

Media release  
24 May 2004



## Where the seeds of the nation were planted is New Zealand's number 1 garden

The Waitangi Treaty Grounds is the first garden to be assessed and endorsed by both Qualmark – New Zealand tourism's quality mark - and the New Zealand Gardens Trust (NZGT) under their new dual assessment system.

In March this year NZGT launched a new quality endorsement for gardens in conjunction with the Qualmark™. The NZGT is sponsored by the Royal New Zealand Institute of Horticulture and was set up in 2002 to promote excellence in the New Zealand garden sector and to present gardens as a product to the visitor market.

To be eligible for a Qualmark™ endorsement, gardens must first be members of the NZGT and be assessed and graded by the body as a 'Garden of National Significance' or a 'Garden of Regional Significance'. Qualmark then assess the gardens using the criteria used to assess all tourism businesses to determine how well they function as a visitor attraction.

"I'm so pleased that a place which is so culturally and historically important to New Zealand has the honour of being the first garden to be both Qualmark™ endorsed and NZGT graded," says Fiona Luhrs, Qualmark Chief Executive.

Not only has the garden received the Qualmark™, the entire Waitangi Treaty Grounds have been assessed according to Qualmark's generic criteria and are now a Qualmark™ endorsed visitor activity.

Customer service, facilities and equipment, staff management, environmental and cultural aspects, general safety and welfare and overall business operations are Qualmark's generic criteria used to assess a tourism business.

"We applied for Qualmark endorsement because it is New Zealand tourism's quality standard and we believe that it is important for visitors to see that we are a Qualmark endorsed attraction," says Jeanette Richardson, Waitangi Treaty Ground General Manager.

"The assessment process was very rewarding not only because it highlighted that we do have the quality systems and measures in place on a day to day basis but also because we are the first garden to be endorsed."

The Qualmark and NZGT assessment systems compliment each other well.

"The Qualmark™ assessment of the garden will ensure the garden has the appropriate operational and business systems in place to meet visitors' expectations, while the NZGT assessment will ensure that the garden is meeting technical quality standards pertinent to gardens and garden savvy visitors," says Ms Luhrs.

"Through the introduction of the Qualmark™ endorsement system, virtually any type of tourism business can be assessed."

**ENDS**

### Notes to editor – Waitangi Treaty Grounds

The Treaty Grounds, set in extensive park-like grounds on a headland overlooking the Bay of Islands, currently host over 150,000 visitors each year. Apart from the historic precinct, the estate has walking tracks and picnic areas.

The Waitangi Treaty Grounds and National Trust estate were gifted to the people of New Zealand in 1932 by Lord & Lady Bledisloe. The Waitangi National Trust Board was established later that same year to administer the 1000 acre property.

The first task undertaken by the Board was the restoration of the Treaty House which was officially opened to the public on February 6 1934. Construction of Te Whare Runanga (meeting house) commenced in 1934 and was officially opened at the Centennial Celebrations of the signing of the Treaty of Waitangi, February 6 1940. The two buildings, along with Ngatokimatawhaorua - one of the world's largest ceremonial waka - make up the key taonga of the Waitangi Treaty Grounds.

### **Notes to editor – Qualmark**

The Qualmark™ is New Zealand tourism's official quality mark and is owned by Tourism New Zealand and New Zealand Automobile Association. It is backed by Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ) and other leading industry organisations.

Qualmark licenses accommodation and tourism businesses to use the Qualmark™. Eligibility is determined by an onsite assessment and ongoing customer feedback. The assessment takes the form of a star grading system for accommodation businesses and a quality endorsement system for other tourism businesses, such as visitor activities, attractions and transport.

Qualmark is a service to the tourism industry, assisting operators to improve business practices and their delivery of visitor experiences. It is the way the industry directs travellers to quality assured products and services. Currently over 1200 accommodation and other tourism businesses are part of the Qualmark™ licensing system.

### **For more information please contact:**

Jane Gower  
Communications Manager  
Qualmark New Zealand Ltd.  
Email: [jane@qualmark.co.nz](mailto:jane@qualmark.co.nz)  
Phone: 09 377 7142  
Mobile: 0274 660 171

OR

Mary Dickson-Hunt  
Enterprise Manager  
Waitangi Treaty Grounds  
Phone: 09 402 7437