

AUSTRALIAN TOURISM ACCREDITATION PROGRAM (ATAP)



INFORMATION PACK FOR OPERATORS



CONTENTS

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?	3
WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIAN TOURISM ACCREDITATION PROGRAM?	3
HISTORY	4
INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS	5
ACCREDITATION CYCLE	7
ACHIEVING TOURISM ACCREDITATION.....	8
CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION	9
ACCREDITATION FEES	10
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	12
THE ACCREDITATION LOGO	13
OWNERSHIP AND SALE OF A BUSINESS.....	13
CONFIDENTIALITY WITHIN THE ATAP PROCESS	14
HELP IS AT HAND TO WORK THROUGH THE PROGRAM.....	14
COMPLIANCE – REMOVAL OF ACCREDITATION.....	14
RIGHT OF APPEAL	14



WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Accreditation is a means for encouraging the professional development and continuous improvement of the tourism industry. It works by giving public and consumer recognition to those businesses that have met a standard within their business operations and who strive to maintain and improve ethical and professional expectations that are set and agreed to by the industry itself.

In effect accreditation allows an industry to become self-regulating, and to take charge of its own affairs without undue interference from unsympathetic regulators.

Accreditation is a vital ingredient in ensuring the continued success of Australia's tourism industry.

Furthermore, meeting the demands of the consumer in a constantly changing marketplace is best met through the establishment and maintenance of agreed industry standards.

WHAT IS THE AUSTRALIAN TOURISM ACCREDITATION PROGRAM?

The Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) is a business development program based on Quality Assurance principles. The program is adapted from the Australian Tourism Accreditation Standard which was developed by industry and establishes the minimum requirements for tourism accreditation programs nationally.

ATAP is an online program that requires businesses to demonstrate that they have met industry expectations and standards within their business operating systems. This includes areas such as:-

- Compliance with both business and industry specific regulations;
- Adherence to industry sector standards and codes of practice;
- Risk management procedures and training;
- Business and marketing plans;
- Human resources management policy and procedures;
- Customer service policy and procedures;
- Environmental management policies and procedures.

The program encourages and supports the development of professional management systems that will lead to reliability, consistency and predictability in the operation of a business which in turn results in improved customer service and satisfaction.

ATAP can provide customers and industry colleagues with an assurance that participating businesses are committed to professionalism both in business operations and delivery of service.

ATAP is available to any business that engages with visitors which includes, but is not limited to, operators in the following categories: accommodation, tours, attractions, restaurants, wineries/cellar doors, festivals/events, or online booking services.

In addition, there are two sector specific accreditation programs that ATAP offer:

- Camp/Adventure Activity Accreditation
 - This has been developed with the Australian Camps Association to set industry standards for camp and/or adventure activity providers. It is recognised by the Department of Education and Training (DET) for residential campsites hosting Government school groups.
- Visitor Information Centre Accreditation
 - Only accredited Visitor Information Centres can display the registered 'i' trademark (yellow "i" sign with the blue background) and have approved Vic Roads signage directing visitors to the centre.





HISTORY

Tourism accreditation in Australia has existed for many years within various subsectors. In Victoria, the Better Business Tourism Accreditation Program (BBTAP), which was an accreditation program operated by the Tourism Accreditation Board of Victoria was developed in 1997 to provide an accreditation program open to all tourism businesses.

Major development of the program occurred when the various National Tourism Accreditation Programs (South Australia, Tasmania, Northern Territory and Western Australia) joined with BBTAP to convert the Victorian pilot project into a national on-line accreditation program, which was called the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP) in 2008. At the same time these stakeholders adopted the name ATAP in each of their jurisdictions. Each state shared their intellectual property and contributed financially to develop ATAP and the online program into a national program.

On 27th November 2013 Tourism Accreditation Australia Ltd (TAAL) was reconstituted to become the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program Ltd (ATAP Ltd), a not for profit organisation owned by members.

ATAP Ltd is dedicated to improving Australia's destination competitiveness by increasing the quality of tourism products and services. ATAP is also dedicated to developing sustainable tourism businesses through continuous improvement. These twin objectives are achieved through the operation of ATAP.

In February 2016 ATAP Ltd was reconstituted to Australian Tourism Industry Council Ltd (ATIC) which is a national industry representative organisation that manages two industry development programs – ATAP and the Australian Tourism Awards.

ATIC owns the ATAP accreditation standard, benchmarks, trademark and online user portal. ATIC Ltd is responsible for developing, marketing and delivering the program to tourism businesses both directly and through licenced member organisations.

On 1 September 2015 the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) took on the management of ATAP in Victoria.

VTIC is the peak body for Victoria's tourism and events industry; and works tirelessly as a respected advocate, supporter of industry, powerful ally and partner to your business. VTIC offers members the latest news and information, connections to other tourism and events professionals, input to their 'one voice' policy agenda, accredited training and invaluable business advice to help your business thrive and avoid pitfalls.

If you would like to find out more about VTIC Membership please contact Ian McDougal on 03 8662 5431 or imcdougal@vtic.com.au if you would like to know more.



INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS

The continued success of the Victorian tourism industry is dependent on developing and maintaining quality products and services, which consistently meet or exceed the expectations of customers at both a national and international level.

To achieve this goal, tourism businesses must pay close attention to their business practices to ensure reliability and consistency of products and services. Customer confidence is the key to enhancing profitability. The continuation of the Program will provide a myriad of benefits for tourism industry operators.

Businesses that get the most out of being an accredited product utilise the process as a tool to enhance their businesses practices, review procedures and support their ongoing continuous improvement. Whilst this may not attract customers directly, it can improve reputation, staff outputs and the overall customer experience. They are also usually better prepared when undertaking further business development activities such as entering into the awards programs as they have already undertaken a review of their businesses policies and procedures and are committed to the businesses continuous development.

THE BENEFITS ARE:

For your business

- An improved reputation and higher degree of marketability in the marketplace
- Greater customer confidence and satisfaction, which leads to repeat business
- More effective management systems and improved employee morale and
- Improved training and communications
- A competitive advantage over non-accredited operators
- Access to incentives and discounts not available to non-accredited tourism businesses
- Improved profitability through the implementation of better operating systems
- Ability to display the ATAP 'tick' logo at your point of business and on all promotional and advertising material
- Increased/improved confidence of wholesale and inbound operators
- A head start on your Victorian Tourism Awards submission

For your customer

- Signals a commitment to quality
- Reliability of their chosen product and service
- Consistency in the delivery of their experience
- Certainty of the product and service they will experience
- Satisfies safety and security needs
- A recognised National program through which to address concerns with product delivery

For the industry

- Provides travel retailers/wholesalers with an assurance of professional service
- The Accreditation Logo will be promoted broadly as a symbol of quality within the Australian tourism industry
- Contributes to a more sustainable and competitive tourism industry for Australia
- Demonstrates industry leadership and initiative



THE INCENTIVES ARE:

- Listing on websites such as www.trustthetick.com.au.
- A discounted listing on www.visitvictoria.com.
- Extended licence period for a tour operator's licence though Parks Victoria (3-year as opposed to 1-year licence period for non-accredited businesses).
- Complimentary marketing materials.
- Access to business support tools and templates.
- Benefits associated with national consumer and trade promotion of the ATAP logo.
- Access to professional support and advice from the ATAP team at any time.
- Recognition and promotion of the accreditation logo in government-sponsored programs and tourism publications.
- Every accredited operator is issued with a distinctive logo, which may be used on all advertising and promotional material.

Specifically for Camp/Adventure Activity Accreditation

- Recognition by the Department of Education and Training which enables your business to host government school groups.



Specifically for Visitor Information Centres

- Eligible to use the Visitor Information Centre (VIC) trademark. The blue and yellow italic i has been in the marketplace for some years now and has become a powerful and sought after trademark.
- Opportunity to use Vic Roads signage (including gateway and directional on major roads).
- Only accredited Visitor Information Centres can be provided with directional signage featuring the VIC trademark.
- Marketing of the Visitor Information Centre brand and network to the travelling public and industry.
- Free listings in official publications such as the official visitors' guides, touring maps and authorised digital content.
- Access to training opportunities including the Visitor Information Centre professional development seminars and the annual Visitor Information Centre Summit.
- Participation in the state Visitor Information Centre Reference Group (as appointed) and the regional Visitor Information Centre network group to share information and ideas with other accredited centres and access to research, regular updates, information and advice.
- Access to benchmarking data and monthly reports.
- The accreditation process also assists Visitor Information Centres in running a more professional service and promotes continuous improvement.



ACCREDITATION CYCLE

Accreditation is a three year cycle which is subject to annual renewals. It involves an initial application, two years of renewal followed by a full review at the end. Once a review is complete, the cycle is repeated from the first renewal.

For new operators just starting the accreditation process, the full accreditation program must be completed. There may also be sector-specific requirements, for example for those applying for Visitor Information Centre or Camp/Adventure Activity accreditation.

Annual renewals involve completing a limited number of sections, taking approximately 15 minutes to complete.

At the time of review, operators update the full sections that would have been completed at the time of new application. We encourage businesses to go through their various policies and procedures and review and update where necessary. This assists operators to ensure their business systems and plans are current and they are on track for their desired goals and achievements.

Within each three year cycle a site visit will be undertaken at which time the application contents will be verified and the business will have an opportunity to gain feedback from ATAP's experienced verification officers.

For sector-specific accreditation programs (Camp /Adventure Activity, and Visitor Information Centres) a site visit will be conducted prior to accreditation approval being granted.





ACHIEVING TOURISM ACCREDITATION

STEPS TO ACHIEVING ACCREDITATION:

- Step 1:** Read through the information in this pack. Please feel free to contact our office should you have any questions.
- Step 2:** When you are ready to take the next step, go to <https://accreditation.atap.net.au> to create an online account, and complete the registration process. The registration involves one single page of questions including basic business details, the business' sector, the type of accreditation you wish to apply for, and the business' staff numbers.
- Step 3:** Once your registration form is submitted, the ATAP team will process your registration and provide you with an invoice for your registration payment. You can pay the fee via your preferred method (EFT, credit card, or cheque options are available).
- Step 4:** Once the registration fee is paid and processed by the ATAP team, you will be able to access the full sections required for completion of your application.
- Step 5:** Work through the sections of the program, making use of the many resources within the program. Only information relevant to your business should appear, based on the type of accreditation you selected to apply for and your business' sector.
- Step 6:** When the progress bar at the bottom of the page indicates all areas are completed (look for a green tick against each section), click the 'Submit Application' button.
- Step 7:** The ATAP team will assess your submission. If additional information is required, we will provide you with feedback to help you complete this information.
- Step 8:** Once the application is approved, we will provide electronic logos, and will also post an approval pack including an accreditation certificate and other marketing materials.
- Step 9:** When the online component has been successful, an onsite verification will be carried out within the first 12 months of the approved application where able. This will assess your compliance with the requirements set out in the program and provide you with a feedback opportunity. For sector-specific accreditation programs (Camp /Adventure Activity, and Visitor Information Centres) a site visit will be conducted prior to accreditation approval being granted.



CRITERIA FOR ACCREDITATION

Accreditation with ATAP requires completion of information in the following areas:

- Business Details
- Insurances*
- Licences, Permits & Compliance requirements
- Business and Marketing Plan
- Human Resources Management
- Customer Service
- Business Operating Systems
- Risk Management
- Environmental, Social & Cultural Responsibility
- Agreement to ATAP's Terms & Conditions

*Please note it is a mandatory requirement of the program to have a public liability insurance policy, with a minimum value of \$10 million.

Camp /Adventure Activity providers

Must in addition provide information on:

- Specialised Activities
- Safety Briefings and Care of Clients
- Vehicle Operations

As well as meet specific additional criteria within the following areas:

- Human Resources Management
- Customer Service
- Business Operating Systems
- Risk Management

Visitor Information Centres

Must in addition provide information on:

- Tenancy
- Local Government Support
- Trading name (trade with the words 'Visitor Information Centre' or 'Visitors Centre')
- Meet specific criteria on opening hours and after hour information availability, staffing levels, visitor servicing, information display, professional development,
- Collect and collate visitor records
- Facilities and amenities

In order to obtain accreditation a Visitor Information Centre must:

- Provide initial information to ATAP to inform of the intention for an accredited centre, including providing the proposed location, brief information on the local Council's strategy for the region, and the perceived need for the accredited centre.
- In conjunction with the core application requirements, complete Visitor Information Centre-specific requirements and meet all mandatory criteria.
 - This includes having at least one full time staff member dedicated to the centre, adequate parking, separate staff facilities, and more.
- Have an onsite visit prior to approval being granted.
- Gain approval from ATAP Victoria who will also look at its proximity to other visitor centres, the local council's tourism strategy plan, and whether there is a perceived need for the centre to service visitors.





ACCREDITATION FEES

REGISTRATION

To register with ATAP, you will need to create an account on the online accreditation program as well as submitting your registration fee.

Your registration fee provides the following to your business:

- Access to the online program which is the platform to be used to gain accreditation.
- An abundance of resources available within the online program including templates, samples, case studies, and links to external tool kits to assist you in completion of your application for accreditation.
- Your first year's accreditation fee (subject to conditions – see below).

Conditions

- Your registration fee is valid for 12 months only. If an application has not been received within the 12 month period your access to the online program will be inactivated.
- If your application is received 12 months after your registration, the annual fee for your first year of accreditation will be payable.
- The registration fee is non-refundable.

ANNUAL FEES

Annual fees are based on the number of full-time equivalent persons working within the organisation, whether employed as staff or through a contract arrangement, including owner operators. This calculation takes in the seasonal peaks and troughs of your annual operations. Volunteers and other unpaid workers do not need to be included in your calculation. Fees are payable at the time of your registration and then for subsequent annual renewals. Your annual renewal is due on the anniversary of the approval date of your original submission.

The schedule of fees payable by your business will depend on the type of accreditation you are applying for – General accreditation, Camp / Adventure Activity accreditation, or Visitor Information Centre accreditation.

GENERAL TOURISM ACCREDITATION

***All prices are inclusive of GST**

No. of FTE staff members	<i>1 to 3</i>	<i>4 to 8</i>	<i>9 to 15</i>	<i>16 to 25</i>	<i>26 to 50</i>	<i>51 to 100</i>	<i>100+</i>
Annual Fee	289	540	620	790	990	1550	1990

General Tourism Accreditation Discounted Fee:

If you are a member of one of the following organisations, you are eligible for a discount:

- VTIC – Victoria Tourism Industry Council
- HAA – Hosted Accommodation Australia
- AHA - Australian Hotels Association
- ACA – Australian Camps Association

No. of FTE staff members	<i>1 to 3</i>	<i>4 to 8</i>	<i>9 to 15</i>	<i>16 to 25</i>	<i>26 to 50</i>	<i>51 to 100</i>	<i>100+</i>
Annual Fee	270	500	574	730	916	1435	1840



VISITOR INFORMATION CENTRE ACCREDITATION

***All prices are inclusive of GST.**

Applies to those businesses that are looking to become accredited Visitor Information Centre and display the blue and yellow i logo.

No. of FTE staff members	<i>1 to 3</i>	<i>4 to 8</i>	<i>9 to 15</i>	<i>16 to 25</i>	<i>26 to 50</i>	<i>51 to 100</i>	<i>100+</i>
Annual Fee	<i>500</i>	<i>730</i>	<i>804</i>	<i>960</i>	<i>1146</i>	<i>1665</i>	<i>2070</i>

CAMP / ADVENTURE ACTIVITY ACCREDITATION

***All prices are inclusive of GST.**

No. of FTE staff members	<i>1 to 3</i>	<i>4 to 8</i>	<i>9 to 15</i>	<i>16 to 25</i>	<i>26 to 50</i>	<i>51 to 100</i>	<i>100+</i>
Annual Fee	<i>489</i>	<i>740</i>	<i>820</i>	<i>990</i>	<i>1190</i>	<i>1750</i>	<i>2190</i>

Camp / Adventure Activity Discounted Fee:

If you are a current member of the Australian Camps Association you are eligible for a discount. You will need to provide a current membership certificate upon payment.

No. of FTE staff members	<i>1 to 3</i>	<i>4 to 8</i>	<i>9 to 15</i>	<i>16 to 25</i>	<i>26 to 50</i>	<i>51 to 100</i>	<i>100+</i>
Annual Fee	<i>439</i>	<i>690</i>	<i>770</i>	<i>940</i>	<i>1140</i>	<i>1700</i>	<i>2140</i>



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO COMPLETE?

The amount of time needed to complete documentation will depend largely on the nature, size and preparedness of your business. You may already have some of the documentation in place. The amount and nature of your documentation will vary greatly depending on business size, and this will be taken into account when your application is assessed.

There is a time restriction of twelve months from registration to completion. If you do require an extension, you should approach the ATAP Victoria team as soon as possible to arrange this. However, the sooner you work through the program the sooner your business will obtain the rewards of accreditation.

PERIOD OF ACCREDITATION AND RENEWALS

Your business is accredited from the time your accreditation is approved to the same date the following year. You must complete yearly accreditation updates and submit your accreditation fee in order to remain accredited.

WHO CAN BE ACCREDITED?

Accreditation is open to all businesses, of any size. If you service a visitor in any way then accreditation is for you.

The online program has been designed to provide assistance to businesses of all sizes. For new or smaller businesses that need to develop their current business systems there is a wealth of information available. For larger or established businesses that already have business systems in place, there is the opportunity to attach documents. They can also make use of the resources available to further enhance their current practices.

This means that no matter the size of the business, large or small, the online program is designed to assist in your ongoing business development.

HOW DO I START THE PROCESS?

To start the accreditation process, go to <https://accreditation.atap.net.au> to create an online account and complete your registration process. You will then be provided with an invoice for your registration payment. Once that is paid and processed you will have access to the full sections to complete for your application. More information can be found in the "Achieving Tourism Accreditation" section earlier in this document.

HOW DO I USE THE ONLINE PROGRAM?

Upon registration, you will receive access to the online accreditation program. The online program contains a user guide to help you through. The accreditation process does not need to be completed in one go – you can save your progress each time you log in. Of note, if you have soft-copy documents already existing, these can be uploaded, or there will also be options for completing relevant fields or a template.

DO I NEED CAMP / ADVENTURE ACTIVITY ACCREDITATION?

The Department of Education and Training (DET) states that: *"Schools using residential campsites for overnight camping must use accredited campsites, to ensure these venues meet minimum criteria regarding safety and suitability."* ATAP's Camp / Adventure Activity Accreditation is recognised by the DET in meeting this accreditation standard.



The DET defines a residential campsite as campsites which usually have permanent facilities (such as cooking and eating facilities, beds and an amenities block) and adventure recreation options. This definition does not include caravan parks, hotels/motels, ski lodges or Victorian government residential schools. If you are hosting government school groups, but are unsure of your accreditation obligations, it is best to contact the DET directly on (03) 9637 2000, or for more information [please visit the Department of Education & Training website](#).



Camp / Adventure Activity Accreditation is the highest standard of accreditation for this sector, and is the only ATAP accreditation program recognised by the DET. However, if you are not looking for a DET recognised program ATAP does have a general accreditation option for accommodation providers.

If you are an operator that runs a 'specialised activity' as defined by the Adventure Activity Standards (AAS) on the Outdoors Victoria website, you must complete ATAP's Camp and Adventure Activity accreditation. When registering, please ensure you identify the 'specialised activities' your business offers. For more information on what constitutes a 'specialised activity', please [refer to the Outdoors Victoria website](#). Please contact our office if you have any queries regarding this requirement.

THE ACCREDITATION LOGO

The Australian Tourism Accreditation Program's nationally recognised logo signals to your customer, the industry, and your industry partners that you operate a professional business, meeting national tourism business accreditation standards.

General tourism business:

Including but not limited to operators in the following categories: accommodation, tours, attractions, restaurants, wineries/cellar doors, festivals/events, or online booking services.



Visitor Information Centre:

Only accredited Visitor Information Centres can access VicRoads directional signage featuring the VIC trademark.



Camp/Adventure Activity operator:

Government schools using residential campsites in Victoria as a venue for their camp or excursion are required to use only accredited campsites. The Camp/Adventure Activity accreditation program is recognised by the Department of Education and Training.



Where accreditation has been cancelled, businesses must immediately cease to utilise the accreditation logo, including stickers, stationery, website, and all other forms. We would also require that you endeavour to recall all distributed marketing material that displays the logo in the marketplace.

OWNERSHIP AND SALE OF A BUSINESS

The achievement of accreditation is a good indicator of the quality of your business. The documentation you develop will describe why your business is unique and or successful.

If you sell your business however, your accreditation status is not automatically transferable. It is the duty of the operator to notify ATAP staff when a business is for sale or changing ownership. A new owner of a previously accredited business is welcome to re-apply for accreditation.

A transfer form must be completed which includes a formal handover of intellectual property and signatures from the old and new owners of the business. The form must be completed and returned to the ATAP office before access to the online accreditation program for the new ownership can be granted. ATAP also require updates to applicable licences and insurances.

ATAP has the right to suspend accreditation of a business who has failed to inform us of a change of ownership. The suspension will stand until the requested transfer requirements have been received and approved.



CONFIDENTIALITY WITHIN THE ATAP PROCESS

All information and documentation supplied by your business will be treated as **strictly confidential** and will be reviewed only as part of assessing your application for approval. All ATAP employees are required to sign confidentiality agreements.

Regarding financial information, while we do require that your business has procedures in place for financial management, we never need any actual figures supplied. It is sufficient for us to know the general details of the procedures you have in place.

HELP IS AT HAND TO WORK THROUGH THE PROGRAM

If you had any questions during the process, you can refer to the resources available on the online program for direction (there is plenty of information, case studies, templates, samples and links available), or call or email the ATAP team to ask any specific questions.

COMPLIANCE – REMOVAL OF ACCREDITATION

Accredited operators have an ethical and professional responsibility to meet and maintain reasonable standards of conduct and performance. Any business not abiding by the conditions of accreditation may have its accreditation refused, suspended or revoked.

Reasons for refusal, suspension, or loss of accreditation may include but are not limited to the following:

- Inability to meet or maintain appropriate accreditation standards;
- A complaint being substantiated which reflects a breach in accreditation standards;
- Consumer feedback indicating a breach in accreditation standards.

In the event of a complaint being lodged with ATAP regarding an accredited operator, the operator will be requested to respond in writing to all of the allegations made.

If it can be proven that the complaint is justified and constitutes a failure to maintain the appropriate accreditation standards, the business may be placed on-notice or given a formal warning to avoid any further breaches of the accreditation standards. In more serious cases, the business may have its accreditation status suspended, or completely removed, if warranted.

The ATAP Program Manager has full authority to suspend or cancel the accreditation of any business in the case of a serious breach of accreditation standards. Any business whose accreditation is revoked or suspended must immediately cease representing themselves as an accredited business.

Should the business wish to re-apply for accreditation at a later stage, the complete process of application and assessment is required. The ATAP Program Manager has the right to refuse a re-application from an operator who has previously breached accreditation standards.

Where accreditation has been removed, the business must immediately return their accreditation certificate and cease to represent the business as being accredited with the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program and with any other related cooperative marketing programs where the business requires accreditation.

RIGHT OF APPEAL

A business has a right of appeal to ATAP if its accreditation is removed or application refused. An appeal can be made against any decision made by ATAP Victoria with exception to the decision as to whether the applicant has met the required minimum criteria for accreditation.

An operator must initially inform ATAP of its wish to appeal within 14 days after notice of ATAP's decision has been given. ATAP will provide a written response outlining the appeals process and reasons for the refusal or cancellation decision.

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ACCREDITATION PROGRAM
VICTORIA**



The operator must then provide a written response to the situation and present justification for its accreditation to be reinstated which may be used by ATAP as part of its decision.

ATIC Ltd is the licensor of ATAP and if issues are not resolved at a state level it can be taken to the licencing body.

Entitlements to appeal and appeal procedures may change from time to time with the absolute discretion of the ATAP Program Manager and or ATAP licensor.



For more information please contact the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program Victoria office on (03) 8662 5387 or email accreditation@vtic.com.au