safety criteria for adventure tourism operators – will apply for businesses providing specialised experiences.

The new Guest & Hosted sector will become part of Qualmark’s accommodation star grading programme that also caters for Hotel, Backpacker, Holiday Park and Self Contained & Serviced (ie motels and apartments) establishments.

“The Guest & Hosted sector contains such a variety of accommodation experiences - including B&Bs, guest houses, country inns, boutique lodges, farm and home stays - the choice for visitors can be overwhelming. Our feedback from the industry is that official star grades will be hugely beneficial in this important sector of the accommodation industry.”

Ms Luhrs says the new systems, and Qualmark’s role as the official quality assurance agency, stem from last year’s national tourism strategy and will help underpin the industry’s strategy to be world class.

“These quality assurance systems fulfil two roles. They provide a process through which operators can better understand and improve their product. And they attract visitors to those businesses that have undergone the rigorous assessment process and met the standards set in consultation with their peers.”

Ms Luhrs says Qualmark has worked closely with operators and associations in each of the sectors to be rolled out from 1 July. “There’s very strong recognition of the need to maintain and lift standards across the board, and of the need for a system that recognises businesses that are professional and trustworthy.”

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