



QUALITY TOURISM STAR RATINGS

Information for Operators



CONTENTS

WHAT IS THE QUALITY TOURISM FRAMEWORK?	2
WHAT ARE STAR RATINGS?.....	2
WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?.....	2
STAR RATINGS HISTORY	3
INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS	4
HOW DOES IT WORK?.....	5
HOW IS A RATING CALCULATED?	6
STAR RATINGS FEES.....	8
ACHIEVING A STAR RATING.....	9
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS.....	9
THE ACCREDITATION AND STAR RATINGS LOGOS.....	11
CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP AND SALE OF A BUSINESS.....	12
CONFIDENTIALITY WITHIN THE QTF PROCESS.....	13
COMPLIANCE – CANCELLATION OF ACCREDITATION.....	13
RIGHT OF APPEAL.....	13

WHAT IS THE QUALITY TOURISM FRAMEWORK?

The Quality Tourism Framework (QTF) is a national business development program, providing a single online pathway for business development that incorporates online training, quality assurance, product development digital distribution and market development. The QTF integrates multiple previous industry programs, including the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program (ATAP), Star Ratings Australia and the Australian Tourism Awards.

The QTF is owned by the Australia Tourism Industry Council (ATIC). ATIC is the national representative body for the state/territory tourism industry councils whose collective, through their members, represents tourism regions, industry associations and businesses throughout Australia.

The role of ATIC is to provide leadership and industry representation through a national voice for tourism, and to manage national industry development programs.

The Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) is licensed to manage the QTF in Victoria on behalf of ATIC. 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 our 'one voice' policy agenda, accredited training and invaluable business advice to help your business thrive and avoid pitfalls.

WHAT ARE STAR RATINGS?

Star Ratings are an internationally recognised symbol for quality accommodation standards. They are used in more than 70 countries worldwide and reflect the cleanliness, quality and condition of guest facilities. In Australia, the 'star' symbols are a licensed trademark and can only be used by properties that have been licensed to use them by ATIC.

A Star Rating is determined by more than 200 criteria that have been ranked by Australian travellers according to what's important to them. These criteria are grouped into three assessment areas – Facilities & Services, Cleanliness, and Quality & Condition – that are applied across the property to the bathroom, bedroom, recreational facilities etc. The rating is independently verified ensuring customers have confidence in the rating assigned to each property.

Star Ratings are awarded to six distinct accommodation categories: Hotel, Motel, Serviced Apartment, Hosted Accommodation, Caravan-Holiday Park and Self Catering. Each category weights the criteria differently based on what Australian travellers expect for that category.

The Star Ratings program is a Quality Assurance Module within the QTF designed specifically for the accommodation sector. All Star Rated properties must achieve Quality Tourism accreditation.

WHAT IS ACCREDITATION?

Quality Tourism accreditation is a means for encouraging the professional development and continuous improvement of the tourism industry. It gives public and consumer recognition to businesses that have met a standard within their business operations and who strive to maintain and improve ethical and professional standards that are set and agreed to by the industry. Achieving these standards is the best way to meet

changing consumer demands, signalling to consumers and industry that you are committed to professionalism in both business operation and customer service.

There are four levels of accreditation. Level One – Quality Tourism Essentials provides businesses with the necessary tools and resources to develop business practices that result in experiences that are reliable, consistent, predictable and sustainable. This in turn leads to customer confidence and increased profitability.

Level One assurance indicates to the consumer and industry that a tourism business is committed to quality business practices, professionalism and delivering what they promise.

STAR RATINGS HISTORY

The Star Ratings scheme has a long history as Australia's only independent, accredited accommodation scheme providing quantified, objective and industry wide quality assessments. Founded in the 1950s, the scheme was owned via Star Ratings Australia by the Australian Motoring Services (AMS), including state motoring organisations NRMA, RACV, RACQ, RAA, RAC, RACT and AANT.

When the program was introduced the criteria in Australia was based only on the facilities or amenities offered to guests. Industry and consumer expectations have changed greatly since then, especially with the advent of the internet and online consumer ratings and reviews. 90% of Australian travellers want the Star Ratings scheme to measure the quality of guest facilities. The assessment criteria were amended in 2011 to reflect this.

In 2014, consumer reviews were incorporated alongside the official assessment, as Travellers' Ratings. Star Ratings Australia was one of the first independent classification systems in the world to introduce aggregated guest review scores alongside independent accommodation ratings. Powered by ReviewPro, the Travellers' Rating reflects the quality of the accommodation experience according to past guests who have rated the property or posted a review on more than 175 websites in 45 different languages.

In 2017, the AMS ceased to operate Star Ratings Australia. ATIC took on the program to complement its existing business development programs (the Australian Tourism Accreditation Program and the Australian Tourism Awards) and developed the QTF as an integrated business development pathway for all tourism businesses. Star Rated properties now have their business standards independently verified as well as their accommodation standards.

In 2018 with the integration of Star Ratings into the QTF, the brand and logo changed from the blue Star Ratings Australia logo to the QTF brandmark.

INCENTIVES AND BENEFITS

As part of the QTF, Star Rated businesses share a vision of quality service and excellence. By participating in the framework, you will be acknowledged and included in the distinguished list of Quality Tourism Accredited Businesses (QTAB) that have all demonstrated their commitment to delivering trusted and exceptional visitor experiences.

BENEFITS

FOR YOUR BUSINESS

- Greater visibility to customers through using one of the most widely recognised and trusted symbol of quality accommodation standards
- Reputation management from a free online dashboard of guest reviews across all major OTAs, review sites and social media platforms
- Greater customer confidence and satisfaction, which leads to repeat business
- A competitive advantage over non-accredited operators
- Access to incentives and discounts not available to non-accredited tourism businesses
- Ability to display the QTF brandmark at your point of business and on all promotional and advertising material
- Increased/improved confidence of wholesale and inbound operators.

FOR YOUR CUSTOMER

- Signals a commitment to quality
- Reliability of their chosen product and service
- Consistency in the delivery of their experience
- Satisfies safety and security needs

FOR THE INDUSTRY

- Provides travel retailers/wholesalers with an assurance of professional service
- The QTF brandmark is 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.

INCENTIVES

- 60% off your ATDW listing, ensuring you're displayed on the Visit Victoria and Tourism Australia consumer websites
- Complimentary ReviewPro account, enabling you to monitor and analyse what guests are saying about your products across 100+ consumer review websites and channels globally
- Entry into the annual Star Ratings Gold List, showcasing the top ten properties in each category State-wide and nationally
- Complimentary listings on national consumer websites www.starratings.com.au and www.trustthetick.com.au
- Complimentary VTIC In the Loop membership, providing access to special discounted rates for VTIC events, including the annual Victorian Tourism Conference and the Victorian Tourism Awards Gala Ceremony

- Fast track your Victorian Tourism Awards submission
- Access to the national Quality Tourism landmark, promoted through a variety of national digital marketing campaigns
- Complimentary marketing materials
- Free access 24/7 to our business development templates and tools
- National advocacy campaign on behalf of all Quality Tourism operators at the Federal level to escalate industry priorities.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

All Star Rated businesses must achieve Level 1 accreditation through the QTF. Once this is achieved, businesses can apply for a Star Rating.

SCHEME ENTRY CRITERIA

Properties must comply with the Scheme Entry Criteria, which include:

- Holding all relevant insurances; including workers compensation as well as public liability to the value of \$10, 000, 000
- Compliance with all relevant and applicable legal and/or regulatory obligations, including compliance with all Trade Practices Act, Consumer Affairs, and Occupational Health & Safety obligations
- All guest accommodation has lockable entry doors and secure windows
- The property has a dedicated website and/or email address and can accept bookings year-round
- The property complies with the Star Ratings Code of Conduct

The full criteria and Code of Conduct are available in the online program.

CATEGORY CRITERIA

The six Star Ratings accommodation categories have been developed so consumers can easily understand and differentiate one accommodation type from another. Properties need to meet the below requirements for their preferred category:

Category	Description
Hotel	Properties that offer fully serviced guest rooms with en-suite bathrooms (excluding Pubs). Traditionally, hotels are licensed for the supply of alcohol and will provide meals and beverages from restaurant or bar facilities located on the property. Guests expect daily housekeeping services that are included in the tariff, as well as a dedicated reception area or service desk. This category includes Resorts and Apartment Hotels.
Motel	Properties that offer fully serviced guest rooms with en-suite bathrooms. Motels offer guests complimentary car parking adjacent to their rooms, or nearby if located in CBD areas. Guests expect daily housekeeping services that are included in the tariff, as well as a dedicated reception area or service desk. Motels may offer meals and beverages to guests from dining facilities on the property, or nearby restaurants and cafes.

Hosted Accommodation	Properties that offer hosted Bed & Breakfast, Farm Stay or Guesthouse accommodation. Guests expect breakfast and housekeeping services to be included in the tariff and to interact with the resident host during their stay. Bathroom, kitchen, lounge or dining facilities may be shared depending on the unique style of the property and guest experience. Guests also expect to receive a personal reception or check-in service from the resident host.
Serviced Apartments	Properties that offer fully serviced and self-contained guest rooms or units, featuring separate bedrooms, bathrooms, kitchen and living areas. Guest rooms or units traditionally range from studio apartments through to one-two- three bedroom or penthouse apartments. Guests expect a dedicated reception area and service desk, as well as housekeeping services included in the tariff.
Self-Catering	Properties that offer self-contained accommodation in the form of holiday units, cottages, chalets, villas, cabins or houses. Guests expect to be fully self-sufficient throughout the course of their stay. Bathroom, bedroom, kitchen, living and laundry areas are separate and may be shared according to the unique style of the property and guest experience.
Caravan- Holiday Parks	Properties that offer powered and unpowered sites for caravans and tents as well as self-contained holiday units or cabins with separate bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living areas. Guests will expect a range of amenities located within or adjacent to the Park, such as a supermarket for groceries or laundry.

PRE-ASSESSMENT

Properties complete a pre-assessment through the online program and receive a Provisional Star Rating immediately. The pre-assessment involves the operator providing the Facilities & Services and Quality & Condition details for the property.

HOW IS A RATING CALCULATED?

Each of the three areas of assessment (Facilities & Services, Cleanliness and Quality & Condition) has a range of criteria which are weighted across the various aspects of the property.

A score for each area of assessment is calculated based on more than 200 criteria that have been ranked by Australian travellers according to what’s important to them. The Consumer Weighting Index (CWI) is a proven evaluation technique originally developed by the Sustainable Tourism CRC at Victoria University.

Within the aspects of the property (bedroom, bathroom etc.) guests have placed greater or lesser value on things that make up their experience. E.g. within the bedroom, guests place most value on the bed/size of the mattress, followed by bedding and window coverings/privacy. This weighting also differs depending on the property category, e.g. the bed is weighted higher for a Hotel property compared to a Caravan Holiday Park property.

For example, for a Hotel the following CWI is applied across specific areas of the property (table 1). Each area is then further broken down into room components (table 2).

TABLE 1

Room Level	Facilities & Services	Cleanliness	Quality & Condition
Bedroom	25%	21%	22%
Bathroom	17%	22%	18%
In-Room Facilities	14%	17%	17%
Recreation Facilities	12%	11%	10%
Food & Beverage	11%	9%	12%
Guest Services	11%	8%	11%
Building Exterior	10%	12%	10%
Total	100%	100%	100%

TABLE 2

Bedroom	Facilities & Services	Cleanliness	Quality & Condition
Bedcovers	N/A	2.33%	1.8%
Bedding	3%	2.33%	3.8%
Mattress/Size of Bed	5.2%	2.33%	5.9%
Clothes Storage/Bedroom	3.4%	2.33%	1.8%
Bedside Lighting	1.2%	2.33%	0.6%
Bedroom Lighting	1.5%	2.33%	1.6%
Window Coverings & Privacy	5.5%	2.33%	2.8%
Bedroom Floor Space	5.2%	2.33%	N/A
Walls and Ceilings	N/A	2.33%	2.4%
Floor Coverings	N/A	2.33%	1.3%
Total	25%	21% (rounded)	22%

Out of the three area of assessment scores, the lowest score determines the final Star Rating, as per the below example:

Star Rating	Facilities & Services	Quality & Condition	Cleanliness
5 Star	Excellent (85-100%)	Excellent (90-100%)	Excellent (95-100%)
4.5 Star	Superior (70-84%)	Superior (75-89%)	Very Good (85-94%)
4 Star	Very Good (60-69%)	Very Good (65-74%)	
3.5 Star	Good (50-59%)	Good (55 – 64%)	
3 Star		Reasonable (45-54%)	
2.5 Star	Moderate (30-49%)	Moderate (35-44%)	Good (70-84%) Caravan Park (75-84%) All other categories
2 Star		Adequate (30-34%)	
1.5 Star	Acceptable (20-29%)	Satisfactory (25-29%)	
1 Star		Acceptable (20-24%)	
Rating Under Review	Rating Under Review (0-19%)	Rating Under Review (0-19%)	Rating Under Review (0-69%) Caravan Park (0-74%) All other categories

FACILITIES AND SERVICES

Facilities and Services standards measure the presence or absence of various facilities and services that a property may provide, or the level to which a property provides that facility or service with various options. E.g. onsite restaurant, reception opening hours, pool/tennis court/playground. Facilities and Services criteria are each awarded a score.

QUALITY AND CONDITION

Quality standards measure the level of quality of facilities that exist within a property. The assessment of quality includes design elements, material, construction technique, sustainability, experiential and functional. Consumer research also showed ‘modernity’ (stylishness, freshness, innovativeness, avant-garde) to be a significant component of quality. Quality criteria are given a score based on the level of the quality.

Condition standards measure the level of condition of facilities that exist within a property. Condition is defined as the absence of defects, tears, stress or wear, holes or frays at the time of assessment. For each condition criteria, the degree and frequency are selected and then an average score is calculated.

CLEANLINESS

Cleanliness standards measure the level/degree of cleanliness of facilities that exist within a property. Cleanliness is defined as the absence of dirt, including dust and stains, at the time of assessment. For each cleanliness criteria, the degree and frequency are selected and then an average score is calculated.

*For Caravan Holiday Park properties, the lowest acceptable cleanliness level is 70%, due to the outdoor nature of this accommodation sector.

STAR RATINGS FEES

REGISTRATION

An access fee of \$180 must be paid by each new registration to the online system. This allows you to access the QTF and its various resources. Once paid, you can see all development levels and niche sector requirements. To submit your accreditation application and be recognised as a QTAB you must pay an additional fee.

- Your access fee is valid for 12 months only. If your application has not been submitted within the 12-month period, you must pay the \$180 access fee again to continue with your application
- The access 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. Volunteers and other unpaid workers do not need to be included in your calculation. Fees are payable at the time of your registration, when you have achieved accreditation and are recognised as a QTAB, and then for subsequent annual renewals in line with the financial year.

STAR RATING – FIRST YEAR

*All prices are inclusive of GST.

No. of FTE staff members	1 to 3	4 to 8	9 to 15	16 to 25	26 to 50	51 to 100	100+
Annual Fee	200	480	540	710	910	1470	1910

STAR RATING – RENEWAL

This incorporates the access fee and QTF fee payable for renewal.

No. of FTE staff members	1 to 3	4 to 8	9 to 15	16 to 25	26 to 50	51 to 100	100+
Annual Fee	380	660	720	890	1090	1650	2090

ACHIEVING A STAR RATING

- Create an account in the online program at <https://online.qualitytourismaustralia.com>
- Pay the relevant fees
- Once your payment is received you can start working through the Level 1 accreditation application modules, making use of the many resources within the program
- Complete the Star Ratings pre-assessment, following the information within the program to select the correct Facilities & Services and Quality & Condition answers for your property
- The QTF team at VTIC will assess your Level 1 accreditation and Star Ratings pre-assessment submission. If additional information is required, we will provide you with feedback on the missing details
- If needed, resubmit your application addressing the feedback comments
- Once the Provisional Rating is accepted by you and the VTIC team, you are eligible to use the rating in all digital collateral
- Within 6 months we will conduct a site visit to confirm your official Star Rating and verify the standards submitted in the pre-assessment
- When the official Star Rating has been confirmed we will post an approval pack including an accreditation certificate and other marketing materials

Your Star Rating needs to be renewed annually. This comprises a short online renewal submission in the anniversary month of your accreditation, and the annual fees paid in line with the financial year.

Site visits are held every three years following your first site visit.

Star Rated properties can upgrade to Level 2 accreditation at any time.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

HOW LONG WILL IT TAKE TO COMPLETE?

The amount of time needed to submit your application will depend largely on the nature, size and preparedness of your business. You may have some or all the documentation already in place, in which case you can upload it all to the online program. Generally, businesses should aim to complete the accreditation application within three months of starting their application.

The Star Rating module should take a couple of days to a couple of weeks to complete, depending on how much time you have available to dedicate to the pre-assessment.

HOW DO I USE THE ONLINE PROGRAM?

The online program contains a user guide to help you through. The accreditation process does not need to be completed at one time, progress is automatically saved. For questions that require documents to be uploaded, you can either upload your existing documents, or use the existing fields or templates within the online module.

The standards for the Star Ratings criteria are available within the online program.

CAN I HAVE MORE THAN ONE RATING?

There are two types of additional ratings a business can register, based on the following conditions:

- The Primary listing is always the property name
- For Caravan Parks, the 'Park' i.e. the amenities, buildings, reception is the primary listing and the additional configurations, e.g. cabins are the additional listing
- Additional ratings must be at the same physical business location/street address
- The Primary listing must account for 60% of the room types
- For same category split ratings, a minimum of four rooms is required to warrant a split rating, or 20% of the total rooms/units, whichever is greater.

ADDITIONAL CATEGORY RATING

When a business has multiple room types within different categories, they can apply for an additional category rating. E.g. a Hotel could have 60 rooms with the following types:

- Deluxe Suite – 8 rooms
- Superior Suite – 5 rooms
- Standard Suite – 20 rooms (Primary listing)
- Standard Studio – 17 rooms
- Self-Contained – 10 rooms (New category)

The Hotel would have a Primary rating based on the Standard Suite and an additional category rating for the Self-Contained rooms.

SPLIT RATING

A split rating is an additional rating/listing based on the same category but a different room configuration/type rating. E.g. a Hotel has a 3.5 Star primary rating for their Standard Suites, but they want a different rating for their Deluxe Suites.

A fee of \$110 per additional listing is applied for both additional category listings and split listings.

CAN I UPGRADE MY RATING WHEN I RENOVATE?

If a property undergoes a significant renovation and believes they have upgraded their Star Rating, they can re-submit a pre-assessment. If the calculated rating changes, a new site visit will be required to verify this at a cost of \$310.

MY RATING HAS BEEN DOWNGRADED AND I DON'T AGREE WITH IT

In order to retain a Star Rating, it is the responsibility of the operator to maintain the required standards to meet the minimum ranking in each of the three key areas of assessment relevant to that Star level. Star Ratings are only awarded if the standards are met at the time of the site visit and are not automatically retained.

If a business has any concerns regarding their Star Rating this must be communicated to VTIC within 30 days of receiving the official Star Rating.

WHAT IS REVIEWPRO?

ReviewPro is an international online reputation management tool. Collecting review data from 175 OTAs and review sites in more than 45+ languages, ReviewPro enables you to analyse positive and negative reviews down to the semantic level, respond to all reviews through the one dashboard and prioritise operational and service improvements according to client feedback.

ReviewPro calculates your Global Review Index™ (GRI), a score out of ten based on the review data collected. It can be calculated for a given point in time (day, week, month year etc.)

A ReviewPro account will give you insights into your guests' behaviour and expectations, leading to:

- Increased guest satisfaction
- Boosted rankings on TripAdvisor and other review sites
- Leveraging your online reviews to increase revenue
- Identifying which areas of your business are of highest concern to guests, and where you can achieve the greatest impact.

WHAT IS THE GOLD LIST?

The Gold List is calculated annually. The ten properties in each category with the highest GRI over a 12-month period State-wide, and nationally, are awarded Gold List status. The Gold List is featured on the Star Ratings consumer website and Gold List properties receive a certificate and logo to use in all marketing collateral.

THE ACCREDITATION AND STAR RATINGS LOGOS

The QTAB landmark is available to all businesses engaged in the QTF who have successfully completed, at a minimum, Level One – Quality Tourism Essentials of the QTF.

This landmark helps travellers identify those businesses that have met best practice within the tourism industry, providing an assurance that they will receive a professional, high quality tourism experience.

Star Rated properties are eligible to use the logo for their relevant Star Rating and category. A half-Star Rating is represented by the outline of the Star, with no fill.

The Quality Tourism Brand Guide provides the specifications for use of the Quality Tourism Brandmark.

LEVEL ONE - QTAB



STAR RATING



When a business's Star Rating is cancelled, they must immediately cease to use the QTF landmark in any marketing collateral including stickers, stationery, website, and all other forms. They must also endeavour to recall all distributed marketing material that displays the logo in the marketplace.

CHANGE OF OWNERSHIP AND SALE OF A BUSINESS

Accreditation status is not automatically transferable when a business is sold. It is the duty of the operator to notify VTIC when a business is for sale or changing ownership. A new owner of a previously accredited business can 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 VTIC before access to the online accreditation program for the new ownership can be granted. VTIC also require updates to applicable licences and insurances.

VTIC 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 QTF 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 and renewal submissions.

Regarding financial information, while we do require that your business has procedures in place for financial management, we do not need actual figures supplied. The general details of the procedures you have in place are sufficient.

COMPLIANCE – CANCELLATION 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 cancelled.

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 VTIC regarding an accredited operator, the operator will be requested to respond in writing to 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.

VTIC 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 must be followed. VTIC 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 through the QTF and with any other related cooperative marketing programs where the business requires accreditation.

RIGHT OF APPEAL

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

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

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 VTIC as part of its decision.

If issues are unable to be resolved at a state level it can be taken to ATIC.

Entitlements to appeal and appeal procedures may change from time to time with the absolute discretion of VTIC and/or ATIC.