“Protect our Parks

Involve our Operators

Invest in the Future

Incentivise Quality”
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chairman’s Report 16/17</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CEO’s Report 16/17</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key Achievements</td>
<td>6-7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Achievements</td>
<td>8-12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Survey Findings</td>
<td>13-14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The past year has seen our organisation increase its sustainability by diversifying its offerings, engaging with communities, benefiting the environment and building its financial security. These activities and achievements mean we are in a better position to work with our members and stakeholders to achieve our primary goals of promoting and supporting the ecotourism industry through building capacity, being a strong advocate and actively promoting high standard tour operations and systems.

Ecotourism Australia (EA) launched our new “Ecotourism Destination Certification” program at our annual conference in Hobart, with Kosciusko National Park, Blue Mountains National Park and soon Cape Byron National Park certified through this program. This focus on Destinations will be a future direction for EA where we can work closely with our members, communities, local governments and tourism organisations to develop Ecotourism Destinations around Australia that actively promote themselves, provide meaningful and enjoyable experiences for visitors and bring jobs and economic benefit to their regions.

The success of our members at State and National Tourism awards remains a yearly inspiration to us with six (6) gold award winners at the Nationals – better than any individual State! This clearly demonstrates that EA members are the ‘cream on top of the coffee’ with passionate people delivering world class experiences.

We head into our next year with optimism. Visitation is heading in the right direction, the Australian dollar is steady and there is a sense of co-operation developing within the industry where organisations, businesses and individuals are actively seeking partnerships and opportunities.

Once again, I must thank my fellow Board Members who continue to provide strong support to the staff, members and myself. They are a tireless group and represent your interests well.

I look forward to seeing you all in Adelaide for this year’s annual Ecotourism Australia Global Eco conference 27th – 29th November.

Finally, my thanks to our hard-working CEO, Rod Hillman and his wonderful, dedicated team for all their efforts on behalf of EA and our members.

Yours,

Rick Murray
Chairman
2016/17 has been a strong year for Ecotourism Australia with new products launched, new activities undertaken and new people engaged. Our balance sheet continues to grow in the right direction with key milestones reached on membership, certification and other activities.

Increasingly, our primary certification program of ECO Certification continues to gain international recognition through our Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC) Accreditation, our adherence to strong and transparent processes and systems and the quality of tour businesses who choose to gain and retain their ECO Certification. An example of this is our ongoing relationship with Vanuatu where we have worked for three years to assist them to introduce a Minimum Tourism Standards program with the eventual aim of introducing ECO Certification to the South Pacific.

Our key relationships with National Parks Agencies have now reached the point where every State and Federal based Parks Agency is an Ecotourism Australia member with many having ECO Certified product within their Parks. We have also commenced our new Ecotourism Destination Certification program focused on National Parks. Our firm belief is that National Parks are the foundation of much of Australia’s ecotourism industry and building strong relationships with them is one of our key tasks.

A key activity of the past year has been to work with our members, stakeholders and other Industry Associations to develop the ‘Nature Based Tourism in Australia – A Manifesto’. This draft paper articulates the need for change within our industry with a focus on:

- Delivering on the Marketing promise
- Building Destination Australia, and
- Embracing Innovation

I encourage you to read and provide comment to the draft Manifesto, available on our website: www.ecotourism.org.au/about/NBT-Manifesto

I want to thank our members for another year of amazing experiences - delivered with passion, my Board for their enthusiasm and support and of course my ever capable and talented team.

Yours,

Rod Hillman
Chief Executive
# Key Achievements

## Certification:
- EA held successful certification workshops with QLD’s Scenic Rim, Mackay Tourism and South Australian Tourism Industry Council
- EA launched the Ecotourism Destination Certification Program, with Kosciusko National Park becoming the first certified Ecotourism Destination

## Membership:
- EA conducted 150 secret shopper audits of members’ web presence and digital consumer facing platforms
- EA launched our new Ecotourism Resource Hub, a digital library of gathered ecotourism and nature based tourism research, destination management plans, domestic and international resources, and helpful tools

## Partnerships:
- EA and the South Australian Tourism Industry Council introduce free ATAP Accreditation for ECO Certified Members in South Australia
- EA formed partnerships to bring greater benefit to members through Tourism Tribe and Australian Traveller
- EA signed an Agreement with Infinity Travel (China) to deliver the EcoGuide program in Greater China
- EA transferred management of the EcoGuide Certification program in Australia over to our partners at Savannah Guides, to deliver greater benefits to certified EcoGuides

## Events:
### Conference
- Successful 2016 Global Eco Asia-Pacific Conference was held in Hobart, Tasmania

### Australian Tourism Exchange
- EA attended ATE 2017 as a seller representing all EA members, where 20% of all Sellers present were EA certified operators

### 2016 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards
- EA once again sponsored the Ecotourism Category at the Australian Tourism Awards
- EA members took home a total of 17 awards (6 Gold, 6 Silver and 5 Bronze), more than any State!

## People:
- EA welcomed Innes Larkin of Mt Barney Lodge to our Board of Directors

## International Consulting:
- EA delivered the Operational Plan for the Vanuatu Department of Tourism’s Minimum Standards Program
- EA, in partnership with Live & Learn, secured grant funding through IUCN to support projects that will include the introduction of ECO Certification in Vanuatu

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Image: K7 Adventures, Advanced Ecotourism, Snowy Mountains NSW
Website & Social Media

Over the 2016/17 financial year, our website www.ecotourism.org.au received over 240,000 page views across over 85,000 interactive sessions by over 60,000 users.

The most visited pages on our website remained:

- www.ecotourism.org.au (Our homepage)

Facebook:
Facebook following increased by 17%
Approx. followers on 30 June 2017: 3,350

Instagram:
Instagram following increased by 41%
Approx. followers on 30 June 2017: 1,838

Twitter:
Twitter following increased by 11%
Approx. followers on 30 June 2017: 3,053

Linkedin:
Linkedin following increased by 10%
Approx. followers on 30 June 2017: 2,098
Mount Barney Lodge country retreat owner operators, Innes Larkin and his father John, were presented with the 2016 Australian Search and Rescue Award. An initiative of the Australian National Search and Rescue Council, the accolade recognises an outstanding contribution to search and rescue activities in Australia. Mr Larkin and his father, have lent their extensive knowledge of the national parks and hiking trails surrounding their lodge to search and rescue efforts on more than 400 occasions for some 700 lost and overdue bushwalkers.

Yondah Beach House
Advanced Ecotourism

Yondah Beach House installed a gravity-powered, on-site rainwater harvesting system which now makes them 100% water self-sufficient! By utilising an onsite tank, the catchment area has increased by 162sqm and in just a few months, 95,000 litres was harvested and transferred, saving $2500. By eliminating trucked water, Yondah reduced their carbon emissions from desalination, truck use and water pump use to zero! They have even incorporated water points to create ponds for local wildlife, making this project a true commitment to sustainable tourism.
Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary
Advanced Ecotourism & ROC

Currumbin Wildlife Sanctuary launched a new Kids on Conservation Trail, designed to educate kids about some of Australia’s endangered wildlife. The interactive experience aims to enhance young visitors’ knowledge of bilbies, brush-tailed rock wallabies, the Kroombit tinker frog and other species while exposing them to the Sanctuary’s conservation programs.

Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary
Advanced Ecotourism & ROC

The late Reg Sprigg was inducted into the Australian Prospectors & Miners’ Hall of Fame in recognition of his outstanding contribution to geoscience and environmental protection, most notably his establishment of the multi-award-winning Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary, home to scenery and geology so incredible that it is now protected by its own Act of Parliament.
Member Achievements

Ecotreasures
Advanced Ecotourism & ROC

Ecotreasures has continued helping to clean up critical penguin habitat in the Sydney Harbour catchment area by removing plastic from the beach.

Fair Food Forager
Business Member

Fair Food Forager launched an app with a mission to change the way the world eats. The app assists with everyday ethical food decisions, by helping people find ethical and responsible produce and eateries.
With less than 50 Orange-bellied Parrots left in the wild, Moonlit Sanctuary partnered with The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning, Zoos Victoria, Melbourne Water, Parks Victoria, BirdLife Australia and the Tasmanian Government to run a Mainland Release Trial Program in Victoria for the critically endangered birds.

Gwinganna Lifestyle Luxury Retreat
Ecotourism

Gwinganna Lifestyle Luxury Retreat won the International Spa Innovate Award in the Experiences category, the Eco-Spa of the Year Award with AsiaSpa awards and was the Best Luxury Destination Spa in Australia with World Luxury Spa Awards. Along with excellence in their product offering, these awards recognise Gwinganna’s ecological achievements and commitment to sustainable practices and conservation.

Moonlit Sanctuary
Ecotourism
Member Achievements

Calypso Star Charters
Advanced Ecotourism & Climate Action Leader

Calypso Star Charter offset 100% of their carbon emissions relating to vessel propulsion, shore power, office, company travel, passenger transfers (hotel to vessel) and bait storage. Operating within Marine Protected Areas, Calypso is environmentally conscious and their policy is to be as energy efficient as they can, in order to reduce their CO2 emissions from fossil fuel. They achieved this milestone with the help of Canopy carbon management.

Peter Cochrane
Individual Member
Ecotourism Australia board member and leading ecotourism industry spokesman, Peter Cochrane, was elected to represent Oceania for a four-year term on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Governing Council.

Detour Adventures
Advanced Ecotourism
Ian Redpath, owner of Detour Adventures and an adventure guide taking guests off-road in and around Bathurst, New South Wales, was awarded for Tour Guiding Excellence by Charles Sturt University.
Ecotourism Australia has conducted a survey of all certified operators. The purpose of the survey was to gain a better understanding of how our members value their membership with Ecotourism Australia, what is expected of us and how we can improve. Here are some key findings from the survey responses.

**Membership Survey Results**

158 TOTAL RESPONSES

**Respondent Profile**

- Location: 36% Queensland
- Annual Turnover: 32% <$250,000
- Over 25% have been certified for more than 10 years
- 69% operate in a protected area
- 3 in 5 are members of their State or Territory Tourism Industry Council

**Type of certification**

- Top answer: 48% Advanced Ecotourism

**Type of operation**

- Top answer: 73% Tour operator

**Partnership**

- 92% value EA’s partnership with GSTC
- ...but only 31% display the GSTC logo on their marketing collateral
- 90% of the accommodation providers who are participating in the TripAdvisor GreenLeader programme find it beneficial
- 54% of the accommodation providers have plans to participate in TripAdvisor’s GreenLeader Programme in the future

**Tourism Tribe**

- 90% are not members of Tourism Tribe
- 47% are only somewhat confident in their digital marketing
- Members of Tourism Tribe found their services very beneficial:
  - “They are always very helpful and easy to approach”
  - “Tourism Tribe is excellent and I read and participate regularly in forums”

**Events & Awards**

- 64% find our Annual Global Eco Asia-Pacific Conference useful
- 87% of our members are not planning to attend this years conference
- 3 in 5 support certification becoming mandatory to enter the State/Australian Tourism awards
- 93% find EA’s involvement with Australian Tourism Awards important
- 32% entered their State Tourism Awards this year

**Brochures and other marketing collateral were the main contribution members were willing to make**

- 94% find Ecotourism Australia’s involvement with ATE important
- 32% would like to contribute to a large EA stand
Membership Survey Results 2017

Audits
- 88% of operators audited in the past year found the audit process helpful
- 59% believe the auditor added value to their business

Primary feedback
- "Gave me ideas and inspiration to improve my business"
- "It was extensive and supportive"
- "The audit process separates real eco operators from greenwash operators"

Protected Area Operators
- 85% have a commercial permit, licence or lease to be able to operate in the protected area
- Members found their certification provided benefits for their licence, permit or lease 86%

Policy & Advocacy Issues
- TOP ISSUES RAISED*
  - Digital connectivity
  - Strategic destination planning
  - Conservation

*for which members would like EA’s support

Business Performance
- 83% found their business performed better than last year
- 78% found their business performed better than expected

EA Feedback
- 83% increase credibility and recognition was the main reason operators became members
- 47% being a part of the EA community was the second highest reason

"Being part of the EA, people can see that we too want to help look after the environment to the best of our ability"

$_{eco_tourism_australia}_

RESPONSE TO NEW IDEAS
- Interactive online forum
  - 48% would be interested in hearing more

Commission based booking platform
- Some members had concerns:
  - Complications for small businesses
  - Interfering with current booking platforms
  - Needs to communicate with existing booking platforms

AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT
- Marketing of small businesses
- Stronger brand recognition
- Promote ecotourism to the public
- Stronger advocacy
- More help and assistance

"It's nice to be able to use the logo. At the end of the day it allows a focus on environmental impacts of the business which is very positive"

"It is a form of accreditation that we can promote and support. It gives us credibility. Guests like to see that operators they are staying with are doing their bit to help the environment"