

PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT

[region name]

ECO DESTINATION CERTIFICATION

Prepared by Ecotourism Australia

[date]. Not for publication.

Logo of region



Logo of region's key stakeholders who have assisted with prelim assessment.

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Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners and custodians of country throughout Australia, in particular the [specific nations] people as the Traditional Custodians of the land that encompasses [region name]. We acknowledge their continuing connection to land, waters and community. We pay our respects to them and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people living in [region name], their elders past, present and future.

1. Introduction

[context and introduction specific to region and why they began the assessment]

To provide clarity and advice to [region name] this preliminary assessment has been undertaken to scope the volume of work required to complete the ECO Destinations program. This report outlines the finding of the preliminary assessment and explains the percentage (%) of criteria that is near completion and the areas that would require considerable resourcing to complete. It also explains which criteria are required for each level of certification, assisting the council to make an informed decision on the goal level of certification.

2. Methodology/scope

The preliminary assessment was completed over a period of three (3) weeks. It involved EA'S Programs Manager working in conjunction with [region name] representatives to find information (including documents, weblinks and other supporting information) which can be used to complete the criteria required for an ECO Destination Certification application. The information (including relevant documents) was inputted into the ECO Destination Assessment and Reporting platform, then assessed if it was enough to complete the criteria or not.

Information about the region was sourced by various avenues including:

- interviews with key personnel representing key stakeholders in the region
- reading and searching through various websites
- reading and noting major planning, reporting and policy documents published by the council or other important stakeholders within the region and/or state.
- researching applicable state legislation and looking for examples of the legislation being implemented in the region.

See section three (3) for more information on specific interviewees and websites used.

It is important to note:

- the preliminary assessment is only an indication and final decisions on compliance can only be assessed by a third-party independent auditor. The assessment is based on EA's experience in coaching destinations through their application, the learnings from previous destination's audits and the guidance and criteria requirements that are outlined in the online assessment and reporting platform.
- the preliminary assessment was completed within a dedicated timeframe (30 hours) so some criteria may in fact have more information available and obtain a result better than the report outlines. However, for the purpose of this assessment, it is based on the information found by, and provided to, the EA Programs Manager and inputted into the platform. There no doubt is further information that may strengthen the reporting which

can be provided by the council or other stakeholders should the destination progress to the application stage.

All information collected about the region specific to each criterion is saved in the reporting platform, so there will be a base of information accessible should [REGION NAME] choose to progress with their application.

The scope of the assessment was not just within the council's management, but of the entire geographical region which [REGION NAME] covers. It included all aspects of land management, including those managed by [REGION NAME] and parks and reserves managed by Parks Victoria, among other organisations and community groups. The ECO Destination certification requires a holistic approach to assessment and looks at what the entire region and community as a whole, not just the projects the [REGION NAME] are managing themselves.

3. Summary of contacts

Multiple interviews were undertaken that allowed the key destination stakeholders to provide information on specific areas. Other contacts were also corresponded with to obtain additional specific documents or for further information relative to their areas of work.

Name	Title	Organisation	Form of contact
	Manager Economic Recovery	[council name]	Interview and email correspondence
	Sustainability Project Planner	[council name]	Interview and email correspondence
	Environmental Sustainability Coordinator	[council name]	Email correspondence
	Administration Officer - Economic Development	[council name]	Email correspondence
	Senior Tourism Officer	[council name]	Interview and email correspondence
	Chief Executive Officer	[RTO]	Interview and email correspondence
	Acting District Manager	[PAM]	Interview and email correspondence
	Executive Assistant	[Aboriginal corporation]	Email correspondence

Summary of key websites used to access information (not exhaustive list):

[council name]	[Council website]
[PAM name]	[PAM website]
[RTO]	[RTO corporate site]
[RTO]	[RTO visitor site]
[state dept of environment/planning/tourism]	[website]
[water management agency]	[website]
[Aboriginal corporation]	[website]
[LTO visitor website]	[website]
[State Government]	[website]

[LTO or business member organisation]

[website]

Note: This is not an exhaustive list, just to highlight the main points of information.

4. Assessment Summary

Four categories of assessment

The assessment categorised each criterion into one of three categories listed below. This illustrates the level of work required by the council to complete that criterion.

Complete = Criteria which can be completed using existing documentation and practices.

No additional pieces of work should be required besides reporting on existing information and initiatives and/or providing minor examples.

Partially complete = Criteria in which some strong information was found. Yet there is still some work to do in regard to updating of documents, providing examples of local implementation, and/or uploading some minor documents.

Considerable work = Criteria which requires new documents to be created (or they may exist but have not been found during this assessment) and demonstration of practices/policies being implemented in the region.

N/A = criteria not applicable at the level of certification and does not need to be completed

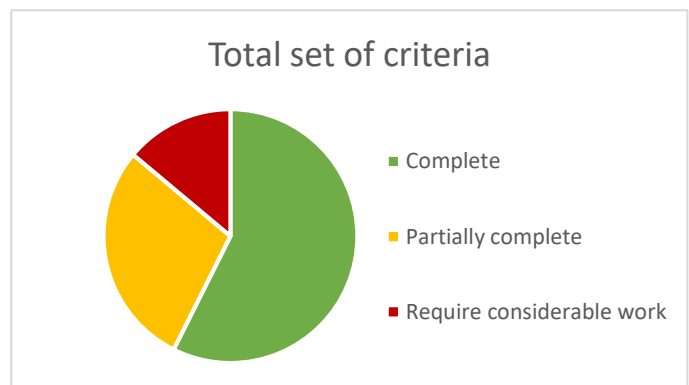
Overall: The complete set of criteria

By assessing all criteria required of the destination (across all levels of certification), this is the complete summary of the level of completion:

57% are complete

29% are partially complete

14% require considerable work



Breakdown by certification level

When undertaking the ECO Destination

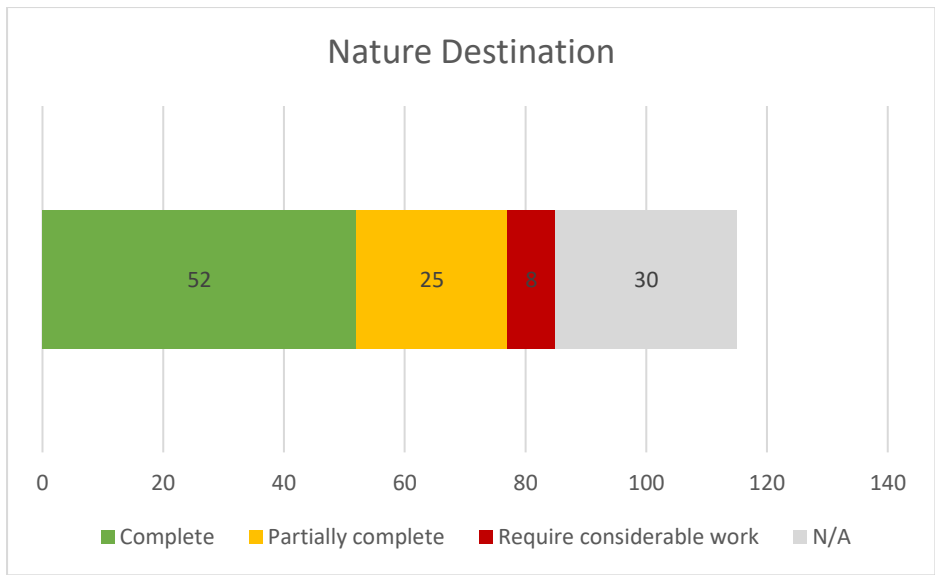
Certification program, there are three levels of certification the region can be certified at:

- Nature Destination
- Ecotourism Destination
- GD Certified (Ecotourism) Destination

For each level of certification, there are specific criteria that are required to be completed.

Please note: At all levels there is a requirement to conduct stakeholder workshops to engage the community in the program. These will vary dependent on the level the council wishes to achieve.

Below is a breakdown of each certification level and the assessed level of completion by [REGION NAME].



For Nature Destination level, there are a total of 85 criteria required to be completed. Remaining 30 (grey in graph above) of the total criteria are not required by this level of certification.

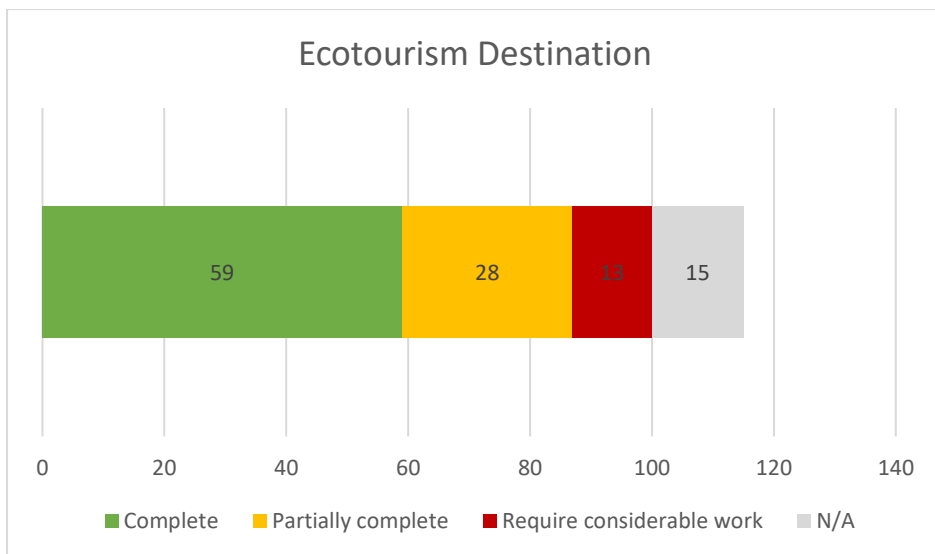
Of the 85 criteria required for completion at this level:

61% are complete

29% are partially complete

9% require considerable work

Estimated minimum hours required to achieve Nature level certification: 130 hours



For Ecotourism Destination level, there are a total of 100 criteria required to be completed. Remaining 15 (grey in graph above) of the total criteria are not required by this level of certification.

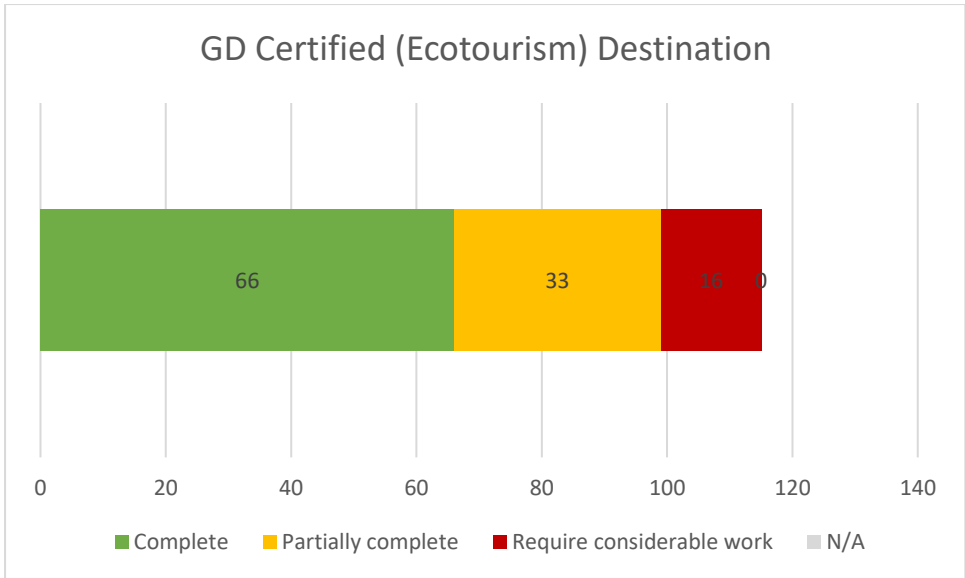
Of the 100 criteria required for completion at this level:

59% are complete

28% are partially complete

13% require considerable work

Estimated minimum hours required to achieve Ecotourism level certification: 200 hours



For Ecotourism Destination level, all 115 criteria are required to be completed. Of the 115 criteria required for completion at this level:

57% are complete

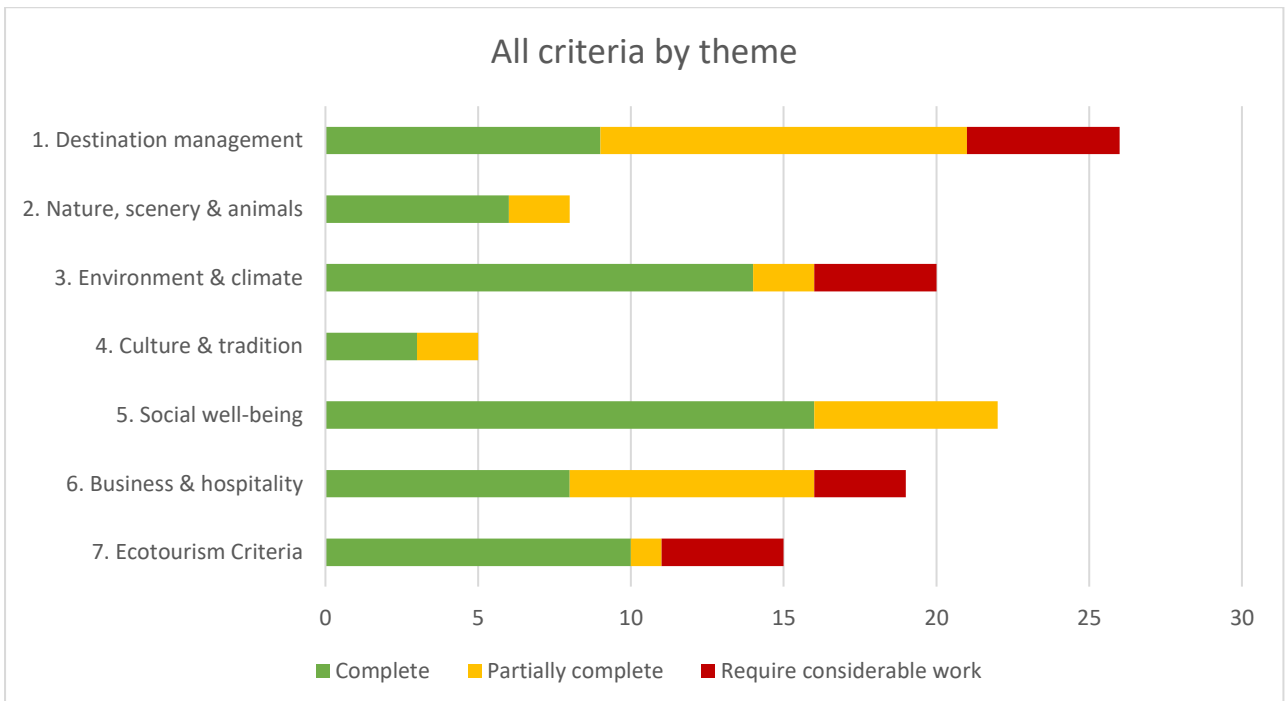
29% are partially complete

14% require considerable work

Estimated minimum hours required to achieve GD Certified (Ecotourism) level certification: 300 hours

Breakdown by theme

The set of criteria required by a destination to complete comprises of six (6) sustainability theme and one (1) ecotourism specific theme. Below is a graph explaining each theme’s level of completeness. It is important to remember this is the entire data set, and with the exception of GD Certified (Ecotourism) destinations, some criteria will not be required at all levels of certification.



5. Main findings

Strengths in existing documentation/practices:

The areas of

- Energy monitoring, minimisation and transition to renewables
- Climate change adaptation and information
- Waste and recycling management
- Water management
- Community participation
- Local economy
- Health and safety
- Landscape and scenery management
- Indigenous culture management

Areas that would need to be worked on or additional examples required:

- Intangible heritage conservation (some Indigenous cultural aspects but also need non-Indigenous heritage)
- Protecting captive animals in tourism
- Monitoring of tourism impacts on nature
- Visitor education and promotion of ecotourism/how to be sustainable
- Property rights

Key documents/focus area that would need a large amount of work:

- Light pollution management
- Sustainable mobility (public transport and soft mobility strategy)
- Ecotourism and sustainability in local businesses - promotion, incentives and rewards.
- Sustainable/ecotourism policy (separate to plan) and plan for entire area – then monitoring and reporting on that policy and plan.

6. Conclusion

[region specific analysis]

Also noted during interviews and in the International Tourism Plan was the shift as a tourism destination from predominantly domestic visitation to increasing international visitor numbers and length of stay. This internationally developed certification program may assist in ensuring the region is prepared for international visitation as it brings provides an international best practice standard to strive towards. The program may also assist the region with appealing to the right type of visitor who cares for the region it is visiting.

[region specific analysis], so it is advised to begin with aiming at an Ecotourism level certification and then reassess the desire to step up the standard. Or the council can elect to begin at Nature Destination level, and upgrade easily to Ecotourism level at a later date if desired.

Noting there would need to be targeted and thorough stakeholder engagement with stakeholders such as [insert region specific] along the process, ensuring approval, support and engagement.

[region specific explanation]

7. Recommendation

It is recommended that [REGION NAME] undertakes the ECO Destination application (seeking the Ecotourism level) as it is considered achievable for the destination and a fantastic fit to the region's image of a place to experience nature.

Preliminary Assessment prepared by

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