

MEDIA RELEASE

Douglas rides eco-tourism wave

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AN ECO-tourism wave could help Douglas Shire businesses and tourism operators tap into rapidly growing international markets.

Douglas Shire Council has called on local operators to become eco-certified and further cement the region as a world-class destination.

The push is part of Council's vision to become the first eco-certified region in Australia.

Douglas Shire Mayor Julia Leu said the tourism industry needs to commit to the highest possible environmental standards to make the most of this.

"International visitors want more authentic and sustainable travel experiences," she said.

"Everyone knows Douglas Shire has a strong environmental charter and now we have a real chance to beam this across the globe and draw more visitors in.

"Eco-accreditation is a clear and recognisable brand that shows the world you practice leading environmental standards."

Council is working in partnership with Tourism Port Douglas Daintree and Eco Tourism Australia to boost certifications.

TPDD Executive Officer Tara Bennett said global tourism wholesalers reported increasing demand for sustainable and authentic experiences among their clients.

"These sellers are now actively looking for the eco-accreditation brand," she said.

"The European markets, particularly Germany, are showing the strongest interest in eco-accreditation, while the younger generations in the US and China, have a rapidly growing appreciation for environmental credentials.

"There is a real opportunity here for Douglas Shire to turn its unrivalled environmental reputation into a competitive advantage through the delivery of sustainable tourism practices."

Ms Bennett recently attended the Australian Tourism Exchange event in Adelaide, where she spoke to global tour wholesalers about this growing trend.

More than 20 tour operators and businesses in Douglas Shire are already eco-certified and seeing the perks.

The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority has developed benefits to reward high standard operators and provide incentives for other operators to improve their performance. This includes an extended term of 20 years for tourism program permits.

Port Douglas-based operator Sailaway was one of the first in the country to be Advanced Eco Tourism certified and is a Climate Action Leader.

Owner Steve Edmondson said achieving certification sparked increased business.

“The accreditation definitely enhanced our credibility and professional standing, which is important criteria for inspiring visitors,” he said.

“Achieving certification can promote professionalism in safety, equipment and service with a philosophy that fosters environmental and cultural understanding.

“We are so privileged to be in a position to educate visitors about our beautiful natural environment while they are forging their perfect memories.”

Sailaway runs tours to the Great Barrier Reef, Low Isles, Mackay and Undine Coral Cays and from Cape Tribulation

TPDD is hosting an eco-tourism workshop for interested parties at the Mossman Gorge Centre on Tuesday, June 19. Please sign up here:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/eco-tourism-accreditation-workshop-tickets-46789484608>

Tour operators and businesses are encouraged to check out Eco Tourism Australia’s website at: <https://www.ecotourism.org.au/our-certification-programs/eco-certification/>

WHY GET CERTIFIED?

ECO Certification is a business development tool.

Through membership, you become part of a nation-wide community of leaders in ecotourism and build your network for sharing best practice and continuous improvement strategies.

Along with reaping the benefits of formulating your plans and goals for the future, you also receive:

- ◆ Operator credibility and industry recognition, throughout Australia and Internationally
- ◆ Certification logos and certificates to display your achievement
- ◆ Marketing across EA’s platforms and free listing on the online Green Travel Guide searchable database
- ◆ Full membership rights with Ecotourism Australia and discounted registration for our annual Global Eco AsiaPacific Tourism Conference

- ◆ Various discounts and opportunities with EA and our industry partners (like TripAdvisor, Australian Traveller Magazine, Tourism Tribe, and many more)
- ◆ Access and eligibility for extended licences and permits through Protected Area Management Agencies
- ◆ Representation at Australian Tourism Exchange

MORE DETAILS AT: <https://www.ecotourism.org.au/our-certification-programs/eco-certification/>

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