

Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licensing Longer term licences

Fact Sheet
June 2018

What is the purpose of a licence?

The tour operator licensing system provides a consistent legislative framework for licensing commercial tourism and commercial recreation activity on public land and waters in Victoria.

Licensing provides land managers and government with assurances that tour operators and activity providers are:

- implementing risk management measures associated with a tour or activity
- meeting relevant safety standards
- complying with environment protection conditions.

Longer term tour operator licences

Public land managers in Victoria can grant a tour operator licence for up to a ten year period.

The decision whether to grant a tour operator licence and the duration and conditions of a licence, are decisions for the relevant public land manager under the guidance of the policy statement 'Licensing System for Tour Operators and Activity Providers on Public Land in Victoria'.

Public land managers must consider whether the applicant is accredited under a recognised industry certification program that encourages improved environmental, cultural and business management standards or if an applicant has a good compliance history under previous licence conditions.

Licensing system 2018 policy update

The 2018 policy reforms recognise that a good business compliance history is evidence of achieving environmental, cultural protection and safety standards set out in a licence and that this is worthy of the security of a longer licence. They also recognise the value of endorsed industry certification as a way of encouraging higher operational standards by increasing the maximum length of licence for accredited operators.

New licence terms available

Land managers may now offer licences for the following terms:

- a standard licence will continue to be granted for a one year period
- a licence for up to three years can now be granted to 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)
- a new licence for up to five years (extended from three years) can be granted subject to relevant endorsed tourism certification
- a premium licence for up to ten years will continue to be granted subject to relevant endorsed tourism certification.

The programs currently recognised as supportive of an application for a longer-term licence are in Table 1.

Table 1: Recognised tourism certification providers

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 (formerly Better Business Tourism Accreditation Program)	Ecotourism - EcoCertification IV
Respecting Our Culture	EarthCheck Benchmarking and Certification (formerly GreenGlobe Company Standard)

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Longer term licences

When considering applications, particularly for longer term licences (i.e. any licence longer than one year), public land managers should ensure that:

- applications are considered fairly and equitably
- applications to carry out the same activities and/or operate at the same locations are treated consistently
- applicants are provided with transparency in decision-making.

Please note that obtaining accreditation under one of the recognised programs is the preferred basis for considering applications for a longer term tour operator licence, as it enables public land managers to recognise and reward an evolving suite of industry-developed and regularly reviewed operating standards.

Recognition of alternate certification programs, equivalent operating standards

Where an alternate industry certification program appears to deliver operating standards equivalent to those required by the recognised programs, public land managers, applicants or certification providers may contact DELWP for consideration of the program as a recognised program.

Will a longer licence term for tour operators result in changes to public access?

No. Public land is set aside by law for the benefit of the public. A licence grants a non-exclusive right to use land, so members of the public can continue to access and enjoy the land.

Before applying for a tour operator licence

Before making an application for a tour operator licence, prospective licence-holders should contact the relevant public land manager and confirm the availability, terms and conditions of licences for the specific activity/site and their compliance history.

Demonstrating industry certification or compliance history does not guarantee a licence will be granted. The decision to grant a licence, its duration and conditions remains within the discretion of the public land manager.

Further assistance

For more information on tour operator licences please visit www.forestsandreserves.vic.gov.au/tour-operators or call the DELWP Customer Contact Centre on 136 186.

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