

Guidelines

Competitive Allocation of Tour Operator Licences

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- A. Template: Expression of Interest Conduct Plan
- B. Template: Expression of Interest Invitation and Application
- C. Template: Expression of Interest Evaluation Matrix

1. Purpose of the Guidelines

The purpose of these guidelines is to inform public land managers, licence applicants and other stakeholders on policy and principles applicable to competitive allocation of tour operator licences.

Public land managers are strongly encouraged to obtain professional probity advice in the preparation and management of any process for the competitive allocation of tour operator licences.

Background

In 2008 the Victorian Government released the policy *Licensing System for Tour Operators and Activity Providers on Public Land in Victoria*.

In this context, 'tour operator' means a person who conducts an organised tour or outdoor recreational activity for profit on public lands in Victoria. 'Public lands' means lands administered under the *National Parks Act 1975*, *Forests Act 1958*, *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*, *Land Act 1958*, and *Wildlife Act 1975*.

The policy committed to legislative and administrative reforms to:

- create a more consistent framework for licensing of tour operators on public lands
- provide incentives for improved environmental performance by tour operators
- guide the appropriate and sustainable use of public land.

In 2018 the Victorian Government released a limited policy update to the *Licensing System for Tour Operators and Activity Providers on Public Land in Victoria* to:

- provide more opportunities to get long term licenses
- set standard rules and limits for competitive allocation of licences.

The majority of tour operator licences in Victoria are issued on a non-competitive basis because a limit to the number of licences available for a site or activity is not considered necessary.

However, there are circumstances in which a public land manager may consider it necessary to restrict the number of licences operating at a particular site or area, to protect natural or cultural values or visitor safety.

In these circumstances, public land managers are required to issue licences through a public competitive process, to ensure commercial access

to public resources is allocated fairly and in accordance with Government policy.

These guidelines have been prepared to support land managers conduct a competitive allocation of commercial tour operator licences on public lands.

Legislation

The Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP), together with Parks Victoria, committees of management and alpine resort boards, manages some 8 million hectares of public land, including parks and reserves, alpine resorts, sea bed and water catchments, as well as places of historical significance.

A consistent framework for licensing of tour operators on public land has been established under the following Acts:

- *National Parks Act 1975*
- *Crown Land (Reserves) Act 1978*
- *Forests Act 1958*
- *Land Act 1958*
- *Wildlife Act 1975*.

The five Acts include provisions that:

- require tour operators to obtain a licence from the Minister or the Secretary via the relevant public land manager
- enable the Minister or the Secretary to issue a tour operator licence of up to 10 years duration
- enable the making of regulations for tour operator licence fees
- provide offence and penalty provisions, including for failure to obtain a licence and for breach of licence conditions.

The legislation applies to all tour operator licences, whether standard tour operator licences, issued on a first come first served basis, or issued through a competitive process.

A set of regulations has been established under each Act. The five similar sets of regulations outline tour operator licence fees for a standard and competitively allocated licence and provisions for licence holders to apply to the Secretary of DELWP for fee relief.

Policy

The 2008 policy *Licensing System for Tour Operators and Activity Providers on Public Land in Victoria* set the following principles for competitive allocation of tour operator licences:

- public land managers may, as a last resort, restrict the number of licences available for an activity or location to protect natural or cultural values or visitor safety
- notification of moving from an unrestricted licence system to a competitive process should be at least 12 months before the competitive allocation process is undertaken
- competitively allocated licences are to be awarded through a fair, open and transparent process
- evaluation of applications in a competitive allocation process will be based on known qualitative criteria
- the length and number of a competitively allocated licence will depend on the management objectives for the site and/or natural resources, for a period not exceeding 10 years
- competitively allocated licences may be subject to a different fee schedule than standard tour operator licences
- minimum fees for competitively allocated licences should be at least equivalent to fees charged for standard licences
- if a competitively allocated licence is not used, it may be cancelled, i.e. 'use it or lose it'.

The 2018 policy update provides further guidance for competitive allocation of licences. As a minimum, land managers are required to:

- inform incumbent licensees of the upcoming process
- state the licence fee that will apply for successful applicants
- state how many licences will be issued
- state the timing for applications, consideration and decision making
- include the process for appeals
- set a maximum page count for applications.

Competitive Neutrality

In Victoria, it is the responsibility of government agencies and local governments to determine if their business activities fall within the scope of the Competitive Neutrality Policy Victoria.

Competitive neutrality policy seeks to ensure that the significant business activities of publicly owned entities compete fairly in the market. Competitive neutrality does not apply to non-business, non-profit activities of government.

In the context of tour operator licences, competitive neutrality is unlikely to require consideration unless a public land manager is offering commercial tourism or recreation services in competition with licensed tour operators.

The Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation can advise government agencies on how to implement competitive neutrality policy, and investigate complaints made by any affected person or business about a government business that may not be applying competitive neutrality policy.

Before lodging a complaint with the Office of the Commissioner of Better Regulation an individual should first discuss their concerns with the relevant government business or agency.

2. When to Competitively Allocate Tour Operator Licences

Policy

Land managers may, as a last resort, restrict the number of licences available for a particular activity or location to protect natural or cultural values or visitor safety.

Notification of moving from an unrestricted licence system for a specified site or activity to a competitive process should take place at least 12 months before the competitive allocation process is undertaken (unless there are no current licences).

If a competitively allocated licence is not used, it may be cancelled i.e. 'use it or lose it'.

The vast majority of licences in Victoria are issued on a non-competitive basis because a restriction on access to the relevant site and/or natural resources is not considered necessary.

Land managers may, as a last resort, restrict the number of licences available for a particular activity or location to protect natural values, cultural values, public access or public safety.

The requirement that competitive licence allocation should be a decision of last resort reflects the underlying competition policy requirement that commercial access to public lands should be restricted only when the demand exceeds the capacity of the site or resource.

Land managers may use competitive allocation where they have identified a new tourism product to bring to the market and, due to the nature of the activity or location, sustainable activity levels or licencing levels are restrictive.

Before adopting a competitive licence allocation process

The decision to competitively allocate licences should be evidence-based, and before deciding to apply a competitive allocation process, land managers should be able to demonstrate they have considered non-competitive mechanisms for meeting excess demand at 'hotspots'.

'Hotspots' is a term used to describe sites that are at or approaching their carrying capacity. There are a range of techniques land managers can use to manage hotspots, including:

- implementing a booking system to share access between all users or between licensed operators
- using signage and other communication tools to encourage behaviour that protects the resource and minimises impacts which may lead to restrictions on access
- minimising conflicts between user groups by developing agreements or codes of practice.

Determining sustainable activity levels

If it is not possible to meet demand and competitive allocation of licences is considered necessary, the land manager needs to determine the sustainable activity levels for the site or resource.

This guideline does not prescribe a methodology for determining sustainable activity levels on public land. Rather, guidance is centred around environmental, economic, safety and equitable public access principles. In considering sustainable activity levels, land managers should be able to demonstrate they have considered:

- **Current and future environmental demands on the site, including -**
 - management objectives for the site, and protection of natural and cultural assets
 - the impact of the licensed activity/ies on the site, biodiversity, flora and fauna
 - relevant government policies and strategies for the management of public lands and biodiversity.
- **Current and future demand for access, including -**
 - the capacity of the site to accommodate the total visitor numbers

- demand for access by the general public
- demand for access by visitors accessing via tour operators
- tour operators' need for reliable, predictable access.
- **The specific requirements of the activity, including -**
 - the capacity of the site to accommodate safely the proposed activity
 - the requirements of relevant Adventure Activity Standards or other industry standards
 - the potential impact of the activity on other public land users and neighbours
 - the capacity of infrastructure and services - such as parking, paths, berths, buoys, shelters, utility blocks etc
 - the duration of activities, and the times and conditions in which they take place. For example, an activity may be reliant on tides or other conditions
 - consideration for any compliance or management issues associated with potential applicants
 - seasonal or other time factors. For example, does demand for licences exceed capacity year-round, only in peak seasons, or only at weekends?

Any restriction on access to licences should only be that which is necessary to address excess demand.

The restriction should not be longer than is necessary, and should only apply to those activities where demand for access to the site or natural resource exceeds capacity.

Determining the number of licences to offer

This guideline does not prescribe a methodology for determining the number of tour operator licences a land manager should offer. Rather, general guidance is provided so that site or activity-specific solutions can be developed. When determining the number of licences to offer for a specific site or activity through a competitive allocation process, land managers should:

- seek to avoid creating a monopoly situation. Unless it is demonstrably impossible, land managers should seek to offer more than one licence

- take into account their own prior experience and knowledge of commercial tour operations or recreational activities on the site
- consult with relevant industry bodies, particularly those setting operational or activity standards
- consult with other land managers with similar management objectives and environmental or access constraints, particularly adjoining land managers
- consider whether there is a need for independent assessment of the number of tour operator licences which could reasonably be offered through competitive allocation.

Determining the number of licences to be made available would also benefit from consultation with existing licensed tour operators on the number of viable businesses the opportunity could reasonably sustain.

Any such consultation needs to be appropriately and transparently managed to avoid the consultation being perceived as inappropriately influencing any subsequent decision making on grant of licences offered.

The number of licences on offer should be stated on the EOI invitation.

Can exclusive access to public lands be granted through a tour operator licence?

Generally licences to access public land do not give the licence holder priority or exclusivity over the general public's access or access by other licensees.

Priority or exclusive access to any area is only likely to be granted where land management objectives, including protection of cultural and natural values and visitor safety, can be best safeguarded through the granting of such a licence.

Where priority or exclusive access is permitted, the land manager should allocate access openly and competitively, unless benefits outweigh the costs and where:

- such commercial use does not threaten the natural and cultural values of public land
- commercial recreation and tourism use does not significantly affect and use of public land by the community as a whole
- environmental, cultural and or visitor safety can be best safeguarded by limiting access to one or a number of operators.

Duration of the restriction

Land managers should ensure any restriction on the number of available tour operator licences is only applied when necessary.

If demand for tour operator licences only exceeds the capacity of the site or resource for part of the year, licences should only be competitively allocated for that period.

If a restriction on the number of licences is a response to an unforeseen event or change in environmental or access conditions, the restriction must not endure for longer than necessary.

Use it or lose it

Licences could be cancelled by land managers if the licence is not being adequately utilised.

If a licence is only being used less than 10 per cent of its intended capacity, public land managers should consider whether the licence is being adequately utilised. It is important to note that there may be factors resulting in the underutilisation of a licence (i.e. seasonality of the activity).

Public land managers wishing to set minimum use requirements as a licence condition, for example a minimum number of days of operation, must publish this requirement in EOI documentation and in any subsequent licence.

Notification

Notification of moving from an unrestricted licence system for a specified site or activity to a competitive process should take place at least 12 months before the competitive allocation process is undertaken. This does not apply to locations where there are no current licences.

Land manager should provide operators with sufficient notification regarding any changes to licence conditions that may be part of the competitive allocation process.

Integrated competitive allocation processes

Many tour operators on public land offer tours or activities that cross delegated land management boundaries, and need licences from two or three land managers to operate their business effectively.

To provide greater certainty for the tour operators, it may be beneficial if adjoining land managers align licence terms and conditions for like activities, where

it is consistent with their land management objectives.

It may also benefit the nature-based tourism industry if adjoining land managers allocate tour operator licences competitively through a joint or integrated process. If land managers undertake such a process, they cannot delegate their licensing powers to an adjoining land manager. Licences still have to be issued by each land manager involved in an integrated process.

Such an approach needs to be carefully considered, as it could also operate to exclude unsuccessful applicants from significant areas of public lands, for the term of any such licences. Such an approach could also limit opportunities for operators.

There is no policy requirement for land managers to take this approach, and there may be characteristics of a site or resource that prevent a land manager engaging in such a process.

Stakeholder engagement and change management

If land managers anticipate that competitively allocated licences may involve complex stakeholder engagement or significant change management, consideration should be given to preparing a stakeholder and/or change management plan.

It is also important to understand the needs of the stakeholders involved in the EOI and effectively communicate the progress and outcomes of the competitive licensing process. Preparing a stakeholder plan will help identify relevant stakeholders, the level of influence of stakeholders, the intended approach to engage stakeholders and critical timeframes.

Conducting an EOI may result in changes to processes or behaviours between land managers and operators. Preparing a change management plan will provide an opportunity to consider and identify approaches to change prior to commencing a competitive process.

Engagement and/or change management should begin well in advance of the allocation process. It should also be commensurate with the potential impacts an allocation decision could have on current and prospective licence holders. For examples of appropriate notice periods for conducting an EOI, refer to section 4.

Not undertaking competitive allocation

There may be circumstances where competitive allocation is not appropriate. For example, where the cost of conducting a competitive allocation exceeds the public benefit.

If there is a need to depart from a competitive allocation for particular circumstances, the reasons need to be transparent and made public.

3. Licence Terms

Policy

The length of a competitively allocated licence will depend on the management objectives for the site and/or natural resources. Licences can be issued for a period not exceeding 10 years.

In determining licence terms, land managers should consider guidance in the 2018 tour operator licensing policy update which are the following:

- A standard one year licence
- Up to three year licence for operators with three years of full compliance (who have provided their insurance details, trip returns and paid invoices on time, and have a record of meeting all their compliance obligations under the licence)
- Up to five year licence for operators with relevant endorsed tourism certification
- A premium up to ten year licence for operators with relevant endorsed tourism certification.

The maximum licence term that may be offered for a tour operator licence on public land in Victoria is 10 years. The length of any tour operator licence is a decision for the relevant land manager.

In determining the term of a competitively allocated licence, a land manager should take into account the management objectives for the relevant site, species or natural resource and policy guidance.

There is no legislative barrier to offering 10 year licences through a competitive process.

As competitive allocation should only take place where licences are being reasonably restricted to protect public land values, land managers should first consider whether issuing long-term licences may limit their ability to effectively manage those resources in the future.

Issuing long-term licences through competitive allocation may also exclude unsuccessful applicants and new entrants from the opportunity for a considerable period of time and unnecessarily restrict competition.

In determining the term for a competitively allocated tour operator licences, land managers may wish to consult adjacent land managers. Aligning licence terms for like activities, where it is not inconsistent with management objectives, may assist in delivering a more efficient tour operator licensing system.

A 2018 tour operator licensing policy update revised the guidance for licence terms, providing an opportunity to get longer term licences (up to three years) for operators with a three year full compliance history and increasing the maximum licence length for accredited operators from three to five years.

Certification programs

Obtaining industry certification is the preferred basis for considering longer term licences, as it enables public land managers to recognise and reward an evolving suite of industry-developed and regularly reviewed operating standards.

The programs currently recognised as supportive of an application for a longer-term licence are:

Up to 5 year licence term	Up to 10 year maximum licence term
Nature Tourism – EcoCertification IV	Advanced Ecotourism - EcoCertification IV
Australian Tourism Accreditation Program	Ecotourism - EcoCertification IV
Respecting Our Culture	EarthCheck Benchmarking and Certification (formerly GreenGlobe Company Standard)

Land managers should take this policy requirement into account when preparing an EOI for competitive allocation of tour operator licences.

Licence transfer

If a licence is issued under a business name, and a new owner buys the business without changing the business entity (i.e. the registered business name remains the same) and continues to comply with all licence conditions, they are not required to go through a full application process and a new licence (as a licence variation) can be issued. This is only if the residual term is greater than one year. One year licences will not be transferable.

The new licence (variation) will not be a right and will require the approval of the land manager who will consider:

- evidence of the new operator's ability to comply with terms and conditions of the licence, including certification standards and insurance
- evidence of intention to run a business
- tests for any anti-competitive practices
- any changes required to ensure the sustainable management of the location and natural resources.

4. Fair, Open and Transparent Licence Allocation Processes

Policy

Competitively allocated tour operator licences are to be awarded through a fair, open and transparent process.

The requirements for fairness, openness and transparency in competitive processes are also known as probity requirements. The key principles that underpin probity are:

Fairness and Impartiality - Potential applicants are to be treated equally and must have the same opportunity to access information and advice.

Consistency and Transparency of Process - Applicants are to be evaluated in a systematic manner against explicit predetermined evaluation criteria.

Security and Confidentiality - The processes for receiving and managing applicant information must ensure the security and confidentiality of intellectual property and proprietary information.

Identification and Resolution of Conflicts of Interest - Any person involved in the EOI process is to declare and address any actual or perceived Conflict of Interest before undertaking any work related to the process or evaluation of applications.

Complaints and Appeals - A means for applicants to lodge a complaint about the EOI process or an appeal to the allocation decision is to be built in and stated in EOI invitation.

Development of a Probity Plan - A Probity Plan details probity issues and the actions to be taken throughout the preparation and management of an EOI process, to ensure there is integrity in the process.

Probity Planning

To ensure probity principles are adhered to during the preparation and management of the EOI process, land managers should consider developing an EOI conduct plan, which entrenches probity principles as operational tasks.

A template **EOI Conduct Plan** is provided at **Attachment A**.

Probity of the EOI process can also be made more transparent by providing applicants with information on the conditions of the EOI and how applications will be evaluated.

A template Invitation for **Expression of Interest** is provided at **Attachment B**.

Land managers should also consider appointing an independent probity adviser to assist in the preparation of an EOI conduct plan and to advise on probity issues that may arise during an EOI process.

Notice of EOI

Moving from unrestricted licensing to EOI process

Notification of moving from an unrestricted licence system for a specified site or activity to a competitive process should take place at least 12 months before the competitive allocation process is commenced.

This principle seeks to ensure potential applicants are afforded adequate time to prepare for reduced availability of licences.

Notice of commencement of EOI

Tour operators are also generally small businesses, and need as much notice as possible of a forthcoming EOI, and as much time as possible to prepare an application.

The intended timing of the key steps of the EOI process should be clearly stated so applicants can be made aware.

It is also important to plan to complete an EOI process well before the expiry date of any existing licences for that activity (e.g. 12 months). If an EOI process is not complete until immediately before or after the expiry date of existing licences, applicants will be unable to make important investment and employment decisions.

When planning an EOI process, land managers should consider:

- advising existing licensees and the public of the intention to commence an EOI process at least 1 month before the process commences
- advising existing licensees, other potential applicants who have expressed an interest and the public of the commencement of an EOI process
- providing the maximum possible period for applications to be submitted, taking into consideration school holidays, public holidays etc
- planning to complete the EOI process and advise applicants of the outcome well before the expiry date of any existing licences for that activity
- requirements to manage latency (use it or lose it)
- setting the fee for a competitively allocated licence (refer to section 6)
- advising existing licensees that any decision must be approved by the Minister or delegate before being finalised.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Policy

Evaluation of applications will be based on known qualitative criteria.

A critical component of a fair and transparent process is to ensure applications are evaluated in a consistent and systematic manner against clear, pre-determined criteria.

Mandatory Criteria

These are criteria that applicants must comply with for their application to be considered. Mandatory criteria are not scored - they may be answered through a 'yes' or 'no' answer only.

EOI documentation may indicate to applicants that failure to address mandatory criteria may disqualify the applicant from further evaluation.

Qualitative Criteria

These are generally weighted criteria, which should be directly relevant to the proposed activity, site and/or resource.

Qualitative evaluation criteria may seek applicant responses to a range of land management objectives and applicant skill sets. For example:

- capability and experience
- environmental management
- activity safety
- social benefits of tour or recreational activity
- economic benefits
- cultural and community engagement
- business management
- customer service
- capacity for innovation.

Public land managers are encouraged to consider each of the suggested qualitative evaluation criteria listed here when preparing a competitive allocation process.

It is important that qualitative criteria are adopted that respond to the specific site and activity.

Issues to consider when drafting evaluation criteria

Well written evaluation criteria will communicate the land manager's requirements clearly to applicants, and enable direct comparison between applicants.

Questions to consider when drafting evaluation criteria include:

- how do the criteria relate to the responsibilities of the land manager, the management of the site, and the management of the activity?
- how important is one criteria in relation to other criteria? Has an appropriate weighting been given?
- could the criteria be met by new entrants to the market and by existing businesses?
- what would be a high scoring response to each criterion? What would be a low scoring response?
- what supporting documentation must be provided? How will it be evaluated?
- how much supporting information is expected from applicants and how much time would it take to be prepared? Don't ask for lengthy documents or extensive data if such information will not be considered during evaluation. Apply limits to application length to reduce the time and cost burden to businesses.

Table 1 discusses some common problems that can arise if the purpose of evaluation criteria is not carefully considered.

Evaluation Matrix

The use of a weighted evaluation matrix is a recognised method for analysing and comparing applications and their responses to evaluation criteria in a detailed and consistent manner.

This approach enables an assessment panel to:

- apply a consistent scoring approach, by defining the meaning of scores
- allocate weightings to criteria and sub-criteria - the higher the weighting, the more important are the criteria or sub-criteria
- summarise the reasons for assigning the different scores for each criterion for each application.

Any weighting to be applied to evaluation criteria should also be made clear to applicants in an Invitation for EOI.

A **Template Evaluation Matrix** is provided at **Attachment C**.

Feedback

Land managers should include an offer to debrief applicants at the conclusion of the EOI process.

A debrief is an opportunity for land managers to provide feedback to applicants on the strengths and weaknesses of their application based on the evaluation criteria and respond to any questions raised by the applicant.

Table 1: Examples of common problems in writing evaluation criteria

Common problems	Example	Issues that may arise	Options to address the issue
criteria that may disadvantage new applicants	“Previous experience of working with the [specified] land manager.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> unfairly disadvantages new applicants the proposed criteria are not directly relevant to applicants’ capacity to meet licence conditions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is reasonable to seek information on applicants’ experience operating in a public land environment, or in a similar environment. However, the weighting to be applied to such criteria must be considered to avoid excluding new applicants with relevant experience outside public lands
criteria that may not enable a qualitative assessment.	“Applicants must submit a copy of their current business plan.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> without further clarification of matters for evaluation, applicants who submit a business plan must be awarded maximum score, irrespective of the quality of the plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consideration must be given to the nature and quality of information requested and the weighting to be applied for example, is specific content required, such as documented OH&S practices, training practices, financial management systems, customer service standards etc?
criteria that may be unnecessarily limiting	“Applicants must provide details and survey certificates for vessels to be used for licensed tours and activities.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Requires applicants to invest in equipment without knowing whether they will be granted a licence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ask applicants to either (a) provide relevant details, or (b) acknowledge that if their application is successful they must provide required information to the satisfaction of the land manager before a licence is granted
criteria that may be given inappropriate weighting	“Ability to make a contribution to the local community.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the proposed criteria are not critical to delivery of licensed activities, and may unfairly disadvantage applicants new to the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> it is reasonable to seek information on applicants’ capacity to deliver outcomes beyond the core evaluation criteria associated with the activity and the management objectives for the land, but the weighting to be applied to such criteria must be considered
criteria that are statutory requirements	“Ability to pay licence fees.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> willingness to meet a statutory requirement is not a basis for comparing applicants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> summarise licence terms and fees in the EOI document, and attach a copy of standard licence to the EOI
criteria that require only a “yes” or “no” answer	“Do you hold certification from a tourism or recreation industry association?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> does not enable differentiation in scoring, as it is unclear which certifications are preferred, and why 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> clarify the qualifications required, how they relate to delivery of licensed activities, and supporting documentation required to demonstrate currency of certification

6. Fees for Competitively Allocated Licences

Policy

Competitively allocated licences may be subject to a different fee schedule than standard tour operator licences.

Minimum fees for competitively allocated licences should be at least equivalent to fees charged for standard licences.

The Regulations establishing tour operator licence fees provide that:

- public land managers may set the annual fee for a competitively allocated licence, but must advertise the fee in a public EOI document before licence applications are made
- as a minimum the annual fee must be equivalent to the annual fee for standard tour operator licences
- use fees for competitively allocated licences are the same as for standard tour operator licences - \$2.40 for adults and \$1.60 for school students and children
- no use fee cap applies to competitively allocated licences.

The annual fee should also reflect a fair and appropriate return to the land manager while ensuring that the system of administration of the licence is both cost effective and efficient.

For annual fees greater than \$5 000, public land managers should seek a valuation by the Valuer General Victoria or a registered valuer.

Fees are to be stated on the EOI invitation.

7. Where to Find More Information

Tour Operator Licensing Policy

Current policy for licensing tour operators on public lands is published on DELWP's website at – www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/tour-operators

If you have an enquiry regarding the policy, please telephone DELWP's Customer Service Centre 136 186; TTY: 1800 122 969

To apply for a Tour Operator Licence

Parks Victoria manages tour operator licensing for national, state and metropolitan parks, marine national parks and sanctuaries, and also for state forests on behalf of DELWP.

Information for current and prospective licensees is published on Parks Victoria's website at www.parkweb.vic.gov.au - follow the link to Licences and permits or call Parks Victoria's Information Centre on 131 963.

Other public lands are managed by a range of delegated land managers. If you need assistance to identify the relevant public land manager, call DELWP's Customer Service Centre on 136 186; TTY: 1800 122 969.

Competition Policy

More information on competitive neutrality policy and complaint procedures is published on the Office of the Commissioner for Better Regulation website at www.betterregulation.vic.gov.au

Enquiries can also be emailed to cn@betterreg.vic.gov.au or call (03) 9092 5800.

The Victorian Government Purchasing Board

The Victorian Government Purchasing Board (VGPB) policies set the minimum standards for procurement of non-construction goods and services in Victorian Government departments and some agencies.

The VGPB provides a wide range of templates for people working in Victorian government who develop local procurement procedures, which may be useful to public land managers preparing tender and other procurement processes.

The VGPB Policies, Guidelines, Tools & Templates are available at their website www.procurement.vic.gov.au

Public land managers are strongly encouraged to obtain professional probity advice in the preparation

and management of any process for the competitive allocation of tour operator licences.

Office of the Victorian Small Business Commissioner

The Office of the Victorian Small Business Commissioner (VSBC) was established to promote a competitive and fair business environment for Victorian small businesses.

The VSBC undertakes four main functions:

- information and education
- review of government practices
- investigation of small business complaints
- dispute resolution.

More information on VSBC services is published on their website at www.vsbcc.vic.gov.au/

If you are a small business operator and need assistance on any matter, you may call the VSBC on 13 8722; TTY: (03) 9651 7596. The VSBC may also be contacted by email: enquiries@vsbc.vic.gov.au

