

# 2025 RULES AND REGULATIONS

## Contents

NOMINATIONS .....	1
ENTRY FEES.....	1
NOMINATION RULES .....	1
SUBMISSIONS .....	5
COMPLIANCE WITH COMPETITION RULES.....	6
INSOLVENCY OF AN ENTRANT.....	7
ONSITE VISIT .....	7
ONLINE REVIEW.....	9
CONSUMER RATING .....	9
TERMS AND CONDITIONS.....	10
TROUBLESHOOTING .....	10

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## NOMINATIONS

Nominations are made via the Quality Tourism Framework Portal:

<https://online.qualitytourismaustralia.com/>

A submission for an award category cannot be made unless a nomination has been made. All entrants must adhere to the nomination rules set out throughout this document.

The nomination collects specific contact information, category selection and agreement to the Awards T&C's.

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## ENTRY FEES

- \$220 + GST NSW Tourism Association Members Rate
- \$295 + GST Non-member Rate
- No entry fee for Outstanding Contribution by an Individual
- Refunds will not be provided for change of mind withdrawals after nominations have closed.

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## NOMINATION RULES

1. If entering more than one category, then a separate and complete entry must be submitted for each category. However, entrants may only enter one submission in any one of the following categories:
  - a. Attractions – either category 1 OR 2;

- b. Festivals and Events – either category 3 OR 4; *NOTE: As one business; entrants can enter both categories as long as their submissions are for different festival/events.*
  - c. Tour Operator – either category 11 OR 12;
  - d. Accommodation – enter category 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 OR 23
- 2. Entrants that commenced trading/visitation/service delivery for the first time in the qualifying period MUST enter the New Tourism Business category.
  - a. Businesses that commenced trading between 1 July 2024 - 30 June 2025 are only eligible to enter the New Tourism Business category. They may also choose to enter the Accessible Tourism category alongside the New Tourism Business category.
  - b. Entrants in the New Tourism Business category must have a separate ABN to the existing business, or be able to provide evidence that they are operating completely separate to any existing business e.g. different staff, management, budget and other operating systems.
- 3. Entrants cannot change categories after the closing date for submissions in the state/territory tourism awards in which they have entered. With the exception of:
  - a. those who enter into an accommodation category and in the case of completing their business standards, they are found to be ineligible for that category and must be moved into a suitable category.
  - b. Regional Tourism Awards entrants that are required to be moved into a category that didn't exist in the regional awards program. Such as Major Tourist Attractions, Major Tour & Transport Operators, Major Festivals & Events, Visitor Information Services, Unique Accommodation or Excellence in Food Tourism.
- 4. Qualifying Period
  - a. The qualifying period for the 2025 program is 1 July 2024 to 30 June 2025. All activities, achievements and innovations referred to within submissions must have occurred within this period.
  - b. Festivals and Events
    - i. Where multiple events have been held within the qualifying period each event can make a submission, each submission must be specific to one event. E.g., FestivalAustralia 2024 and FestivalAustralia 2025, each submission would focus on the activities, marketing etc. for the singular event.
    - ii. Where the festival/events run over the June/July period:
      - 1. The majority of the Festival/Event must have run within the qualifying period.
      - 2. Data used e.g., visitation, spend etc. must focus on the dates within the qualifying period.
    - iii. Planning and preparations which took place prior to the qualifying period may be included in the submission.
  - c. Tourism Marketing and Campaigns
    - i. The majority of the campaign/marketing activity must have been active within the current qualifying period.

- ii. Planning and preparations which took place prior to the qualifying period may be included in the submission.
  - d. New Tourism Business
    - i. Planning and preparations which took place prior to the qualifying period may be included in the submission.
- 5. Trading Period
  - a. All entrants must have traded for the entire qualifying period except those entering the New Tourism Business category, or where trade ceased due to Government restrictions.
  - b. Specifically, entrants in the category New Tourism Business must have commenced trading/visitation/service delivery within the qualifying period. No minimum period of trading has been defined for New Tourism Business.
  - c. Exceptions apply to seasonal businesses and facilities, festivals, events, marketing campaigns, media entries, training and tourism development projects, however the activity being put forward for consideration must have occurred within the qualifying period.
  - d. For Festivals/Events the entirety of the festival/event did not have to occur within the qualifying period, however the majority of the event must fall within the qualifying period.
- 6. Nominated state/territory
  - a. Entrants must be based or have specific operations in NSW
  - a. Where a regional awards program is available, entrants must be based in or operate in the region of their nomination.
  - b. Should a company have branches in more than one State/Territory they may enter in multiple State/Territory awards. However, the submission must focus on the activities undertaken in the state/territory they are submitting their awards entry in.
- 7. Business Standards
 

All entrants must demonstrate their eligibility by meeting the Business Standards relevant to their category or categories before submitting their final entry into the portal. This can be achieved by either holding a current accreditation equal to the Business Standard relevant to their category e.g. Sustainable Tourism Accreditation, or by completing the Business Standard question set.
- 8. Multiple Products
  - a. An entrant, such as a chain or franchise with multiple locations and/or multiple businesses must enter each individually. Only the individual business/location would be able to promote any outcomes. For example, an accommodation chain such as Meriton, or Accor would not be able to enter as an overarching chain, each property would enter as a separate nomination.
  - b. If a 'group' of products have different trading names, each individual trading name would be required to enter separately.
  - c. In some cases, where the ABN, policies, procedures, marketing and operating systems are the same across multiple locations, the head office may enter but

any achievements e.g. winner logo may only be used by the corporate entity, not the individual products.

- d. Aside from those categories where stated, one business can submit two entries, including two entries into the same category. However, they will be competing against themselves they may see value in, for example, securing a win and second placing.

## 9. Accommodation Categories

- a. Accommodation categories will be required to meet accommodation standards specific to their category.
- b. It is not a requirement for a business to be officially Star Rated. Alternatively, the online accommodation standards would be used to demonstrate the entrant's pre-assessment rating.
- c. The specific accommodation category suitable to an operator is determined by the Star Ratings category outlines found here:  
[https://www.starratings.com.au/info/category-outlines#hosted\\_accommodation](https://www.starratings.com.au/info/category-outlines#hosted_accommodation)
- c. Accommodation standards required
  - i. 5 Star Luxury Accommodation
    - 1. Official 5 Star Rated
    - OR**
    - 2. A pre-assessment rating of 5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards
  - ii. 4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation
    - 1. Official 4 or 4.5 Star Rated
    - OR**
    - 2. A pre-assessment rating of 4 or 4.5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards
  - iii. 3-3.5 Star Accommodation
    - 1. Official 3 or 3.5 Star Rated
    - OR**
    - 2. A pre-assessment rating of 3 or 3.5 Stars within the Accommodation Standards
  - iv. Hosted
    - 1. Official 3+ Star Rated
    - OR**
    - 2. A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standards
  - v. Caravan Park
    - 1. Official 3+ Star Rated
    - OR**
    - 2. A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standards
  - vi. Self-Contained
    - 1. Official 3+ Star Rated
    - OR**

2. A pre-assessment rating of 3+ Stars within the Accommodation Standard

- d. NOTE: Unique Accommodation does not have a Star Rating or Pre-Assessment rating pre-requisite.

## SUBMISSIONS

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An entrant must nominate for an award before they can commence preparing their submission.

Submissions are made via the same system as the nominations, this can be accessed at: <https://online.qualitytourismaustralia.com/>

All submissions must include the following:

1. Nomination details
2. Demonstration of meeting minimum business standards, relevant to their category.
  - a. This can be demonstrated via relevant accreditation with the Quality Tourism framework

**OR**

  - b. As a part of the business standards question set within their submission.
3. Completed answers in each category question, including supporting images.
4. Word Count
  - a. A minimum of 4,000 words will be accepted, with the maximum being 7,500 words per submission for national categories 1-25. Accessible Tourism (category 26) has a minimum of 2000 words, and maximum of 3,000 words.
  - b. Words within a table are included in the submission word count.
  - c. It is the responsibility of the entrant to ensure their submission does not exceed the maximum word count.
  - d. Hyperlinks to external sources are not allowed.
5. If a business deliberately combines words by removing spaces (e.g. BusinessPlan) or using a symbol (e.g. &, -,/ Product&Experience, Retail-Store), and it is found to be a deliberate trend throughout their submission, up to 5 points will be deducted from the total score.
  - a. The use of a hyphen (-) where appropriate or commonly used will be accepted e.g. e-commerce, year-on-year.
  - b. Deliberate means combining words in this manner more than 5 times per submission, and for combinations of more than three words, with the intent of reducing word count.
6. Images

- a. The submission can include up to 30 images with captions in categories 1-25 and up to 10 images in category 26.
  - b. Images can include infographics, charts, graphs and pictures. Any image used must be for the sole purpose of supporting the submission by providing evidence. Images cannot be used to form part of the written response to a question.
    - \*A good rule of thumb is 'if you remove the images, will the written word still provide a robust answer?
  - c. Captions are to be a maximum of 10 words, not included in the overall word count. Any words within a caption above 10 words will be included in the overall word count.
  - d. Images are attached via a gallery and can be hyperlinked into the question response.
7. A description of no more than 100 words of your company/product, which will be used by media, for announcements at the presentation ceremony, in promotional material and on website listings. As this will be edited and compiled by people who have not viewed your submission, please remember to include your company/product name and where you are located geographically.
  8. An additional ten images (jpeg format only) which illustrates the entrant's operation should accompany each submission in each category entered. These images will be used for exposure at the presentation ceremony and in official advertising and publications. (Note: 500 dpi files in a JPEG format are required). These should be the best representation of your company/product and be of a professional standard. Note: The national awards event production prefers high-resolution images (1920x1080 in dimensions)
  9. Submissions entered after the deadline will not be accepted.

## COMPLIANCE WITH COMPETITION RULES

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1. The Licensee, with Chair of Judges reserve the right to withdraw submissions if an entry is not compliant with the rules.
2. All submissions are reviewed for compliance with the submission guidelines. This must be undertaken initially by the Program Manager, however the withdrawal of a submission would be reviewed and implemented by the Chair of Judges and the Auditor.
3. All entrants must clearly demonstrate how they meet the eligibility requirements of each respective category that they choose to enter in Q1. If this is not adequately demonstrated, then that entrant may be disqualified.
  - a. For example:
    - Major/Tour & Transport Operators – the two categories are separated by the number of full time (equivalent) employees.

4. By participating in the Awards program, all entrants agree to display the trademarked logos issued with corresponding accreditation, modules or awards programs, including (but not limited to) Quality Tourism Accreditation trademarks, finalist logos and winner's logos.
  - a. The licence to display these logos is valid for one year, and the entrant must annually renew their NSW Tourism Association membership to continue to display these logos.

#### **INSOLVENCY OF AN ENTRANT**

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1. At any time, following submission of an entry in the NSW/Australian Tourism Awards, but prior to the presentation ceremony, should the business become insolvent or place the business under administration, the entrant is no longer eligible to receive an award.
  - a. If prior to the presentation ceremony then the next NSW/Australian finalist shall be elevated to the status of winner.
  - b. If, following the presentation ceremony, the business returns to solvency, then the award cannot be reclaimed by the NSW Tourism Awards/Australian Tourism Awards.
  - c. The next state finalist will not be elevated to the status of national finalist.

#### **ONSITE VISIT**

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1. The purpose of the onsite visit is for verification of the business, not the awards submission. The NSW Tourism Awards conducts these as **Business Verification** meetings – with a pre-arranged online meeting with a member of the judging panel. Companies are under no obligation to offer a judge a free experience of their product. The onsite visit will be prearranged at a mutually convenient time and the judges have a proforma from which they work.
2. All businesses will meet the onsite visit requirements, the exceptions to this are:
  - a. Categories 3 / 4/ 24– Due to the seasonal nature of entrants in these categories the onsite visit is for verification purposes only and therefore no points will be awarded.
  - b. Category 14 /25– No mandatory visitation however may occur at the discretion of the state/territory
3. The specifics of the onsite visit are provided to entrants at the time of booking an appointment with the judge.
4. Onsite visits are not undertaken for Regional Tourism Awards or Australian Tourism Awards.

### **New business (not yet accredited)**

1. If a business is not yet accredited or does not meet the relevant accreditation requirements for their category, they will be required to undertake an awards onsite visit. By undertaking an awards onsite visit they will meet the QTF level one onsite visit certification requirement.
2. If a business wishes to obtain a higher level of certification, additional questions would be required to be assessed relevant to the level module of certification, separate to the awards onsite visit process (this could occur concurrently at the states discretion).

### **Existing Certified Business (not meeting certification requirements)**

#### **1. Level One Certification**

- a. If a business is certified at QTF Level One but does not meet the QTF Onsite Visit Certification Requirements, they will be required to undergo an Awards Onsite Visit.
- b. The Awards Onsite Visit will fulfill the onsite assessment requirements for QTF Level One certification.

#### **2. Higher-Level Certifications & Other Modules**

1. If a business is certified at a level higher than QTF Level One but does not meet the QTF Onsite Visit Certification Requirements, they will be required to complete an Awards Onsite Visit.
2. The Awards Onsite Visit will not satisfy the onsite assessment requirements for higher-level QTF certifications. An independent site assessment must be conducted separately (though this may occur concurrently at the state's discretion).

### **Site Visit/Business Verification criteria**

Business Verification judges will ask to see the following:

- HR
- Business & Marketing Planning
- Customer Service
- Business Operations
- Risk Management
- Environmental Management

### **Site Visit/Business Verification Scoring**

Scoring is not compulsory as a national standard, scoring an awards site visit is a state's discretion. NSW Tourism Awards does not allocate scoring to a Business Verification meeting.



The purpose of the Business Verification meeting is to demonstrate that the entrant meets industry quality standards.

## **DIGITAL REVIEW**

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1. A digital review will be undertaken to assess the entrant's online activities including:
  - a. The entrant's website
  - b. The entrants search engine optimisation
  - c. The entrants external listing sources
  - d. The entrant's online accessibility score via Google Lighthouse (min 70%)
  - e. The entrant's social media channels
2. The digital review will account for up to 20 points.

## **CONSUMER RATING**

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1. The consumer rating will be derived from the GRI provided by ReviewPro and will account for up to 20 points, with some category exceptions:
  - a. Where they have their own specific question set and the consumer ratings do not match what is being assessed no consumer review score is incorporated
    - i. This would include Ecotourism, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism, Cultural Tourism categories
  - b. A consumer rating will not be applied to the following categories
    - i. New Tourism Business
    - ii. Major Festivals and Events
    - iii. Festivals and Events
    - iv. Business Event Venues
    - v. Tourism Marketing & Campaigns
    - vi. Tourism Retail, Hire & Services
    - vii. Local Government Award for Tourism (NSW only category)
    - viii. Take 3 for the Sea Award for Litter Prevention (NSW only category)
    - ix. Service to Tourism Industry (NSW only category)
  - c. For those categories where there is a mix of products included, then the consumer rating value would be 5
    - i. This would include Food Tourism and Visitor Information Services
2. A minimum of 25 reviews must have been received across the social platforms which ReviewPro analyses for the qualifying period in order to receive a GRI. These include Trip Advisor, Booking.com Expedia, Google reviews and many more
3. Businesses that do not have a GRI will receive a score of 0 for consumer rating.
4. When signing your business up to the platform for accreditation or entering the awards, you will be required to supply your TripAdvisor, Booking.com or Google Review link. An email will be generated once you nominate into an awards category that requires a GRI score. Check your email for instructions on how to achieve an account. This will be your responsibility to do so.
5. The responsibility to enter the correct TripAdvisor, Booking.com or Google Review link for their product in each entered category will lie solely with you.

- a. E.g. If you are a hotel that owns a restaurant and want to enter the restaurant into the awards– you will need to supply the TripAdvisor, Booking.com or Google Review account for the restaurant, not the hotel as it is the restaurant that is being scored.
6. Alternate review platforms that are not included within the ReviewPro analysis will not be able to be incorporated to determine the customer rating score. See ReviewPro Guide for further details.

## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

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All nominees must agree to the following terms and conditions:

- *By entering the NSW Tourism Awards, I authorise the use and/or reproduction of images and the 100-word description provided in relation to any editorial/advertising purposes initiated in conjunction with the awards and the Australian Tourism Awards.*
- *I understand that as an award nominee I am bound to the QTF Terms and Conditions, which includes reference to the use and display of any trademark, badge or logo achieved through the Awards process.*
- *I understand that the State/Territory licensee has ultimate decision making as to which category my product enters. I confirm that I have selected the most suitable category for my business to the best of my knowledge and confirm that the State/Territory Licensee has the right to move my nomination to an appropriate category if I am not eligible for the initially nominated category.*
- *My contact details may be supplied to agencies/sponsors engaged on behalf of award/organisers/committees for promotional purposes.*
- *I acknowledge that all decisions of the Awards judges and administrators relating to the outcome of the Awards are final and correspondence will not be entered into surrounding these results.*
- *Under no circumstances will judges be held responsible for any comment, viewpoint or expression, whether expressed or implied, concerning the standard or quality of an entrant's submission.*
- *By ticking the terms and conditions box, I agree not to bring a claim against any Judge, or state/territory Award owner in relation to feedback on my submission.*
- *I declare that the information provided in this submission be true and correct to the best of my knowledge and I agree to the terms and conditions as outlined.*

## TROUBLESHOOTING

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If you are experiencing delays or lost data, it could be for one of the following reasons.

- Check your connection speed and connection reliability, particularly if uploading data.
  - Most internet service providers will give you decent download speeds – to stream Netflix or access social media. However upload speeds tend to be

much slower, and this is particularly prominent when you're uploading images to any online portal.

- One of the simplest solutions is to plug in a LAN cable into the laptop. A cable is hugely faster than going over Wi-Fi, especially when that Wi-Fi is already under pressure by multiple people.
- Check the size of your images
  - If images are larger than the recommended size (Images must be no bigger than 10MB each in .jpeg or .png format - preferably 500dpi files), then the system won't accept it.
  - Resizing images to within (the recommended size outlined above) before uploading is recommended.
  - Upload one image at a time. Wait until an image has finished uploading before starting on the next one.
- Pasting
  - We know that most entrants work on their submission offline (on a Word doc), to then copy and paste answers into the portal. Please be mindful that there can be problems with the amount of content you are pasting at one time.
  - Do not copy and paste multiple pages of text at the same time as the bandwidth can't cope.
  - Pasting content from websites can often incur similar issues as there's styling and hidden characters in a website that adds to what is being pasted.
  - Pasting is fine when done in moderation. A piece of text at a time – not multiple elements because unless you have a very good internet connection, it will create problems.
  - Multiple people working on the same submission can override other's work.
  - Your formatting and your word count may change from a Word or Google doc once pasted in the QTF. The QTF word count is the only one that is considered. Allow time to reformat your work once it is in the QTF.
- Outdated operating systems
  - It is advised not to try filling in an Awards submission on your phone. Laptops are the best medium.
  - Browsers like Chrome/Firefox/Edge offer the best experience and less issues.
  - More recent operating systems, e.g., Windows 11, will also work better.

**If none of the above are the issue**, contact your Program Manager with the following information:

- Business name
- Which submission (if more than one)
- Device and browser type used
- Specific issues e.g., connection keeps timing out, freezing, losing information that was saved



- Any images/screenshots to demonstrate what the issue is or a word of source document that the entrant is working from.
- Copy of a file/image that was lost