



Tourism's best honoured at the Big Event.

Australian tourism operators have celebrated their achievements at the industry's Big Event – the Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, held tonight, Friday 27 February at Crown Melbourne.

Winners were drawn from 27 categories covering the many sectors of the diverse tourism industry. Two new categories were judged in 2008 – the Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism and an Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual – in the national arena.

Rob Gurney, Group General Manager Sales and Distribution, Qantas congratulated **Skyrail Rainforest Cableway**, the inaugural winner of the Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism.

"Our award was designed to recognise and encourage Australian tourism operators to minimise their impact on the local environment, respect local culture and provide benefits to local communities," Mr Gurney said.

"Skyrail shows leadership in its contribution to improving local environmental conditions through sustainable construction, revegetation, and the Sky Rail Rainforest Foundation. It is a complete rainforest experience."

The national Outstanding Contribution Award was won by **Laurie O'Meara** from Western Australia. Laurie has been the driving force and champion of the Australian Tourism Accreditation program, which provided consistency in service and the types of tourism products offered to visitors.

There were two Hall of Fame winners - **Fun4Kids** from Victoria for Festivals and Events and **Quicksilver Group** in Queensland for Major Tour and/or Transport Operator.

Some of the other highlights of the evening included wins to **Australia Zoo** for major tourist attraction, Adelaide's **2008 Clipsal 500** for major festival and events and Tasmania's **Maria Island Walk** for adventure tourism. A full list of winners is attached.

Over 800 industry leaders attended the event, 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.

"The evening was the high point in a difficult year in Australian tourism," said National Tourism Alliance chairman Col Hughes. "Each award winner has shown outstanding achievement and represents the best of what our passionate industry has to offer."

The night was hosted by Richard Wilkins, a man synonymous with the world of entertainment and Craig Willis, the "voice of tennis". Guests enjoyed a taste of "Wicked".

Qantas, along with other sponsors, Tourism Australia, Tourism Victoria, Crown Melbourne, Weekend Australian Magazine, AAA Tourism, Hostplus, KPMG, Datatrax Tourism Touchscreens, Destination Melbourne, Skybus, Preece and Lion Nathan, have generously supported this year's national Awards.

More information about the 2008 Qantas Australian Tourism Awards, can be found at <http://www.tourismalliance.org/tourismalliance/TourismAwards.html>.

For information, photos or interviews, please contact Nicole Sheridan at the National Tourism Alliance on 0411 114 176 or nicole@tourismalliance.org.

QANTAS AUSTRALIAN TOURISM AWARDS 2008 WINNERS

Category	Winner	State	Highly Commended
Major Tourist Attractions	Australia Zoo	Qld	
Tourist Attractions	Pet Porpoise Pool	NSW	Cleland Wildlife Park (SA)
Major Festivals and Events	2008 Clipsal 500 Adelaide	SA	
Festivals and Events	Fun4Kids Festival	VIC	
Ecotourism	Montague Island Tours	NSW	
Heritage and Cultural Tourism	Old Melbourne Gaol Crime and Justice Experience	VIC	The Workshops Rail Museum (Qld)
Indigenous Tourism	Kooljaman at Cape Leveque	WA	
Specialised Tourism Services	APT Group – VIP Touring	NT	The Wilderness Gallery (TAS)
Visitor Information Services	Augusta Margaret River Tourism Association	WA	Geelong Visitor Information Centres (VIC)
Meetings and Business Tourism	Adelaide Convention Centre	SA	
Major Tour and/or Transport Operator	Quicksilver Group	QLD	
Tour and/or Transport Operator	The Discovery Group	QLD	
Adventure Tourism	The Maria Island Walk	TAS	
Tourism Marketing	Quicksilver Group	QLD	
Tourism Education and Training	SKYCITY Darwin	NT	
Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services	Café Pronto	WA	
Tourism Wineries	De Bortoli Winery and Restaurant	VIC	
Tourist and Caravan Parks	Lane Cove River Tourist Park	NSW	
Backpackers Accommodation	Sydney Central YHA	NSW	
Hosted Accommodation	Crystal Creek Meadows Luxury Cottages and Spa Retreat	NSW	
Unique Accommodation	Faraway Bay, The Bush Camp	WA	
Standard Accommodation	Narnu Farm	SA	
Deluxe Accommodation	The Old Woolstore Apartment Hotel	TAS	
Luxury Accommodation	SKYCITY Darwin	NT	
New Tourism Development	Greater Blue Mountains Drive	NSW	Novotel Forest Resort Creswick (VIC)
Qantas Award for Sustainable Tourism	Skyrail Rainforest Cableway	QLD	
Outstanding Contribution by an Individual (National)	Laurie O'Meara	WA	