

05. THE STEVE IRWIN AWARD FOR ECOTOURISM

CATEGORY QUESTIONS

DESCRIPTOR

This category recognises ecologically sustainable tourism businesses with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas. Entrants in this category foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation and conservation.

WORD COUNT

Word Count: Minimum of 4000 words, maximum of 7500 words

SCORE SUMMARY

Submission Score	80 points
Digital Review Score	20 points
Consumer Review	0 points
Site Visit	20 points
TOTAL	120 points

SUBMISSION SCORE BREAKDOWN

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS	5 POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question 1.1 (5 points) Statement of Achievement (0 points) 	
SECTION 2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY	35 POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question 2.1 (10 points) Question 2.2 (10 points) Question 2.3 (10 points) Responsible Tourism and Sustainability Achievements (5 points) 	
SECTION 3. EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	10 POINTS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Question 3.1 	
SECTION 4. EXCELLENCE IN MARKETING	15 POINTS

- Question 4.1. (5 points)
- Question 4.2. (10 points)

SECTION 5. EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE 15 POINTS

- Question 5.1. (10 points)
- Question 5.2. (5 points)

SECTION 6. FINAL REMARKS

- Final Remarks (0 points)

SUMMARY OF QUESTIONS

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS

- Question 1.1 A. Provide an overview of the ecotourism business.
- B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

Statement of Achievement

SECTION 2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY

- Question 2.1. A. Provide 2-4 examples of how the business preserves and protects the environment.
- B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

- Question 2.2. A. Provide 2-4 examples of how the business educates visitors and local communities to broaden their understanding of environmental conservation
- B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

- Question 2.3 A. Provide 2-4 examples of how your business contributes to the local economy and supports sustainable livelihoods
- B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

Responsible Tourism and Sustainability Achievements

SECTION 3. EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

- Question 3.1 A. What improvements have been made to develop business operations and/or the product offering during the qualifying period?
- B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

SECTION 4. EXCELLENCE IN MARKETING

Question 4.1. A. Provide an overview of the business's target markets.

B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

Question 4.2. A. Provide 2-3 examples of marketing strategies the business implemented during the qualifying period, along with their outcomes.

B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

SECTION 5. EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE

Question 5.1. A. What initiatives has the business put in place during the qualifying period to deliver excellent customer service throughout the visitor journey

B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

Question 5.2. A. How has the business made improvements to be more inclusive throughout the qualifying period?

B. Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

SECTION 6. FINAL REMARKS

Final Remarks

RESPONSE GUIDE

SECTION 1. OVERVIEW OF BUSINESS

5 POINTS

Question 1.1

5 points

Question 1.1.A Provide an overview of the Ecotourism business.

(text box response)

Response Guidance

Provide a clear and concise description of the business and the product/service/visitor experience it provides.

Include the vision and the values of the business to help set the scene for later questions.

Assume the judge has no prior knowledge of the business so take them on a journey of how and when it began, where the business is located or where the services are provided, who works in the business etc.

Highlight the business’s points of difference and what makes it stand out from others. Consider the amenities, products, services, or facilities that enhance visitor satisfaction.

Clearly demonstrate your eligibility by aligning with the category criteria to ensure that there is no misunderstanding as to why you have entered this category. The judges (and auditors) need to understand how the business fits into the category; therefore, be sure to include a clear explanation.

The judges may not be familiar with the business - your submission may be judged nationally and could have judges that are not from your state/territory. Therefore, explain everything from the ground up.

Question 1.1.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer in Q1.1.A Examples of the type of evidence you can include are:

- *Images of staff, services, experiences, buildings, room types etc.*
- *Map of location of business, route etc.*

This is an opportunity to show each of the products or services that are on offer.

Do not include any documents (plans, procedures, policies etc.).

Statement of Achievement

0 points

Automatic Listing of Quality Tourism programs the business has completed/renewed in the qualifying period.

- Quality Tourism Accreditation
- Sustainable Tourism Accredited
- Marine Tourism Accredited
- Camp and Adventure Activity Accredited
- International Ready Accredited
- EcoStar Accredited
- Accessible Tourism Program
- Accessible Tourism Accredited
- Tourism Emissions Reduction Commitment Program (minimum of Level 3)
- Star Ratings
- Online Trade Distribution
- International Trade Distribution
- Risk Management Tool
- Business Continuity Tool

If any of these programs are completed prior to the end of the qualifying period this will be reflected in your Statement of Achievement.

SECTION 2. ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY **35 POINTS**

Question 2.1 **10 points**

Question 2.1.A Provide 2-4 examples of how the business preserves and protects the environment.

Provide a short overview of the business approach towards the preservation and protection of the environment.

EXAMPLE

Name of Preservation/Protection activity: _____	
<p>Describe the activity <i>Describe the activity with emphasis on how it preserves and/or protects the environment.</i></p>	
<p>Outline the rationale for implementing this activity and what the business hoped to achieve. This is the rationale and goal setting of the activity</p>	
<p>What outcomes has the business achieved through this activity in preserving and protecting the environment? This is the outcome of the activity</p>	

Response Guidance

(?) Describe the Activity

Describe the activity with emphasis on how it preserves and/or protects the environment.

The preservation of the environment involves actions that conserve natural resources and biodiversity. Some examples include, but are not limited to;

- *Establishing or participating in reforestation programs to restore degraded ecosystems.*
- *Implementing renewable energy sources*

Protection involves safeguarding the environment for future generations. Some examples include, but are not limited to;

- *Limiting visitor numbers to prevent overcrowding and degradation.*
- *Advocating for responsible tourism practices, such as adopting ‘Leave No Trace’ principles.*
- *Creating digital archives, apps, or virtual reality experiences to educate visitors and provide an experience that does not impact the environment*
- *Initiatives to protect environmental assets*

(?) Rationale

Provide the judge with a clear understanding why the activity has been developed and how it contributes to the protection and preservation of the environment.

(?) Outcomes

Provide measures used to understand how the ecotourism business preserves and protects the environment and what outcomes the business has achieved.

Some examples could include, but are not limited to:

Visitor feedback on environmental programs, increased participation in community events, or conservation outcomes.

Question 2.1.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer. Examples of the type of evidence you can include are:

- *An image of the activity*
- *A testimonial from a visitor or local community member*
- *An infographic e.g. graph, demonstrating the results of the preservation activity.*

This is an opportunity to show each of the products or services that are on offer.

Do not include any documents (plans, procedures, policies etc.).

Question 2.2

10 points

Question 2.2.A Provide 2-4 examples of how the business educates and informs visitors and local communities to broaden their understanding of environmental conservation.

Provide a short overview of the business philosophy towards education of environmental conservation to visitors and local communities.

EXAMPLE

Name of education and/or interpretation activity: _____	
Describe the activity <i>Describe the activity with emphasis on how it educates visitors and local communities.</i>	

<p>Outline the rationale for implementing this activity and what the business hoped to achieve.</p> <p>This is the rationale and goal setting of the activity</p>	
<p>What outcomes has the business achieved through this activity in educating visitors and local communities?</p> <p>This is the outcome of the activity</p>	

Response Guidance

Specify any guidelines, programs, or tools provided to visitors to enhance their understanding environmental preservation and protection.

(?) Describe the activity

Provide an overview of the activity. Consider how this activity educates and informs, and to whom.

(?) Rationale

Provide the judge with a clear understanding why the business has implemented the specific activity.

Ensure the rationale relates back to how it can educate and inform visitors and the local community.

(?) Outcomes

What were the measurable results of these activities?

Provide measurable results that demonstrate to the judge the outcomes of the activities and how they educate and inform.

Consider what learnings were made during this process, particularly if intended outcomes were not achieved.

Question 2.2.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer. Examples of the type of evidence you can include are:

- *An image of the activity*
- *A testimonial from a visitor or local community member*
- *An infographic e.g. graph, demonstrating the results of the education activity.*

This is an opportunity to show each of the products or services that are on offer.

Do not include any documents (plans, procedures, policies etc.).

Question 2.3 **10 points**

Question 2.3.A Provide 2-4 examples of how your business contributes to the local economy and supports sustainable livelihoods.

Provide a short overview of the business philosophy towards its contribution to the local economy.

Name of activity: _____	
<p>Describe the activity. This is the overview of the activity.</p>	
<p>Outline the rationale for implementing this activity and what the business hoped to achieve. This is the rationale and goal setting of the activity.</p>	

<p>What outcomes has the business achieved through this activity in ensuring an authentic experience?</p> <p>This is the outcome of the activity</p>	

Response Guide

Provide 2-4 of the business's top examples.

A tourism business can play a crucial role in strengthening the local economy and fostering sustainable livelihoods by generating employment, supporting local industries, and promoting responsible business practices.

Consider the following types of activities the business does to contribute to the local economy:

- *Supporting local businesses e.g. through product packaging, 'buy local' programs or sourcing services locally*
- *Supporting local talent or community groups*
- *Employment e.g. local work experience program, training and development programs*
- *Support of community fundraising*
- *Employing local artisans, performers, or cultural guides to deliver experiences directly to visitors.*
- *Creating partnerships with community groups to reinvest a portion of tourism revenue into local initiatives.*

(?) Describe the activity

Provide an overview of the activity. Consider how this activity supports sustainable livelihoods and its impact to the local economy.

(?) Rationale

Provide the judge with a clear understanding why the business has implemented the specific activity.

Ensure the rationale relates back to how it can support the local economy and sustainable livelihoods.

(?) Outcomes

What were the measurable results of these activities?

Provide measurable results that demonstrate to the judge the outcomes of the activities and how they support the local economy.

Consider what learnings were made during this process, particularly if intended outcomes were not achieved.

Question 2.3.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		Attachment
		Attachment
		Attachment

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer. Examples of the type of evidence you can include are:

- An image of the activity
- A testimonial from a local community member or organisation who has benefited from the activity
- An infographic e.g. graph, demonstrating the contribution to the economy.

This is an opportunity to show each of the products or services that are on offer.

Do not include any documents (plans, procedures, policies etc.).

Responsible Tourism and Sustainability Achievements.

5 points

- Sustainable Tourism Accreditation.
- Has undertaken an assessment of its emissions and identified measures to reduce and offset e.g. through the Tourism Emissions Reduction Program.

- Has undertaken an Accessibility Assessment e.g. through the Accessible Tourism Program on the QTF.
- Has included an Accessible Guide on the business website.

SECTION 3. EXCELLENCE IN BUSINESS & PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT **10 POINTS**

Question 3.1 **10 points**

Question 3.1.A What improvements have been made to develop business operations and/or the eco product offering during the qualifying period?

Provide a short overview of the business approach towards developing its business operations and/or product offering.

EXAMPLE

Improvement 1:	
----- <i>What specific improvements has the business implemented in its operations and/or the product offering during the qualifying period? Keep this response to one sentence, providing a basic introduction only.</i>	
	Describe the Improvement: <i>Provide further detail on the improvement.</i>
	Rationale: <i>What were the reasons for implementing this improvement?</i>
	Specific Goals: <i>What specific goals did the business aim to achieve with this improvement?</i>
	Outcomes:

Response Guidance

Provide between 2-3 examples.

The response to this question can include examples relating to:

- *Business operations*
- *Product development*

(?) Business Operations

"Business operations" generally refers to the day-to-day activities involved in running a business. This can include but is not limited to managing resources, processes, and people to achieve organisational goals.

Some examples of improvements include;

- *Operations (inventory management, compliance and safety, risk management, trade distribution etc.)*
- *Finance (systems, investment, pricing strategy etc.)*
- *Human resources (training, reward, recognition, professional development, attracting staff etc.)*
- *Business capability or learning initiatives (e.g. completion of Quality Tourism programs including risk management, online distribution etc.)*

(?) Product Development

"Product offering" generally refers to the products, services and experiences a company offers its customers.

Some examples of improvements include;

- *Technology (developed a mobile app to improve the experience, introduced AI chatbots to assist in visitor enquiries etc.)*
- *Product packaging (value added to the experience with other local products/experiences etc.)*
- *Facilities (upgraded or introduced new facilities e.g. solar power, ecofriendly transport options, initiating passive design for natural cooling and heating etc.)*
- *Experiences (upgraded or introduced new experiences e.g. eco conscious tour itinerary, locally sourced gastronomic tasting session, reforestation activity etc.)*

Note: this is not a complete list but does provide some examples for consideration.

(?) Rationale

Provide the judge with a clear understanding why the improvement was made.

Some examples on the rationale for the improvement could be:

- *Business Operations*
 - *Reduce business expenses*
 - *Streamline processes*
 - *Other strategic objectives*
- *Product Development*
 - *Driven by feedback*
 - *Reaching new markets*
 - *Advancing technologies*
- *Other strategic objectives*

Note: this is not a complete list but does provide some examples for consideration.

Consider how the improvement aligns with the vision or values of the business as identified in Q1.

(?) Specific Goals

Provide the judge with the specific goals that the business aimed to achieve with the improvement.

Some examples of specific goals could be:

- *Reduce manual effort by 15%*
- *Improve workflow efficiency by 30%.*

(?) Outcomes

What were the measurable results of these changes?

Provide measurable results that demonstrate to the judge the outcomes of the improvement.

Consider what learnings were made during this process, particularly if intended outcomes were not achieved.

Question 3.1.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Provide evidence to support your response. For example:

- *An image of the improvement*
- *A testimonial demonstrating the outcome (NOTE: the main content of the testimonial must appear in the written response)*
- *Before and after images of works*
- *An infographic e.g. graph, demonstrating the outcomes.*

SECTION 4. EXCELLENCE IN MARKETING

15 POINTS

Question 4.1

5 points

Question 4.1.A Provide an overview of the business’s target markets relevant to the ecotourism experience or offering.

Provide a brief introduction to the business’s target markets and how the business identified its top 2 to 3 markets.

EXAMPLE

Name of Target Market:

What stage is the target market in for the business?

Identify if this is Primary Market, Secondary Market, Growth Market or Emerging Market.

(tick box)

<p>Target market characteristics Describe the target market i.e. who are they, where are they from, age, behaviours and motivations.</p>	
<p>How does the business meet the expectations of this target market? Demonstrate how you have tailored the business to the target market.</p>	
<p>What research have you undertaken to confirm this target market is right for the business? Describe the research or analysis undertaken to determine that this target market and their characteristics are suitable to the business.</p>	

Response Guidance

Provide between 2-3 markets.

A **target market** is a specific group of potential customers that a business directs its marketing efforts and products towards.

Identify the various characteristics such as demographics, psychographics, geographic location, and buying behaviour of the selected target market.

Demonstrate how the business tailors its products/service/visitor experience to effectively reach and engage the target market.

(?) Target Market Characteristics

For the target market characteristics, consider the following:

- **Geographic – Where they are:** Where the people live or visit
- **Demographic – Who they are:** Their age, family size, income, or lifestyle, such as families, retirees, or holidaymakers.
- **Psychographic – What they care about:** What they enjoy, believe in, or value, like being active, spending time outdoors, or supporting local businesses.

- **Behavioural – What they do, how they act.** e.g. like hiring bikes, exploring the area, or looking for fun activities.
- **Motivations – What drives them, why they do things:** e.g. like wanting to have family adventures, stay healthy, or trying something new.

(?) Meeting the expectations of a target market

Demonstrate the business’s understanding of the target market’s needs, preferences, and behaviours, and how the business has tailored its products, services or experiences to meet these needs.

(?) Research

Outline how the business has determined that this target market is suitable for the business. What research was undertaken, and what was concluded from this research.

Question 4.1.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Provide evidence to support your response. For example:

- *An image of the target market*
- *An infographic e.g. graph, demonstrating the market characteristics*

Question 4.2

10 points

Question 4.2.A Provide 2-4 examples of marketing strategies the business implemented during the qualifying period, along with their outcomes.

Provide a short overview of the business approach towards developing its marketing strategies.

EXAMPLE

Marketing Strategy 1:	
<i>What was the marketing strategy? E.g. was it a campaign, an exhibition, an event, a partnership, or other marketing initiative?</i>	
Objective:	<i>Provide quantifiable objectives for the strategy.</i>
Target Market:	<i>As per market/s identified in Q4.1</i>
Concept:	<i>Provide greater detail of the strategy.</i>
Rationale and Research:	<i>Describe the research and analysis undertaken to determine that this strategy will achieve the objectives and reach the intended target market.</i>
Activity/Tactics:	<i>Describe the activities or tactics used in the strategy.</i>
How does this strategy align with local, regional or state destination/marketing plans?	<i>Detail how the local, regional or state marketing plans were considered in the development of the strategy.</i>
What were the outcomes	<i>E.g. an increase to website traffic by 21% which generated an increase in online bookings by 30%</i>

Response Guidance

Provide between 2-3 examples.

It is recommended that you include examples that differ to any of the improvements you have included in Q3.1.

(?) Objectives

Provide further detail on the marketing objective.

Objectives or goals can include, but are not limited to:

- Improve brand awareness*
- Increase sales*
- Higher number of leads*
- Attract new customers*
- Improve customer retention*
- Increase online engagement*
- Expand into new markets*
- Optimise ROI*
- Highlight new features/experiences*

Be sure to provide some quantifiable objectives e.g. increase leads from website by 10%.

(?) Target Market

Be sure to align this to one or more of the markets identified in Q4.1.

(?) Concept

This is where you can provide an overview of the strategy outlining its key highlights.

For example:

- A digital campaign to highlight the unique selling proposition of the business*
- A PR campaign to highlight how the business fulfils specific visitor needs*
- Improved website content to create an emotional connection with visitors*
- Targeted email campaign conveying key business ethics/commitments e.g. sustainability or accessibility*
- Social campaign demonstrating how the business aligns with target markets values, preferences etc.*

(?) Rationale

Why did the business execute this strategy?

And what research was used to support the development of this strategy, e.g. visitor feedback, ticket sales, digital analytics etc.

(?) Activity/Tactics

Describe the activities or tactics used in the strategy

Different channels can include, but are not limited to:

- *Digital Advertising*
- *Emails*
- *Events*
- *Influencer marketing*
- *Search Engine Optimisation*
- *Social Media*
- *Traditional Marketing*
- *Trade activities*

(?) Align with local, regional or state destination/marketing plans

Demonstrate how the activity aligns with local, regional or state destination/marketing plans.

(?) Outcomes

Provide measurable results that demonstrate to the judge the outcome of the strategies.

Consider what learnings were made during this process, particularly if intended outcomes were not achieved.

Be sure these results relate back to your specific objectives.

4.2.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		Attachment
		Attachment
		Attachment

Provide visual evidence demonstrating the marketing activity.

Videos can be included, however do not produce a video for the specific purpose to respond to this question, it must have been produced as part of the activity.

Examples of images/video evidence can include:

- *Instagram Reel*
- *TikTok*
- *Video segment on TV*
- *TV Commercial*

SECTION 5. EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE **15 POINTS**

Question 5.1 **10 points**

Question 5.1.A What initiatives has the business put in place during the qualifying period to deliver excellent customer service throughout the visitor journey?

Provide a brief overview of the business’s customer service philosophy.

EXAMPLE

Customer Service Initiative 1.	
	Describe the initiative that enhances the business customer service:
	At what stage of the visitor journey does this impact? <i>(Pre, During, Post, All)</i>
	(checkbox with multiple choice option)

	What influenced the development of this initiative?	
	What investment has been made in this aspect of the visitor experience?	
	What outcomes have come from this initiative?	

Response Guidance

Provide the top 3 to 5 enhancements.

Focus on the initiatives that have specifically related to customer service and provide examples that have not been included in question 3.1.

Ensure that you include activity that is new in the qualifying period.

This could include, but is not limited to:

- *Staff training and development*
- *Customer feedback and post-stay surveys*
- *Improved booking processes*
- *Improved service delivery that goes beyond visitor expectations*
- *Additional services e.g. bed turn down services*

(?) Describe the initiative

Consider the various touchpoints of visitor engagement and how these have been enhanced, specifically for the customer experience.

(?) Stage of the visitor journey

Specify at what point the initiative takes place within the visitor journey – pre, during, post or at all points.

(?) Influence of Initiative

Consider why the business focused on improving this specific customer experience.

This could be, but is not limited to examples such as:

- *Customer feedback*

- Staff input
- Competitive landscape
- Data/survey insights
- Shift in customer demands or expectations

(?) Investment

Consider all resources put towards the initiative. This could be financial, time investment in staff, technologies, supply chain etc.

(?) Outcomes

Provide examples of what outcomes were achieved as a result of the initiative. For example, increased online ratings by XX%, return visitation etc.

You could include testimonials here to demonstrate an improved visitor experience.

5.1.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer in Q4.1.A Examples of the type of evidence you could include are:

- Staff initiatives
- Customer initiatives in place
- A testimonial demonstrating the outcome (NOTE: the main content of the testimonial must appear in the written response)

Question 5.2

5 points

Question 5.2.A How has the business made improvements to be more inclusive throughout the qualifying period?

(text box response)

- Has undertaken or updated an Accessibility Assessment e.g. through the Accessible Tourism Program on the QTF in the qualifying period.
- Has included an Accessible Guide on the business website.
 - Please insert website page the guide is available on.

Response Guidance

Demonstrate how the business has actively considered, and where able, met the needs of a diverse community. This could include:

- *Staff training*
- *Management and leadership*
- *Business policy making*
- *Improved/modified systems/operations/facilities*

Demonstrate how the business has analysed its target markets and identified any specific requirements that may need to be considered for these guests.

5.2.B Provide visual evidence to support your answer.

File Name	Description of Evidence (up to 10 words)	Evidence Attachment
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>
		<i>Attachment</i>

Response Guidance

This is where you can include images to support your answer. Examples of the type of evidence you can include are:

- *Inclusive initiatives in place*
- *A testimonial demonstrating the outcome (NOTE: the main content of the testimonial must appear in the written response)*

SECTION 6. FINAL REMARKS 0 POINTS

In 100 words or less, provide any final remarks as to why the business should be considered as a winner in its chosen category.

(text box)

Response Guidance

Make this a personal response to close out the submission.