The challenges

1. There are several barriers to implementing environmentally sustainable practices, including implementation costs, the labour-intensity of the process to become certified, a lack of government and industry support, and the technical nature of information forums.
2. Many businesses are unaware that by reducing energy consumption, minimising waste and cutting transport costs, they are not only making an important contribution to minimising impacts of climate change, they can save money and so increase profit.
3. Often, businesses have little understanding that the way they conduct themselves through investment, production and employment and marketing is a significant component of the impact of tourism on the environment and local communities.
4. While the economic benefits of tourism are increasingly appreciated by local communities, some of the less identifiable benefits as not so well understood.

Key strategies

1. Foster a collaborative and integrated approach amongst stakeholders at all levels to adopt sustainable practices and foster dialogue on key sustainable tourism issues.
2. Raise industry awareness of the implications of climate change and measures to respond to this issue.
3. Encourage industry leaders to set an example through improving its own environmental and social performance and influencing those of its key suppliers and external funding recipients.
4. Provide incentives to accelerate the adoption of sustainable practices, such as preferential marketing treatment.
5. Provide practical assistance, guidance and tools to tourism operators to help them reduce their environmental and social impact, while benefiting local communities.
6. Reward and recognise excellent sustainable practice in the industry, such as the State Tourism Awards.

Desired outcomes

1. Increased use of environmental best practice programs and tools.
2. A dedicated website resource on sustainable tourism, including fact sheets, success stories, links and other tools.
3. Research and report on the barriers to tourism enterprises adopting sustainable practices, as well as consumer attitudes and perceptions to sustainable tourism.
4. The establishment of a sustainable tourism advisory and advocacy body (Sustainable Tourism Partnership).
5. Greater community benefits created through tourism.
6. Increased industry profitability at SME level, contributing to community well being and cultural appreciation.

Want to know more?

Visit the Tourism Excellence website containing toolkit, case studies and other relevant material to help achieve our vision which is ...

... that by 2010 Victoria's tourism industry is recognised for delivering outstanding visitor experiences.

tourismexcellence.com.au

Module 7 'Sustainability in Tourism', December 2007.
Module 5 'Industry Participation' will be released in early 2008.

SUSTAINABILITY IN TOURISM

You'll love every piece of Victoria

TOURISM EXCELLENCE

'Sustainable tourism' encompasses the environmental, economic and socio-cultural aspects of the tourism industry. The World Tourism Organisation defines it as the development of a tourism product that "meets the needs of present tourists and host regions, while protecting and enhancing opportunities for the future".

The size of Victoria's tourism industry can have a significant impact on the natural and cultural environment. Creating a balance between the interests of tourists, host communities and the environment – and recognising mutual dependency – requires a special approach to guarantee the industry's long term future.

Sustainability in tourism

Victoria's estimated 100,000 tourism-related enterprises have a central role to play in fostering sustainable tourism; through sustainable practice in investment, production, employment and marketing.

There is an established connection between sustainability and commercial success, because reducing energy consumption, minimising waste and conserving water saves money and so increases profit. More information on financial sustainability is included in the Business Excellence module of the Tourism Excellence program.

Global priorities are shifting. Climate change is now seen as a fundamental issue with major implications for tourism, requiring the industry to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions. Globally, it is projected that climate change will not lead to a net loss in demand for leisure tourism, as a loss of demand for a given destination or type of destination may lead to increases in demand for alternative destinations.

However, whether a net environmental gain or loss results from such changes will partly depend on the ability of the tourism industry to raise its sustainability and by the degree that climate influences travel behaviour to a particular tourist destination. Destinations and businesses need to adapt to changes in the pattern of demand and in the type of tourism they offer. Individual tourism businesses can't afford to ignore this issue.

A stronger environmental commitment can give a business a definite marketing and competitive advantage. Nexus Research in 2004 found that 62% of tourists said green accreditation would encourage them to consider one accommodation property over another. There is virtually a new, untapped market comprising visitors who are aware of environmental issues, some of which make consumption decisions based on environmental values. A business demonstrating sound principles and practices can stand out from the crowd.

Despite the growing consumer awareness, there appears to be only a small proportion of Victorian's tourism businesses that have adopted sustainable practices - mainly nature-based operators or large companies in the aviation and hospitality sectors. Of those that have responded to the sustainability challenge, a number have adopted only superficial changes.

There are many benefits for a tourism business in becoming a respected and valued partner of the local community and economy.

This module is designed to help break-down those barriers and to provide industry operators with a starting point for their journey to sustainability.