



**Media release
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QUALMARK PROVIDES SUSTAINABILITY SUPPORT FOR TOURISM BUSINESSES

Qualmark has announced it will be assisting tourism businesses to improve sustainability through a range of assessment and advisory materials currently under development.

Geoff Penrose, Chief Executive of New Zealand tourism's official quality agency Qualmark, says the organisation is developing a range of tools that will work alongside Qualmark's current assessment programme.

"Environmental content has been included in Qualmark's assessment programme since 2002 but we are now working to develop additional materials to assist New Zealand tourism operators implement sustainability practices and good environmental management within their organisations," says Mr Penrose

The Draft New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015 released last week reinforces that at an industry level the country needs to demonstrate it is as environmentally sustainable as possible.

"This will demand the development of more visitor products as well as a full commitment to environmentally friendly management and carbon neutrality in business operations. This will extend right across the tourism spectrum, from managing waste poorly to energy laden laundry processes and driving inefficient vehicles.

"International travellers are increasingly considering these environmental factors when planning their holidays," says Mr Penrose.

In August last year, funding was announced by the Minister of Tourism, Damien O'Connor, for a project which will see a formal environmental accreditation programme for tourism businesses developed.

"Businesses currently holding a Qualmark licence do have to prove elements of good environmental practice but participation in an environmental accreditation programme will help businesses specifically improve their environmental sustainability in more depth," he adds.

Mr Penrose says completion of Qualmark's full environmental assessment and criteria is expected at the end of the year, but initial support materials for businesses are currently available and additional material will be released to members in the coming months.

Qualmark New Zealand is a joint venture between the Automobile Association and Tourism New Zealand. Since its relaunch in 2002, Qualmark has licensed 1900 tourism businesses throughout New Zealand. These businesses account for over 70% of all tourism economic activity.

Please visit the Qualmark team at the Tourism New Zealand booth 1000/1000A at TRENZ.

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