



2020 / 2021 ANNUAL REPORT



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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of country throughout Australia and their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and their cultures, and elders past, present and emerging.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

DR CLAIRE ELLIS



2020/21 has been a tough year: recovering from bushfires, followed by floods, droughts and coming to grips with the enormity of COVID. Throughout the year it's been inspiring to see how our members have responded to these crises with strength,

respect and understanding. Some have seen opportunities to change and adapt, whilst others have needed to hunker down and wait for improvements.

Our travel environment will change, vaccination rates will increase, borders will open and people will travel again. All the indicators are that we are absolutely in the right space. Our visitors are increasingly seeking tourism experiences that allow them to connect to nature, culture, their families and themselves. They want the businesses they engage with to demonstrate caring for our environment and communities - to show sustainability principles – as well as deliver incredible experiences. These areas are core in our businesses and so we foresee a good recovery ahead.

Whilst the prospects are positive there's no denying the deep impact the year has had. Ecotourism Australia has had success supporting and advocating for the industry over the past year. We implemented close to \$160,000 of discounts to members over the year, created cost-saving partnerships for our members and continually worked with industry partners to influence government decision makers to understand the plight of our members.

Throughout the year I've truly appreciated the support of my fellow Board Members and whilst sad to see the departure of Peter Cochrane and Rick Murray it has been great to have Janet Mackay and Caroline Densley join us with new ideas and enthusiasm.



CEO'S REPORT

ROD HILLMAN

Last year was tough. Tough for our members and tough for Ecotourism Australia. But, like you, we took advantage of the time and had a hard look at ourselves to work through what we could do to build back better.



Thanks to a lot of hard work by our Board and staff we are now in a better place, ready to continue providing support and services to our members

and the broader industry. We've focused on building a strong network of ECO Destinations (21 to date) to support our certified members and build awareness. These destinations now cover close to 30% of our members and we are hoping to reach over 50% by this time next year.

We've continued to explore and deliver on partnerships that bring real value to our members such as our agreement with the Queensland Tourism Industry Council where our certified members gain Quality Tourism Accreditation free of charge and our partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature - Australia (WWF-Australia) supporting eight ECO destinations in bushfire impacted regions. Our four PhD scholarships – in partnership with The University of Queensland – are well into their research and we expect to share their findings and implications in the coming years.

Our aim of being 100% online is close – very close – and it has made a significant impact on our ability to work with tourism businesses and destinations applying for certification. We've launched our new Green Travel Guide, ensuring our members' products are easily accessible to their customers, and we're currently researching tools and programs to enhance our members' businesses, such as new carbon calculators, sustainable business programs and communication channels.

Most of all, we've been listening to our members who have suffered throughout the year through no fault of their own. The impacts of the bushfires, floods and droughts were still upon us when COVID struck with devastating impact. Although harrowing there are also many stories of hope and inspiration where members have made big changes for the better.

COVID will end, people will get vaccinated, and the borders will open. We can't wait.



PARTNERSHIPS

ONGOING PARTNERSHIP WITH WWF-AUSTRALIA



PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY

**Australian Wildlife and
Nature Recovery Fund**

The continuation of funding support from the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia (WWF-Australia) helping destinations throughout their ECO Destination Certification application process has accelerated Ecotourism Certification significantly across the country. Ecotourism Australia is excited to continue working with WWF in strengthening the ECO Destination Certification program, and in turn, ECO Certification of operators within these regions.

QTIC RECOGNISES ECO CERTIFICATION

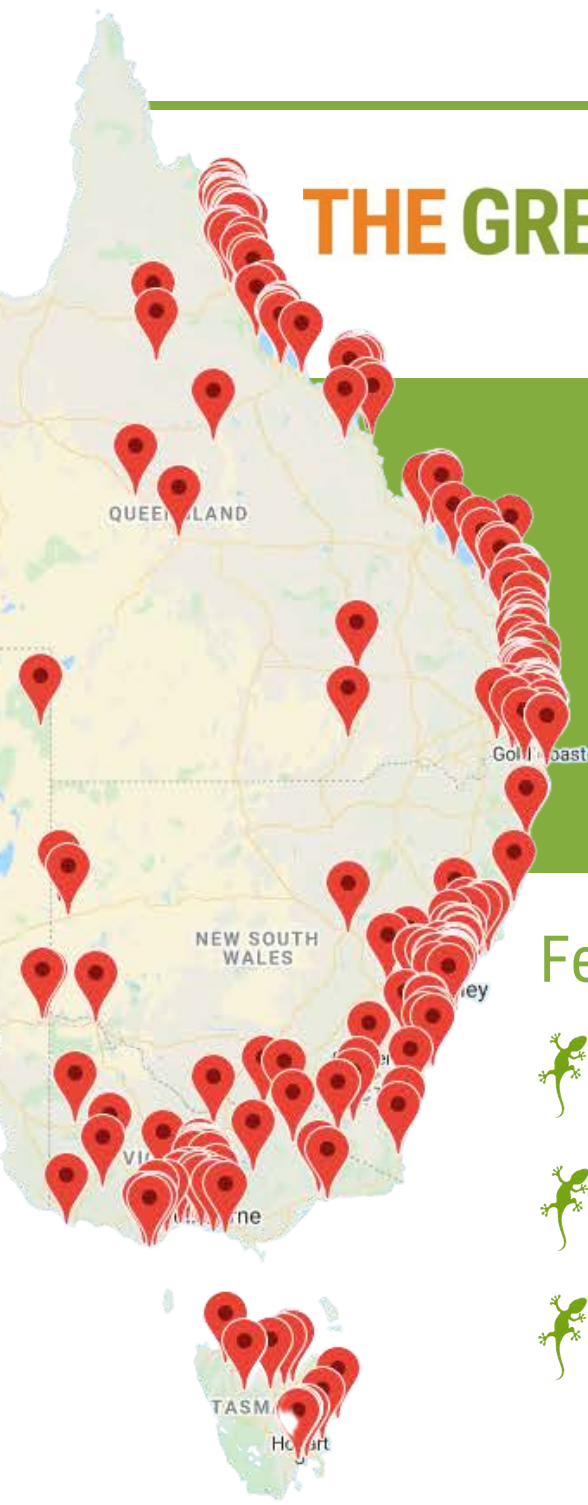
Ecotourism Australia and the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC) have cross-recognised each other's certification programs in a move to strengthen support for over 200 Queensland tourism businesses.

By having Ecotourism Australia's ECO Certification program and QTIC's Quality Tourism Accreditation program (QTAB), operators save on certification costs and are only subject to a single triennial audit.

The agreement serves to strengthen the longstanding partnership between two influential voices in the Queensland tourism industry, all while allowing Queensland tourism businesses to reap the benefits of two strong certification programs.



THE GREEN TRAVEL GUIDE



On World Environment Day, 5 June 2021, Ecotourism Australia launched the new and improved Green Travel Guide featuring a redesign for a new look and improved user accessibility.

Features



Over 1,700 ECO certified tours, attractions, and accommodations



Interactive map featuring all operator locations and links to their Green Travel Guide listing



Listing for each certified ECO Destination featuring ECO certified operators in the region

WHAT TRAVELLERS WANT:

The Green Travel Guide purpose aligns with recent Booking.com research stating that 83% of global travellers think sustainable travel is vital, and 61% say COVID-19 has made them want to travel more sustainably in the future.

(Booking.com, 2021)

Progressive Web App (PWA) for offline access, anytime.



RISE OF ECO DESTINATION CERTIFICATION APPLICANTS



12 new ECO Destination Certification Applicants

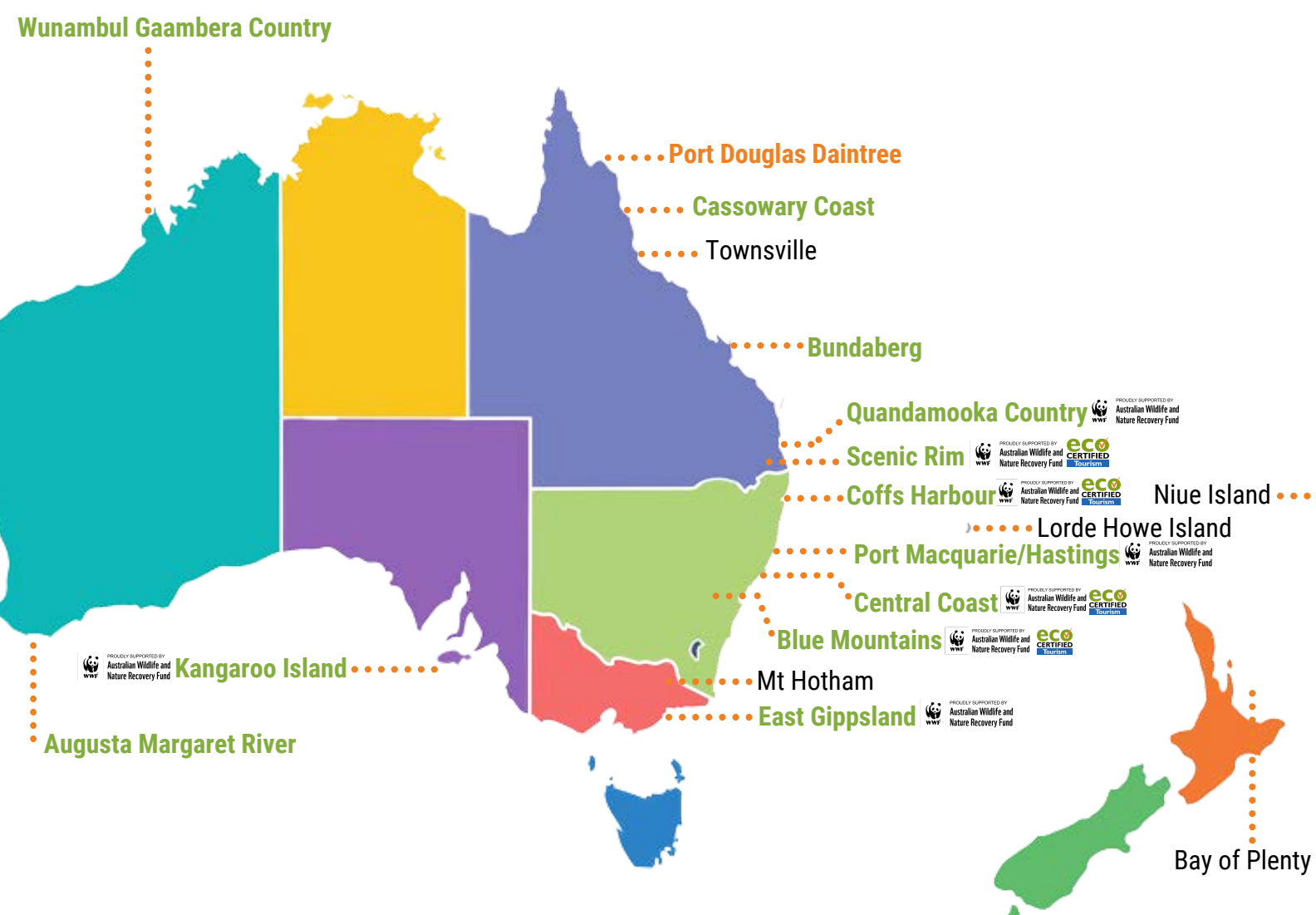


PROUDLY SUPPORTED BY
Australian Wildlife and
Nature Recovery Fund

8 applicants are part of the WWF-Australia funding scheme announced in 2020



5 ECO Certification incentive programs rolled out in destinations to support interested businesses in making the step towards certification



BRINGING THE ECOTOURISM COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Despite snap lockdowns and changing border restrictions, **it has been more important than ever to connect with members and key stakeholders along their certification journey on the ground**, and Ecotourism Australia has found a way. Amongst ECO Destination Certification applicants, eight site inductions were completed across the country, bringing together members of the ecotourism community within those regions and signifying the launch of each ECO Destination Certification program.

Ecotourism Australia continues to be a source of knowledge and support for applying destinations and recognises the chance to bring together applying destination representatives as an excellent learning opportunity. The introduction of network meetings between destination representatives and key stakeholders has created a knowledge hub that continues to grow as more stakeholders are connected and able to share their ECO Destination Certification journey. This facilitates a connection between representatives from different regions increases the value of their certification as they strengthen relationships and learn from other ECO Destination Certification Applicants.



ACHIEVEMENTS

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE ELECTED BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Peter Johnson



Innes Larkin



Alysia Brandenburg

HONOURARY LIFE MEMBERSHIP AWARDED

For his contributions to the company and to the broader ecotourism industry, Rick Murray was awarded Honorary Life membership of Ecotourism Australia. His contributions span over 14 years beginning as a Director from 2006 to 2020, and includes his nearly 5 years as Chairman and 2 years as Deputy Chairman.



Janet Mackay



Caroline Densley

A VOICE FOR ECOTOURISM

GLOBAL ECO ASIA-PACIFIC CONFERENCE 2020

Held at Margaret River in Western Australia, Ecotourism Australia hosted its premier event, the Global Eco Asia-Pacific Conference over three days in the first week of December 2020. The theme 'Revolution, Driving Evolution' honoured the opportunity to take stock of the tourism climate and gave a voice to diverse players driving innovation in the sector. The conference featured a wide range of panellists speaking to their expertise on the current issues facing the industry with an ever-present focus on sustainability.

For the first time, Global Eco satellite nodes were held in six destinations for operators to benefit from the conference's useful exchange of knowledge remotely. For Ecotourism Australia, it has been important to bridge the accessibility gap between the organisation and our operators who may not have the time to step away from their businesses or funds set aside to travel for Global Eco 2020.

PANEL DISCUSSIONS

Ecotourism Australia was invited to two panel discussions, sought after as a voice for the ecotourism industry and the importance of ECO Certification. Relationships Manager Alyssa Sanders was a panellist on the East Gippsland Nature Based Tourism Exchange 2021 held via zoom, delving into the role of ECO Destination Certification in destinations. Marketing and Communications Manager Lina Cronin presented at the Green Guide to Australian Travel webinar for ATE buyers, relaying the importance of The Green Travel Guide as a trusted ecotourism hub for the environmentally-conscious traveller and giving insights into the ECO Destination Certification program.



ASSISTANCE

WWF funded up to \$30,000 to 8 regional areas on their ECO Destination Certification journey

\$5,000 of \$30,000 supports uptake of certification by businesses in the region

\$500 allocated for up to 10 businesses in a region to gain ECO Certification



Ecotourism Australia supported its members through pausing ECO Certification costs when income was limited due to the coronavirus pandemic

Over \$100,000 in discounts were granted over the 2020/21 financial year

STATISTICS

MOST LIKED SOCIAL MEDIA POSTS



Rawnsley Park Station
Advanced Ecotourism certified
Climate Action Business
Green Travel Leader

Photo credit: @lleetye on Instagram

ECO CERTIFIED OPERATORS



18 newly certified operators



26 new Green Travel Leaders



4 new Hall of Fame entrants

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Dr Claire Ellis



Innes Larkin



Alysia Brandenburg



Dr Noreen Breakey



Michael Collins



Caroline Densley



Wendy Hills



Peter Johnson



Janet Mackay



Rosie Sandover

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

THE TEAM



Rod Hillman
Chief Executive



Lina Cronin
Communications and
Marketing Manager



Alyssa Sanders
Relationships
Manager



Nadine Schramm
Certification
Manager



Fay Dawson
Accounts
Manager



Katie Heilbronn
Communications and
Marketing Coordinator



Shannon Scullion
Certification
Coordinator



Shea Wittig
Membership
Coordinator

SPECIAL THANKS TO:



Tyler Hood
Certification Data
Entry Officer



Ingrid Huitema
Communications and
Marketing Coordinator



Erica Johnson
Communications and
Marketing Coordinator



Eloise Touchot
Certification and
Policy Manager

Our 2020/21 Interns: Ani Aldridge | Naomi Cahill | Franklin Githieya | Jithmi Gammanpila | Alba Hernandez | Tessa Kemmerling | Olivia Lam | Antoine Lenique | Laura Cardona Perez



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