

1. FOREWORD

The 1990s saw increased recognition by many industries, in Australia and overseas, of the need to embrace quality assurance and accreditation systems, resulting in the significant investment which many firms put into gaining ISO 9000-series accreditation. It was inevitable but essential that this trend should involve the Australian tourism industry.

Continuous improvement and best business practices are critical to the ongoing success of the Australian tourism industry in meeting the demands of a constantly changing marketplace. Such challenges can best be met through the establishment, maintenance and enforcement of agreed industry standards.

"The most powerful form of advertising is satisfied customers. It is therefore important that standards of service delivery be responsive to consumer demand. As the proportion of inbound visitors increases, more emphasis will need to be placed on meeting international best practice standards.

Quality assurance programs and the accreditation of operators will be essential in helping to raise service standards to acceptable levels. Accreditation systems should not, however, be administered by governments but established and operated by the industry, based on minimum acceptable standards."

Tourism: Getting it right for the Millennium (industry input to the development of a national Tourism Action Plan, written by Mr Jon Hutchison, October 1997, p171.)

Tourism accreditation is a process designed to establish and continually improve industry standards for conducting tourism businesses. It aims to assist every tourism business to improve the way it operates. Thus, accreditation provides consumers and the industry with an assurance that a tourism operator is committed to quality business practices and professionalism in all aspects of the enterprise.

There is no other industry in Australia as diverse as the tourism industry. Its sectors embrace *transportation* (including air, rail, coach, water), *accommodation* (whether backpacker hostels or camping/caravan parks, B&Bs or boutique hotels, to five-star hotel chains), and *attractions and events* too numerous to mention.

Several unrelated moves of varying quality had been taken to address the need for accreditation. It had become obvious that a national coordinated approach was necessary to gain or regain the confidence and support of the industry.

In 1997 the peak industry body Tourism Council Australia (TCA) convened a meeting of stakeholders in Brisbane to decide on how to bring together the various accreditation initiatives to form a national system.

The two main outcomes of that meeting were:

- a) To establish a national framework for tourism accreditation using the identification of a national logo.
- b) To establish a national accreditation organisation made up of representatives of all states and territories to oversee the preparation of the system and to monitor its operation.

These objectives were achieved working under the umbrella of TCA. That organisation went into administration in December 2000 and persons involved in accreditation set up an independent company, Australian Tourism Accreditation Association Ltd (ATAA), to carry on the process.

2. A FRAMEWORK FOR NATIONAL ACCREDITATION

2.1 Introduction

In accordance with the decision of the 1997 Brisbane meeting, TCA established a National Accreditation Committee, which was subsequently entitled the Australian Tourism Accreditation Authority (the ATAA).

It was agreed that the most efficient method to further the establishment of the national program incorporating the existing initiatives was to evolve and adopt cross-sectoral minimum requirements for accreditation. This was called the Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard (the 'Standard').

Although in some states TCA had taken a leading role in administering accreditation using a broad based model, other states used existing associations or other parties to develop and administer their own programs. National associations may administer programs across state boundaries.

To ensure uniformity of approach and adherence to the Standard, a framework has been established. This addresses the issue of state administration of Accreditation Programs together with the monitoring of the Standard. The Australian Government provided funds to initiate the implementation of the Standard and the Framework which became the Australian Tourism Accreditation System.

"The Government supports the establishment of industry-based quality assurance and accreditation programs aimed at achieving international best practice standards of service delivery. In particular, the Government supports the initiative of Tourism Council Australia to establish a National Quality Assurance Accreditation Scheme."
A Ticket to the 21st Century

2.2 Key Features

The main features of the national system for tourism accreditation are:

- a) recognised and accountable accreditation authorities at State and Territory level, as well as a national coordinating organisation operating with simple, transparent and cost effective administrative processes;
- b) consistency between jurisdictions in the interpretation and implementation of the accreditation standard, programs, guidelines and administration;
- c) adherence to a national accreditation standard which encourages more consistent approaches to enable effective, efficient and sustainable business management and activities;
- d) a unified and coordinated approach to promote the significance of accreditation to industry and consumers, including a nationally recognised accreditation logo;
- e) processes and partnerships to develop and provide resource materials which assist businesses to achieve accreditation; and
- f) authority, ability and independence of Program Managers capable of delivering, administering and enforcing accreditation programs to preserve the integrity of accreditation and its commercial value to participating enterprises.

2.3 Definitions

- a) **Australian Tourism Accreditation Association Ltd** (“ATAA”) is a company limited by guarantee established for the purpose of developing a national consistent system of accreditation for the tourism industry in Australia.
- b) **Australian Tourism Accreditation Logo** (“Logo”) is the registered symbol that may be used by tourism businesses to indicate that they have achieved accreditation.
- c) **Australian Tourism Accreditation Program** (“Program”) is a formulation of requirements and documentation prepared by a Program Manager to be followed by businesses seeking accreditation.
- d) **Australian Tourism Accreditation Program Manager** (“Program Manager”) is a person, company, association or group of associations licensed by the ATAA to implement an approved Program.

- e) **Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard (“Standard”)** is the set of principles established by the ATAA to apply to all Programs. It is a checklist of the features found to be essential for a viable tourism business.
- f) **Australian Tourism Accreditation System (“Accreditation System”)** is the coordinated operation of approved Programs throughout Australia by the Australian Tourism Accreditation Association.
- g) **Onsite Verification** is the process employed by Program Managers to ensure that tourism businesses continue to operate within documented and approved programs thereby meeting the Standard.

3. THE ORGANISATIONAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 The Role of ATAA

The ATAA’s charter is to provide leadership and coordination in the development and implementation of accreditation programs for the tourism industry within a national framework. It will provide for continuous increases in industry professionalism and standards, a quality experience for tourists throughout Australia and deliver clear business benefits for tourism enterprises.

The ATAA has up to fifteen (15) members including:

- a Chairperson appointed by the Directors;
- representatives of each State and Territory Accreditation Committee (eight (8) in total); and,
- up to seven (7) special appointments to ensure suitable representation of expertise, experience and industry interests.

ATAA retains the ownership of the Logo and will apply and maintain a range of processes to ensure the consistency and rigor of the Standard. These will include the following:

- a) encourage the development and implementation of nationally consistent Accreditation Programs throughout the tourism industry;
- b) evaluate and approve Accreditation Programs with or without amendment and issue a licence, with or without an annual licence fee, to approved Program Managers covering the use of the Logo;

- c) ensure the maintenance and development of the Standard for mandatory inclusion in all the ATAA approved Accreditation Programs across Australia;
- d) authorise the maintenance and development of mandatory criteria for the approval of Accreditation Programs with respect to assessment, administration and enforcement procedures;
- e) facilitate the establishment of Accreditation Committees in all States and Territories of Australia;
- f) oversee the activities of the State and Territory Accreditation Committees to ensure consistent practice and standards;
- g) ensure all Program Managers institute and maintain a system whereby all accredited businesses are subject to an onsite verification visit at least every three years;
- h) establish and maintain a database of tourism businesses that are accredited pursuant to the Standard and make available on demand or by way of periodical publication details of accredited businesses;
- i) oversee future development of the national system and provide leadership in tourism accreditation;
- j) market and promote the Logo, in partnership with Government tourism agencies;
- k) encourage marketing initiatives which increase consumer and industry awareness and understanding of tourism accreditation conducted by or in partnership with Government tourism agencies and State/Territory Accreditation Committees;
- l) advise and assist in the development of training and education programs for tourism accreditation;
- m) review legal issues and obligations associated with tourism accreditation;
- n) recognise and involve all boards, associations or organisations operating Accreditation Programs approved under the previous Tourism Council Australia administration;
- o) establish technical committees to make recommendations for the improvement of the Accreditation Program, Standards and their implementation.

3.2 The Role of the Technical Advisory Committee

An advisory committee has been established to support the operation of the ATAA in respect to technical aspects of accreditation.

Committee membership is limited to six (6) persons with experience in the development and administration of accreditation standards and programs. Members are appointed directly by the Chairperson of ATAA, who shall be an ex-officio member of the Committee.

The Committee has been established to:

- a) examine and make recommendation to ATAA on the approval of all tourism accreditation programs;
- b) make recommendations to ATAA for the continuous improvement of the Standard, administrative process and procedures; and
- c) research, report and provide technical advice to the ATAA as required on all matters relating to accreditation.
- d) provide a forum for the exchange of experiences in the operation of Programs so as to ensure the highest degree of uniformity possible, given the inherent differences that exist.

3.3 The Role of State/Territory Tourism Accreditation Committees

Each State and Territory will establish an Accreditation Committee comprised of appropriate representatives of the Industry. Members should have a wide spread of sector involvement and a commitment to the improvement of industry standards.

Responsibilities of these Committees include:

- a) raise consumer and industry awareness of the benefits of accreditation through cooperative arrangements with State/Territory tourism agencies and associations in partnership with national marketing programs initiated by ATAA.
- b) make recommendations to ATAA regarding accreditation support programs, training, system development, and enhancing the marketing value of accreditation for tourism enterprises.
- c) maintain close relationship with State or Territory governments to achieve identifiable advantages for accredited businesses in government programs.
- d) receive applications from prospective bodies or persons for appointment as Program Managers, ensuring that proposed programs adequately meet the requirements for licensing by

ATAA and refer such programs to the Technical Advisory Committee for appraisal.

- e) receive bi-monthly reports from Program Managers detailing progress made in the implementation of the particular accreditation program.
- f) collate and on forward full details of businesses which have achieved accreditation, to allow the ATAA to maintain an accurate database. Such reporting to include details of businesses which have not renewed or have had accreditation cancelled.
- g) monitor the operation of the System and make suggestions and recommendations to the ATAA with a view to making improvements to the operation.
- h) liaise with the ATAA to provide advice to businesses with operations in more than one jurisdiction, with the aim of removing the need for the enterprise to deal with multiple agencies.

3.4 Australian Tourism Accreditation Program Managers

Program Managers may be industry bodies or associations either individually or in consortia or may be individual persons or companies.

Program Managers will have prepared or commissioned the preparation of an Accreditation Program which will have been submitted to and approved by the ATAA.

The approval of the Program by the ATAA shall result in a licence being issued to the Program Manager to implement that Program, collect fees and approve the use of the Logo by accredited operators.

When submitting an Accreditation Program for endorsement by the ATAA the Program Manager must:

- a) ensure that the Program requires businesses to clearly meet all aspects of the Standard;
- b) provide a statement of requirements for accreditation as well as the method by which an applicant's submission for accreditation is assessed;
- c) provide a simple statement of principles upon which the Program is based;
- d) provide a full copy of any associated documentation;

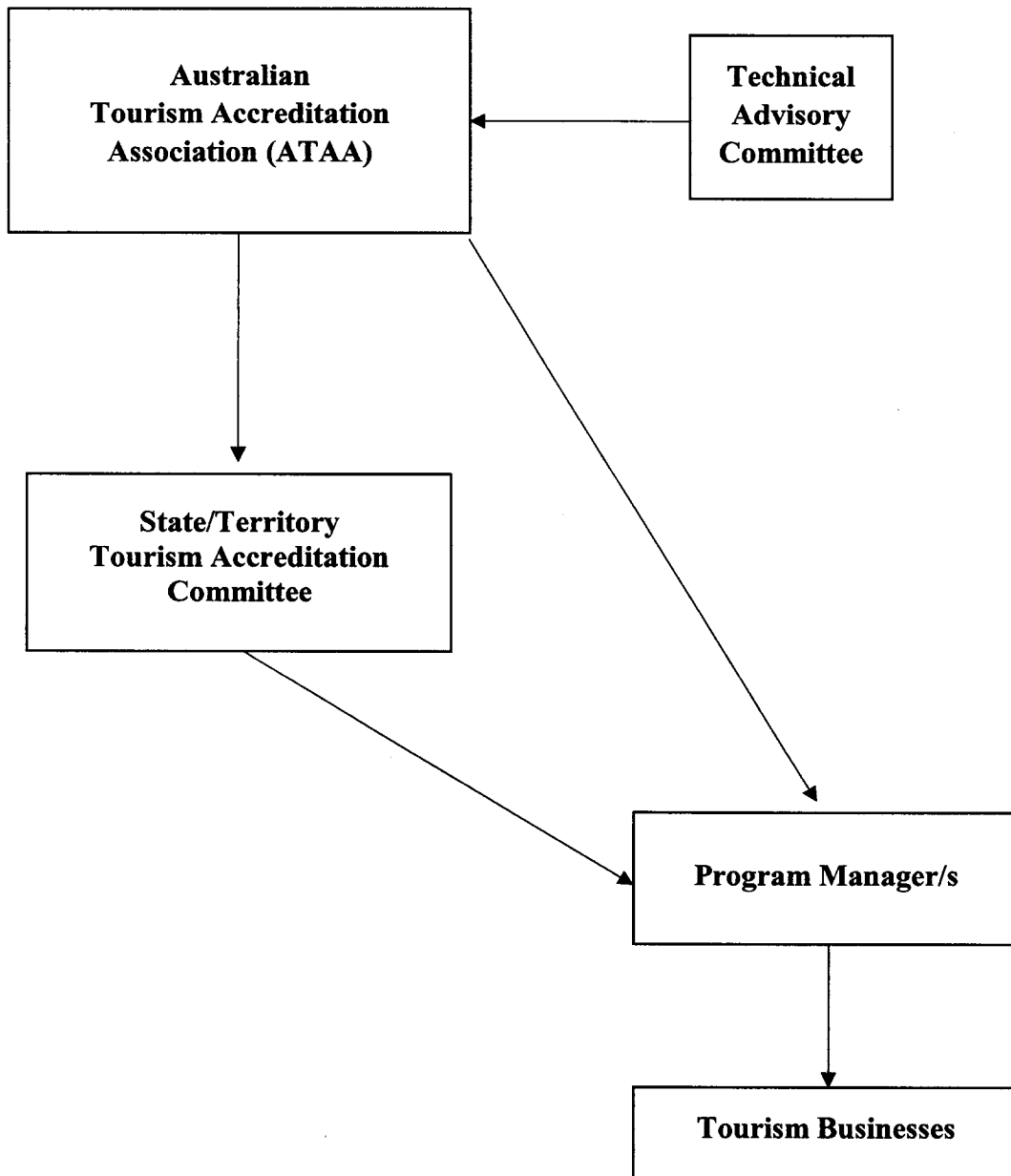
- e) provide full detail of fees to be charged for accreditation including any discounts or concessions. These details are to cover the life of the Program so as to facilitate the application of the license agreement with ATAA;
- f) demonstrate that the program and its management is open to public scrutiny at all points of the accreditation process including the assessment and renewal process;
- g) identify adequate support for businesses relating to industry information and professional development programs, ie. include a description of how the Program is to be supported including any resources which can be provided to the business by the Program Manager to achieve and maintain accreditation, eg. resource materials, professional development programs, staff training etc;
- h) require that the applicant acknowledge that accreditation is issued on an annual basis and that upon renewal, the applicant be able to demonstrate to the Program Manager continued compliance and improvement against the business principles and standards;
- i) require the applicant to provide an annual statutory declaration of compliance and commitment to the business principles and standards contained within the Program;
- j) outline a procedure whereby persons suitably qualified and knowledgeable in all aspects of the program will carry out on site verifications of all accredited businesses at least every three years after the initial accreditation.
- k) incorporate an appropriate complaints management process with documented procedures for dealing with advice received from consumers that allege unsatisfactory performance by accredited businesses.
- l) incorporate into the complaints management process an appeal provision in favour of the business in respect to action taken by the Program Manager;
- m) acknowledge that the ATAA retain the right to recover use of the Logo from the Program Manager or directly from an individual business entity and that this is clearly identified within the Program.

3.5 Onsite Verification

Following receipt of initial accreditation all businesses must be subject to onsite verification at least every three years. In arranging for such to be carried out the Program Manager shall ensure that:

- a) notice is given of intention to carry out an onsite verification and that this is arranged for a mutually convenient time;
- b) persons carrying out onsite verifications do so in a non-threatening courteous, and value adding manner. The purpose, nature and outcomes of the audit are to be explained in advance;
- c) persons carrying out onsite verifications are well trained in all aspects of the relevant program and have the manner and skills to carry out the task effectively and with minimum interference to the business;
- d) any subcontractors appointed to effect onsite verifications shall have all the attributes of an employee employed in the task;
- e) all on site verification details are treated as confidential and not discussed to a third party without the authority of the accredited tourism business.

3.5 Australian Tourism Accreditation System Flowchart



4. THE OPERATIONAL FRAMEWORK

A tourism business can become accredited by making application to a licensed Program Manager and preparing the documentation necessary to show that the business meets all requirements of the Standard.

Businesses making application can expect to receive advice and assistance from the Program Manager to achieve accreditation status

It is a commitment of businesses that having gained accreditation, they continue to maintain the Standard and continue to strive for excellence in their operation.

4.1 The Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard

The Standard has been approved by ATAA and is applicable to all sectors of the industry in all States and Territories. The Standard describes the essential features required of a tourism business to achieve accreditation. Compliance with the Standard requires evidence of suitability for accreditation based on the degree of sound business practices *appropriate to the size and nature of the business*.

The Standard is clearly defined with principal components and specific descriptive elements. These principles will be verified through a verification audit process that will seek evidence of specific elements. Satisfactory verification confirms compliance with the Standard and hence achievement of accreditation for the tourism business.

All Accreditation Programs seeking to be licensed by the ATAA, will require participating businesses to provide evidence of the following:

Requirement	Elements	General Interpretation Guidelines
<p>Legal Compliance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business registration/certificate of incorporation • Australian Business Number • Licences and permits • Insurance appropriate to the business, including \$5 million minimum cover for public liability • Food safety compliance (if applicable) • Compliance with relevant codes of conduct/ethics. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Table listing pertinent details of regulatory compliance including licence, permit numbers, issuing authority, issue and expiry dates. • Table listing pertinent details of insurance coverage including insurer, policy numbers, issue and expiry dates. • Evidence of food safety compliance. • Sign-off on compliance with the national Code of Conduct or sectoral Code, if it exists.
<p>Strategic/ Business Planning</p>	<p>Corporate, strategic and/or business plans incorporating, as applicable:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business description and product/service range • SWOT analysis • Overview and statement of objectives • Market research and competitive positioning • Marketing plan • Budget and action plan to support the above. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants to provide a brief (50 words) description of their business. • Applicants to complete a SWOT analysis and incorporate, as a minimum, the key headings of: Customers, Competitors, Environment and Company broadly. • Evidence of documented objectives and supporting strategies. • Evidence of market/customer research. • Provide basic template for plan including Objectives and Strategies, action plan and budget.
<p>Human Resource Management</p>	<p>Policy and procedures for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff recruitment (including job descriptions, organisation chart, roles and responsibilities) • Staff rostering • Training program for staff (including an induction program, customer service training and ongoing professional development initiatives) • Maintenance of personnel records • Procedures to ensure occupational health and safety. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of documented organisation chart, job descriptions, roles and responsibilities. • Evidence of staff rostering. • Evidence of a planned training program, and documented procedures for induction, customer service, training, and professional development completed. • Evidence of personnel records. • Evidence of OH&S training.

Requirement	Elements	General Interpretation Guidelines
<p>Environmental Management</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Documented policy and practices for sustainable environmental protection (e.g. TCA Code of Sustainable Practice, National Ecotourism Accreditation Program or other sectoral Codes). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of documented planning and application of procedures for environmental sustainability, and sign-off on the relevant Code.
<p>Administration And Operations</p>	<p>Sound, consistent procedures for day-to-day administration and operations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial management processes (banking and record documentation) Purchasing and storage (including preferred suppliers, purchasing, storage and sales procedures). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of a procedures/operations manual including all elements listed and evidence that procedures are being followed.
<p>Customer Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Printed, available code of conduct for delivery of quality customer service Procedures for how the promised product/service quality will be delivered (e.g. telephone answering) Fair, equitable and publicised terms and conditions for bookings and cancellations Periodic evaluation of customer feedback, and follow-through mechanisms to ensure customer views are noted and acted upon Complaints handling Truth in advertising and marketing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evidence of documentation related to service delivery and service standards provided to all staff. Documented procedures to support all areas of customer service. Evidence of documented terms and conditions. Evidence that feedback is collected. Documented complaints handling procedures. Evidence that advertising, collateral, images and claims are a true representation of the product offered.

Requirement	Elements	General Interpretation Guidelines
<p>Risk Management</p>	<p>Policies, procedures and planning to minimise the likelihood of risk to human, physical and/or informational resources, to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internal controls that ensure products, equipment and food are safe and "fit for purpose" • Known hazard management procedures in the workplace (physical, chemical and biological) • Maintenance of safe storage of goods, plant and equipment, particularly of perishables • Workplace safety procedures known by all employees • Prominently displayed emergency and evacuation procedure guides. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of documented risk management plan incorporating policies and procedures relevant to the industry sector, and evidence that procedures are being followed. • Emergency and evacuation procedures documented and accessible to staff and customers.
<p>Maintenance</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Documented procedures, records and schedules for cleaning, inspection, servicing, repair and replacement of equipment, buildings, transport and signage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evidence of documented maintenance and cleaning procedures for equipment, buildings, transport and signage.

The above core principles and guidelines of the Standard are the elements to be audited, and upon which the recognition of business entities will rely, regardless of the particular Program.

The use of the ATAA Logo will identify to the consuming public those businesses that have successfully achieved the Standard.

4.2 Australian Tourism Accreditation Programs

Programs offer a pathway through which the ATAA seeks to encourage the development and maintenance of effective, efficient and sustainable business practices.

It is integral to Programs that they expect accredited businesses to develop and maintain a strong commitment to service excellence seeking at all times to exceed the expectations of the consumer.

Programs fall into two categories, both of which require applicant businesses to conform to the Standard set by the ATAA.

Sectoral Programs would normally be initiated by an industry association and be specifically directed to businesses covered by that sector of the industry. In addition to the requirements of the Standard such a Program would include the provision of facilities and standards peculiar to that sector. An early example of a Sectoral Program has been prepared by Caravan Industry Australia and approved by the ATAA. Sectoral Programs would usually have a national focus.

Generic Programs whilst containing the requirements of the Standard are not directed to any specific sector of the industry. It would be expected that where appropriate compliance with any industry regulations or requirements would be covered as part of the Standard. The State/Territory Programs are Generic Programs, which have the ability to have sector specific requirements added.

If a proposed Program fails, initially, to meet the requirements of the ATAA, then the ATAA or State/Territory Accreditation Committee will provide the necessary guidance and negotiate a specified time frame within which the Program Manager must aim to comply with the Standard.

4.3 Licensing

4.3.1 Australian Tourism Accreditation Licence Agreement

The Australian Tourism Accreditation Licence Agreement is a signed contract between the ATAA and the Program Manager (the business entity) which finalises the endorsement of a Tourism Accreditation Program that has met the Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard and can operate within the Australian Tourism Accreditation System.

4.3.2 The Australian Tourism Accreditation Logo

The ATAA has registered a logo in the following format showing a yellow tick on a green background. The Logo shall contain the words "Accredited Tourism Business" and "Australia".



Program Managers licensed by the ATAA, are authorised to grant the use of the Logo to businesses achieving accreditation status.

The ATAA and its State and Territory Accreditation Committees will promote the Logo as a symbol of the commitment by accredited businesses to the pursuit of quality and excellence.

4.3.3 The Australian Tourism Accreditation Certificate

Program Managers are to issue the approved ATAA accreditation certificate to tourism operators when they have satisfactorily passed the requirements of the Standard. Artwork/masters for this certificate are available from the ATAA and State/Territory Accreditation Committees.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information contact:

Sally Hollis
Executive Officer
Australian Tourism Accreditation Association Ltd

Telephone: (08) 9472 0000
Facsimile: (08) 9472 0111
Email: accreditation@tourismcouncilwa.com.au

Moore, Bede

From: Aherne, Louisa - ATC
Sent: Tuesday, 24 February 2004 11:35 AM
To: Moore, Bede; Richardson, Neil
Cc: O'Neill, Stephen - ATC
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Dear Bede and Neil

This is to acknowledge that the Australian Tourist Commission agrees to be a party to the submission to the ACCC for preferential/exclusive treatment of accredited businesses, coordinated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

I would note, however, there is no reference in the submission to Tourism Australia and the implications for involvement in this submission. While the ATC is currently involved in this submission, how will the ACCC outcome/ruling impact on the new Tourism Australia, given that it's not strictly Tourism Australia taking part in the submission? I would suggest that some thought is given to this.

Regards

Louisa

Moore, Bede

From: paul.albone@tourism.vic.gov.au
Sent: Tuesday, 24 February 2004 3:32 PM
To: Moore, Bede
Cc: stuart.toplis@tourism.vic.gov.au; angela.drayton@tourism.vic.gov.au
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Hi Bede

Tourism Victoria wishes to be a party to the ACCC application regarding accreditation being coordinated by ITR

Regards

Paul Albone
Manager Industry Development
Tel (03) 9653 9752
Fax (03) 9653 9728
Mob 0413 270 405

Moore, Bede

From: Spurr, Bill (SATC) [Spurr.Bill@saugov.sa.gov.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 25 February 2004 11:02 AM
To: Moore, Bede
Subject: Submission to the ACCC - Preferential/Exclusive Treatment of Accredited Businesses

To Bede Moore,

Confirming that the South Australian Tourism Commission endorses the ACCC submission.

W T (Bill) Spurr
Chief Executive
South Australian Tourism Commission
Level 6, 50 Grenfell Street
ADELAIDE SA 5000

* Phone 61-8-8463-4501 * Fax 61-8-8463-4530
* E-mail spurr.bill@saugov.sa.gov.au
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Moore, Bede

From: David Etherton [DEtherton@tourism.wa.gov.au]
Sent: Saturday, 21 February 2004 3:14 PM
To: Moore, Bede
Cc: Bob Johnson
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Good afternoon Bede, I am not sure Bob Johnson got to this yesterday, please be advised that the WATC confirms that it agrees to be a party to this application coordinated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

Kind regards

David Etherton

Director Industry Development

Message

Moore, Bede

From: Slater, Nick [nick.slater@act.gov.au]
Sent: Friday, 20 February 2004 3:52 PM
To: Moore, Bede
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Bede

Australian Capital Tourism Corporation agrees to be a party to the application for preferential/exclusive treatment of accredited businesses coordinated by the department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

Regards

Nick

Nick Slater
Product & Industry Development Manager
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Moore, Bede

From: Claire.George@nt.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 20 February 2004 12:38 PM
To: Moore, Bede
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Hi Bede,

The Northern Territory Tourist Commission agrees to be a party to this application coordinated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

Claire George

Manager, Strategic Development

Northern Territory Tourist Commission
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Moore, Bede

From: Rowan.Sroule@tourism.tas.gov.au
Sent: Friday, 20 February 2004 2:05 PM
To: Moore, Bede
Subject: RE: ACCC Submission

Dear Bede,

Please note that Tourism Tasmania as the Tasmanian Government tourism agency agrees to be a party to the to the ACCC application on tourism accreditation being coordinated by the Department of Industry, Tourism and Resources.

Rowan Sproule
Director Infrastructure and Research
for the Chief Executive
Tourism Tasmania
GPO Box 399
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