

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009



Indigenous cultural experiences offer a competitive advantage to the Australian tourism industry.

In a competitive industry environment, tourism businesses that operate at national industry standards have the greatest potential to benefit from opportunities available. A business with ROC accreditation will be recognised in the industry as having sustainable business and environmental practices. The ROC Program is unique in that it also provides the recognition of cultural protocols and authenticity.

## How do I go about getting certified?

1. Contact Ecotourism Australia to order a workbook on **07 3252 1530**
2. Complete the self-assessment criteria
3. Submit your application to Ecotourism Australia for independent assessment to:  
Po Box 881, Fortitude Valley QLD 4006
4. An onsite audit will be conducted within the first 3 years of applying to ensure the standards are being maintained. The audit may be within a few weeks after gaining certification or 1-3 years thereafter

**NB.** If you already have ATAP, then you will receive credit for section 1 – you won't have to complete this section, just provide us a copy of your certificate.

The fees below are based on the turnover of your business and the table below details the cost for each level		
Gross Turnover	Once-only Assessment Fee	Annual Fee
< \$250,000	\$385	\$335
\$250,001 - \$1,000,000	\$445	\$530
\$1,000,001 - \$5,000,000	\$550	\$770
\$5,000,001 - \$10,000,000	\$645	\$930
> \$10,000,000	\$850	\$1040

**\*\*The prices listed above are inclusive for ECO, ATAP & ROC Certifications\*\***

## What criteria do I need to complete?

A list of the criteria applicable for ROC Certification is listed below. To achieve ROC Certification, the following sections of the workbook must be completed:

- Sections 1 to 4 – core criteria only
- Section 5 – selected core criteria only
- Sections 9 – core criteria only
- Section 10 - core and advanced criteria

If in doubt, look out for the ROC logo. This logo will appear on each page that has criteria applicable for your application.

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

## 1. Business Management and Operational Planning

If the business has an existing Business and Marketing Plan and Operational Strategies it is not necessary to redo these, as long as the existing plan and operational policies and procedures meets the criteria.

If the business does not have the documentation in place, blank electronic templates are available for use by the business.

If the business is currently accredited under one of the ATAA national tourism accreditation programs, and is already using the logo (green circle with gold tick), the Business Management and Operational Planning section does not need to be completed.

### 1.1 Legal Compliance

There are a number of regulations, licences and permits including vessel surveys that are required to operate a nature tourism or ecotourism business

### 1.2 Insurance Details

Public Liability Insurance, and other business insurance provide the nature tourism and ecotourism business with necessary security in the event of an accident affecting the business operation

### 1.3 Business Plan

A Business Plan helps set out a vision for the nature tourism and ecotourism business and facilitates sound future decision making. Ecotourism Australia has a template that you can use if you need to develop a Business Plan.

### 1.4 Marketing Plan

A Marketing Plan helps the nature tourism and ecotourism businesses identify where its visitors are coming from and how to best access and communicate with those visitors. Ecotourism Australia has a template that you can use if you need to develop a Business Plan.

### 1.5 Human Resources

Effective management policies for staff, combined with staff training, will result in more motivated and loyal staff.

### 1.6 Operational Management and Business Systems

The operational management of nature tourism and ecotourism businesses is documented to ensure consistent standards and service quality outcomes.

### 1.7 Customer Service

Established customer service standards set by the nature tourism and ecotourism businesses lead to greater customer satisfaction and consistency of service.

### 1.8 Risk Management

The nature and ecotourism business is committed to providing a safe workplace, providing safe experiences to all customers and has documented risk management and emergency procedures accessible to staff and customers.

## Business Ethics

The business and all its personnel adopt and follow ethical business practices such as:

- accepts a commitment to best practice ecological sustainability, natural area management, and the provision of quality ecotourism experiences;
- works through ecotourism to protect and preserve the natural and cultural heritage and Indigenous relationship to land;
- values the social, cultural and natural heritage diversity of Australia;
- values cultural and natural integrity and authenticity in business;
- will eliminate any practice that is unacceptably damaging the environment, heritage or Indigenous culture and beliefs;
- will eliminate any practice that could be damaging to trade or consumers or to the dignity of the ecotourism industry;

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

- acknowledges its responsibilities in meeting the reasonable expectations of all customers to the best of its ability. Customers include any individual or business wishing to use or receive the goods or services of the business;
- is committed to complying with the National Privacy Principles contained in the Privacy Act.
- shall endeavour to treat all customers equally;
- reserves the right to change its goods and services to meet the expectations of its customers;
- is responsible for all of its advertising and promotional activities, which accurately reflect the activities of the business;
- will inform direct customers of all the terms and conditions of the contract including the terms of payment and any cancellation conditions. We will do this prior to or at the time of entering the transaction or purchase of our goods and/or services. This business will adhere to those terms and conditions;
- will ensure that all monies received from a customer are receipted and an authentic copy will be provided to the customer;
- will fairly and amicably deal with all reasonable customer concerns and queries. The decision of any mediator who may be employed will be final and binding
- will present its goods and services in the best possible way;
- will exercise all reasonable care to address customers' safety and comfort;
- will take all reasonable measures to ensure that all plant, equipment and products are in good working order. We will, under duty of care, list potential hazards and risks that exist within the business and implement methods to regularly assess and minimise them;
- will where possible inform customers of pertinent facts concerning other tours, transportation, accommodation or other tourist services available to our customers; and
- will adhere to industry codes of practice where they apply.

## 2. Responsible Marketing

Marketing provides clients with information that increases respect for the natural and cultural environments visited. Operators provide clients with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the product. Nature tourism and ecotourism marketing and supplementary information provide customers with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the product and how to respect the natural and cultural environments visited.

## 3. Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction is achieved when the experience offered consistently meets or exceeds the realistic expectations of customers. Ecotourism operations monitor and act upon customer feedback.

## 4. Natural Area and/ or Cultural Focus

Applicants need to complete this section to determine which program they wish to qualify for. If you have both a nature and cultural tourism focus, you may wish to apply for both ECO and ROC Certification.

### 4.1 Natural Area Focus

Only complete this section if you are also applying for ECO Certification

### 4.2 Indigenous Cultural Focus

Tourism is sensitive to the value of interpretation and involves different cultures, particularly Indigenous culture. Many tourism areas have significant cultural values and tourism should embrace the cultural aspects of an area visited.

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

## 5. Environmental Management

Nature tourism and ecotourism activities should not degrade the natural environment. Ecotourism operations are developed and managed to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural environments in which they operate in, through the recognition and application of ecologically sustainable practices.

### 5.1 Environmental Planning and Impact Assessment

Operations have been established on the basis of understanding potential environmental impacts and are consistent with local and regional environmental planning.

### 5.2 Operational Environmental Management

All operations have considered their environmental aspects and the management of such are documented.

### 5.3 Location

Operations are only undertaken in locations where nature tourism and ecotourism is an appropriate use and impacts are minimised.

### 5.4 Construction Methods and Materials

Construction has maximised the use of renewable and recycled materials and has involved practices to minimise environmental impacts.

### 5.5 Site Disturbance, Landscaping and Rehabilitation

The operation involves minimal disturbance; any areas disturbed are rehabilitated to restore ecological processes.

### 5.6 Drainage, Soil and Water Management

Site drainage reflects the natural site topography and the operation does not cause soil loss, or impacts such as erosion and sediment pollution to down slope lands and waterways.

### 5.7 Visual Impacts

Nature tourism and ecotourism operations are not visually dominant.

### 5.8 Biodiversity Conservation

Provide evidence that the nature tourism and ecotourism products' biodiversity impacts have been minimised.

### 5.9 Lighting

Where natural lighting is inadequate, lighting is minimised to a level where the visibility of signs and displays is still clear, and to also provide for safety and security.

### 5.10 Water Supply and Conservation

Operations involve minimal use of an ecologically sustainable supply of water.

### 5.11 Waste Water

Sewage and effluent is minimised and has no significant environmental impact.

### 5.12 Noise

Nature tourism and ecotourism operations enable customers to experience the natural sound-scape.

### 5.13 Air Quality

Nature tourism and ecotourism operations involve minimal air pollution.

### 5.14 Waste Minimisation and Management

The waste minimisation policy of reduce, reuse, and recycle underpins the operation of the product.

### 5.15 Energy Use and Minimisation: buildings

### 5.16 Energy Use and Minimisation: transport

### 5.17 Minimal Disturbance to Wildlife

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

## **9. Working with Local Communities**

In many situations the local community is integral to the ecotourism product. The benefits of ecotourism should be distributed to the local community. Benefits may include employment of local guides, the purchase of provisions and services and the use of local facilities.

### **9.1 Provision of local benefits**

### **9.2 Minimal impact on local communities**

### **9.3 Community involvement**

## **10. Cultural Respect and Sensitivity**

Although the focus of ecotourism is primarily on the natural values of an area, many of these areas have significant cultural values, especially Indigenous values. Hence, ecotourism should also embrace the cultural aspects of an area visited.

### **10.1 Consultation and Training**

### **10.2 Visitor Information**

### **10.3 Indigenous Arts, Crafts & Goods**

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

## Examples of Best Practice...

### **Responsible marketing**

- The operator uses only Eco Certification Program accredited accommodation, carriers or principals.
- The operator's web site is hot linked to another operator's web site that offers Eco Certification Program accredited products.
- The operator promotes another operator's Eco Certification Program accredited products in his/her own marketing material.
- The operator takes bookings for Eco Certification Program accredited products on behalf of another operator.

### **Environmental sustainability - impact assessment**

- Remove vessel from the river each night via a fixed crane to: reduce stress to the riverbank; reduce marine growth on the bottom of the vessel, which reduces the need to anti-foul; and eliminate the need for anchoring or mooring in the river.
- The operation and management of the structures and facilities are undertaken in accordance with an environmental management plan, which meets the requirements of the International Environmental Management Standards in the ISO 14000 series or equivalent.
- A study has been undertaken to determine limits of acceptable change, or the social and environmental carrying capacity, of the tour site.
- An ongoing, independent monitoring program assessing environmental impact has been established.

### **Environmental sustainability - site location**

- Development of the ecotourism facility has occurred on a degraded site that is restored and rehabilitated with local native species.

### **Environmental sustainability - energy consumption**

- Using vegetable based oil for engines.
- The operation uses solar powered vehicles that are either directly charged by the sun or via an electricity supply sourced from renewable energy.
- The operation sources part or all of its energy from a methane-based composting system.
- The operation runs a program that rewards customers who choose to use less energy, water and resources during their experience.

### **Environmental sustainability – waste minimisation**

- The operation recycles waste paper into products for customers to purchase.

### **Interpretation**

- Tours are filmed to provide further feedback and interpretation on the trip, as the guide can further explain and point out things that guests may have missed. These videos are for sale to the group as an ongoing conservation resource and memento of the trip.
- Customers are encouraged to provide constructive written feedback about their interpretive or educational experience so that quality can be further improved.
- Interpretive material promotes concepts of ecotourism beyond the area of operation.
- The operator shares best practice ideas with other operators through publications, training programs, workshops and influence in professional organisations.

The operator commits resources to regular community service aimed at educating the local community

- The operator commits resources to regular community service aimed at educating the local community on ecotourism and sustainable practices.
- Interpretation promotes tangible environmental actions.
- The operator demonstrates a significant commitment to upgrading the skills and training of guides and interpretive personnel.

# Summary of Respecting Our Culture Program 2009

## Contributions to conservation

- Funding of fauna and flora research.
- Offering guests the opportunity to participate in conservation activities, such as monitoring the flora and fauna, and research/regeneration projects.
- Provide information on wildlife to Parks and Wildlife services about nesting and hatching sightings to monitor changes in population numbers.
- Setting aside land for conservation/research and to use it as a control area to monitor visitor impacts.
- Long-term partnerships with local conservation groups are formed which provide mutual, tangible benefits.
- The operator and/or staff are involved with a formal scientific research project aimed at measuring and understanding environmental impacts.
- The operator and/or staff formally contribute to, or are members of, a scientific advisory committee.
- Financial support is provided to research initiatives and public land management projects beyond normal permit/licensing fee arrangements.
- A full-time qualified environmental management officer(s) is employed.
- Customers spend more than a third of their time participating in research, management or rehabilitation of the natural area.
- A privately managed area for nature conservation is created and developed.
- Significant infrastructure/site hardening is developed to protect an area and is provided for all visitors to help protect/minimise damage to an area.
- The operation has entered into a voluntary conservation agreement with a protected area manager or private landowner.
- The operator contributes to the further professional development of ecotourism through active involvement in a relevant professional association eg. Ecotourism Australia, Australian Tourism Operators Network, Interpretation Australia Association, Inbound Tourism Organisation of Australia, Tourism Council of Australia.

## Working with local communities

- Operators should encourage local and regional tourism bodies to experience all of their products.
- The operator offers a permanent discount off fares/entry for locals.
- The operator has identified how to minimise negative social impacts through discussions with specialists and has acted according to information gathered.
- The operator has been involved in a social impact study undertaken on the local community.
- The operator is assisting to implement the recommendations of a social impact study undertaken on the local community.
- The operator has a contract with a community-based food cooperative to purchase food in bulk on a regular basis.

## Cultural respect and sensitivity

- Invests in continual personal development for Aboriginal staff
- Funding Aboriginal community activities and programs
- ECO Certified in addition to being ROC accredited
- Support and market other Aboriginal tourism products, arts and crafts

**\*\*To apply for ROC Certification, you will need to complete your application via workbook – please contact Ecotourism Australia for further information\*\***



For a full copy of the program, please contact the National Office on 07 3252 1530.

