

Ecotourism Australia Complaints Process

Complaints, Suspension or Forfeiture of Certification

Certification may be suspended pending rectification of an identified problem, or revoked by Ecotourism Australia's Certification Committee if a certified product is found not to meet required criteria.

Should Ecotourism Australia receive a complaint, consumer feedback, or recommendations from an audit report, Ecotourism Australia will write to the operator requesting a written response. If an adequate explanation is not provided, the operator will be given a defined period to rectify the situation. Failure to comply with the request within the designated period may result in certification being suspended pending rectification, or cancelled.

If certification is suspended then:

- The maximum period of suspension is six months (beyond six months the certification will be forfeited);
- A notice of suspended certification status will be distributed to relevant government agencies and key tourism industry organisations;
- Ecotourism Australia would remove the operator from any of its lists and website material;
- Ecotourism Australia would suspend its support for the operator in its marketing and education programs, for the duration of the suspension period; and
- The operator would be required to remove its certification logo from their website and would be required to exclude the logo from any new material printed during the suspension period (existing printed material, containing the certification logos, would not need to be destroyed).

If the product certification is cancelled then:

- The operator must cease representing the product as certified. This includes withdrawing all marketing material featuring the certification logo and the national tourism accreditation "tick" logo, and notifying third parties (e.g. wholesalers, agents) who may be promoting the product as certified;
- A notice of loss of certification status will be distributed to relevant government agencies and key tourism industry organisations; and
- The Certification Program manager, and/or TAAL, retain the right to recover the use of the TAAL "tick" logo from the applicant or directly from the business entity.

Should the operator wish to reapply for certification at a later stage, they will be required to submit a new application with appropriate application fees.

Note:

Ecotourism Australia reserves the right to suspend/cancel certification of any operator where multiple, serious complaints are received. The guidelines for suspension/cancellation are:

- At least 3 formal complaints received over a 24 month period
- Supporting evidence documented through visitor centres, PAM's and Trip Advisor web based schemes etc
- All evidence supporting suspension/cancellation will be presented to the Certification Committee who will determine the final decision

In this circumstance, if the operator wishes to maintain their certification, the operator must fund an auditor to conduct a full audit of the business. Any corrective actions noted during the onsite audit must be addressed before certification can be reinstated.