

## TOURISM AWARDS CHANGES IN 2021

The Australian Tourism Awards have always been about celebrating the hard work and dedication made to create quality tourism experiences. This year we also want to celebrate resilience.

2020 saw many challenges faced by businesses, with some similar and some different across the states and territories and industry sectors. This year's awards program will continue to celebrate excellence, to reward business innovation and exceptional customer service, as well as championing the resilience of our industry.

The Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC) have made some adjustments to the awards program and the rules of entry in 2021 to enable businesses to share their stories on how they overcame the difficulties experienced as a result of the bushfires and COVID-19.

Below is a summary of the changes for the 2021 Victorian Tourism Awards program. Please note these changes are applied in the national level, and across all States and Territories.

**Please see further down for the rules and criteria.**

### QUALIFYING PERIOD

- The qualifying period for this year's awards will be adjusted to account for the variances in closed businesses across the states over the past 12 months. Therefore, the qualifying period is extended from **1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021**.
- An exception to the rule applies to the **New Tourism Business** category. See the rules and criteria for more details.

### CATEGORIES

As a part of the review for 2021, the participation in various categories were examined and the following changes were determined to more adequately reflect the entrants to the category:

- 'Specialised Tourism Services' has been replaced by 'Tourism Retail & Hire Services'
- 'Destination Marketing' has been renamed 'Tourism Marketing & Campaigns'
- 'Standard Accommodation' has been renamed '3-3.5 Star Accommodation'
- 'Deluxe Accommodation' has been renamed '4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation'
- 'Luxury Accommodation' has been renamed '5 Star Luxury Accommodation'

[Click here](#) to view the full list of categories.

### QUESTIONS

In 2021, businesses can choose what they want to focus on - strategies implemented to attract or grow and/or strategies implemented as a part of their recovery and resilience to COVID-19. Therefore, the existing questions have been amended to enable a response from the business which is relevant to them.

Whilst Responsible Tourism/Sustainability is an incredibly important part of any business, the challenges faced by many during the qualifying period make it difficult to respond to this question, though at no fault of their own. So, rather than disadvantage businesses, the Responsible Tourism section has been temporarily suspended in 2021 – except for *03. Major Festivals & Events* and *04. Festivals & Events*.

The business innovation and excellence in social, economic, environmental and ethical tourism can form part of your response to the 'Business Development' question.

Most categories\* will have a revised question set which focuses on five key areas:

- COVID-19 & bushfire impact to the business (0 marks)
- Introduction to the business
- Business development
- Marketing
- Customer experience

\*The following categories will have an updated set of questions that are specific to the individual category:

- Major Festivals & Events
- Festivals & Events
- Ecotourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Tourism
- Tourism Marketing & Campaigns
- New Tourism Business

### WORD COUNT

Having temporarily suspended the Responsible Tourism question, the 2021 program will also temporarily drop the word count to **8000 words**.

Please note this also applies to:

- Major Festivals & Events and Festivals & Events – the Responsible Tourism question still applies to these two categories, but the word count is reduced to 8000 words.
- State categories: 26. Tourism Education and Training, 27. Local Government Award for Tourism and 28. Excellence in Accessible Tourism

### SCORING

As a response to industry's feedback over the past few years, the 2021 program will incorporate a more encompassing scoring system where various elements, including consumer reviews, will contribute to the overall result.

Entries will be scored on the following elements:

- Written submission
- Online review
- Consumer rating
- Site visit

Please note:

- Site visit scoring is not compulsory as a national standard. Therefore, the site visit score in Victoria is added to the total score outlined for the various Australian Tourism Awards categories, and in some instances, the total score available to an entrant will be 120.

### ONLINE REVIEW

The entrant's online activities will be assessed by the panel of judges and will include:

- The business website
- The business social media channels
- The business search engine optimisation
- The business external listing sources

The online review scoring will occur at the State/Territory level only and will account for 10% of the entrant's overall score.

A copy of the Online Review questions will be provided to all entrants.

### CONSUMER RATING

The consumer rating score will account for 20% of an entrant's overall score, with some exceptions\*. The consumer rating will capture the entire qualifying period and will be derived from the GRI (average score of all online reviews) provided by ReviewPro.

Award entrants will now have access to a complimentary [ReviewPro](#) account, via the Quality Tourism Framework dashboard for the duration of the program.

\*Due to the nature of the below categories, consumer rating will not apply to:

- Major Festivals & Events
- Festivals & Events
- Ecotourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Aboriginal & Torres Strait Island Tourism
- Business Event Venues
- Tourism Marketing & Campaigns
- New Tourism Business
- State categories: Tourism Education & Training, Local Government Award for Tourism and Excellence in Accessible Tourism

\*For those categories where there is a mix of products included, then the consumer rating value will be 5%.

This includes:

- Tourism Retail & Hire Services
- Excellence in Food Tourism

Please note: a minimum of 25 reviews must have been received over the qualifying period across the 175+ online review sites that ReviewPro captures from in order to receive a GRI score. Businesses that do not have a GRI will receive a score of 0 for the consumer rating score.

## 2021 RULES AND REGULATIONS

Categories and criteria are set in the national level by the Australian Tourism Industry Council (ATIC).

### ENTRY FEES

- All States and Territories charge a nomination fee to enter the Tourism Awards. In Victoria, Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) absorbs the cost, so there is no fee for entrants.

### NOMINATIONS

- Nominations are made via the Quality Tourism Framework online system. This can be accessed [here](#). Past entrants can use the same log-in details as previous year/s.
- A submission for an award category cannot be made unless a nomination has been made.
- All entrants must adhere to the nomination rules and guidelines set out throughout these guidelines.
- The nomination collects specific contact information, category selection and agreement to the Awards terms and conditions.

Please note that all nominations will need to be approved by VTIC before the entrant can proceed with their submission.

Please see the [2021 key dates](#) for nominations deadline in Victoria.

### NOMINATION RULES

1. If entering more than one category, then a separate and complete entry must be submitted for each category. However, entrants may only enter one submission in any one of the following categories:
  - a. Attractions – either category 1 OR 2
  - b. Festivals and Events – either category 3 OR 4
  - c. Tour Operator – either category 11 OR 12
  - d. Accommodation – enter category 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 OR 23
2. Entrants cannot change categories after the closing date for submission in the state/territory tourism awards in which they have entered.
3. **Qualifying Period**
  - a. The qualifying period for the 2021 program is **1 July 2019 to 30 June 2021**. All activities, achievements and innovations referred to within submissions must have occurred within this period.
  - b. For Festivals and Events, where multiple events have been held within the qualifying period, each event can make a submission, and each submission must be specific to one event. E.g., Festival Australia 2019 and Festival Australia 2020 - each submission would focus on the activities, marketing, etc. for the singular event.
  - c. Entrants that commenced operations for the first time in the qualifying period must enter the **New Tourism Business** category.
    - Due to the extended qualifying period for 2021, for new businesses that commenced operations between **1 July 2019 - 30 June 2020**, they can choose to

enter into either New Tourism Business **OR** an alternate category. For those that commenced operations between **1 July 2020 - 30 June 2021**, they are only eligible to enter into New Tourism Business.

#### 4. Trading Period

- a. All entrants must have traded for the entire qualifying period except those entering the New Tourism Business category, or where trade ceased due to Government restrictions.
- b. Specifically, entrants in the category New Tourism Business must have commenced trading/visitation or service delivery within the qualifying period. No minimum period of trading has been defined for New Tourism Business.
- c. Exceptions apply to seasonal businesses and facilities, festivals, events, marketing campaigns, media entries, training and tourism development projects, however, the activity being put forward for the awards must have occurred within the qualifying period.

#### 5. Nominated state/territory

- a. Entrants must be based or have specific operations in Victoria
- a. Where a regional awards program is available, entrants must be based in or operate in the region of their nomination.
- b. Should a company have branches in more than one state/territory, they may enter the State/Territory awards for the relevant branch for so long as the submission focuses on the activities undertaken in that state/territory.

#### 6. Multiple Products

- a. An entrant, such as a chain or franchise that has multiple products, must enter each product individually if they want each property to be able to promote the achievement of winning a tourism award. Alternatively, the corporate head office may enter, but the winner logo may only be used by the corporate entity, not the individual products.
- b. Aside from those categories where stated (rule 1), one business can submit two entries, including two entries into the same category (although, they will be competing against themselves). However, businesses in this case may see value in, for example, securing a win and second placing.

#### 7. Accommodation Categories

- a. Accommodation categories will be required to meet accommodation standards specific to their category.
- b. It is not a requirement for a business to be officially Star Rated. Alternatively, the online accommodation standards would be used to demonstrate the entrant's pre-assessment rating. Please note, it may take an entrant 1-2 hours to complete the pre-assessment.
- c. Accommodation standards required:

##### **5 Star Luxury Accommodation**

- Official 5 Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards

##### **4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation**

- Official 4 or 4.5 Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 4 or 4.5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards

**3-3.5 Star Accommodation**

- Official 3 or 3.5 Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 3 or 3.5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards

**Hosted**

- Official 3+ Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standards

**Caravan & Holiday Parks**

- Official 3+ Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standards

**Self-Contained**

- Official 3+ Star Rated

**OR**

- A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standards

- d. NOTE: Unique Accommodation does not have a Star Rating or Pre-Assessment rating prerequisite.

**Please see the [2021 key dates](#) for pre-assessments (Accommodation Standards) deadline.**

Please note that if the Accommodation Standards pre-assessment is not completed by this deadline, your nomination will be withdrawn. Star rated properties do not need to complete this pre-assessment.

The Accommodation Standards pre-assessment will be available to all entrants once the nomination has been approved by VTIC. If your property does not reach the required star rating for the chosen category, your nomination will be changed for the appropriate category.

## **SUBMISSIONS**

An entrant must nominate for an award before they can commence preparing their submission.

Submissions are made via the same online system the nominations are made, this can be accessed [here](#).

1. **Submissions are due on Tuesday, 31 August 2021 at 5pm.** A late submission will not be accepted.
2. All submissions must include the following:
  - a. Nomination details
  - b. Demonstration of meeting minimum business standards, relevant to their category. This can be demonstrated via relevant accreditation with the [Quality Tourism Framework](#) **OR** as a part of the business standards question set within their submission. Please note, it may take an entrant ½-1 hour to complete the business standard questions. Other accreditations are accepted for Ecotourism. For more details, please contact the [Victorian Tourism Awards Coordinator](#).

QTF Accredited businesses do not need to complete this pre-assessment. **Please refer to the [2021 key dates](#) for the Business Standards deadline.**

The Business Standards section will be available to all entrants once the nomination has been approved by VTIC.

3. Category questions including supporting images.

#### 4. Word Count

- a. The submission will be maximum 8,000 words in length for all business categories.
- b. Individual categories (29, 30, 31) submissions will be maximum 2,500 words.
- c. Words within a table are included in the submission word count
- d. It is the responsibility of the entrant to ensure their submission does not exceed the maximum word count. If exceed, the submission will be withdrawn from entering.

#### 5. Images

The submission can include up to 25 images with caption.

- a. Images can include infographics, charts, graphs and pictures.
- b. Any image used must be for the sole purpose of supporting the submission by providing evidence. Images cannot be used to form part of the written response to a question. A good rule of thumb is 'if you remove the images, will the written word still provide a robust answer'.
- c. Captions are to be a maximum of 6 words, not included in the overall word count. Any words within a caption above 6 words will be included in the overall word count.

#### 6. Media & Promotional

- a. A description of no more than 100 words of your company/product is required, and will be used by media, for announcements at the presentation ceremony, in promotional material and on website listings. As this will be edited and compiled by people who have not viewed your submission, please remember to include your company/product name and where you are located geographically. This should be written in third person.
- b. An additional ten images (jpeg format only) which illustrates the entrant's operations should accompany each submission in each category entered. These images will be used at the presentation ceremony and in official advertising and publications.
  - o Note: 500 dpi files in a JPEG format are required.
  - o Images are required to be high-resolution, and preferably 1920x1080 in dimensions.

#### COMPLIANCE WITH COMPETITION RULES

1. The Victoria Tourism Industry Council, with Chair of Judges reserve the right to withdraw submissions if an entry is not compliant with the rules.

2. All submissions must be reviewed for compliance with the submission guidelines. This must be undertaken initially by the Awards Coordinator, however the withdrawal of a submission should be reviewed and implemented by the Chair of Judging and the Auditor.
3. All entrants must clearly demonstrate how they meet the eligibility requirements of each respective category that they choose to enter in Q2 (Introduction) of the submission. If this is not adequately demonstrated, the entrant may be disqualified.
  - a. For example: Tour & transport – the two categories are separated by the number of F/T equivalent employees
4. There is no direct entry into the Australian Tourism Awards. Only state or territory tourism award winners in categories 1 through 25 will automatically become a finalist in the Australian Tourism Awards.
5. Entrants who win the same category three consecutive years in a row at the State/Territory Tourism Awards, will enter Hall of Fame.
6. Entrants who win the same category three consecutive years in a row at the Australian Tourism Awards enter into the national Hall of Fame.

#### **INSOLVENCY OF AN ENTRANT**

1. At any time, following submission of an entry in the Australian Tourism Awards, but prior to the presentation ceremony, should the business become insolvent or place the business under administration, the entrant is no longer eligible to receive an award.
  - a. If prior to the presentation ceremony, then the next national finalist shall be elevated to the status of winner.
  - b. If, following the presentation ceremony, the business returns to solvency, then the award cannot be reclaimed.
  - c. The next state finalist will not be elevated to the status of national finalist.

#### **SITE VISIT**

1. The purpose of the site visit is for verification of the business, not the awards submission. Companies are under no obligation to offer a judge a free experience of their product. The site visit will be prearranged at a mutually convenient time and the judges have a proforma from which they work.
2. All businesses will meet the site visit requirements, the exceptions to this are:
  - a. Individual categories 29 / 30 / 31 do not receive a site visit
  - b. Categories 3 / 4 / 8 / 14 / 26 / 27 – due to the seasonal nature of entrants in these categories, the site visit is for verification purposes only and therefore no points will be awarded.
3. The specifics of the site visit are provided to entrants at the time of booking or appointment.
4. Site visits are not undertaken for national judging.

### Site Visit Criteria

Site visit judges will ask to see the following:

- a. HR documents
- b. Business & Marketing Planning
- c. Customer Service
- d. Business Operations
- e. Risk Management
- f. Environmental Management

### Site Visit Scoring

Scoring is not compulsory as a national standard. Scoring an awards site visit is at the states' discretion. If scored, the marks are added to the score out of 100, i.e. the total score now available to an entrant would be 120.

The percentage of the total score for the site inspection is outlined below:

- a. HR – 2/20 (10%)
- b. Business & Marketing Planning – 5/20 (25%)
- c. Customer Service – 5/20 (25%)
- d. Business Operations – 3/20 (15%)
- e. Risk Management – 3/20 (15%)
- f. Environmental Management – 2/20 (10%)

### ONLINE REVIEW

In 2021, an online review will be undertaken to assess the entrant's online activities including;

- a. The entrant's website
- b. The entrant's social media channels
- c. The entrants search engine optimisation
- d. The entrants external listing sources

The online review will account for 10% of the total score. Scoring of the online review will occur at the State/Territory level only, similar to the site visit.

The online review does not apply to:

- a. Tourism Education and Training
- b. Local Government Award for Tourism

### CONSUMER RATING

In 2021, a consumer rating score will be introduced. The consumer rating will be derived from the Global Review Index (GRI) provided by [ReviewPro](#) and will account for 20% of the total score available, with some exceptions:

- a. Categories with a specific question set and where the consumer ratings do not match what is being assessed, no consumer review score is incorporated. This would include:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Tourism
  - Accessible Tourism
  - Cultural Tourism

- Ecotourism
- b. A consumer rating will not be applied to the following categories:
  - Major Festivals and Events
  - Festivals and Events
  - Business Event Venues
  - Local Government Award for Tourism
  - New Tourism Business
  - Tourism Education and Training
  - Tourism Marketing & Campaigns
- c. For those categories where there is a mix of products included, then the consumer rating value would be only 5. This would include:
  - Retail and Hire Services
  - Food Tourism
- d. A minimum of 25 reviews must have been received across the social platforms which ReviewPro analyses during the qualifying period in order to receive a GRI.
- e. Businesses that do have a GRI will receive a score of 0 for consumer rating.

#### INDIVIDUAL CATEGORIES

- The Rules for Entry for the 2021 Victorian Tourism Awards DO NOT apply to the individual categories (29, 30, 31)
- For more details on these categories, see questions and criteria under each [Award category](#).

If you have any queries in regard to the rules and regulations, please contact:

**Michelle Dall'Ava**

Program Coordinator

E: [mdallava@vtic.com.au](mailto:mdallava@vtic.com.au)

P: 03 7035 5717