

The Tourism 'Beep' Test

Tourism and fire fighting are unlikely bedfellows, but it was the Country Fire Authority's recruitment process that provided Tourism Alliance Victoria with a new benchmark for tourism operator training. The tourism 'beep' test has been introduced into the Gippsland region and will soon be adopted by the Macedon Ranges region.

The fire brigade has a five stage recruitment process, but the first hurdle for aspiring fire fighters is the fitness 'beep' test. Recruits must be able to run a specified distance within a certain time. They must prove their fitness before they can proceed any further. If they fail, they must concentrate on developing their fitness before they can re-apply.

The then Deputy CEO of Tourism Alliance Victoria, Bindi Gove, learned of the beep test and decided to trial a tourism version of it. The Tourism Beep Test requires tourism operators to complete two of the most important questions contained in the eight questions of the Victorian Tourism Awards entry process: business planning and environmental sustainability. The business planning question is a generic and all-encompassing question, while it was considered that the sustainability question was critical to the industry's future and is notoriously poorly answered.

Gippsland operators were recruited through the tourism associations and the Destination Gippsland campaign committee. A writing workshop was held in the region to assist operators prepare their answers to the key questions.



A pre-requisite of attendance was that operators had to have first attempted to answer the questions, so that they could be reviewed at the workshop.

According to Bindi Gove, the insight gained through participating in the workshop made a big difference to how the operators approached the questions. Most of them went on to significantly alter their answers.

The answers also provided businesses with useful material that they could use in other applications, such as websites, marketing collateral etc.

It was decided that the two questions should form the basis of a submission to the Gippsland Tourism Awards, which were held at a local industry function. The questions were assessed by a panel of judges and all entrants received personal feedback and were subsequently invited to attempt the other six questions in the Victorian Tourism Awards entry form, then submit it for State consideration.

The tourism 'beep' test generated four entries from Gippsland to the State awards in 2006, which grew to 20 entrants in the 2007 awards.

Key findings

Industry participation can often be increased by providing a means for business operators to 'dip their toe' in the right pool,

Create a staged process for things as big as a tourism awards, so that the initial steps do not overwhelm operators or take them far out of their comfort zone,

Awards and other external recognition need to be as much about mentoring and self-development as they do about recognising individual achievement.