

# Hon Damien O'Connor

## Minister of Tourism



27 May 2008

**Media Statement**

### **Minister announces world first scheme for tourism industry**

A world first integrated environmental performance and tourism quality assurance system was announced today by Tourism Minister Damien O'Connor.

The details of *Qualmark Green*, an extension of environmental criteria in *Qualmark's* quality assurance scheme, were outlined by the Minister at the Tourism Rendezvous New Zealand (TRENZ) conference in Rotorua this morning.

From August this year all *Qualmark* licence holders will have to meet minimum environmental standards as part of their quality accreditation assessments. In addition, environmental and social initiatives underway in a tourism business will now be recognised in their overall score.

Mr O'Connor said the new integrated system is the most significant for New Zealand's tourism industry to date in the area of environmental sustainability.

"This new criteria will help the tourism industry meet the main goal of the New Zealand Tourism Strategy 2015, to be the leading contributor to a sustainable New Zealand economy. It also builds on the Labour-led government's aim for New Zealand to be the first truly sustainable nation.

"While we are fortunate to have such a successful 100% Pure New Zealand brand, the most crucial task ahead of the tourism industry is to deliver on this 100% Pure image. As it is our environment that underpins our brand, we need to take credible and visible steps to reduce our environmental impact and improve our environmental management."

Mr O'Connor said new government funding of \$840,000 for the Sustainable Tourism Advisers in Regions (STAR) project will help tourism businesses meet the new standards. Up to eight regional organisations will receive \$88,000 over three years, to employ an adviser who will work with tourism operators to reduce their business' impact on the environment.

"The new STAR advisers will provide a one on one service to tourism operators helping them reach the new *Qualmark Green* standards and will suggest ways the business can aim to achieve full marks.

"As New Zealand's official mark of quality, I congratulate *Qualmark* on stepping up to the challenge of being a world leader," said Mr O'Connor.

For more information visit [www.qualmark.co.nz](http://www.qualmark.co.nz) or see attached backgrounder.

**Contact: Kelly Gunn (Press Secretary), Phone (04) 471 9878 or 021 227 9878**