

# Ecotourism Australia Limited

annual

**report**

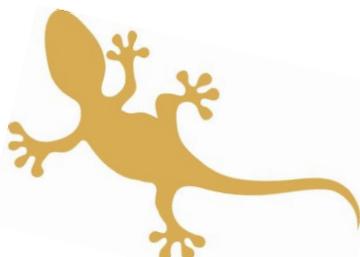
2010/11

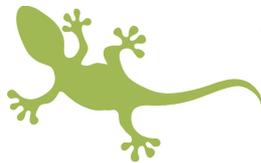


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## Chair's Report 2010/11

It is with great pleasure that I present my report as Chairman of Ecotourism Australia in the year of its 20<sup>th</sup> birthday.

While we reflect on the last year, as our organisation reaches this significant milestone, it is also worthwhile to reflect on the last 20 years and the achievements over that time.

The members of Ecotourism Australia should be justly proud to be part of an organisation that has delivered ground breaking initiatives including the world's first environmental certification for the tourism industry, the Climate Action Certification program and a number of pioneering agreements with protected area managers.

Over these 20 years it has also weathered many of the storms that have impacted adversely on the tourism industry both in Australia and globally.

Not the least has been the challenges of the last 12 months which have been particularly difficult for the small businesses that provide many of the ecotourism experiences in Australia.

Ecotourism Australia has worked hard to support and assist operators working under 'hardship' conditions, while ensuring that it continues to deliver services to other members and certified operators.

Over the past year, there have been a number of significant changes in some of our projects and activities, including the membership adopting a new Constitution at last year's AGM, the Board approving a new strategic direction and important changes to EA's membership and certification structures.

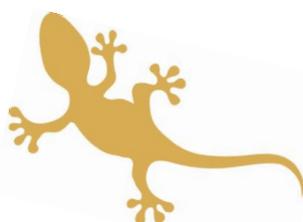
The new strategic vision that has been adopted by the Board for Ecotourism Australia is:

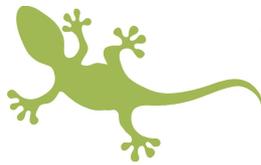
**“To inspire environmentally sustainable and culturally responsible tourism”**

This new vision reflects Ecotourism Australia's aspiration to be a strong and viable leader in the Australian tourism industry and to provide a visionary model that overseas tourism organisations might aspire to adopt. Underpinning this vision, the Board seeks to ensure Ecotourism Australia is a sustainable, relevant, progressive, credible and supportive organisation.



**Duncan Mackenzie**  
Chairman





Ecotourism Australia's leadership was very much in the forefront when both our ECO and ROC certification programs were accepted as pilot programs for the Federal Government's TQUAL Accreditation program. In addition, the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program was also accepted for TQUAL Accreditation and these programs were recognised at the launch by Minister Ferguson at Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) 2011.

Certification continues to be the key focus of Ecotourism Australia's activity, and excellent growth in new certifications have helped Ecotourism Australia hold its own during a time when many existing certified operators have ceased trading or have experienced financial hardship.

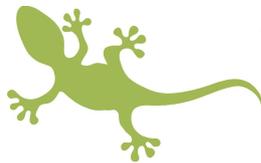
Certification growth has been aided by continuing recognition through DEC WA, GBRMPA and Tourism NT as well as the ongoing partnership with Parks Vic and the newly launched TIPA program with Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service. The rapidly growing recognition of the importance of certification in assessing the verification of best practice tourism operators speaks to the credibility of the Ecotourism Australia programs and is essential to the sustainability of the organisation.

During the year, Ecotourism Australia also introduced a substantial structural change to membership and certification. This was based on Member and Certified Operator Surveys and issues raised at various roundtables with Members and Certified Operators around Australia. The most significant change is that all certified operators now receive membership to Ecotourism Australia as part of their annual fees. This gives operators the opportunity to engage with the organisation and its Board in a much more meaningful way.

Ecotourism Australia continues to ensure that its certification process is helping operators achieve environmental best practice. The launch of ECO IV in December 2010 saw the inclusion of new significant criteria on Climate Action and Animals in Captivity. I would like to acknowledge Zoo and Aquariums Australia for their assistance in adding the best practice criteria to ECO certification.

In 2011, Ecotourism Australia also introduced increased requirements around the renewal process. This followed the feedback from audits in 2010 which identified that a number of core documents were not being updated annually as required by certification. The more robust renewal process is seen as an ECO 'health' check while also assisting operators to be 'audit ready'.





**Certification and Membership Statistics**

	ECO & ROC Certification		EcoGuide Certification	
	Total Certified	Change	Total Certified	Change
YE 08	574		44	
YE 09	710	24%	53	20%
YE 10	843	19%	59	11%
YE 11	988	17%	75	27%
1-Jul-11	1006	2%	82	9%

	Climate Action Certification		Membership	
	Total Certified		Total Members	
YE 08	NIL		198	
YE 09	17		225	14%
YE 10	27	59%	248	10%
YE 11	49	81%	228	-8%
1-Jul-11	52	6%	552	142%

Certification Statistics	Total Certified	Currently Applying
ECO & ROC Certification	1006 products	249 companies
Climate Action Certification	53 operators	37 companies
EcoGuide Certification	82 guides	54 guides
Membership	150 + 402 operators	n/a

Ecotourism Australia has shown leadership through developing significant relationships with overseas organisations and governments including the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the Royal Kingdom of Cambodia and providing a presentation at an APEC Conference on Ecotourism in late 2010.

Looking to the future, Ecotourism Australia will continue to work with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council towards recognition of certification programs through the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria. This international recognition will continue to establish Ecotourism Australia's global leadership.

The annual Global ECO Conference plays a major role in positioning Ecotourism Australia and the Australian tourism industry as leaders in this increasingly popular area of global tourism. At last year's conference, 12% of the delegates were from overseas, a strong indication of the interest in Australian ecotourism and sustainable tourism.





## Marketing

Ecotourism Australia recognises that certified operators are looking for stronger marketing messages about certification to be delivered to the marketplace, and within its limited means, EA continues to develop and drive marketing messages via a variety of channels.

At the 2010 Global ECO Conference, Ecotourism Australia launched Eco Lodges of Australia, a marketing consortium of Advanced Ecotourism certified accommodation across Australia. There are currently 20 Eco Lodges of Australia members and we have gained considerable media coverage for the brand and members. It has been an exciting initiative and one that we believe can expand, based on some of the feedback received from wholesalers at ATE this year.

In February, in order to assist disaster impacted Queensland operators, Ecotourism Australia launched a social media campaign "Operation rECOvery". This provided a digital vehicle for a number of certified products to submit content for a daily listing on Facebook and LinkedIn. This campaign resulted in about 800-1000 hits per day and the campaign was picked up by The International Ecotourism Society, amongst others.

The Green Travel Guide was launched at ATE 2011 and is now available for sale in both hard copy (totally environmentally friendly production) and free online. We have also encouraged certified operators to onsell the publication via their gift shops or reception areas.

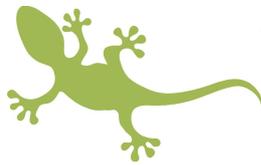
There have been a number of media stories during 2010/2011 that have profiled a range of Ecotourism Australia's certified products. We have also attempted to initiate features in a number of publications supported by operators. Two publications that supported these features were **Aussie Backpacker** and **Travelling In Australia** Magazine.

## Management

Over the past 12 months, committees of the Ecotourism Australia Board developed work plans that have resulted in a number of substantial strategic outcomes for the organisation. The committees are:

- **Awards Committee** chaired by Ross Dowling
- **Certification Committee** chaired by Shelley Lavender
- **Conference Committee** chaired by Tony Charters
- **Corporate Governance Committee** chaired by Shelley Lavender
- **Executive and Finance Committee** chaired by Duncan Mackenzie
- **Membership and Marketing Committee** chaired by Cameron Kerr
- **Policy Committee** chaired by Vivienne Clare





I would like to recognise the hard work and dedication of our Staff in Brisbane – the ‘heart’ of Ecotourism Australia. Our Chief Executive, Kym Cheatham, has had to bear the brunt of the GFC, floods and fires across a number of states while at the same time ensuring that EA remained a strong and supportive organisation to all its members and operators. She did this, along with the brilliant assistance of our other staff, in an exemplary fashion – thanks Kym for a job very well done!

Unfortunately it is a fact of life that nothing remains the same, and we have seen some changes in staff this year, losing both Kristie Gray and Michele Mayhew. I would particularly like to acknowledge Kristie Gray whose commitment, diligence and expertise over four years (particular in managing and developing our core certification programs) will be sorely missed.

Both Kristie and Michele have taken positions in Queensland in the tourism/environmental field and we wish them all the very best for the future. In replacing these two key staff, we like to welcome Leonie Bowles and Loretta Stellino to the EA team.

On behalf of the Ecotourism Australia Board, I would like to thank most sincerely, the staff of Ecotourism Australia for their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm in what has been a very difficult period for the Australian Tourism industry.

At the 2010 AGM, we saw some changes in the Directors of Ecotourism Australia. Michael Collins and Anji Kemp-Nishiyama joined the Ecotourism Australia Board as new Directors, and their contribution has been warmly welcomed.

On behalf of the Ecotourism Australia Board, I would like to thank retiring Board member Jude Franks for her conscientiousness and input as a Director, particularly within the Marketing and Membership Committee.

I wish to sincerely thank all the members of the Board, who are, without exception a dedicated and engaged team of passionate professionals with the best interests of our industry at heart. It is not easy, at the best of times, to remain focussed on the essentials of planning and strategy, but when disasters overtake us that are outside the purview of the organisation to control, Board management is made even more difficult.

During 2010 and 2011 the EA Board have risen to the challenges thrust at us and have emerged as a strong and viable Board ready to face the unknown challenges of the next 12 months.

I encourage all members (particularly our new members) to continue to be actively involved in Ecotourism Australia – it’s your organisation and we rely and very much appreciate your input and suggestions.

We have achieved a great deal this year under trying conditions and we very much look forward to new and exciting challenges in the future, which will help guarantee our place on the national and international scene.

**Duncan Mackenzie**  
Chair





## Key Achievements 2010/2011



**New strategic direction of Ecotourism Australia**



**Launch of Eco Lodges of Australia**



**Launch of ECO IV**



**“Operation rECOvery” social media campaign for disaster affected Queensland operators**



**ECO and ROC certification become TQUAL accredited**



**ECO ZONE continues at ATE 2011**



**Launch of TIPA in Queensland**



**Ecotourism Australia turns 20!**

