



2025 Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards Entrant Handbook



Acknowledgment of Country

Mackay Isaac Tourism acknowledge and pay respects to the Traditional Owners of these lands, past, present and the young leaders who are the elders of the future. In acknowledging the Aboriginal communities deep and enduring connection to country and waters, it is also recognised that these communities are integral to the future of the unique landscapes and experiences that make up the region.

About Mackay Isaac Tourism

Mackay Isaac Tourism is the leading destination marketing agency in the region. The organisation champions the promotion for our vibrant travel destination that offers unique natural beauty, rich cultural experiences, and diverse events. Through strategic partnerships and innovative campaigns, the organisation drives visitor growth, supports local businesses, and showcases the best of Queensland's heartland to domestic and international audiences.

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2025 Awards Timeline

9am Wednesday 23 April 2025	Nominations Open Complete a nomination online (name, contact, category, details). At this point you can opt into the local and/or state awards.
9am Friday 9 May 2025	Awards Nominations Webinar Join us for an informative and interactive webinar designed to support and guide tourism operators through the 2025 awards nomination and submission process.
5pm Sunday 15 June 2025	Nominations Close
Early July 2025	Submissions Writing Masterclass Join us for a facilitated masterclass on how to best structure your awards submission.
5pm Friday 15 August 2025	Submissions Due
Mid - Late September 2025	People's Choice Public Voting Entrants in the 2025 Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards categories 1 – 18, will automatically be entered into the People's Choice Awards under one of two segments: Experiences/Services and Accommodation
August 2025	MIT Gala Awards Dinner Tickets on Sale
Friday 31 October 2025	Gala Dinner Winners and finalists will be announced at the Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards Gala Dinner at the MECC.
Friday 14 November 2025	Queensland Tourism Awards Queensland Tourism Awards winners will be announced at the 40th anniversary of the Queensland Tourism Awards at the Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre.
March 2025	Australian Tourism Awards Select gold winners from the Queensland Tourism Awards qualify as Australian Tourism Awards Finalists. The National Award Winners will be announced at the Australian Tourism Awards in March of 2026.

Awards Overview & Categories

The Mackay Isaac Tourism awards celebrate exceptional industry accomplishments, honouring the finest individuals, businesses, and events across the region. Winners and finalists are announced at MIT's night of nights – the annual Mackay Isaac Tourism Gala Awards Dinner.

Mackay Isaac Tourism align their local award categories and criteria with the State Tourism Awards program. Entrants on a local level may opt to put their local submission through the Queensland Tourism Awards at the time of submission.

2025 Mackay Isaac Tourism Award Categories:

1. Tourist Attractions
2. Festivals and Events
3. Award for Ecotourism
4. Tourism Retail, Hire and Services
5. Business Event Venues
6. Tour and Transport Operators
7. Adventure Tourism
8. Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services
9. Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries
10. Caravan and Holiday Parks
11. Hosted Accommodation
12. Unique Accommodation
13. Self-Contained Accommodation
14. Standard Accommodation
15. Deluxe Accommodation
16. New Tourism Business
17. Excellence in Food Tourism
18. Excellence in Accessible Tourism
19. Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group
20. Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual
21. & 21. People's Choice Awards (Accommodation and Experiences/Services)



Category Overviews

1. Tourist Attractions

This category recognises natural or built attractions that people visit for pleasure and interest.

Entrants in this category attract amongst the highest visitor numbers during the qualifying period for their State/Territory. Major Tourist Attractions would see over 100,001 annual visitors to the attraction.

2. Festivals & Events

This category recognises tourism leisure festivals, events and exhibitions that enhance the profile/awareness and appeal of the destination they are held in as well as creating economic impact, increased visitation and community involvement.

3. Award for Ecotourism

This category recognises ecologically sustainable tourism businesses with a primary focus on experiencing natural areas. Entrants in this category foster environmental and cultural understanding, appreciation, and conservation.

4. Tourism Retail, Hire and Services

This category recognises businesses that sell/provide goods or hire services which contribute to the tourism industry. The contribution made to the tourism industry can be economical (e.g. retail, galleries), experience based (traditionally non-tourism specific experiences e.g. shopping precincts) or service based (e.g. digital solutions for travellers or tourism businesses).

5. Business Event Venues

This category recognises venues who provide high quality facilities specifically designed for business visitors e.g. meetings, incentives, conferences and exhibitions.

6. Tour and Transport Operators

This category recognises a business who makes a major contribution in the combined provision of touring and transport services. This category is open to businesses with fewer than 15 annual full-time equivalent employees.

7. Adventure Tourism

This category recognises outdoor adventure tourism experiences that involve visitor participation and a personal challenge.

8. Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services

This category recognises all restaurants and catering services offering a tourism experience and/or servicing the tourism industry. It is not a food award but does recognise a significant contribution to tourism through the provision of food and beverage. This category is open to hotel or stand-alone restaurants, event caterers, pubs and cafés.

9. Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries

This category recognises wineries, distilleries and boutique breweries that offer a cellar door experience and create a significant contribution to tourism.

10. Caravan and Holiday Parks

This category recognises tourism excellence in a caravan or holiday park. The focus of this award is on both the facilities and services that enhance the tourism experience. This category is open to caravan or holiday parks that offer cabin and tenting accommodation and must meet a 3 – 5 Caravan & Holiday Park Star Rating Standard.

11. Hosted Accommodation

This category recognises hosted accommodation that offers a bed & breakfast, farm stay, cottage or other intimate accommodation experience and must meet a 3-5 Hosted Accommodation Star Rating Standard. Serviced apartments, hotels and resorts should consider entry into one of categories 21-24 which best fit their product. For companies that are managing multiple self-contained properties they should focus on one of their properties.

12. Unique Accommodation

This category recognises tourism excellence in accommodation providing a unique tourism experience that includes an overnight accommodation experience with an included activity. The focus of this award is on the uniqueness of the tourism experience. This category is open to properties developed around unconventional accommodation infrastructure that includes an activity (passive or active). Entry is open – but not limited to – tented holidays, houseboats, tree houses, underground accommodation and yacht charters.

13. Self-Contained Accommodation

This category recognises tourism excellence in accommodation providing guests with non-serviced accommodation and the freedom of self-sufficiency. The focus of this award is on both the facilities and services that enhance the tourism experience. This category is open to accommodation that offers a self-catered accommodation experience and meets a 3-5 Self Catering Accommodation Star Rating Standard. For companies that are managing multiple self-contained properties it is recommended they focus on one of their properties.

14. Standard Accommodation

This category recognises serviced accommodation that meets the 3-3.5 Star Rating standard (pre-assessment or final rating). The focus of this award is on both the facilities and services that enhance the tourism experience. This category is open to accommodation experiences that meets a 3 to 3.5 Star Rating Standard in any Star Rating category.

15. Deluxe Accommodation

This category recognises serviced accommodation that meets the 4 or 4.5 Star Rating Standard (pre-assessment or final rating). The focus of this award is on both the facilities and services that enhance the tourism experience. This category is open to accommodation experiences that meets a 4 or 4.5 Star Rating Standard in any Star Rating category.

16. New Tourism Business

This category recognises new tourism businesses that have commenced trading, visitation, or service delivery during the qualifying period. This award recognises excellence in the planning and development of new tourism infrastructure and/or services. Existing tourism businesses that have commenced a new product or opened new infrastructure need to enter another category most applicable to the business.

17. Excellence in Food Tourism

This category is open to food producers, providers, tour operators, cooking schools, food attractions, farm gate experiences, farmers markets, trails and other food tourism experiences in the State/Territory, featuring the State/Territory produce as the core component.

18. Excellence in Accessible Tourism

This award recognises businesses that provide a product, experience or service that goes above and beyond to accommodate and cater for people with disabilities and/or specific needs e.g. hearing impairment, low vision, limited mobility, wheelchair/scooter needs or cognitive.

Prerequisite: Met the standard for at least one (1) of the five (5) 'badges' in the Accessible Tourism program within the Quality Tourism Framework (QTF).

19. Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group

This Award celebrates the strong, ongoing personal commitment made by an individual or team of volunteers who freely give their time and skill, contributing to the professionalism of our industry and the positive image of tourism in Queensland.

20. Award for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual

This award recognises the extraordinary personal and professional achievement and contribution by an individual over many years to the Mackay Isaac tourism industry.

21 & 22. People's Choice Awards (Accommodation and Experience/Services)

Entrants in the 2025 Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards categories 1 – 18, will automatically be entered into the People's Choice Awards under one of two segments: Experiences and Services, or Accommodation. Voting will be open to the public. No submission required and no site visit required.

This category will be completely independent from the judging process and will come down to consumer choice – tourism operators will be able to connect with visitors and followers to encourage them to vote. Voting will be managed by Mackay Isaac Tourism.

A Gold winner will be announced for both segments based on the highest number of votes they each receive. Voting will open in early September, after submissions have closed.

Entrants will be provided with a marketing toolkit to assist in the promotion of voting.

Nomination Process

The nomination process is a brief registration of intent to enter the Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards. It involves filling out a few details (Business name, description, number of employees etc.) and deciding if your submission is being put forward for the local and/or state tourism awards.

If you are entering more than one category, a separate entry must be submitted for each.

Step 1.

Before nominating, please carefully read the Rules and Regulations document.

Step 2.

Once you've chosen your category (or categories), please nominate via the national Online Awards Portal www.online.qualitytourismaustralia.com where you can create an account. If you have entered the awards previously, your login details will remain the same. If you need to add or update an email address linked to your company's account, please contact development@mackayregion.com.

Please ensure the details you enter when nominating present exactly how you wish to be listed on websites, certificates, at the Gala dinner and in any media promotion.

Nominate now

Step 3.

Once you have entered your nomination into the portal, you will have see the message "Please make payment for your unpaid nominations in order to proceed" under "Pending Actions". After the fee has been paid, you will be able to commence your Queensland Tourism Awards Submission**.

Entry Fees (incl. GST)	Under 25 employees	25 plus employees
MIT Member	\$0	\$0
QTIC Member*	\$190	\$230
QTIC Non-member*	\$380	\$460

*Applicable if putting your submission through to the Queensland Tourism Awards.

**This is only applicable if you are applying for a state award.



Business and Accommodation Standards*

***This step is only applicable if applying for state awards.**

The Business and/or Accommodation Standards, relevant to your category, must be completed as they guarantee a minimum standard in your business management.

Your answers do not contribute to your final score but will be reviewed by our Accreditation Team to ensure your eligibility into the awards program. These must be submitted by Monday 9th June to give ample time for our accreditation team to assess.

Entrants who are Accredited through the Sustainable Tourism Accreditation Program will not be required to complete the Business Standards.

Entrants who are Star Rated through Star Ratings Australia will not be required to complete the Accommodation Standards.

Business Standards

This business standards are a direct copy of QTIC's Sustainable Tourism Accreditation questions and covers the best standards for tourism businesses across all aspects of sustainable tourism operations, including:

- Environmental Management
- Social & Cultural Responsibility
- Codes of Ethics and Professional Conduct
- Customer Service, Safety & Protection
- Staff Wellness and Human Resources
- Sustainable Business Operation
- Social and Regulatory Licensing Compliance
- Sustainable Tourism Marketing & Promotion

Accommodation Standards

To qualify for accommodation categories 17-23 (except for Unique Accommodation), you need to meet a specific Star Rating. You can do this by completing a Star Ratings pre-assessment module, which will calculate your proposed rating. For example, if you're entering the 5 Star Accommodation category, your pre-assessment rating must be 5 stars to be accepted.

Need help?

Feeling a bit confused? Don't worry! The awards portal will guide you through both the Business Standards and Accommodation Standards, explaining exactly what you need to provide. A green tick will appear once each section is completed. If you have any questions about this section of the awards, feel free to reach out to QTIC's Accreditation Team at accreditation@qtic.com.au.

Preparing for your Awards Submission

If you have entered the Mackay Isaac Tourism or Queensland Tourism Awards before, please critically review your judges' feedback.

Substantiating your claims with evidence is a must throughout your submission, so be sure to include examples, ensuring they relate to the qualifying period (July 1, 2024 - June 30, 2025). All activities, achievements and innovations referred to within your submission must have occurred within this period. You can refer to past results if relevant, but only if it helps you to answer the question and demonstrate growth.

You can refer to items such as:

- Your Business Plan, Marketing Plan and Customer Service Policy.
- Visitor numbers for the qualifying period, as well as previous year's figures to compare.
- Financial information (sales figures, revenue, profit margins etc). You don't need to state actual figures in your submission, but percentage representations are a good idea.
- A clear description of your target markets and percentage breakdown of actual visitation by market.
- Copies of customer feedback and evidence of customer satisfaction (this could take the form of satisfaction surveys, feedback forms, TripAdvisor comments etc. Identify areas which require particular attention and a system for addressing feedback).
- Copies of PR activity and media coverage achieved during the qualifying period.
- Details of marketing and advertising activity, and results of activity (refer to collateral including brochures, media releases, blogs, engaging social media posts, images, newsletters, media clippings, PR).
- Statistics on website traffic and social media usage.
- OHS and Risk Management Policies and Procedures.
- Staff development and training policies, and information on activities that took place during the qualifying period.
- Information on environmental initiatives and performance.
- Ways in which your operation has contributed to the local economy during the qualifying period i.e employment, purchase of good and services, events etc.
- Goals, strategies and outcomes for the qualifying period.
- Systems you use to record data e.g. visitor numbers, bookings etc. (Generating a report which reveals trends and tallies relevant to the qualifying period is very helpful).



Breaking down each component of a submission

Word Count

For categories 1 – 17, the written submission has a word limit of 4,000 – 7,500 words.

To ensure you are using your word count wisely, the judges recommend writing a minimum of 100 words for each point. For example, if a question is worth 4 points, your response should be a minimum of 400 words. Please ensure you are not using hyphens or slashes to sneak in more words, as points will be deducted.

Images

Submissions can include up to 30 Images (including info-graphics, diagrams, charts, graphs, and pictures) and are linked throughout your written responses rather than inserted into the text boxes. Images and testimonials throughout your submission will help break it up and add substance to your response.

Please make sure they are relevant and easy to interpret.

The images uploaded in the Media and Promotional section will be used for promotional material and screen media for the night and are not included in the image count. The image captions are also not included in your overall word count, unless they exceed 10 words.

It is a requirement that images are to be used to further support your written response and not to convey key points. A good rule of thumb to use is 'if the images were removed, would my written submission still answer the question?'

Written Submission

In your written responses, please don't assume local knowledge as your judge may not be familiar with the region or community. Quotes and evidence that substantiate your answers are great to include in your submission. Carefully read the questions and make sure to follow the guides that are included in the question sets.

Digital Review

A businesses' digital/online presence is an important consumer touch point and plays a significant factor to overall business success. The Digital Review accounts for 20 Points of your overall score.

Please find a copy of the standard online questions below.

Question	Points
Website	
Does the Website Provide a clear overview of the product/service?	1
Is there a clear call to action on the website?	1
Does the website communicate their sustainability/positive impact initiatives?	1
Is a Sustainability Plan/Climate Action Plan/Emission Reduction Action Plan available via the website?	1
Is there is a dedicated section/page within the website which promotes/explains the Accessibility of the product/service?	1
Is an Accessibility Guide/AIAP/DAIP/Video available via the website?	1
Is the website compliant with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG)?	1
Is the website search engine optimised?	1
Does the website actively promote the entrant's region and encourage visitation?	1
Social Media & Online Reviews	
Was the business actively engaged on social media throughout the qualifying period?	2
Do their social media pages actively promote the region and encourage visitation?	1

Did the business regularly respond to their online reviews within the qualifying period?	2
External Online Sources	
Is the business listed on ATDW?	2
Does the business have a Google Business Profile (also known as Google My Business)?	2
Can the entrant be found on at least two other online booking/listing sites?	2
Total Points Available	20

Consumer Review / GRI Score (Global Review Index)

Your GRI Score is provided by ReviewPro and is worth between 5 and 20 points (please see table on next page).

ReviewPro is an online reputation management tool that collects reviews from over 175 travel websites.

The Global Review Index (GRI) is a score out of 100 that measures a business's online reputation based on these reviews. This score is then converted into points for your category. For example, if your GRI is 95, you would get 19 points out of 20.

- A minimum of 25 reviews must have been received between July 1 2024 - June 31st 2025 to formulate a score. Businesses that do not have a GRI will receive a score of 0 for consumer rating.
- When you nominate, you will need to request a ReviewPro account. There will be a tick box stating "Request reviewpro activation" which you will need to tick so your score can link to the awards portal.

Virtual Site Visits or Business Verification Meetings*

In 2025, QLD will be implementing Virtual Site Visits, worth 20 points (excluding category 24, where a virtual site visit is conducted but is worth 0 points). Site Visits are not conducted for categories: 3, 4, 14 and 27-31.

A member of the Judging Panel will be allocated to your business, and they will contact you to arrange a suitable day/time for the online meeting (throughout June). A representative from your business will be required to meet with the judge for approximately one hour to conduct a virtual site inspection of your business and to run through some questions.

You are welcome to ask questions, however Judges will only provide general advice and are not permitted to provide specific information on how to answer a question. Please note, the Judge who conduct the meeting will not necessarily read/judge your written submission.

**Virtual site visits or business verification meetings are only required if you are also nominating for the Queensland State Awards.*



Points Breakdown

The following pages break down the scoring and the word/image allocation for each category

Category	Word Count	Image Count	Written Submission	Digital Review	GRI	Virtual Site Visit*	Total Points**
Tourist Attractions	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Festivals and Events	4,000 - 7,500	30	80	20	N/A	N/A	100
Award for Ecotourism	4,000 - 7,500	30	80	20	N/A	20	120
Cultural Tourism	4,000 - 7,500	30	80	20	N/A	20	120
Tourism Retail, Hire and Services	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	N/A	20	100
Business Event Venues	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	N/A	20	100
Tour and Transport Operators	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Adventure Tourism	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Caravan and Holiday Parks	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Hosted Accom.	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Unique Accom.	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Self Contained Accom.	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Standard Accom.	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
Deluxe Accom.	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	20	20	120
New Tourism Business	4,000 - 7,500	30	80	20	N/A	0	100
Excellence in Food Tourism	4,000 - 7,500	30	60	20	5	20	105

Excellence in Accessible Tourism	4,000	10	40	10	5	20	75
Outstanding Contribution by a Volunteer or Volunteer Group	2,500	10	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	50
Outstanding Contribution by an Individual	2,500	10	50	N/A	N/A	N/A	50
People's Choice Awards	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Only applicable for Queensland State Award nominations.*

*** Minus the virtual site inspection point allocation.*



Entrant Assistance & FAQs

Entrant Assistance

For further guidance, the below QTIC resources are available:

- [6 Steps to Nominate for QTA](#): A short YouTube video is available for first-time or newer entrants, giving a quick breakdown of the timeline of entering the Queensland Tourism Awards.
- **Example Submission Responses**: QTIC have developed examples for each category of what to include in high-quality written responses. You will receive a copy of this when you nominate. If you require a copy please reach out to awards@qtic.com.au
- **10 Top Tips**: This PowerPoint serves as a convenient reference guide, particularly tailored for those who are less experienced or new to this endeavor. The checklist provided aligns with the primary categories' inquiries and is designed to assist all participants. You will receive a copy of this when you nominate. If you require a copy please reach out to awards@qtic.com.au.
- [Paid Submission Reviewers and Writers](#): Entrants have the option to use a paid submission writer or submission reviewer. It is up to the entrant to reach out and discuss price, timeline etc.

FAQs

What are the People's Choice Awards?

All entrants who have entered a submission in categories 1–20 will automatically be entered into the People's Choice Award. The People's Choice Awards are split over two categories – Experiences/Services and Accommodation – with voting open to the public and managed by Mackay Isaac Tourism. These two categories will be completely independent from the judging process and will come down to consumer choice – tourism operators will be able to connect with visitors and followers to encourage them to vote. Voting will open in September, after submissions have closed. More details will follow.

Do you announce finalists prior to the Gala Awards Ceremony?

No. Mackay Isaac Tourism Awards will announce bronze, silver and gold winners at the Gala Awards dinner.

Why should I enter the Queensland Tourism Awards?

- Improve planning, development and internal analysis for your tourism business;
- Discover the full potential of your business;
- Gain a competitive edge by receiving feedback from industry leaders;
- Energise and motivate your staff;
- Use your submission as a benchmark to improve your bottom line;
- Receive media publicity and exposure;
- Celebrate and network with industry peers and colleagues at the Gala Awards Dinner;
- Encourage the continual raising of standards among Queensland tourism operators through accreditation and certification.
- Access to professional photo/s of trophy recipient holding trophy.
- Inclusion in Mackay Isaac Tourism media releases which is distributed to an extensive media list following the Gala Ceremony.
- Exposure through MIT social media channels during/after the Gala Ceremony.
- All winners (Gold, Silver and Bronze) will receive a winner's logo to distribute as they wish for additional exposure and credibility.



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