

Ecotourism Australia Limited



ANNUAL REPORT 2009/10

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Chairman's Report 2009/2010



Duncan Mackenzie
Chairman

It is with great pleasure that I present my report for 2009/2010 as Chairman of Ecotourism Australia.

The last 12 months have been a very active time for Ecotourism Australia. During the year we defined the focus of Ecotourism Australia in three main areas: Industry Development, Advocacy, and Consumer Marketing, and it under these areas that I am happy to report on our achievements.

Industry Development

Certification is clearly the foundation of our Industry Development focus and we have seen a substantial increase in Ecotourism Australia's certification programs over the past 3 years. (Table 1)

This growth has been supported by programs run in conjunction with the Tourism NT Accreditation Drive, the SATC Climate Action program and the Parks Victoria Partnership Agreement.

The Tourism NT Accreditation Drive saw ECO and ROC certification recognised by Tourism NT and the resulting program has seen an 47% increase in ECO or ROC certified operators in the NT.

The SATC Climate Action program was undertaken in partnership with the SA Tourism Industry Council as a lead up to the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) in Adelaide. Aligning to the SA governments aspiration for a low carbon economy, 30 tourism businesses achieved Climate Action Certification by ATE, a fantastic achievement. South Australia now leads the country in Climate Action certification.

The Parks Victoria Partnership Agreement was developed later in the year and will continue to roll out during 2010/2011. Focussing on assisting Licensed Tourism Operators to achieve ECO, ROC and Climate Action certification, this program also assists individuals to achieve EcoGuide certification. This program sits within Victoria's Nature Based Tourism Strategy, and will see workshops and mentoring assist in the growth of certified operators in Parks in Victoria.

This year we have also seen the pilot of the Marine Safe program in the Whitsundays. This certification has been developed with the support of Maritime Safety Queensland and in conjunction with the Whitsunday Charter Boat Industry Association. Fourteen places were funded in the pilot and the official launch of the program is expected to occur later in 2010.

The Global ECO Conference is a major activity in the area of industry development. The 2009 conference, held in Alice Springs with the support of Tourism NT, was hailed by all as an excellent event, with 77% of delegates indicating that the conference 'met' or 'exceeded' their expectations. A seasoned conference goer admitted that the Day One program was the best he had ever been to. There is no doubt that the calibre of international speakers at Global ECO, provides an educational and development opportunity not found anywhere else in Australia and potentially throughout the Asia Pacific region.

2009/2010 has seen Ecotourism Australia actively participate in a number of industry workshops and conferences around Australia:

Climate Action Workshops:

- Cairns – GBRMPA Climate Change Workshops
- Port Douglas – GBRMPA Climate Change Workshops
- Airlie Beach – GBRMPA Climate Change Workshops
- Coffs Harbour – DECCW Climate Change Workshops
- Blue Mountains – DECCW Climate Change Workshops
- Sydney – DECCW Climate Change Workshops
- Brisbane – Ergon Energy October 2009

Ecotourism Workshops:

- Gold Coast – Gold Coast Accreditation Panel
- Launceston – at the Tourism Tasmania Conference
- Canberra – DEWHA Environment Assessment Branch

Conference Presentations

- Shades of Green Regional Tourism Forum 2009 – Strahan August 2009)
- Northern Rivers Tourism Symposium – Byron Bay October 2009
- Savannah Symposium Darwin - November 2009
- Conference on Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism, Kep, Cambodia sponsored by Ausaid – March 2010

Table 1: Growth Statistics

ECO & ROC Certification Growth			EcoGuide Certification Growth		
Year	Total Products Certified	% increase	Year	Total Certified	% increase
YE Dec 2007	574		YE Dec 2007	44	
YE Dec 2008	710	24%	YE Dec 2008	53	20%
YE Dec 2009	843	19%	YE Dec 2009	59	11%
YTD July 2010	974	16%	YTD July 2010	74	25%
Climate Action Certification Growth			Membership Growth		
Year	Total Certified	% increase	Year	Total Members	% increase
YE Dec 2007	NIL		YE Dec 2007	198	
YE Dec 2008	17		YE Dec 2008	225	14%
YE Dec 2009	27	59%	YE Dec 2009	248	10%
YTD July 2010	49	81%	YTD July 2010	255	3%

Advocacy

During 2010, Ecotourism Australia has strengthened its advocacy and representation work. In 2009/2010, we represented the interests of our stakeholders on the National Tourism Accreditation Framework Working Group and a variety of other associated working groups: eg. National Landscapes Reference Group, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority Climate Change Action Group and the Sustainable Tourism Alliance.

We have also prepared a number of submissions and position papers on issues of particular relevance to ecotourism and sustainable tourism: eg.

- Submission to the '*Draft Management Program for the Saltwater Crocodile *Crocodylus porosus* in the Northern Territory 2009 – 2013*' - September 2009
- Submission to the '*Draft Uluru Kata Tjuta Draft Management Plan*' - September 2009
- Submission to the Department of Sustainability and Environment, '*Victoria Draft Design Guidelines for Nature-Based Tourism in Victoria*' - October 2009
- Submission to the NSW Government regarding the '*Draft Changes to the Game and Feral Animal Control Act*' - October 2009
- Submission to the South Australian Government Department for Environment and Heritage and Primary Industries and Resources regarding - '*Mining and Exploration on Arkaroola Sanctuary*' - January 2010
- '*National Long-Term Tourism Strategy: Indigenous Tourism Development Working Group*' – Indigenous Tourism Industry Representative Body – Discussion Paper April 2010
- '*Culling of Native Fauna and Recreational Shooting Position Paper*' - August 2009

During the latter half of the year, a great deal of energy was spent on the development of a broad discussion paper in preparation for the 2010 Federal Election. **Tourism for the Future 2010– 2020 Discussion Paper** was released to all political parties in August 2010.

Ecotourism Australia has issued a number of media releases in 2009/2010:

- 29 May 2010: Green Travel Guide Australia released At ATE 2010
- 17 March 2010: Announcing the Green Travel Leaders
- 27 February 2010: Accredited Tourism Businesses Excel at Australia Tourism Awards
- 30 November 2009: Tourism Awards Dominated by Accredited Businesses
- 25 November 2009: Qld Government Eco-plan
- 31 August 2009: Culling and Recreational Shooting
- 9th July 2009: Ecotourism Australia supports Traditional Owners on Uluru Climb Ban

We have expanded our activities internationally to reinforce our reputation as world leaders in Ecotourism. As a consequence, Ecotourism Australia was invited and sponsored to attend a two day workshop on the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria in Hong Kong, and a Dialogue on Sustainable Futures in Shanghai. Ecotourism Australia has also joined the Global Sustainable Tourism Council, which is a UN funded body.

Marketing

The increase in interest in Ecotourism and Sustainable Tourism has seen Ecotourism Australia enjoy a number of opportunities to increase the importance and profile of certification.

To that end, Ecotourism Australia declared 2010 as the '**Year of Responsible, Ethical and Sustainable Travel**'. A major activity was the establishment of a brand **Green Travel Leader** for tourism organisations that have been ECO certified for 10 years or more. There are currently 50 Green Travel Leaders who feature on their own mini website: www.greentravelleader.com.au. The Green Travel Leaders have had some coverage in media including being picked up in the UK in a 'green' e newsletter. We also wrote to the Tourism Ministers in each State and Territory about the Green Travel Leaders. Recognising certified operators who have longevity is an essential ingredient in Ecotourism Australia's marketing strategy..

We expanded our presence at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) 2010 under the '*Nature Theme*,' by the creation of an ECO Zone. We were joined by six ECO certified operators and from the feedback we received it was a worthwhile exercise. We are replicating the ECO Zone in 2011 and we hope to grow the number of certified operators involved. ATE 2010 saw Ecotourism Australia introduce badges for certified operators to wear.. Most operators proudly displayed their ECO, ROC, Climate Action, and Green Travel Leader Badges and buyers commented on their visibility. Marketing was further assisted by the development of a '*Gecko Trail*' which led to the operators booths.

We have been active in the use of consumer travel media to get out the message about certification, and below are some of the articles that have appeared:

- Wildlife in Australia Magazine '**A Rewarding Holiday: Ecotourism in Australia**' July 2009
- Australian Traveller Magazine '**Take A Green Holiday**' July 2009
- Travelling in Australia '**Green Ochre**' August 2009
- Escape Magazine News Limited Newspapers '**Top Eco Break's**' September 2009
- Australian Geographic Magazine '**At One With Nature**' Oct – Dec 2009
- Make Tracks Magazine '**Holidays That Don't Cost The Earth**' March-September 2010

Management

In 2009/2010, the Board approved a **Strategic Plan** from which a **Business Operational Plan** was developed for 2010/2011.

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. Some of the work undertaken by the committees is below:

Certification Committee chaired by Shelley Lavender

- EcoGuide Certification Review
- Complaints Management Process Review
- Auditing Process and Guideline Review
- ECO Certification IV development

Policy Committee chaired by Vivienne Clare

- All the submissions and position papers mentioned above

Membership and Marketing Committee chaired by Jude Franks

- Membership and Certified Operators Survey
- Membership Review
- Marketing strategy development

Awards Committee chaired by Ross Dowling

- Awards Criteria Review
- Awards Sponsorship strategy

The Board also set up a **Constitutional Review Working Group** chaired by Shelley Lavender to update and review the Constitution in line with the Corporations Act.

I would like to recognise the hard work and dedication of our Staff. Without a doubt we have the best Administrative team possible working towards ensuring that Ecotourism Australia remains at the international forefront of accreditation processes. This team constantly develops and delivers accreditation programs at the highest professional level, making Ecotourism Australia the envy of the world.

In her role as CEO, Kym Cheatham has had to face the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) that brought many larger organisations to their knees. Through her dedication and extremely hard work, Ecotourism Australia is now flourishing and expanding, accepting new and exciting challenges on a regular basis.

The impact of increased certification activity has seen a restructure of roles in Ecotourism Australia. Kristie Gray is now National Quality Standards Manager and has taken full responsibility for all certification programs to ensure we maintain the highest professional standards in program management. Kristie is supported internally by Michelle Mayhew who has been appointed to the role of Program Coordinator.

On behalf of the board members I would like to thank most sincerely, the staff of Ecotourism Australia for their hard work, dedication and enthusiasm. Without their input we could not gain the growth and positioning for the future, that make others want to emulate our achievements.

In 2009/2010, we saw the resignation of Wayne Jenvey as a Director of Ecotourism Australia. He will however, remain involved by assisting us in a pro bono capacity, and we thank him for his ongoing dedication and commitment to the organisation. During the year, Shannan Perry sought a Leave of Absence due to the birth of her first child. Shannan has since resigned from Ecotourism Australia's Board due to her family commitments. On behalf of the Ecotourism Australia Board, I would like to thank both Wayne and Shannan for their work as Directors.

At the 2009 election, Andy Ralph and Lisha Mulqueeny joined the Ecotourism Australia Board as new Directors, and their contribution has been warmly welcomed. 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.

I encourage all 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 (GFC) 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
Chairman

Key Achievements 2009/2010



Launch of Green Travel Leaders as part of the Year of Responsible, Ethical and Sustainable Tourism



ECO Zone at Australian Tourism Exchange 2010



Number of certified products increased by 22% from 2008/2009



Marine Safe Certification Pilot commenced



Increased advocacy and representation to all levels of government



Increased international profile through Global Sustainable Tourism Council

