



# AUSTRALIA



CHAPTER

1



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## THE AUSSIE SPECIALIST PROGRAM

### I.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of Best Practice	The Aussie Specialist Program
Name of Contributor/ Organization	Tourism Australia (Australian Government Agency)
Address/Contact Details	Post: GPO Box 2721, Sydney NSW 2001  Tel: +61 2 9360 1111 Fax: +61 2 9331 6469 Email: corpaffairs@tourism.australia.com Website: www.specialist.australia.com
Year Initiative Started & Completed	1996 (launched) and is still operating.
Location of Best Practice Project	The Aussie Specialist Program is available in United Kingdom/Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia, Japan and New Zealand.
Awards/Recognitions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Best Travel Agents' Training Program for 2004 and 2005 at the Selling Long Haul and Short Breaks Worldwide Travel Awards.</li> <li>● PATA 2002 Grand Award for Training and Education.</li> <li>● Recognized internationally as the world's first online destination marketing and training program.</li> </ul>

### 2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 The Aussie Specialist Program (ASP) developed by Tourism Australia is a destination marketing training program for retail travel agents. It is intended to equip them with the knowledge and skills, not only to sell and promote Australia more effectively, but also to provide a higher level of service to their customers.

2.2 It is a classic case of how effective partnerships can be forged through exciting, motivating and most importantly, enabling retail travel agents from all over the world to up-sell Australia. There is extensive and active participation of tourism retail agents who are provided with the knowledge and support to effectively market Australia through their partnership with Tourism Australia under the Aussie Specialist Program.



2.3 The Aussie Specialist Program was launched globally in 1996, evolving to an online training platform in 2002, (and is now available in the United Kingdom/Europe, North America, Latin America, Asia and New Zealand) with the aim of creating a network of trained and knowledgeable travel agents who act as a referral for consumer inquiries and a distribution network for Australia.

2.4 This program is designed to provide travel agents with the training, tools and resources to become destination experts. Its on-line platform allows the agents to have a convenient, flexible and user-friendly way to learn at their own time and pace.

2.5 Today, there are over 12,000 consultants participating in the Aussie Specialist Program in the United Kingdom, North America, Latin America, Ireland, Germany, France, Asia and New Zealand. The program is decade old but it is still going strong and continue to generate success in every market where it is being transferred and replicated.

### 3.0 THE OBJECTIVES

3.1 Create an agent training program that excites, motivates and enables all travel consultants to up-sell Australia;

3.2 Engage the support of retail travel agents as partners;

3.3 Equip retail travel agents with high leveraged tools that provide them with special skills and knowledge to sell and promote Australia more than any other destinations of the world.



## **4.0 THE MODEL**

4.1 The program consists of two phases:

- Phase 1: The establishment of a training platform through the creation of a free online training environment; and
- Phase 2: The targeting of particular 'premier' agents who are invited to become marketing partners. These premier agents have a proven track record of selling Australia and the desire to invest in marketing with Tourism Australia.

4.2 Generally, this simple and straightforward program trains retail travel agents with special knowledge and skills to be an 'Aussie Specialist' who can service the needs of the individual travellers (or FIT) well. It consists of a 12-month renewal partnership where the retail travel agent has to stay proficient as an 'Aussie Specialist'.

4.3 As an entry point, they have to undergo training to 'know' Australia, which is covered in 4 modules consisting of:

- Introduction to Australia;
- Features and attractions of each state and territory;
- Building effective itineraries;
- Using their Aussie Specialist status to the best advantage.

There is a short examination with a passing score of at least 85% before the next module can be taken. This is followed by a final examination when all the 4 modules are completed.

## **5.0 THE IMPACT**

5.1 A niche role for retail travel agents where they are clearly focused and committed with an upper hand on product knowledge to promote and sell Australia which comes along with rich dividends for them as qualified Aussie Specialists.

5.2 Among others, an increase in business for the retail travel agents is probably the best incentive for them which is made possible through their better knowledge and confidence in selling Australia.

5.3 High profile exposure for the retail travel agent's business through free listing on Tourism Australia's consumer website [www.australia.com](http://www.australia.com) and in the Travel Australia Guide for consumers.

5.4 Well trained retail travel agents with most up-to-date knowledge of Australia attributed by a variety of support factors:

- Regular product updates via the Aussie Specialist Travel Club;
- Access to the Aussie Specialists Help Desk;
- Access to a complete range of Australia collaterals;
- Invitation to Aussie events;
- Leads to marketing;
- Networking opportunities, etc.

5.5 Currently, Tourism Australia has over 12,000 Aussie Specialists in the program.

## 6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

6.1 The Aussie Specialist Program is a classic example of a win-win partnership whereby both the retail travel agents and Tourism Australia have the common goal to effectively and efficiently market Australia as a 'must see' destination. To ensure retail travel agents are able to achieve this goal, Tourism Australia extends tailored training and support to participants. This enables the dissemination of a consistent message of Australia as a destination to potential travelers.

6.2 This innovative partnership between retail travel agents and Tourism Australia as the National Tourism Organization succeeds in cutting through the multiple layers of international barriers to connect directly with the private sector of retail travel agents and customers from all over the world.

6.3 A global partnership with partners from all over the world is possible and can be successful when there is flexibility to accommodate changes to suit local conditions.

6.4 The Aussie Specialist Program has allowed for the benefits of the internet to be used to maximum advantage while still allowing customers to connect with physical retail travel agents. The power and the use of technology in partnership building with anyone and anywhere in the world not only brings everyone closer together but also drives commitment to all partners to a world class level.



## AUSTRALIA

### THE GBRMPA HIGH STANDARD TOURISM PROGRAM Marine Park Tourism Management

#### 1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION

Official Name of “Best Practice” Initiative	The GBRMPA High Standard Tourism Program
Name of Contributor/ Organization	Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority (GBRMPA)
Address/Contact Details	PO Box 1379, TOWNSVILLE, QUEENSLAND, AUSTRALIA 4810  Tel: +61 7 4750 0775 Fax: +61 7 4772 6093  Email: <a href="mailto:l.mulqueeny@gbrmpa.gov.au">l.mulqueeny@gbrmpa.gov.au</a> Website: <a href="http://www.gbrmpa.gov.au">www.gbrmpa.gov.au</a> Contact Person: Lisha Mulqueeny
Year Initiative Started & Completed	Commenced in 2003 and completed Stage 1 in 2004. Stage 2 program is still ongoing.
Location of Best Practice Project	The Great Barrier Reef Marine Park

#### 2.0 KEY SUMMARY

- 2.1 ‘The GBRMPA High Standard Tourism Program’ is designed to rapidly increase the voluntary uptake of best practices and high standards by tourism businesses operating in the World Heritage listed Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 2.2 The key outcomes of the Program are enhanced environmental protection, reef health and tourism sustainability, all of which contribute to a world-class experience for visitors.
- 2.3 This is a partnership between the GBRMPA (the Australian Government managing agency for the Great Barrier Reef), its 820 tourism operators (2005) and *approved* certification (accreditation) scheme providers. The Program caters for the full range of tourism operators, including:
- Day tours;
  - Overnight and extended tours;

- Diving and fishing charters;
- Aircraft or helicopter tours;
- Bare boats (self-sail);
- Cruise ships;
- Beach hire and water sports;
- Passenger ferries;
- Whale watching tours.



- 2.4 In essence, the GBRMPA provides substantial incentives for tourism operators to voluntarily implement high standards across their operations. Operators who demonstrate high standards to GBRMPA gain appropriate certification from an approved independent certification scheme.
- 2.5 Integral to the Program uptake is the GBRMPA practice of recognizing and substantially rewarding the efforts of all tourism businesses that voluntarily improve their operating standards to a best practice level. (However, those operators who choose not to participate in the Program are not disadvantaged, as the Program uses incentives rather than disincentives to gain commitment from them).
- 2.6 Its success is attributed to the consistent upkeep of high tourism standards which brings fundamental benefits to all involved:
- for the tourism operators - 'a healthy reef' means a more attractive tourism product and more satisfied customers, which leads to increased revenue;
  - for the GBRMPA - high standards bring with them greater protection to the Marine Park (particularly at high use sites), improved understanding by visitors and users of the Great Barrier Reef on the importance of protection and how to experience the Marine Park in a positive and sustainable way; and
  - for the certification providers - a necessary critical mass of tourism businesses to make investing in developing standards financially viable.
- 2.7 By working in harmony with other management tools, such as zoning, the management plans, permits, legislation, policy and other voluntary partnership programs, the GBRMPA High Standard Tourism Program helps reinforce a vibrant and sustainable tourism environment.
- 2.8 Given the enormity of the GBRMP (which, at 348,700 square kilometres is bigger than the United Kingdom, Holland and Switzerland combined); it has the potential to be the most significant of its kind in the world. Today, it is the world's largest World Heritage site and the biggest tropical marine reserve on the globe.



### **3.0 THE OBJECTIVES**

- 3.1 Be an even healthier Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 3.2 Enhance environmental protection of tourism sites at one of the world's most treasured natural areas which contributes about A\$5.1 billion annually from the two (2) million visitors every year.
- 3.3 Accelerate the increase in the number of tourism operators in the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park to operate at a high standard level.
- 3.4 Enhance visitor experiences and satisfaction in the Great Barrier Reef to world-class level.
- 3.5 Involve the tourism industry to cooperate in the wise use, care and protection of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park.
- 3.6 Inculcate a culture of 'striving for best practice' among the tourism operators and crew through a regularly updated system.
- 3.7 Continually find new and better ways through active partnership between the tourism industry and other stakeholders to deliver ecologically sustainable, cost effective, responsive and equitable management of tourism and recreation use within the Marine Park.



## 4.0 THE MODEL

4.1 There are 2 aspects in this High Standard Tourism Program:

- A system to identify and monitor high standard operators, and
- A suite of incentives and benefits to encourage uptake and reward operators.

### 4.1.1 A System To Identify And Monitor

- a) Operations are identified as high standard when they are successfully certified with an 'approved' external certification scheme. Although the GBRMPA does not directly assess the operators individually, it assesses the certification scheme and it is this scheme which will in turn, assess the operators. In other words, an operator is regarded by the GBRMPA as 'high standard' when they become eco-certified.
- b) For certification schemes to be approved, the GBRMPA uses a rigorous assessment process to determine whether the scheme sufficiently covers the criteria that are important to the Marine Park, which are: environmental sustainability, economic sustainability (especially in terms of creating a quality visitor service and experience, and in capacity building of operations), and socio-cultural sustainability (which is about community participation, consultation and cultural respect).
- c) Periodic physical auditing of each certified operator and product is undertaken by the scheme at least once during the term of certification, which currently is 3 years. This auditing aspect is crucial to the credibility of the GBRMPA High Standard Program and the integrity of the *Eco Certification* scheme. By placing the audit requirement on the scheme, the GBRMPA continues to maintain an arms length relationship with the operator, which also saves resources.

### 4.1.2 A Suite of Incentives and Benefits

- a) To stimulate and maintain operators' interest and commitment to achieving the High Standard status, the GBRMPA offers tangible benefits to encourage and reward those operators who become certified. Currently, GBRMPA is offering certified High Standard operators these:
  - Increased certainty of access, through a significantly extended term on their permit to operate in the Marine Park from the standard 6-years to 15-years;
  - Formal GBRMPA recognition as a high standard operator, including showcasing it on a dedicated High Standards GBRMPA webpage, profiling in relevant GBRMPA, partner media kits and publications, and awarding GBRMPA Certificates of High Standard Operation at industry and community events;



- Exposure in the media and at trade events such as the Australian Tourism Exchange; and
  - Increased consumer and trade awareness of certified products and the *Eco Certification* logos through cooperative brand campaigns with Ecotourism Australia and destination marketing organizations.
- b) A key to the sustainability of the Program is that it requires relatively low resources and a small budget from the GBRMPA, and the incentives for operators provide a sufficient return for tourism operators to justify their cost of investing in high standards. These benefits include those that are provided by the GBRMPA, and perhaps most importantly, the direct improvements the operators gain in their everyday operation by adopting the best practices outlined.
- 4.2 The key success factors of the Program are:
- Clear delineation of the criteria that a certification scheme needs to meet in order to be approved by the GBRMPA;
  - Strong support from the Marine Park tourism industry, both for the initial concept and throughout its implementation;
  - A productive partnership with the approved certification scheme, backed-up by a formal Deed of Agreement;
  - Physical audits of operators and their products;
  - Wide publicity and media coverage for operators; and
  - A benefits package that is relatively low cost yet attractive to operators.

## **5.0 THE IMPACT**

- 5.1 The GBRMPA High Standard Tourism Program has had a major impact since its launch and continues to attract more operators. The first rewards were offered in late 2004; and by the end of 2005, there were 25 certified high standard operations in the Marine Park, running 44 individually certified products.
- 5.2 These 25 operators include all of the major high volume tourism operators in the Marine Park, who contribute nearly 40% of all tourist visits there.
- 5.3 This Program has increased the focus by individual tourism operators on site stewardship and the link between care and protection of the Marine Park and their business success.
- 5.4 This Program has also helped drive cultural and organizational change both for the Government agencies and within the tourism industry. The GBRMPA and its partner protection agency staff are able to understand better the benefits that working in partnership with the tourism industry can bring for conservation and marine park protections and how this has a direct impact on dealings with the industry. Similarly, the tourism industry can clearly see the benefits of working in partnership with the managing agency, and approach issues as problems to solve together rather than taking standalone and immovable stance.

## 6.0 LESSONS LEARNED

- 6.1 Keeping the Barrier Reef 'Great' for future generations requires the cooperative and concerted efforts of many parties. In this case, the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority, the Queensland Parks and Wildlife Service, the marine tourism industry, Ecotourism Australia and other certification schemes, other government agencies and the community are all involved in a common mission.
- 6.2 A partnership approach rather than adversarial management can lead to the best environmental outcomes.
- 6.3 Senior level commitment to a powerful vision, well thought out implementation, and a partnership approach with industry and community is critical.
- 6.4 Incentives play a very important part in motivating people to adopt best practice and partnership. Organizations involved in encouraging best practices must be prepared to be generous and creative in providing incentives as well as in committing to new ways of working with industry.
- 6.5 Incentives need not be expensive. For instance, in the case of the GBRMPA, giving extended term permits has little, to no cost for the GBRMPA. It also offers potential cost savings and productivity gains in the form of reduced administration time and more available resources.
- 6.6 Achieving long term business commitment to tourism best practice in a protected area is derived by partnering with industry to truly understand the key factors of good business decision making, that are related to those that impede and/or enhance business competitiveness.
- 6.7 Identification of these business factors provides the 'hook' upon which the protected area manager is able to leverage on significant and commercially viable incentives for tourism operators to invest voluntarily.





- 6.8 Working with an independent certification body to drive quality, set standards and ensure compliance, is a useful way for protected area managers to minimize the cost of implementation. This also help to ensure a distinct line between mandatory and voluntary park standards, both of which have very different compliance requirements and consequences.
- 6.9 Physical auditing of operator standards is critical, not only as a check on individual operator standards, but also to determine the success of the certification scheme in the implementation of its program.