



STRICTLY EMBARGOED UNTIL 11PM FRIDAY 29 FEBRUARY 2008

Tourism's best honoured at industry's night of nights

Australian tourism operators have celebrated their achievements at the industry's night of nights—the 2007 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards (QATAs), held on Friday 29 February at the National Convention Centre in Canberra.

Close to 1000 industry leaders attended the gala spectacular, with a crowd including state and territory tourism ministers and Federal Minister for Tourism Martin Ferguson.

The awards are organised annually by the National Tourism Alliance (NTA) on behalf of the Australian tourism industry and hosted by NTA chairman Col Hughes and Qantas Group General Manager Sales and Distribution Rob Gurney.

"The evening was the high point in an excellent year in Australian tourism," said NTA chairman Col Hughes. "Each award winner has shown outstanding achievement and represents the best of what our fantastic industry has to offer."

Winners were drawn from 25 categories which covered the many sectors of the diverse tourism industry. Some of the highlights of the evening included wins to BridgeClimb Sydney for the major tourism attraction, Adelaide's *Clipsal 500* took out the major festival and event award and the Canberra Institute of Technology's Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management won the tourism education and training award for the second successive year.

Federal Minister for Tourism Martin Ferguson has paid tribute to all of the finalists and award winners.

"Congratulations to all of the finalists and award winners of the 2007 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards. Each of the winners honoured tonight represents innovation, excellence and above all, outstanding achievement and commitment to the Australian tourism industry," said Mr Ferguson.

“The awards have recognised the incredible diversity and quality that exists right across the \$75 billion national industry.”

The night was filled with entertainment, which was headed by MCs Andrew Daddo from Channel Seven’s *The Great Outdoors* and Sally Obermeder from Channel Seven’s *Sydney Weekender*. Special entertainment included Australian music legend Jimmy Little performing the National Anthem and *I Still Call Australia Home* together with the Qantas Choir and the cast from the hit Monty Python musical *Spamalot!* performing a piece from the show.

Qantas, along with other sponsors, Tourism Australia , Australian Capital Tourism, Prime, the National Convention Centre, AAA Tourism, Crowne Plaza Canberra, KPMG, Hyatt Canberra, Datatrax Tourism Touchscreens, Zoo, Canberra District Wine Industry Association and Lion Nathan, have generously supported the 2007 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards.

More information about the 2007 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards can be found at <http://www.tourismalliance.org/tourismalliance/TourismAwards.html>. A description of winners in each category is attached.

For information, pictures or interviews, please contact Sophie Hunter at Morris Walker Pty Ltd ph: 02 6162 0021 e: shunter@morriswalker.com.au or Nicole Sheridan at National Tourism Alliance on 0411 114 176.

Brief description of category winners

1. Major Tourist Attractions – BridgeClimb Sydney, NSW

BridgeClimb Sydney offers tourists a unique and breathtaking way to experience the world-famous Sydney Harbour Bridge. The climb can be performed in two different ways, by either going over the top or through the steel heart of the national icon.

Climb leaders guide tourists on an unforgettable three-and-a-half hour journey over catwalks, ladders and stairways to the bridge summit, 134 metres above the water. Dawn, day, twilight and night climb departures are available, all delivering spectacular 360-degree views of one of the most beautiful harbour cities in the world.

2. Tourist Attractions – Questacon, ACT

Questacon, Australia's National Science and Technology Centre, aims to promote greater understanding and awareness of science and innovation through fun, imaginative and inspirational learning experiences. Questacon does this through a combination of interactive exhibits, themed galleries and science theatre.

Questacon is the national leader in popularising science and technology and is Australia's largest science centre. Annually, Questacon attracts over 400,000 local, interstate and international visitors. As the National Science and Technology Centre, Questacon takes its exhibitions and programs Australia-wide, visiting a further 344,000 people in regional, rural and remote communities each year.

3. Major Festivals and Events – Clipsal 500, SA

In its nine year history Adelaide's *Clipsal 500* has achieved national and international recognition, including the prestigious V8 Supercars Australia 'Promoter of the Year' award for seven consecutive years, eventually gaining entry into the Hall of Fame in 2005.

The 2007 event set a new national motor sport attendance record of 276,900 attendees and since its inception has returned an economic benefit to the state of South Australia of \$186.9 million.

The V8 Supercar Championship round in Adelaide is a unique testing format of consecutive 250km races on Adelaide's world-renowned 3.2km city street circuit. The four-day event combines Australia's largest motor sport festival with a diverse range of quality entertainment to create an enormous carnival.

4. Festivals and Events – Fun4Kids, VIC

Warrnambool's widely acclaimed Fun4Kids Festival attracted over 33,500 visitors in 2007, and has grown to become Australia's most prestigious children's festival.

Celebrating the imagination and creative spirit of children, Fun4Kids showcases high quality children's entertainment, interactive exhibits and awesome workshops.

It provides the perfect winter school holiday escape, as it is set within a 2.5 acre indoor village where children can have a blast while they play, imagine, participate and create.

The event aims to reinforce Warrnambool's position as the region's family friendly destination, delivering some seriously good fun on the Great Ocean Road.

5. Ecotourism – Montague Island Tours, NSW

Montague Island is a unique nature reserve with significant environmental, Aboriginal and European heritage.

First used for a lighthouse in the 1800s, today the island is a critical breeding ground for seabirds. Montague Island Tours offers visitors a world-class natural attraction on the south coast of NSW. Visitors stay exclusively in the restored heritage guesthouse, experiencing spectacular coastal scenery and close encounters with whales, penguins and seals, while contributing to scientific research and conservation.

Montague Island Tours is jointly managed and operated by the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Conservation Volunteers Australia.

6. Heritage and Cultural Tourism – The Workshops Rail Museum, QLD

Built on the site where the first train ever to run in Queensland steamed from 140 years ago, the Workshops Rail Museum in Ipswich is filled with history and fun.

This \$20 million museum offers activities that are new and exciting for all ages, such as driving a train simulator, discovering the romance of rail with restored heritage trains and taking part in behind the scenes workshops.

The Workshops Rail Museum is a true trip down memory lane, not be missed by lovers of history.

7. Indigenous Tourism – Muru Mittigar, NSW

Muru Mittigar not only provides an exciting and educational tourism experience, but is also committed to providing employment opportunities to Aboriginal Australians, presenting positive outcomes to its local community.

Some travellers go thousands of miles to experience Aboriginal culture, however Muru Mittigar offers an authentic Aboriginal experience located in Cranebrook, Western Sydney, through hand-made arts and crafts, traditional arts, cultural workshops, educational tours and Koori cooking.

Muru Mittigar is a unique Aboriginal cultural tourism product.

8. Specialised Tourism Services – Rubyvale Gem Gallery, QLD

Rubyvale Gem Gallery is a small family business situated on the Central Queensland sapphire gemfields. It mines and cuts the local sapphires, and sets them in uniquely designed jewellery, which is then beautifully displayed in the quaint shop, which was renovated from one of the town's original miners' cottages.

Visitors to the gallery can see sapphires being cut and made into jewellery. The most outstanding collection of rare and valuable sapphires on the gemfields is also on display. Relaxing in the beautifully landscaped garden with devonshire tea featuring homemade scones is a treat not to be missed by visitors to the Rubyvale.

9. Visitor Information Services – The Augusta-Margaret River Tourism Association, WA

The Augusta-Margaret River Tourism Association is a progressive, innovative and cohesive organisation with a commitment to foster excellence in sustainable tourism and deliver a positive, unique and memorable tourism experience to all visitors.

The association, which was established 50 years ago, is a not-for-profit organisation with a committee of management elected by the membership. Its mission is to maximise the benefits of tourism for the region and its objectives are to promote the Augusta-Margaret River region, provide quality tourism services and attractions and to conserve and protect the region's unique caves and Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse, vested in its care.

10. Meetings and Business Tourism – Geelong Otway Tourism, VIC

Geelong Otway Tourism has created and refined a recipe for bringing together key stakeholders who deliver services to the business tourism market, and conducting activities to stimulate demand for those services.

With the support of industry partners, Geelong Otway Tourism attracts nearly 20,000 conference delegates a year, with an economic impact of \$48 million on the local economy.

Key strategies to achieve this include the provision of hands-on support to conference organisers, attracting buy-in from the local tourism industry, and conducting high-impact destination marketing programs.

11. Major Tour and/or Transport Operators – The Quicksilver Group, QLD

The Quicksilver Group is Australia's largest Great Barrier Reef cruise operator and a pioneer of environmentally sustainable tourism.

With Cairns and Port Douglas-based operations and spectacular outer Great Barrier Reef and island destinations, the group offers an expansive range of reef experiences to visitors to tropical north Queensland.

The company's landmark reef experiences include Quicksilver's Outer Reef and Low Isles cruises, Great Adventures' reef and Green Island cruises, Silver Series' adventure dive and snorkel trips, Pro Dive Cairns live-aboard trips and dive courses, plus the eco-sensitive five star Green Island Resort.

12. Tour and/or Transport Operators – Go West Tours, VIC

Combining innovation with old-fashioned customer service, Go West Tours operates small group day tours to Melbourne's iconic sightseeing destinations.

Over the past two years Go West has pioneered a number of industry-first innovations, including a personal audio translation system and an in-coach personal video service. These innovations contribute to a wholistic approach to the touring experience, delivered by a passionate and highly-trained team.

Go West also offers entertaining and memorable day tours to the Great Ocean Road and to Phillip Island's famous Penguin Parade.

13. Adventure Tourism – Tri State Safaris, NSW

For 15 years Tri State Safaris has been taking its clients to some of Australia's most remarkable and remote locations. With a focus on nature based touring, the company has an enviable reputation for its knowledge and expertise in the outback.

With destinations from Broken Hill to Broome, and the Simpson Desert in between, there's bound to be a bit of adventure in every tour. Imagine standing where no other person has ever stood before, breathing in a cool desert sunrise, hearing a dingo howl and looking up at starlit skies.

Operating under the philosophy of "Remember when a holiday was a real adventure", Tri State Safari tours offers outback adventures to remember.

14. Tourism Marketing – Tourism Noosa, QLD

Tourism Noosa is a dynamic and innovative local tourism authority with two visitor information centres servicing the area.

Tourism Noosa has spearheaded the marketing campaign, *There's Only One Noosa* in 2007, which has brought 1.7 million visitors to Noosa and the surrounding area and continues to excel in the tourism marketing area.

By working to bring tourists to the area, Tourism Noosa has not only helped thousands of tourists find their way, but has helped business to boom in the local economy.

15. Tourism Education and Training – The Canberra Institute of Technology Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, ACT

The Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management at the Canberra Institute of Technology is one of Australia's leading and most innovative tourism educators.

It makes a significant contribution to tourism education through programs designed to raise industry professionalism, particularly in skill shortage areas and through training staff for the local industry.

The faculty's three departments (Tourism, Hospitality and Hotel Management, and Culinary Skills) offer an extensive range of programs from short courses to advanced diplomas that articulate into degree programs.

16. Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services – Grazing, ACT

Grazing is located in the magnificent 1865 National Trust Royal Hotel in the quaint village of Gundaroo. The ironbark floorboards reflect the glow of the five huge open fireplaces and ambience is a great compliment to the award winning cuisine.

Grazing is completely focused on fresh regional farm produce. The menu features only the wines of the Canberra district. The flavours of the district are

well represented— 'fresh from the farm dam' yabbies, tender Bungendore grain fed beef and organic vegetables plucked from the kitchen garden.

Grazing is the perfect venue to have a true Canberra district food and wine experience.

17. Tourism Wineries – Bimbadgen Estate, NSW

Situated high on a hill overlooking the Hunter Valley, Bimbadgen Estate is one of the Hunter's most picturesque wineries. Bimbadgen Estate is a market leader for tourism in the area, offering a full wine educational experience comprising of 36-year-old vineyards, an open plan winemaking facility, contemporary cellar door, award-winning restaurant and accommodation all in one location.

Bimbadgen hosts up to six musical events throughout the year including Bimbadgen Blues and A Day on the Green. It is a pioneer of winery concerts in the area, hosting both Australian and international artists and attracting over 20,000 visitors to the area in the past 12 months.

18. Tourist and Caravan Parks – Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort, QLD

Set amidst 28 acres of tropical landscaped gardens, Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort is a friendly oasis for holiday makers from Australia and all over the world.

Cairns Coconut Caravan Resort has condos, villas and cabins designed to suit couples, families and groups looking for a holiday with a home away from home feeling.

Free activities include two huge resort pools with hot spa, cold spa and waterslides, tennis, mini-golf, beach volleyball, an enormous adventure playground and much more.

19. Backpacker Accommodation – Bungalow Bay Koala Village, QLD

Located on Magnetic Island, Bungalow Bay Koala Village is a 100-bed backpacker YHA resort catering to a mainly international clientele.

Facilities include 25 double / twin bungalows and five islander bungalows offering dorm accommodation in a bush setting, with free-ranging native wildlife so that visitors can get a true Australian wildlife experience.

Bungalow Bay Koala Village has advanced accreditation with the Australian Eco Tourism Association.

It has all the facilities of a four star island resort, with the reception building winning seven building awards for tropical architecture. The resort is located at Horseshoe Bay, and the features an onsite wildlife park.

20. Hosted Accommodation – Monreale, VIC

Monreale is an estate comprising a 100-year-old country house, four cottages and two retreats and is surrounded by three acres of rainforest gardens, waterfalls, ponds and tree fern groves.

Monreale reflects the needs of guests who demand privacy and romance within the confines of their personal space.

Romantic ambiance, deluxe spas in the open plan living area, large picture windows and wood fires are just a few of the luxuries on offer at Monreale.

21. Unique Accommodation – Faraway Bay, WA

Faraway Bay is a soul enriching hide-away on Western Australia's remote and spectacular Kimberley coastline. At Faraway Bay a few days can offer an extremely relaxing experience.

Accessible only by air, a maximum of just 12 guests share this isolated wilderness in secluded cliff-top cabins. Tourists can explore and discover the secrets of this ancient landscape, including Ice Age rock art and bird watching, or simply just beach comb, then lounge, stargaze, and lounge some more.

22. Standard Accommodation – The Noorla Heritage Resort, QLD

The Noorla Heritage Resort is a grand Italian Art Deco villa located on the tropical coast of Queensland. All rooms have genuine antiques, Persian carpets and classic lamps. These features are blended beautifully with modern amenities and comforts.

Highlights of the Noorla include high tea at the Ceylon tea rooms and meeting an abundance of birdlife while exploring the gardens.

The Noorla has been described as a grand mansion, guests are able to relax and take in their beautiful surroundings, or enjoy a number of attractions within close distance to the resort.

23. Deluxe Accommodation – Crown Promenade Hotel, VIC

Crown Promenade Hotel features 465 contemporary and stylish rooms including 18 studios and three suites. Designed to be functional and relaxing, all rooms offer city or bay views. Facilities include Melbourne's only purpose-built and fully flexible Crown Conference Centre, Mesh restaurant, Tonic bar and The Deck, a leisure centre with a 25-metre infinity indoor heated pool plus a café with wireless internet technology.

Strategically located near the central business district and leisure precincts, the award-winning hotel is part of the Crown Entertainment Complex with more than 40 restaurants and bars, a 24-hour world-class casino, cinemas, retail and entertainment facilities.

24. Luxury Accommodation – The Louise, SA

Set atop a hill, the luxurious Louise retreat is surrounded by hundreds of acres of vines overlooking the magnificent Barossa Valley.

This vineyard retreat consistently exceeds the expectations of the sophisticated traveller, thanks to the vision, resources, passion and commitment of its owners and staff.

The retreat offers just 15 luxuriously appointed suites, each ideally situated to provide guests with complete privacy and stunning views over the surrounding vineyards of the Barossa.

25. New Tourism Development – Piners and Miners, TAS

Pure Tasmania's new Piners and Miners signature experience on the state's west coast takes visitors into one of the most remote and undiscovered parts of the world, uncovering a century-old story of triumph and tragedy.

The intimate, engaging experience has been carefully created to highlight the west coast's natural and historic beauty – the temperate rainforests of the World Heritage Area, a long history of mining and harvesting of huon pine and the tenacity of the human spirit in the face of adversity.

Piners and Miners offers a unique experience, combining forest walks, history, four-wheel-driving and beautiful scenery.