



Kimberley Quest, WA
Advanced Ecotourism Certified, Hall of Fame 2023
Photo credit: Kimberley Quest

Ecotourism Australia Annual Report

2022/23

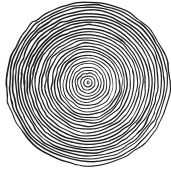


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We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing custodianship of the land, waters and culture for over 60,000 years. We pay our respects to them and their elders past and present. We are privileged to learn from them in the way we care for and share Australia's diverse nature and culture, and we strive to walk humbly in the footsteps of those who have walked these paths before us.





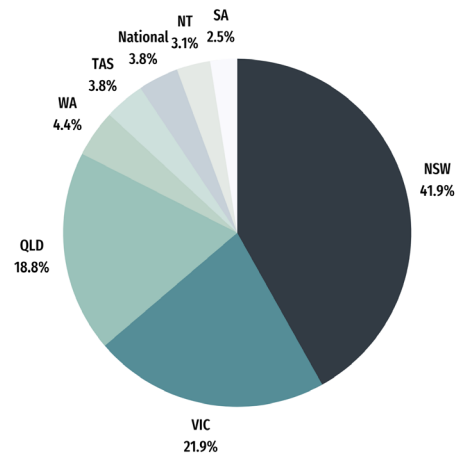
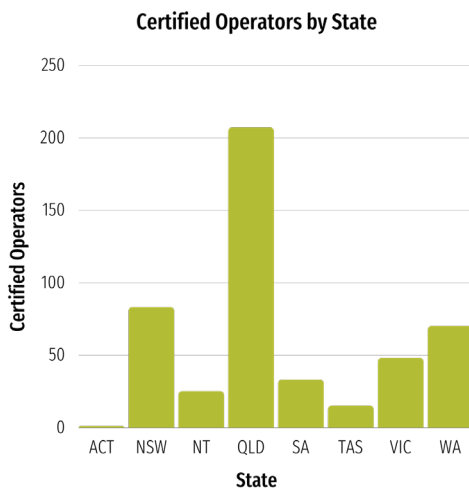
More than **1,800** Certified experiences across four Certification programs



32 new Certified operators in 2022/23



82 new certification applicants in 2022/23



Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecards by state

Over **480** Certified operators



More than half of members have been certified for 10 years or longer



62 businesses have been certified for 20 years or longer

2 New certification programs

- Sustainable Tourism Certification
- Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification

1 New sustainability pathway

- Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard

7 New strategic partnerships

- Tourism Australia, Accor Pacific, Deloitte Access Economics, Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW), Big Red Group, Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), and Caravanning Industry Association of Australia.

12 Inductees into the Hall of Fame

23 Businesses became Green Travel Leaders



Augusta-Margaret River, WA
Ecotourism Certified ECO Destination
Photo credit: Augusta Margaret River Shire

We're 100% committed to supporting eco and sustainable tourism

Our Vision

Leading tourism to be a catalyst for positive change.

Our Mission

As the peak body for ecotourism and sustainable tourism we connect, champion, inspire and inform through strategic partnerships and global best practice standards.

Our Values

- 1 Positive**
We are proud of our legacy, we are optimistic and we continue to influence change as future-focused custodians for eco, regenerative and nature-based tourism.
- 2 Integrity**
We work with trust, transparency and best practice standards and we help our certified operators and members create better experiences through ethical and sustainable operations and destinations.
- 3 Respect**
We respect and advocate for global best practice standards and recognition of culture and we champion our operators, our team and our sector.
- 4 Collaborate**
We are one team and value our partnerships that help us connect, champion, inspire and inform our industry.

About **Ecotourism Australia**

Ecotourism Australia is recognised as the credible, national peak body for sustainable and nature-based tourism. It is a non-government, not-for-profit member organisation, established in 1991, that promotes and supports the ecotourism industry in Australia through building capacity and actively promoting sustainable tourism operations and systems. Our key program – ECO Certification – was the world’s first national ecotourism certification program. Ecotourism Australia's Certification programs, including the new Sustainable Tourism Certification, are acknowledged internationally, and our standard is recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC).

We have more than 1,800 certified experiences with close to 500 operators in our ECO, Sustainable Tourism, Climate Action, and Respecting Our Culture Certifications. In 2018 we launched the ECO Destination Certification program where operators and government work together to demonstrate a community-wide and entire regions’ commitment to sustainable tourism management practices. Today there are 20 destinations in Australia and the Pacific participating in the program.

In late 2022, three new sustainability programs were launched: Sustainable Tourism Certification, Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification, and the pre-certification benchmarking program the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard. These programs are based on our ECO Certification standard and are designed to support the broader tourism industry to demonstrate their commitment to, and be recognised for, the four pillars of sustainability: environmental, cultural, financial/business, and socio-economic impact. Our core program, ECO Certification, showcases ECO Certified operators’ sustainability leadership with additional criteria for wildlife engagement and conservation.

Ecotourism Australia has global partnerships, working with the Global Sustainable Tourism Council (GSTC), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) and Green Destinations (an international organisation for sustainable destination development), and key partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region including with WWF-Australia, Parks Australia, and the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA).



Green Travel Guide

Our **Green Travel Guide** is a consumer-facing website that features every ECO certified and Sustainable Tourism certified operator and destination.



Message from the Board Chair

Dr Claire Ellis

Ecotourism Australia has continued our journey of growth and change steered by increased demand for sustainable tourism and our ambition to inspire a more sustainable future for the tourism industry marked by greater contribution by the tourism sector to our people and planet. This year we released our 2022-25 Corporate Strategy, with the central focus of leading tourism to be a catalyst for positive change. It is encouraging to see the significant progress already achieved in reaching our objectives. We have formed productive collaborations and partnerships with key industry bodies, expanding the influence and impact of our organisation. Our internationally recognised certification standards are helping to grow the understanding and progress within our ecotourism and sustainable tourism sector and forging a pathway to sustainability for the broader visitor economy.

After years of uncertainty and upheaval marked by devastating bushfires, floods and pandemics, the tourism industry continues to be affected by new and ongoing challenges. We continue to work with our certified operators and members to hear their concerns and learn about the difficulties they have experienced. We are proud to have provided crucial financial relief to those operators again impacted by natural disasters this year. After a few tumultuous years, operators are resetting their sights to the future and seeing new opportunities.

Events of recent years have elevated the significance of travel for many consumers and particularly the desire to connect with nature, support local communities and recognise and value culture. People are increasingly seeking transformative, feel-good travel experiences that rejuvenate and now, like never before, there is a great opportunity for sustainable and responsible tourism. For 25 years, our flagship ECO Certification has certified nature-based ecotourism experiences and assured travellers that they have selected businesses committed to the journey of sustainability. Our programs remain highly credible, and our ECO Certification and Sustainable Tourism Certification standards are recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council.

We continue to work with our partners to promote ecotourism and provide benefits to our certified operators. Our ongoing partnership with World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia critically supports 10 regions in the ECO Destination Program, bringing together tourism and conservation in disaster-affected areas to build back better. Our partnership with Green Destinations ensures we continue to deliver global best practice sustainable destination certification with seven destinations now certified and a further 13 in the program. Our research partnership with the University of Queensland supports vital research and knowledge-sharing to address critical issues impacting eco and sustainable tourism; and we continue to work with our Protected Area Management partners to provide rewards for certified operators and continue the sustainable growth of tourism in Australia's natural areas.

As the national peak body for ecotourism and sustainable tourism, we advocate for improvements in our industry, and provide credible and relevant sustainability programs for tourism businesses. In late 2022, we launched the new Sustainable Tourism program, a key component of our Corporate Strategy. Our new Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, with our founding partner Tourism Australia providing marketing support, creates a pathway to sustainability that is accessible to all tourism businesses. Our partnership with Tourism Australia is significant and highlights the industry's readiness and enthusiasm to embrace

sustainability as mainstream. We also launched the Sustainable Tourism Certification programs for non-nature based operators and destinations, that use standards formally recognised by the Global Sustainable Tourism Council. The new programs have been positively received and attracted exciting new partnership opportunities with organisations including, the Big Red Group, Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, Deloitte Access Economics, Destination NSW, Accor Australia Pacific and Caravan Industry Association of Australia. With the support of our partners, we have achieved remarkable progress.

A key priority in our 2022-2025 Corporate Strategy is to ensure a sustainable future for Ecotourism Australia. I am pleased to report through continued strong support from our ECO Certified operators and members maintaining their certification and business membership; high levels of new tourism operators interested in starting their journey through our new Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and/or undertaking ECO or Sustainable Tourism Certification; and securing grant support (such as the Australian Government Export Development Management Grant program) has improved our financial position. As a not-for-profit we remain committed to working with, and for our operators to help the visitor economy industry to grow.

I am grateful to the Board for their unwavering dedication and vision over the past year, including Innes Larkin, our long serving Deputy Chair for his guidance, advice and assistance, and Dr Noreen Breakey, who both stepped off the Board this year. I am pleased to welcome Robert Taylor, CEO of Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC), to the Board. His vast knowledge and expertise in Indigenous tourism and the broader hospitality and tourism industry will ensure Ecotourism Australia remains at the forefront of sustainability in Australia and internationally.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our staff team and interns, whose commitment and hard work implementing the directives of the Board have been instrumental in our continued success. I would also like to specifically recognise and thank our CEO, Elissa Keenan, for her enthusiasm and hard work in rapidly supporting and driving the multiple changes our organisation has delivered this year. Together, the staff and Board through their passion and expertise have allowed Ecotourism Australia to navigate challenges and seize opportunities, propelling us towards our vision.

As our organisation continues to evolve, it is reassuring to reflect on the past year and to see how much has been achieved. Looking ahead, we remain committed to exploring new collaborations, leveraging emerging opportunities and staying at the forefront of our industry. I am confident that Ecotourism Australia will continue to address the needs of operators, visitors and our communities and expand our operational and partnership capacity to foster a more sustainable tourism industry.



Wildlife Wonders, VIC
Advanced Ecotourism Certified
Photo credit: Wildlife Wonders



Message from the CEO

Elissa Keenan

The past 12 months have been a period of significant growth for Ecotourism Australia driven by renewed positivity across the tourism industry, presenting a prime opportunity for responsible tourism. We know that visitors are increasingly demanding genuine sustainable and ecotourism experiences during their holidays, and this is confirmed through multiple research studies. Significantly, operators at the Australian Tourism Exchange (ATE) reported that many international buyers were, for the first time, proactively asking about operator's commitment to sustainability. Our range of certification programs provide credible assurance for visitors and wholesalers and is aligned with international best practice sustainability standards.

We were pleased to welcome 32 new ECO certified operators to our community; and formally recognise Australia's first Sustainable Tourism certified operator, Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience. This year we celebrated 12 ECO Certified operators being awarded Hall of Fame status, recognising their 20 years of ECO Certification; and 23 operators achieving Green Travel Leader status for 10 years of certification with Ecotourism Australia. More than half of all our certified operators have been certified for 10 or more years. We congratulate all our certified businesses for their commitment to genuine best practice sustainability standards and look forward to seeing their journey of continuous improvement and leadership in this space.

Through our key partnership with the World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia (WWF-Australia), two regions - Blue Mountains and East Gippsland - achieved ECO Destination Certification this year. WWF-Australia also supported our second annual ECO Think Destination Forum on Taribelang Bunda, Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang and Bailai Country in the Bundaberg region, which achieved ECO Destination Certification in 2023.

Building on our organisation's pioneering leadership in eco and nature-based tourism, we set our sights on delivering a range of new products, services and partnerships to support all visitor economy businesses across Australia and the South Pacific, focused on sustainability. We were pleased to announce our significant partnership with industry leader, Accor Australia Pacific, to independently certify all their properties across the region as either ECO certified or Sustainable Tourism certified under our new program.

With founding partner Tourism Australia, we launched the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, which is helping to demystify and benchmark sustainability for businesses across the entire visitor economy. The Scorecard meets a crucial need in the market to provide a simple and affordable pre-certification benchmarking tool and gives businesses the guidance they need to implement sustainability practices across the pillars of sustainable management and delivering positive environmental, socio-economic and cultural impacts. Importantly, it allows for destination, state and nationwide review of our industry's progress across all key sustainability indicators, helping us identify strengths for marketing and gaps for further support. The uptake of this program has been incredibly strong, and we look forward to supporting more businesses on their sustainability journey moving forward.

Our strategic local and international partnerships are essential to creating a stronger sustainable tourism industry across the country. Our partnerships with the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (Distribution

Partner), Big Red Group (Key Enablement Partner), Deloitte Access Economics (Data Analysis Partner), Destination NSW (Industry Partner), Caravan Industry Association of Australia (Industry Partner) and the Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC), who helped us launch the new program, together with funding support from Export Market Development Grant, are providing critical reach and amplification of the Scorecard, helping raise the profile of sustainable tourism throughout the industry. We continued our valued partnership with the Australian Tourism Export Council and participated in the annual ATEC Meeting Place and various training workshops, including a dedicated webinar for ATEC members on the new Sustainable Tourism pathway program.

At Ecotourism Australia we are committed to promoting responsible tourism and driving positive change across the tourism industry. Our activities over the past year have been centered around our vision and the objectives of our 2022-25 Corporate Strategy. We have worked with our certified operators and destinations to understand the challenges they are facing, including insurance and labour shortages, and discuss key topics of sustainability and the value of certification in the tourism industry through regular roundtable meetings with the Federal Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, Austrade and other tourism peak body representative groups. We contributed to the re-released THRIVE 2030 Strategy and importantly, Ecotourism Australia is formally recognised under Priority 4 noting our pathway to certification program, Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, and in Priority 7 with reference to our Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Certification. We have received strong support from Austrade over the past year and look forward to collaborating with them to deliver on THRIVE 2030 and other initiatives.

Participation at forums and conferences is educating tourism and aligned industries on the importance of sustainability, and converting interest into action has been a key activity this year. Recurring meetings with state tourism organisations, industry associations and peak bodies is positively influencing the inclusion of sustainability within Australia's visitor economy and driving continuous improvement for the industry. As a result of our diverse activities, we have heard countless inspiring success stories and testimonials that exemplify the positive outcomes derived from our work, including impactful case studies and best practice initiatives.

I am proud to lead our team of outstanding and passionate professionals who are committed to "walking the talk" in every way. Our team has achieved much success this year while supporting ECO certified operators, applicants and destinations, and developing, launching and implementing our new sustainable tourism pathway program. I also thank the Board Directors for their continued vision and belief in delivering the best outcomes for our industry.

As an organisation, we remain committed to advancing sustainable tourism across Australia and providing world-class certifications and pathway programs to support the broader visitor economy. Ecotourism Australia is proud to work with our certified operators, applicants, corporate, business and individual members and partners, and we look forward to continuing working with you to drive continuous improvement for our industry.

Corporate Plan 2022-2025

In September 2022, we released our Corporate Plan 2022-2025 which guides our strategic focus and operations. We are building on our legacy through new products and services to support nature-based, eco and sustainable tourism with our strategic objectives:

- 1 Ecotourism Australia is recognised as the credible peak body for sustainable, eco, regenerative and nature-based tourism in Australia and the Pacific.
- 2 Ecotourism Australia is proactively driving targeted partnerships and diversified revenue streams to achieve strategic outcomes.
- 3 Ecotourism Australia's certification products and services are the gold standard for existing and new member categories that match our peak body scope.
- 4 Ecotourism Australia has a strategic plan supported by business systems and processes to grow; and is agile in responding to emerging opportunities and threats.

We continue to focus our efforts on six strategic priorities:

1 LEGACY LEADER

Goal: Deliver globally recognised certification and recognition programs across Australia and the South Pacific.

2 STRENGTHENING INDUSTRY

Goal: Strengthen and promote our industry and recognise the contribution of ECO certified operators and destinations to Australia and the South Pacific; generate value for our members; and deliver new products and services for the broader tourism industry.

3 ADVOCACY

Goal: Provide a credible and respected voice for ecotourism, nature-based tourism, and sustainable tourism across our region; focus on positive outcomes generated by quality tourism and play a strategic national role in identifying issues and solutions.

4 STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Goal: Identify strategic partnerships for collaboration and program delivery, measuring and demonstrating value added to the United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) objectives for sustainable, nature-based and ecotourism.

5 BRAND AWARENESS

Goal: Through effective communication, marketing and positioning, supported by key industry research and data, increase awareness of Ecotourism Australia, and the products, services and programs we deliver.

6 SUSTAINABLE OPERATIONS

Goal: Ensure Ecotourism Australia is a sustainable organisation with prosperous growth opportunities.

Advocacy

International engagement and collaboration

Ecotourism Australia is at the forefront of sustainable and ecotourism certification and is recognised globally for our certification programs, the standards implemented by our certified operators and our approach. We are proud to represent this region in international forums, working groups and networks, contributing to continuous standard improvement, education and awareness about responsible travel and promoting the efforts of the Australian tourism industry in sustainability and ecotourism.

Ecotourism Australia continues to contribute to international discussions on and implementation of best practices through the Tourism Impact Alliance, an international panel of GSTC recognised certification bodies, to discuss the ongoing development and improvement of sustainable certification standards. Through our partnership with Green Destinations, we are invited to judge the annual Green Destinations Top 100 Story Awards before winners are presented at ITB in Berlin. We retain links with the Asian Ecotourism Network which connects responsible tourism, conservation and communities across the Asia Pacific region.

In April 2023, Ecotourism Australia was invited by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) to virtually attend a session at the 61st Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation working group meeting and delivered a presentation on socio-cultural sustainability in tourism and shared successful case studies from Australia. Ecotourism Australia Chair, Dr Claire Ellis, was invited to present to 50 senior government representatives in the tourism sector from Ho Chi Minh City on sustainable tourism and destination development and management.

We continue to work to support other countries to develop eco and sustainable tourism practices and systems. Ecotourism Australia recently met with long-term supporters, Promark Japan and the Japanese Ecotourism Society, to discuss ways to collaboratively build knowledge of eco and sustainable tourism in Japan.



Alice Springs Desert Park, NT
Advanced Ecotourism Certified, ROC Certified and Hall of Fame 2023
Photo credit: Alice Springs Desert Park

National and State engagement and advocacy

Over the past year, Ecotourism Australia attended and contributed to various Federal Government roundtable meetings regarding the current state and future of the tourism industry with the Minister for Trade and Tourism, Senator the Hon. Don Farrell, Austrade, and other peak body associations. These forums enable Ecotourism Australia to amplify the concerns of our members and the wider sustainable tourism industry on a national stage and collaborate to act on challenges and opportunities.

We have worked with government to address issues impacting the sector including changes to agritourism legislation, the 2022 foot-and-mouth disease outbreak, insurance challenges and labour shortages as well as opportunities to support further education, awareness and capacity building in sustainability for tourism operators across the visitor economy.

Through regular engagement with Austrade, peak bodies and industry associations across Australia we continue to seek ways to collaboratively address key industry issues and opportunities and advocate for sustainable and ecotourism.



THRIVE 2030: The Reimagined Visitor Economy

Ecotourism Australia's participation in Austrade Tourism Roundtable meetings has been instrumental in the stronger presence of sustainable tourism in the policy priorities and future direction of Australian tourism. Re-released in March 2023, THRIVE 2030: The Reimagined Visitor Economy is Australia's national strategy for sustainable growth of the visitor economy and is positioned in the broader policy context. THRIVE 2030 sets a target of sustainably growing visitor expenditure to \$230 billion by 2030 and it includes actions for government and industry under three key themes: Collaborate, Modernise and Diversify.

The Strategy has a heightened focus on sustainability issues and formal recognition of Ecotourism Australia's Programs and Certifications. Significantly, under priority 4 "Embracing leading edge business practices", our Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard program is recognised as a key priority action in building the industry's sustainability capability and helping to deliver high-quality experiences to visitors. The recognition of the scorecard as pathway to certification for all businesses wishing to start their sustainability journey in THRIVE 2030 reinforces the value of starting a sustainability journey and supporting operators to achieve full certification. Ecotourism Australia's Respecting Our Culture (ROC) Certification was also acknowledged under Priority 7 "Grow unique and high-quality products, including First Nations experiences". These outcomes solidify the importance of sustainable and regenerative tourism in the Australian visitor economy and policy direction.

In addition to supporting THRIVE 2030, Ecotourism Australia has provided essential input to the Austrade Visitor Economy Diversification Strategy that seeks to build a more resilient visitor economy by attracting a diverse range of visitors from varied market segments. While the strategy is still in draft stages, our feedback will inform its development and underscore the specific challenges and opportunities for the sustainable and ecotourism industry.



Australian Government

Australian Trade and Investment Commission

Climate Ready Australia

This year Ecotourism Australia was invited to join Climate Ready Australia 2030 – an interdisciplinary initiative bringing together partners from across society to develop the shared agenda, investment plan and national capability needed to drive climate action in Australia. Ecotourism

Australia is committed to working with the alliance of peak bodies involved in the initiative to deliver tangible climate ready projects and solutions to advance climate action, mitigate climate risks, improve resilience to climate change, and maximise benefits to Australian society, the environment and economy.

As part of the Climate Ready alliance, we are supporting the development of tools including infographics to help businesses better understand the climate policy landscape and which carbon emissions monitoring tools and systems may be suitable for their use. Our role is ensuring the process of emissions tracking and reporting is accessible and understandable for tourism operators to undertake. The tourism industry, and particularly nature-based tourism, is reliant on the environment to operate and our participation in Climate Ready Australia 2030 is helping to ensure the environment, communities and economy are more resilient to the impacts of climate change and can sustain tourism well into the future.



**CLIMATE READY
INITIATIVE**

Shaping a climate ready future

In addition to participating in roundtables and collaborations, we have provided feedback and insights to support the development of several key federal and state strategies; and sit on several advisory and consultation committees including:

- Re-released THRIVE 2030 Strategy
- Federal Inquiry into Australia's Tourism and International Education Sectors
- Climate Ready Australia 2030
- Sustainable Ocean Plan
- Austrade Discussion Paper: International Diversification Strategy for the Visitor Economy
- Australian Government Jobs and Skills Summit and associated outcomes
- Parks Australia management plans for Christmas Islands and Cocos (Keeling) Islands Marine Parks
- Sustainable Tourism Advisory Committee
- Tourism and Parks Agencies Forum (TAPAF)
- Murray-Darling Basin Peak Groups
- South Australian Tourism Commission Sustainable Tourism Plan (still to be released)
- Queensland Towards 2030 Strategy
- Tourism NT Sustainable Tourism Toolkit
- Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance
- QTIC Associations Council
- Geotourism Forum

Ecotourism Australia continues to provide executive services to the Tourism and Parks Agencies Forum (TAPAF) which invites state tourism organisations and state and federal parks agencies to meet quarterly. TAPAF is an important initiative to support sustainable growth of responsible tourism in Australia's protected areas and enables participants to collaborate on a national level.

Sustainable Ocean Plan

The Sustainable Ocean Plan by the Department of Climate Change, Energy, the Environment and Water will identify a long-term vision for the health of Australia's oceans and is developed in collaboration with ocean stakeholders including governments, First Nations peoples and industry. Consultation is still ongoing for this Plan, and Ecotourism Australia will provide feedback throughout its development and highlight the need for sustainable tourism practices amongst marine operators.

Over the past twelve months we provided advice and input into the South Australian Tourism Commission's Sustainable Tourism Plan and the Tourism NT Sustainable Tourism Toolkit. Contributing to these plans and strategies ensures the voices of our members are heard and that sustainable tourism remains a priority for state and federal governments.

Ecotourism Australia is a member of several state-based industry collaborations and organisations that advocate for the sustainability within the tourism industry. The Queensland Tourism and Conservation Alliance established in 2022 is a collaboration between the Queensland Tourism Industry Council (QTIC), National Parks Association of Queensland (NPAQ), Queensland Conservation Council, Queensland First Nations Tourism Council and Pew Charitable Trusts. The Alliance advocates for expanding Queensland's protected areas and is bringing tourism and conservation together to grow a strong sustainable nature-based tourism industry in the lead up to the 2032 Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games. We are an integral member of QTIC's Associations Council, which is helping to collaboratively drive forward the state's tourism industry. Our participation in the QTIC Associations Network connects us into discussions on tourism recovery and wider industry support.

Ecotourism Australia also engages with various award programs to promote and recognise the value of ECO and Sustainable Tourism Certification.

We are forming partnerships to develop vital evidence for stronger advocacy and better inform government decision-making. Through our partnership with Deloitte Access Economics, we are gathering critical data and research to provide insights into the tourism industry's future and understand which areas need further support and investment.

DELOITTE ACCESS ECONOMICS

Data Analysis Partner

Deloitte Access Economics partnered with Ecotourism Australia as data partner to generate data analysis and reporting on the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and broader sustainability and tourism trends. This data is useful to inform key stakeholders of the predominant sustainability trends in Australia, provide useful information to build capacity and address industry opportunities and challenges.

Deloitte.
Access Economics



Highfield Farm & Woodland & Kestrel Nest EcoHut, NSW
Ecotourism Certified
Photo credit: Highfield Farm & Woodland & Kestrel Nest EcoHut

Supporting a more sustainable tourism industry

Sustainable Tourism Certifications

In April 2023, Booking.com¹ released their latest Sustainable Travel Report revealing 76% of global travelers want to travel more sustainably in the next 12 months, a 16% increase on 2021 data. As the demand for sustainable tourism experiences continues to grow year on year, operators are seeking ways to demonstrate their genuine commitment to visitors and continuously improve their sustainability practices.

Our ECO Certification, developed as the first of its kind in the world, continues to assure travellers their nature-based tour, accommodation and attraction experience aligns with international best practice sustainability standards.

Based on our core ECO Certification program, Sustainable Tourism Certification for operators and Sustainable Tourism Destination Certification for destinations was created in late 2022. Using Ecotourism Australia's 30 plus years' experience in sustainable and responsible tourism, the Sustainable Tourism Certification program certifies that non-nature-based businesses and destinations are minimising negative impacts and maximising benefits for the environment, community and culture. Releasing this certification was driven by the growing demand for sustainability programs and wanting to ensure that every business in the tourism industry has access to a credible, independently verified certification.

ACCOR AUSTRALIA PACIFIC Industry Partner

Ecotourism Australia and Accor Australia Pacific entered a strategic partnership in 2023 to see the independent certification of all Accor properties across Australia and the Pacific as Sustainable Tourism certified through Ecotourism Australia's Sustainable Tourism Certification. The Accor group is a world-renowned leader in tourism and hospitality and moving to third-party certification by Ecotourism Australia demonstrates their commitment to global best practice sustainability.

"Sustainability is redefining our business model and we are proud to lead the industry forward by investing in our sustainability actions and activities in the region. Our next phase of growth is built on our powerful sense of social, environmental and economic responsibility"

Sarah Derry, Chief Executive, Accor Australia Pacific



Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience Australia's first Sustainable Tourism Certified business

On 29 June 2023, Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience became Australia's first Sustainable Tourism certified operator through Ecotourism Australia's new Sustainable Tourism Certification. Located in the Bundaberg region (Ecotourism certified ECO Destination), the Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience is a sustainable tourism icon implementing a range of initiatives across the four pillars of sustainability. Bundaberg Rum adopts zero waste and minimal impact practices in their production and are committed to creating a circular economy that supports local industries in Bundaberg. The distillery is eager to support disaster affected communities, and in 2020 partnering with WWF-Australia to release 'Australian Bushfire Regeneration Rum'. The Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience is set to be the first of many Sustainable Tourism certified operators.

"Operating a holistically sustainable tourism business is a real priority for us and we're proud of the inroads we've made, including our new solar panel system to help us reach our target of achieving net zero carbon emissions by 2030. However, the job is far from done and we look forward to continuing to work with Ecotourism Australia and others to keep raising the bar for sustainable tourism"

Duncan Littler, Marketing and Experience Manager, Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience

¹ Booking.com, 2023, Sustainable Travel Report 2023



Photo credit: Ecotourism Australia

(L-R) Ecotourism Australia's Head of Sustainability and Business Operations, Nadine Schramm, and Chief Executive, Elissa Keenan, with Bundaberg Rum's Marketing and Experience Manager, Duncan Littler, at the Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience Certification Announcement.

Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard

This year, Ecotourism Australia also launched the innovative Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard with founding partner Tourism Australia helping market the program.

In a survey of 180 travel and tourism businesses of all sizes, the World Travel and Tourism Council² found that the largest challenges to implementing sustainability for businesses were resourcing, cost, and a lack of clear targets or measurements of success.



Founding Partner



Powered By



BIG RED GROUP

Key Enablement Partner

Big Red Group and Ecotourism Australia partnered in 2023 to leverage the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and ECO and Sustainable Tourism Certifications on their platform. As Key Enablement Partner, Big Red Group is committed to promoting sustainable experience operators who begin their sustainability journey with the scorecard or take the next step with certification by displaying their commitment on their listing.

"Our partnership with Ecotourism Australia will help make sustainability information more accessible so businesses can responsibly share their sustainability achievements and travellers can book and spend according to their values"

Jemma Fastnedge, Chief Sustainability Officer, Big Red Group

BIG RED GROUP

² World Travel and Tourism Council, 2022, [A World in Motion: Shifting Consumer Travel Trends in 2022 and beyond](#)

Tourism Australia Founding Partner

Tourism Australia and Ecotourism Australia entered a strategic partnership in 2022. As founding partner of the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, Tourism Australia provides vital industry insights and ongoing marketing support of the program. Through Tourism Australia's support the Scorecard continues to gain momentum as a credible program for tourism operators to begin and benchmark their sustainability journey. The relationship with Tourism Australia is of major importance and demonstrates the breadth of Ecotourism Australia's work beyond our core ECO Certification, to raise the profile of sustainability across the entire tourism industry and meet the expectations of international travellers.

"Travellers and travel planners struggle to identify sustainable options and how to assess their authenticity. This creates a significant opportunity for all of us to solve, and this is why Tourism Australia is pleased to be the founding partner for the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, powered by Ecotourism Australia. It will help us meet the changing traveller expectations and, of course, it will play a role in the sustainable delivery of tourism experiences across Australia"

Phillipa Harrison, Managing Director, Tourism Australia



The Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard helps businesses and their customers demystify genuine sustainability through a simple pre-certification benchmarking tool and measuring where their business is at on their sustainability journey at a point in time. The pathway program is designed for any business in the tourism industry and assesses how well they address the four pillars of sustainability: sustainable management, environmental impacts, socio-economic impacts and cultural impacts. Using personalised recommendations from their Scorecard assessment, businesses gain practical insights and actionable tips allowing them to begin their sustainability journey.

The Scorecard helps businesses to evaluate the sustainability credentials of their current and potential suppliers and create a network of sustainability through their operations. By partnering and working with suppliers who have also completed the Scorecard, operators are able to strengthen their credentials and ensure their own product or service is meeting the highest standards. Regions in the ECO Destination Certification program are actively supporting and encouraging uptake of the Scorecard for operators in their destination to provide more sustainable experiences to visitors throughout their stay.

The uptake of the program across almost all states and territories is impressive and is creating an accessible pathway to sustainability for the entire tourism industry.

"It made us pause and consider all the different components of a sustainable business. It was very educational and will support us with business growth and our future applications for grants and awards"

Amanda Hinton, Tourism Tribe

"We were starting our journey, so we needed to get a snapshot of where we were at and then try and work out where we wanted to be. Using Ecotourism Australia's Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard was a really good way to stop and measure what we were good at, and identify the areas we needed to improve on"

Simon Nathpine, Sovereign Hill Museum

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse Distribution Partner

Australian Tourism Data Warehouse (ATDW) partnered on the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard in 2023 to showcase sustainable tourism experiences on the ATDW online platform, building on the existing ECO Certification partnership. Highlighting Certification and Scorecard status on operators' listings ensures that scorecard holders and certified operators are elevated as leaders in sustainable and ecotourism for distribution partners to publish. Listings on ATDW are distributed to the eight state destination marketing organisations, supporting tourism businesses to grow their online exposure and bookings.

"ATDW has a core value of 'Advocating for tomorrow's sustainable future through innovation' and is very committed to building awareness of the critical importance of sustainability for all Australian tourism operators"

Jan Hutton, Chief Executive, Australian Tourism Data Warehouse



Destination NSW Industry Partner

In a nation-wide first, Destination NSW and Ecotourism Australia announced their partnership to support eligible NSW tourism businesses to receive complimentary access to the Scorecard. This industry partnership is accelerating sustainable tourism in the state's visitor economy and providing an accessible pathway for tourism businesses to begin their sustainability journey. By engaging local businesses to complete the Scorecard, Destination NSW can gain a clear snapshot of their state's tourism sustainability benchmark and provide effective support to operators.

"Support for our stakeholders to undertake credible sustainability programs, like the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, is essential to give them the confidence to begin their sustainability journey. We are committed to developing and promoting high-quality, genuinely sustainable visitor experience offerings that align with consumer expectations"

Steve Cox, Chief Executive Officer, Destination NSW



The Victorian Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) hosted Ecotourism Australia after the launch of the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard to help Victorian businesses start their sustainability journey.



Chief Executive Elissa Keenan speaking at the VTIC 2023 Vision Summit
Photo credit: VTIC

Export Market Development Grant

Ecotourism Australia was awarded funding from Austrade's Export Market Development Grant to promote the new sustainability programs, particularly to international markets. The grant will provide vital support for the ongoing development and roll out of the new Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and Sustainable Tourism Certifications.



Through the Export Market Development Grant, and in collaboration with our partners, Ecotourism Australia is increasing awareness amongst industry of the importance of sustainable tourism action as well as the tools available to assist them on their journey of continuous improvement. This award of funding is supporting the broader tourism industry to increase their capacity for best practice sustainability and high-quality tourism experiences and products that better align with the growing sustainability expectations of international visitors.

University of Queensland

Partner

The Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks Grant is an important development of the research partnership between the University of Queensland and Ecotourism Australia. Ongoing collaboration has seen Ecotourism Australia support four PhD candidates at the University of Queensland, exploring topics of low carbon futures, commercial tourism in national parks, overtourism in natural areas and sustainable destinations. One PhD near conclusion has been exploring the transition to low carbon futures in tourism. PhD candidate, Csilla Demeter attended the 2023 ECO Think Destination Forum, and delivered an insightful presentation outlining practical solutions businesses can make to positively influence the sustainable behaviour of guests.

The partnership between Ecotourism Australia and the University of Queensland creates mutual benefit by providing valuable knowledge sharing and forming a strong research base to understand current issues in tourism and sustainability to inform management options.



**THE UNIVERSITY
OF QUEENSLAND**
AUSTRALIA

Indian Ocean Territories Marine Parks Grant

Ecotourism Australia, in partnership with the University of Queensland and Christmas Island Tourism Association, was successful in attaining funding through the Indian Ocean Territories (IOT) Marine Parks Grant to strengthen sustainability of the IOT Marine Parks and local economy, through collaborative world-class ecotourism. The award of this grant demonstrates the importance of sustainable tourism and ecotourism development in Australian government and Parks Australia priorities and will be delivered from July 2023 to May 2025.

This project will facilitate tourism capacity building in the Indian Ocean Territories through engagement with the local tourism industry, personalised coaching and workshops, and research driven by local needs and priorities. The grant will assist development of a sustainable tourism toolkit prepared by Ecotourism Australia and support the uptake of Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and world-leading ECO Certification and Sustainable Tourism Certification for local operators.

Throughout the project, we will be supporting our partner, the University of Queensland, to apply their research insights to practical initiatives that benefit the local community. Next year we will work with Christmas Island Tourism Association to boost their local industry's capacity for responsible tourism and ensure the sustainable growth of visitation to the island.



Photo credit: Douglas Shire Council

Ecotourism Australia's Ecotourism Specialist, Shea Wittig, (centre) at The Sustainability Story industry breakfast hosted by Douglas Shire Council.

Connecting with Industry

The conversation around the urgent need for sustainability is accelerating as individuals, businesses and destinations seek out information around sustainability. Increasingly, industry is looking to Ecotourism Australia as the peak body to provide the latest insights and practical pathways to achieve sustainable practices.

Over the past year, Ecotourism Australia has attended and presented at multiple conferences, summits, workshops and webinars to educate and inform the industry on sustainable and ecotourism and share how businesses can start their sustainability journey with the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard or Certification.

"Our Advanced Ecotourism Certification has been like a badge of honour for our Australian businesses. It is a sign to all our stakeholders that we are always actively taking steps to minimise our footprint and treading lightly in the beautiful but fragile areas we operate in."

Brad Atwal, Marketing Director | World Expeditions & Australian Walking Holidays
Advanced Ecotourism Certified, Respecting Our Culture Certified, Climate Action Business Certified, Green Travel Leader

11 Presentations and panels

4 Webinars

600+ Meetings directly with operators

3,900+ Visitor Economy Stakeholders reached

1,600+ Direct communications contacts

ECO Destination Certification Program

It is important to visitors that their entire experience in a destination is genuinely sustainable, and benefits community, culture and environment. Our Destination Certification programs provide a framework for regions to become more sustainable and attract high-yield visitation by like-minded travelers.

Certified ECO Destinations 2022-23

Three new destinations were awarded ECO Destination Certification in 2022-23 – Bundaberg, Blue Mountains and East Gippsland – joining four existing ECO Destinations of Port Douglas Daintree, Coffs Coast, Central Coast and Augusta-Margaret River. There are 13 additional destinations currently completing their ECO Destination application.

Bundaberg, Queensland

Taribelang Bunda, Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang and Bailai Country

Certified at Ecotourism level, the Bundaberg region, became the second certified destination in Queensland in January 2023. The region is home to iconic ECO certified Advanced Ecotourism operators including Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort, Lady Musgrave Experience and Mon Repos Turtle Centre, as well as Australia's first Sustainable Tourism certified operator, the Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience. The destination has implemented several projects aimed at holistic sustainability in the area including the One Million Tree Project, an ambitious mission to plant one million native trees by 2024 across the region with the help of residents, businesses, schools and the wider community.

East Gippsland, Victoria

Gunaikurnai, Monero and Bidawel Country

The East Gippsland Shire Council achieved ECO Destination Certification at the Ecotourism level in May 2023 with support provided by WWF-Australia's Australian Wildlife and Nature Recovery Fund, helping regions to 'build back better'. In collaboration with regional stakeholders, the East Gippsland region is the first destination in Victoria to meet global best practice sustainability standards. The region is home to two ECO certified operators, Lakes Beachfront Holiday Park and Gippsland High Country Tours (a Hall of Fame operator since 2018 that recently closed their doors) and a number of other businesses starting their sustainability journey. Notably, the East Gippsland region has brought the local community and stakeholders on their ECO Destination Certification journey, fostering a region that values sustainability at its core.

World Wide Fund for Nature- Australia Partner

The World Wide Fund for Nature-Australia (WWF-Australia) provides significant support for 10 Australian regions to achieve ECO Destination Certification, and to date four have reached this milestone. Our partnership with WWF-Australia is key to helping bush-fire affected regions to build back better by developing an environment where sustainable and ecotourism thrive, and which benefits the entire region. Through our partnership, the organisation has supported the delivery of the ECO Think Destination Forum which was held in Bundaberg in 2023.



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**Australian Wildlife and
Nature Recovery Fund**



Blue Mountains, NSW
Ecotourism Certified ECO Destination
Photo credit: Filippo Rivetti

Blue Mountains, New South Wales

Darkinjung, Dharawal, Dharug, Gundungurra, Wonnarua and Wiradjuri Country

Supported by WWF-Australia after the devastating 2019-20 summer bushfires, the Blue Mountains region achieved ECO Destination Certification at the Ecotourism level in March 2023. The region, located in the UNESCO World Heritage Area, joined the Coffs Coast and Central Coast regions as the third certified destination in New South Wales. The destination boasts five ECO certified operators including Tread Lightly Eco Tours (Advanced Ecotourism, Climate Action Business, Respecting Our Culture) who achieved Hall of Fame status in 2023 for 20 years of ECO Certification. The Blue Mountains City Council was the first Australian council to recognise the Rights of Nature in 2021 and are striving to net zero emissions by 2025.

Eco-Certified Tourism Destination Grant Program

In August 2022, the Queensland Government Department of Tourism, Innovation and Sport (QTIS) announced \$1 million in funding for local government areas with a focus on nature experiences to begin or fast track their destination sustainability certification by mid-2024. Ecotourism Australia's ECO Destination Certification is aligned with the goals of the grant and is actively contributing to the state government's vision of Queensland as a leading sustainable nature-based destination.

Seven regions elected to achieve international best practice ECO Destination Certification with Ecotourism Australia. Successful applicants included new destinations Gladstone, Gympie and Livingstone, which have now started their applications, and existing destinations Scenic Rim, Townsville, Cassowary Coast and Bundaberg using funds to complete their certification.



**Queensland
Government**



(L-R) Ecotourism Australia Board Director, Janet Mackay; Tourism Lead at Scenic Rim Regional Council, Susan Packer; Principal Ranger, Wide Bay Area, at Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, Peter Wright; Chief Executive Officer at National Parks Association of Queensland, Chris Thomas; and Ecotourism Australia Board Director, Wendy Hills.

ECO Think Destination Forum 2023

Through our partnership with WWF-Australia and with support from our event sponsors Tourism and Events Queensland, Tourism Tribe and JMD Ross Insurance Brokers, Ecotourism Australia held its second annual ECO Think Destination Forum in ECO Destination Bundaberg in 2023.

More than 80 destination managers, state and national government representatives, technology solutions providers and aligned tourism and conservation stakeholders from all states and territories of Australia came together to learn about best practice sustainable destination management, discuss critical issues facing the tourism industry and collaborate and problem solve for effective action.

Speakers from Tourism Australia, Tourism and Events Queensland, Austrade, WWF-Australia, Accor Australia Pacific, Australian Tourism Data Warehouse, and ECO Destinations shared insights and inspiring stories centred around the multifaceted theme 'Sustainability is a Journey'.

Key Takeaways

- Destinations are committed to implementing the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard and support a pathway to certification, recognising its capability to transition the industry to a more sustainable future, that meets consumer expectations.
- Collaboration and partnerships between tourism organisations, Indigenous groups, local community and industry, and the environment are essential and can ensure mutual successes on the pathway to sustainability.
- The ECO Think Destination Forum continues to play a crucial role in facilitating collaborative learning and delegates were able to recognise they are not alone in their goals and challenges.
- The tourism industry has made strides towards sustainability in recent years, however there is still progress to be made. ECO and Sustainable Destination Certification continues to elevate sustainability to remain an ongoing priority and ensure there is genuine commitment across a region long-term.

Certified Member **Achievements**

Our certified operators and ECO Destinations are committed to driving positive change and striving for the highest standards in sustainability and tourism. Their achievements highlight their valuable contributions in shaping the future of sustainable tourism and deliver well-deserved recognition for their dedication and commitment to eco and sustainable tourism. The accomplishments of our certified members demonstrate their success in day-to-day operations and commitment to continuous improvement to become an industry leader. We are proud of their accomplishments and their transformative impact on the Australian tourism industry.

Qantas Australian Tourism Awards 2022

This year 31 Ecotourism Australia certified operators were nominated for 36 awards at the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards (QATA) held in March 2023. There were 17 Ecotourism Australia certified operators across four states and territories who placed at the awards for tourism excellence in 2022.

Of the 17 certified businesses recognised for their contribution to Australian tourism, eight Ecotourism Australia certified operators were awarded gold, four were awarded silver, and seven awarded bronze. Our certified operators were represented across 15 diverse categories such as Unique Accommodation, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Experience, Adventure Tourism, and Major Tourist Attractions.

ECO certified at the Advanced Ecotourism level, Live Ningaloo in Western Australia won gold for the second year in a row in the Ecotourism Category, followed by ECO certified Tasmanian Walking Company in Tasmania with silver and Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort in Queensland winning bronze. Australia's first Sustainable Tourism certified business, the Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience, won gold for the Tourist Attractions category. Congratulations to all ECO and Sustainable Tourism certified QATA finalists and winners who continue to elevate responsible and sustainable tourism experiences on the main stage.

Banksia National Sustainability Awards 2023

The Banksia National Sustainability Awards honour businesses from various industries that align with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Within these awards, the sustainable tourism category recognises businesses that excel in safeguarding the environment, supporting communities, and preserving cultural heritage, including Indigenous and local cultures.

Advanced Ecotourism certified, Climate Action Leader and Green Travel Leader Passions of Paradise received the sustainable tourism award for their notable efforts in citizen science on the Great Barrier Reef. ECO certified operators and destinations named as finalists included Busselton Jetty, Fun Over 50 Holidays, Lady Elliot Island Eco Resort, and Central Coast Council.

Green Destinations Story Awards and Top 100 2023

Celebrated each year at the world's largest travel trade show, ITB Berlin, Green Destinations' Top 100 Stories Competition highlights destinations around the world making progress towards more sustainable practices while maintaining a competitive tourism experience and a positive local community.

Two ECO Destinations, Coffs Coast and Central Coast, were recognised at the prestigious Global Green Destinations Story Awards and were nominated for the People's Choice Category. Coffs Coast was awarded third place in the Culture and Tradition Category, for their 'Two Path Strong' sustainability story which celebrates local Indigenous tourism and the rich culture that has supported the first Aboriginal bilingual school in NSW, the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School.

Both destinations continue to demonstrate an ongoing commitment to sustainable tourism practices across the four pillars of sustainability.

Green Destinations Partner

Our ECO Destination Certification program was established in partnership with Green Destinations, a leader in destination sustainability certification. Our participation and engagement at international Green Destinations forums ensures our Destination Certification programs remain competitive and continue to meet best practice standards and extends our global reach.



ECO Certified Ecotourism, and ROC Certified Wajaana Yaam Adventure Tours in ECO Destination Coffs Coast donates a portion of its profits to the Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation (BMNAC), founder of the Gumbaynggirr Giingana Freedom School and part of the region's 'Two Path Strong' sustainability story.



Giingana Gumbaynggirr Cultural Experience by Bularri Muurlay Nyanggan Aboriginal Corporation
Photo credit: Leah Moore

2023 Hall of Fame Entrants

Operators certified by Ecotourism Australia's certification programs for 20 years are inducted into the Ecotourism Australia Hall of Fame. In 2023, we welcomed 12 new entrants into the Hall of Fame listed below:

- Alice Springs Desert Park
- Arkaroola Wilderness Sanctuary
- Coral Expeditions
- Forest Rise Chalets & Lodge
- Go Wild Adventure Tours
- Hervey Bay Whale Watch
- Kimberley Quest
- Ningaloo Coral Bay Boats
- Rawnsley Park Station
- Tallship Adventures & Tallship Derwent Hunter
- The Great Escape Charter Company
- Three Islands Whale Shark Dive

2023 New Green Travel Leaders

Green Travel Leader status is awarded to operators certified with Ecotourism Australia for 10 years. This year, 23 operators achieved Green Travel Leader recognition:

- Absolute Ocean Charters
- AquaFun Avoca Lake
- Australian Sunset Safaris
- Broger's End Kangaroo Valley
- Cicada Lodge
- Diamond Waters Treehouse Retreat
- Freycinet Experience Walk
- Horizon Guides
- Noonaweena
- Oakvale Wildlife Park
- Queensland Japanese Services
- Simmo's Offroad Tours
- Spirit Safaris
- Tarkine Wilderness Lodge Meunna
- Tasman Venture
- Tasmanian Expeditions
- Tasmanian Walking Company
- Temptation Dolphin Cruise
- Torquay Surfing Academy
- Tribal Warrior
- Untamed Escapes
- Whitsunday Escape
- World Expeditions & Australian Walking Holidays

We congratulate these operators on their incredible achievement and a strong commitment to sustainability. There are currently 62 operators around Australia who have achieved Hall of Fame status. Of these, 271 operators have been certified with Ecotourism Australia for over 10 years, which is more than half of all ECO certified operators.



Rawnsley Park Station, SA
Nature Tourism Certified, Advanced Ecotourism Certified,
Climate Action Business Certified and Hall of Fame 2023
Photo credit: Rawnsley Park Station

Communications and engagement

This year Ecotourism Australia celebrated certified operator achievements (and those starting their sustainability journey) across our monthly ECO News, the Green Travel Guide, our corporate website and social media channels. In line with our vision to lead tourism to be a catalyst for positive change, we regularly share inspiring stories from our certified operators on their achievements and best practice initiatives; through case studies and media opportunities to promote the best practices of our ECO Certified operators; recognising operators starting their sustainability journey through the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard; and promoting tips for responsible travel.

57,000 Views on the Green Travel Guide

50,000 People reached through Ecotourism Australia's social channels

24,000 Followers on Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram

8000 Views on the Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard webpage

4000+ Subscribers to our ECO News

200+ National, state and regional media coverage including through the ABC, 7 News, The Courier Mail, Australian Traveller, Escape and Australian Geographic.

Did you know?

In 2022, Australian Traveller spotlighted ECO Certified tourism featuring 75 ECO Certified accommodations, tours and attractions around Australia across three articles with an estimated audience of 150,000 readers!

(L-R) Head of Narmbool and Sustainability at The Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Simon Napthine; Lord Mayor of City of Melbourne, Sally Capp; Head of Sustainability at Tourism Australia, Penny Refferty; Board Chair at Ecotourism Australia, Dr Claire Ellis; and Chief Executive at VTIC, Felicia Mariani.



Sustainability Panel Discussion at the VTIC 2023 Vision Summit
Photo credit: VTIC

Our Partners

Global Partners



Industry Partners



Tourism Australia, Founding Partner
Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard



Accor Australia Pacific



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Australian Government
**Great Barrier Reef
Marine Park Authority**



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AUSTRALIA



Australian Tourism Data Warehouse,
Distribution Partner



Deloitte Access Economics,
Data Analysis Partner

BIG RED GROUP

Big Red Group,
Key Enablement Partner



Destination NSW,
Industry Partner



Caravan Industry Association of Australia,
Industry Partner



AUSTRALIA
Export Market Development Grant,
Funding Partner



**QUEENSLAND
TOURISM INDUSTRY
COUNCIL**



Ecotourism Australia Face to Face Board Meeting in May 2023.

Our board

Chair | Dr Claire Ellis | Claire Ellis Consulting

Deputy Chair | Innes Larkin | Mt Barney Lodge

Alysia Brandenburg | AbPs Consulting Services

Caroline Densley | Diverse Travel Australia

Janet Mackay | TRC Tourism

Michael Collins | CF Global (Australia)

Nat Burke | World Wide Fund for Nature Australia

Dr Noreen Breakey | The University of Queensland

Peter Johnson | Diamond Waters Treehouse Retreat

Wendy Hills | Hills Consulting

We acknowledge the resignation this year of Directors Innes Larkin, Mount Barney Lodge, who has served on the Board since 2016 and has held ECO certification for more than 20 years, and Dr Noreen Breakey, The University of Queensland, who has been on the Board since 2019.

We are deeply grateful to both Directors for their energy, commitment, and contribution to Ecotourism Australia. They have supported the organisation during a period of significant growth and brought unique and credible perspectives from a certified operator, business, academic and industry view.

We are pleased to welcome Robert Taylor, Chief Executive of Western Australian Indigenous Tourism Operators Council (WAITOC), to the Ecotourism Australia Board of Directors.

Our team



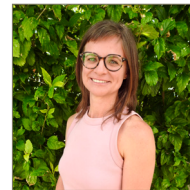
Elissa Keenan | Chief Executive Officer

Nadine Schramm | Head of Sustainability and Business Operations



Alyssa Sanders | Head of Destinations and Member Services

Shea Wittig | Ecotourism Specialist



Amelia Tricker | Sustainable Tourism Specialist

Shannon Scullion | Sustainable Tourism & Destination Specialist



Martin Lopez Behar | Strive 4 Sustainability Specialist

Georgie Snare | Communications & Events Officer



Katie Heilbronn | Communications Coordinator

Thank you to our 2022-23 interns



Hanna Schwake | September 2022 - February 2023

Elena Brivio | February - July 2023



Rujun (Amy) Yang | April - June 2023

Ecotourism Australia history

Since 1991, Ecotourism Australia has been at the forefront of the Australian responsible tourism industry and is proud to be the recognised national peak body for sustainable and ecotourism.

1991	Ecotourism Association of the Indo Pacific Region is formed and later renamed the Ecotourism Association of Australia in 1992.
1996	The world's first National Ecotourism Accreditation Program (NEAP) is launched.
2000	EcoGuide Certification is launched to certify high-quality guides across Australia.
2002	The organisation is renamed Ecotourism Australia Limited (EA) in the International Year of Ecotourism designated by the United Nations General Assembly.
2003	ECO Certification replaces NEAP.
2008	Ecotourism Australia wins the Conservation Award at the World Tourism and Travel Council Tourism for Tomorrow Awards. Respecting Our Culture Certification is adopted from Aboriginal Tourism Australia recognising high-quality, authentic Indigenous cultural experiences. Climate Action Certification is launched focusing on operator actions toward mitigating their emissions.
2011	56 operators awarded the first Green Travel Leader Certification for their commitment to greening the tourism industry by maintaining ECO Certification for 10 years or more as Ecotourism Australia celebrated 20 years of operation.
2013-14	The combined annual turnover of all Ecotourism Australia certified tour operators exceeded \$1 billion, demonstrating how ecotourism is no longer a niche but has become mainstream.
2018	Ecotourism Australia launches the ECO Destination Certification program.
2019	Port Douglas Daintree (Kaku Yalanji and Yirrganydji Country) region achieves Australia's first ECO Destination Certification.
2020	Ecotourism Australia partners with WWF-Australia through the Bushfire Recovery Fund to support destinations around Australia to 'build back better' after the Black Summer Bushfires of 2019-20. To date, the program has supported 10 destinations and 53 local operators to undertake ECO Certification.

2021 Ecotourism Australia celebrates its 30th birthday and launches a new brand with a 'ripple' design, organically flowing outward, encompassing the ripple effect of our purpose to 'do good' and create greater change. With a hint of nostalgia, our gecko can still be found on the Green Travel Guide.

Coffs Coast (Gumbaynggirr Country) region achieves ECO Destination Certification.
The inaugural ECO Think Destination Forum is held in the Coffs Coast and Bellingen regions.

2022 Central Coast (Darkinjung Country) and Augusta-Margaret River (Tallinup and Wooditjilyup Country) achieve ECO Destination Certification.

Ecotourism Australia launches the new sustainable tourism pathway program with a pre-certification benchmarking tool, Strive 4 Sustainability Scorecard, and Sustainable Tourism Certification for non-nature focused operators and destinations.

2023 Three regions - Bundaberg (Taribelang Bunda, Gooreng Gooreng, Gurang and Bailai Country), Blue Mountains (Dharug and Gundungurra Country) and East Gippsland (Gunaikurnai, Ngarigo Monero and Bidwell Country) achieve ECO Destination Certification.

Australia's first tourism business is awarded Sustainable Tourism Certification (Bundaberg Rum Visitor Experience Centre).



Freycinet Experience Walk, TAS
Advanced Ecotourism Certified, Green Travel Leader
Photo credit: Luke Tschärke

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