

Eco Operator of the Year

This category aims to recognise ecologically sustainable tourism with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas that foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

Question 1 – Overview and history (0 Points)

Maximum 500 words

Provide a general overview of the nature and history of your product. You must demonstrate your eligibility for entry in this category as outlined in the descriptor above.

Important note: submissions that do not demonstrate eligibility may be disqualified.

Question 2 – Product (20 Points)

Maximum 500 words

- a) Explain how your product/s meet the two key principles of ecotourism:
 1. Demonstrates continued best practice sustainability
 2. Provides opportunities to experience nature in a way that leads to greater understanding, appreciation and enjoyment
- b) What innovation/s have taken place to improve the nature of the visitor experience and minimise the possible impacts on the environment?

Tips: Innovations could include infrastructure development, new marketing ideas or sales activities. Innovations must have taken place during the qualifying period of 01 July 2007 to 30 June 2008.

Question 3 – Business Plans (20 Points)

Maximum 500 words

- a) Describe your visionary goals and business ethic
- b) Describe the key features of your business, for example goals, strategies and outcomes
- c) Demonstrate the economic sustainability of your business

Tips: Part b is asking you to explain what you were trying to achieve, how you went about it and the related outcomes. Part c would benefit from the inclusion of a graph or diagram showing the growth of your business within your answer.

Question 4 – Marketing (20 Points)

Maximum 500 words

- a) Who are your target markets and why
- b) Describe your key marketing strategies for each target market and detail the success/outcomes of those strategies
- c) How do you use your distinctive difference and positioning to attract your target markets
- d) Demonstrate how clients are provided with an accurate and responsible depiction of what to expect from the experience/product

Tips: The answer should consider all arms of marketing (e.g. sales, advertising, public relations, word of mouth and web-based marketing) where appropriate. Your objective should be to demonstrate a clear plan, supported by market research and the result achieved.

Question 5 – Customer Service (15 Points)

Maximum 300 words

- a) Outline your customer service ethics and values
- b) What steps do you take to ensure quality customer service practices are achieved and a high level of customer satisfaction is maintained
- c) How do you identify and provide for people with specific needs

Tips: Points to consider could include your repeat business strategy, feedback collection and changes implemented based on feedback. Specific needs could include language, physical, intellectual and other special needs.

Question 6 – Professional Development (10 Points)

Maximum 400 words

- a) State the number of people working in the business (specify the number of full-time, part-time, casual and volunteer employees)
- b) What are the main elements of your commitment to the professional and personal development of staff and yourself
- c) Name four key points of how you identify staff training or skill development needs
- d) Summarise key training development programs undertaken, especially programs aimed at training staff on the environmental sustainability aspects of your operations

Tips: Points to consider could include the objective of training/development programs, how these were measured and the extent of the uptake and outcomes for the business.

Question 7 – Risk Management (15 Points)

Maximum 300 words

- a) Describe the risk issues you have identified for your business and summarise risk management strategies you have put in place
- b) How do you ensure compliance of risk management strategies/procedures among full-time, part-time, casual and volunteer staff

Tips: Risk management relates to all parts of your business including Occupational Health and Safety, risk to visiting public and specific business related risk. Consider using a practical example or detail an incident and outcome to prove how your risk management strategy works. Detailed documentation about your risk management strategy and emergency procedures can be provided in an appendix.

Question 8 – Environmental Sustainability (20 Points)

Maximum 500 words

- a) Demonstrate how your business had been developed and managed to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural environments in which you operate →through the recognition and application of environmentally sustainable practices
- b) What initiatives have you introduced to minimise the negative environmental impacts of your ongoing business practices and activities

Tips: Environmental sustainability initiatives could include energy and water conservation, building design and location, waste management, recycling, tree planting, engaging environmentally sensitive procedures and complying with the ECO Certification Program.

Question 9 – Cultural and Social Environment (20 Points)

Maximum 500 words

- a) Describe how your business supports the local community and it's culture
- b) Describe how your business uses and promotes local products and services
- c) If applicable, demonstrate how your business is sensitive to, interprets and involves the local culture

Tips: Benefits to the local community could include apprenticeships, in-kind contributions, employment of local residents, partnerships with community-based organisations etc. The use of local products and services could include food and beverage suppliers, service providers, trades people and local building material. If local products and services are not available, briefly explain.

Question 10 – Involvement in the Tourism Industry (15 Points) Maximum 400 words

Demonstrate how your organisation and/or employees have contributed to the development of the tourism industry at:

- a) A local/regional level
- b) A state/territory level
- c) A national level

Tips: Examples could include cooperative marketing, media famils, cooperation with local and state tourism authorities, tourism accreditation, active membership of industry associations, leadership in industry forums, involvement in trade shows and other partnerships and alliances.

The winning entrants will receive:

- Return travel to South Australia
- Attendance to the plenary sessions held in Adelaide on the 17th and 18th of November including all Keynote and Concurrent addresses, morning teas, lunches and afternoon teas
- Attendance to the Welcome Cocktail Reception at Windy Point Restaurant
- Attendance to the awards ceremony at the **Tourism Australia 'Australian Experiences' Gala Dinner – National Eco Awards and Gala Auction** where you will be presented with your award

Next Step:

Applications are to be submitted by the 27th October 2008. The winner will be announced at the Inaugural Conference on Green Travel, Climate Change and Ecotourism Gala Ecotourism Awards Dinner on Tuesday the 18th November 2008 in Adelaide, South Australia.

Applications may be submitted via the online application form, by email to support2@ecotourism.org.au or by mail to:

Ecotourism Australia
PO Box 881
Fortitude Valley QLD 4006

Any questions regarding your application may be directed to support2@ecotourism.org.au