

Update

Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project

Issue No 5 June 2007

The Project...

The Department of Sustainability and Environment (DSE) is leading a project to reform the licensing system for tour operators and activity providers operating on public land.

This project seeks to improve current licensing arrangements to encourage a viable, growing, nature based tourism industry on public land and ensure safe and sustainable use of that land.

Specifically, the project objectives are to:

1. Improve opportunities for industry investment and security;
2. Create a simpler and more efficient licensing system;
3. Encourage higher operating standards;
4. Improve management of capacity – both environmental and visitor;
5. Improve compliance;
6. Manage all organised groups in an appropriate and equitable manner.

Parks Victoria, Tourism Victoria and Tourism Alliance are closely involved in the project.

General Update

In 2006 the *Directions Paper for Public Land Tour Operator and Activity Provider Licence Reform Project* was released for public comment.

A final policy statement and implementation plan is currently being drafted in response to the 80 submissions received.

A new 10 year maximum licence term

A number of submissions to the Directions paper sought a further extension to the proposed 7-year Premium Licence term to 10 years. A maximum 10 year licence term has now been agreed and this commitment is reflected in Victoria's Draft Nature Based Tourism Strategy 2007-2011 due to be released soon.

The longer licence term will better position Victoria as a leader in nature based tourism, it will provide greater business security and a longer planning cycle for those operators entering the international market. Legislation will be required to implement the proposed 10 year maximum licence term.

An Intermediate licence term

In addition to the standard one and 10 year licences, it is proposed that an intermediate licence term also be provided. The length of the intermediate licence will be determined through the certification project outlined below.

Certification Project

A review of tourism certification programs is currently underway in order to determine the levels of certification required for the intermediate licence term and the 10 year maximum licence term.

This review is being undertaken through discussion with all of the certification program providers currently recognised by Parks Victoria as adequate for three year licences.

Who needs a licence?

A large number of submissions were concerned that the proposed definition appeared to include activity undertaken by non commercial recreational and community groups, and that requiring such groups to obtain a licence would impact significantly on their finances and activities. This was not the intention of the Directions Paper.

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Who needs a licence? Continued.....

As public land is set aside through legislation for the benefit of the public as a whole (these benefits include protection of natural and cultural values, sustainable resource use and provision for public recreation, enjoyment and education), non-commercial sport and recreation clubs, groups and individuals are not required to hold a tour operator licence.

A more comprehensive definition of who does and does not require a licence will be provided in the final policy statement and during the legislative drafting phase key stakeholders will be consulted to ensure the new definition does not inadvertently include non-commercial recreational clubs or community organisations.

New Tour Operator and Licence Reform Project Team member

Gerard McHugh has taken 12 months leave and Cindy Hazell has been employed as a Policy Officer in the Tourism and Recreation Team at the Department of Sustainability and Environment. Cindy's main role will be to finalise the policy statement and to implement the action plan in partnership with Parks Victoria.

To be placed on a mailing list to receive future updates about this project or to raise issues in relation to the project, email the project team at:

licence.reforms@dse.vic.gov.au