

Media Release

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Tourism sectors welcome new quality endorsement and star grading systems

Tourism organisations are enthusiastic about the positive effects that new quality assurance programmes will have in their sectors, following their introduction on 1 July.

Adventure Tourism

“This is a fantastic moment for the adventure and outdoors sector of the tourism industry in New Zealand,” says Greig Caigou, who chaired the Adventure Tourism Council that was set up to develop standards for adventure tourism operators. “The implementation of the new tourism quality standards represents many years of steadfast effort and lobbying from the adventure tourism industry.

“These standards not only strengthen minimum safety requirements for clients but give a more holistic assurance that operators are culturally sensitive, have good business practices and are environmentally thoughtful. They’ve also heightened awareness of the issues surrounding sustainable tourism practices and will ‘raise the bar’ in terms of quality assurance as the industry invests in the future of adventure and outdoor tourism in New Zealand.”

Charter Boats

Richard Perkins of the Marine Transport Association says the endorsement system for charter boats has special significance leading into the next Americas Cup and will enable visitors to make informed choices. “Thanks to the Americas Cup and the internet, more and more charter operators are marketing themselves both nationally and internationally these days.

“This is the first credible, independent quality accreditation system the charter vessel industry has ever had to use in that marketing activity. It was sadly lacking during the 1999-2000 Americas Cup.

“It is an entirely market driven initiative where customers have a credible standard relating to the product they are considering purchasing. We have worked hard in the development to cover the various categories of charter vessel from luxury cruising or live-aboard, to the day-trip/recreational fishing charter operators.”

Tourist Flights

Geoff Ensor from the South Island’s Air Safaris says the new systems play an important role in the establishment of a tourist flight operators group that has been formally recognised by the Civil Aviation Authority and the Department of Conservation.

“Over 30 operators have either attended seminars and/or expressed support for the group and the quality programme. By meeting these requirements, we will enhance our own performance and reputations, while ensuring we keep pace with the efforts of other tourism activities. We see it as doing our bit to improve the overall perception of tourism in New Zealand.” Geoff says development of tourist flight operator standards began in 2000.

Guest & Hosted Accommodation

Patricia MacDonald of the NZ Association of Farm and Home Hosts says the new Guest & Hosted star grades will help travellers choose from the many available options. “Market prices are the only other way of suggesting what is being offered.

“It’s not just for guests’ benefit. It enables the host to realise the level of hospitality and service that they provide and therefore where they are in the market. Qualmark must be beneficial for those that are serious about their hospitality.”

Hotel Accommodation

Anton Wilke, General Manager of Mitchell Corporation, which operates the Mainstay and Golden Chain groups, says independent star grades are very important to

inbound tour operators and buyers. “The message has been very clear from offshore that they want a credible, independent quality assurance.”

The Mainstay chain has been quick to endorse Qualmark’s new Hotel star grading system by signing up all 41 of its properties.

“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.”

Tourism Industry Association New Zealand

John Moriarty, Chief Executive of TIANZ says: “We will be challenging and supporting our members to look at how we develop people, apply principles of business excellence and embrace Quality Tourism Standards. We see these as necessary rather than merely desirable and fully support the Minister’s increased investment in Qualmark to advance a national quality programme.”

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