Protect our Parks

Involve our Operators

Invest in the Future

Incentivise Quality

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“We love what we do and where we do it. Sharing our experience and knowledge with others is what we are passionate about.”

Alistair Lawson, Owner of Great Ocean Road Surf Tours
2013/14 has been a significant year for Ecotourism Australia Ltd with solid growth in membership and certification, development of broad and strategic partnerships and alliances and a substantial review of our premier certification program ‘ECO-certification’.

On 3rd March 2014 our then Chairman, Mr. Cameron Kerr, retired from the Board and I had the privilege and honour of being elected to the Chairman’s role. I acknowledge the inspirational role Cameron Kerr played during his tenure with Ecotourism Australia and wish to pass on sincere thanks from the Board, Management and our members. Lisha Mulqueeny, Ross Dowling and Andrew Daff also left the Ecotourism Australia Board this year and again, left with our thanks and high regard.

The Board has been renewed with the addition of two exemplary tour operators Lizzie Corke and Peter Gash, a prominent land manager in Rod Quartermain, and the previous Director of National Parks (Federal) Peter Cochrane. This ‘new blood’ has provided the Board with an impetus to revise our ‘value proposition’ and focus our efforts on bringing value to our members.

The change of Governments throughout Australia has bought a new paradigm of ‘reducing red tape’ and a refocusing of tourism organisation’s budgets towards marketing as opposed to product development. This change of policy has seen programs such as TQUAL being abandoned by the Federal government, National Landscapes unsupported and long held incentives for quality tourism operators forgotten.

Ecotourism Australia has spent considerable time and effort pursuing these challenges seeking to enlighten the decision makers that quality matters. Tour Operators who manage their businesses in a sustainable manner, provide amazing visitor experiences and make a direct contribution to their communities and environment are the same operators who should be showcased and encouraged. This is simply common sense.
We look forward to our next year in pursuing these goals and will actively seek to achieve our aims by encouraging governments to:

- Protect our Parks,
- Involve our Operators (in decisions),
- Invest in the Future, and
- Incentivise Quality.

My thanks to our Board of Directors, our CEO, Rod Hillman and his team for their unflinching support over the year as we head into a time of challenge but with genuine hope that stakeholders are seeing ecotourism as a solution through building regions, creating jobs, inspiring visitors and protecting the environment.

Rick Murray
Chair
Over the past year, there have been a number of significant achievements:

- Commenced an exciting partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia to bring benefit to our members and programs, to deliver an effective audit program.
- Developed a partnership with Coastal Marine Eco Tourism Corp. to sell ECO Certification under a licence agreement in South Africa.
- Introduced the Protected Area Manager’s membership package to build tangible relationships between National Parks and the eco-tourism industry.
- Finalised the ECO Certification program review and launched the simplified and condensed application.
- Launched the new Ecotourism Australia website, www.ecotourism.org.au, receiving over 40,000 pageviews in its first month.
- 94 additional products were certified in the 2013/14 financial year.
- Held a successful Global Eco Conference in Noosa.
- Maintained a strong advocacy and representational presence at the state and federal government level.
- Relocated the head office to a more member accessible location.
- Attended the Australian Travel Exchange in Cairns.
- Certified operators annual revenue exceeded a billion dollars.
- Introduced free one-on-one coaching sessions to assist all certification applicants.
- Created the ECO Certification tool-kit to provide a step-by-step guide to completing the ECO application.
I have found it very gratifying to see forty (40) new tour operators become certified with Ecotourism Australia in 2013/14. This is a very clear statement that the industry increasingly sees certification and Ecotourism Australia as relevant and important to their business.

We expect this trend of sustainable growth to continue with a raft of new eco-certification applications that are taking advantage of the simplified application and process, closer relationships with Parks and Tourism Agencies and the increase in associated benefits that come with Ecotourism Australia membership.

The introduction of our ‘Protected Area Managers Package’ has Park agencies seeing us as genuine partners. It demonstrate to the broader industry that they understand their role in tourism and that they certify their own products. We are very pleased to have Parks Victoria, GBRMPA, Parks Australia and Department of Parks and Wildlife (WA) already joined us in this initiative and we will continue to work with the others.

Our partnership with Conservation Volunteers Australia (CVA) has begun its trial in Victoria (our thanks to Parks Victoria for their support) with the aim of rolling out the initiative nationally in 2015. This partnership will allow us to better manage our audit program and provide a range of opportunities for our members to engage in conservation activities that are effective and relevant.

It was extremely pleasing to see this year that Ecotourism Australia certified tour operators continue to be a true reflection of quality with more than a quarter of all National Tourism Award winners and over 20% of all stall holders at Australia Tourism Exchange (ATE) have attained ECO certification.
It is also timely to reflect that the Australian ecotourism industry is a significant and growing sector of the broader tourism offering. The combined revenue of certified operators is now well above $1 billion annually and increasingly its unified voice is being heard and we are bringing the changes to drive this growth.

I wish to thank our Board for its clear direction and leadership, my staff for their unbelievable work ethic. We all truly appreciate the ongoing support of our members and will continue to ensure that we deliver on our promise of providing a true value proposition to our members.

Rod Hillman
Chief Executive
“Building regions, creating jobs, inspiring visitors, protecting the environment”.

Discover.