



## ***Introduction***

The Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council has collaborated with the Tourism Corporation and re-energised its existing Accreditation Scheme. Based on the existing 1997 scheme this new programme will continue to give visitors confidence when choosing where to stay, where to eat and how best to experience what the Cook Islands has on offer. It's a non profit, re-modelled, simple, affordable and robust quality assurance programme. Using the new Tourism Industry Charter as its foundation, the scheme consists of a self-assessment process which is then underpinned by visits from independent assessors from NZ. The scheme is governed by an Accreditation Board made up of representatives from the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation, the Tourism Industry Council, Ministry of Health and National Environment Service. (See the Tab labelled FAQ's for more information).

## ***Instructions***

***After you have familiarised yourself with the information contained in this document complete the business details and minimum standards sections.***

An N/A is only to be used where the quality standard is not applicable to your business or property. If you select NO for any standard, that cell will be coloured red as a prompt that you will need to raise the operation standards to that level, within a 3 month period. You will need to notify the Accreditation Coordinator once you have met the compliance requirements. You will still submit your form as you will be accredited with the conditions of becoming fully compliant within a set timeframe.

As you work through the checklist, save your entries regularly by clicking on SAVE. At the top right hand corner of each cell there are 'pop up' notes (highlighted in red), which provide helpful information for most compulsory items. In hard cover versions, these helpful hints are listed on a separate page/tab in the document.

Once you have completed all information, SAVE the file on your computer, then send it as an attachment, by email to [accreditation@tourismindustry.co.ck](mailto:accreditation@tourismindustry.co.ck) for processing by the Accreditation Coordinator. Hard copies can be dropped off to the Tourism Corporation in Avarua.

You will be invoiced for the accreditation fees as calculated by the size of the business. Once you have paid your fees your accreditation will be confirmed and you will receive two window stickers for your business. Additional stickers can be purchased for \$5 each and can be ordered on the business details form.

Cook Islands Tourism Corporation will be notified of your eligibility for accreditation and will update their records so that you will receive the associated benefits including being featured on the Corporation's website. In October of each year, you will be sent a new form to complete for the following years accreditation. Once your accreditation membership is approved, you will receive an accreditation pack including 2 stickers for display and access to digital logos online.

By submitting this form and applying for accreditation membership you agree to be bound by the terms and conditions of this accreditation scheme as outlined in the tab labelled, TERMS & CONDITIONS.



## *Cook Islands Tourism Quality Assured Charter*

- We will work individually and collectively to enhance the positive reputation of our destination.
- We will share market and statistical information and network constructively to ensure that we leverage the destination's ability to be regionally competitive.
- We will ensure that our business complies with all regulations in respect to health and safety, protecting the well being of our clients and staff.
- We will relate with all our clients in a courteous and professional manner reinforcing the destination's reputation as being genuinely warm and hospitable.
- We will promote our products accurately so that client expectations are appropriately met, while ensuring that our rates/prices clearly reflect true costs for clients.
- We will handle client enquiries or complaints in a timely and conciliatory manner.
- Our business practices will reflect the elements of professionalism and fair practise underpinned by compliance with all legal and financial regulations of the Cook Islands.
- Our staff will be afforded all opportunity to grow through nurturing and training and provided with wages and work conditions which meet all parameters of our labour laws.
- Adopt environmental and sustainable best practices which ensure the protection of our lagoons and land ecosystems while promoting the use of renewable energy.



## ***Fee schedule***

If you operate several businesses under different trading names then a separate application must be made for each trading entity.

Annual Membership Fees (PLUS VAT)

### **Hotels of 35 units or more**

Up to 100 units \$75 + \$10 per unit

100-200 units \$75 + \$10 per unit (max \$1200)

200-300 units \$75 + \$10 per unit (max \$1500)

### **Hotels and Self Catering with less than 35 units**

\$75 + 10 per unit

### **Holiday Rentals (with one self-contained residence)**

\$75 each

### **Budget Accommodation Facility**

\$75 per facility, plus \$10 for each room

PLEASE NOTE:

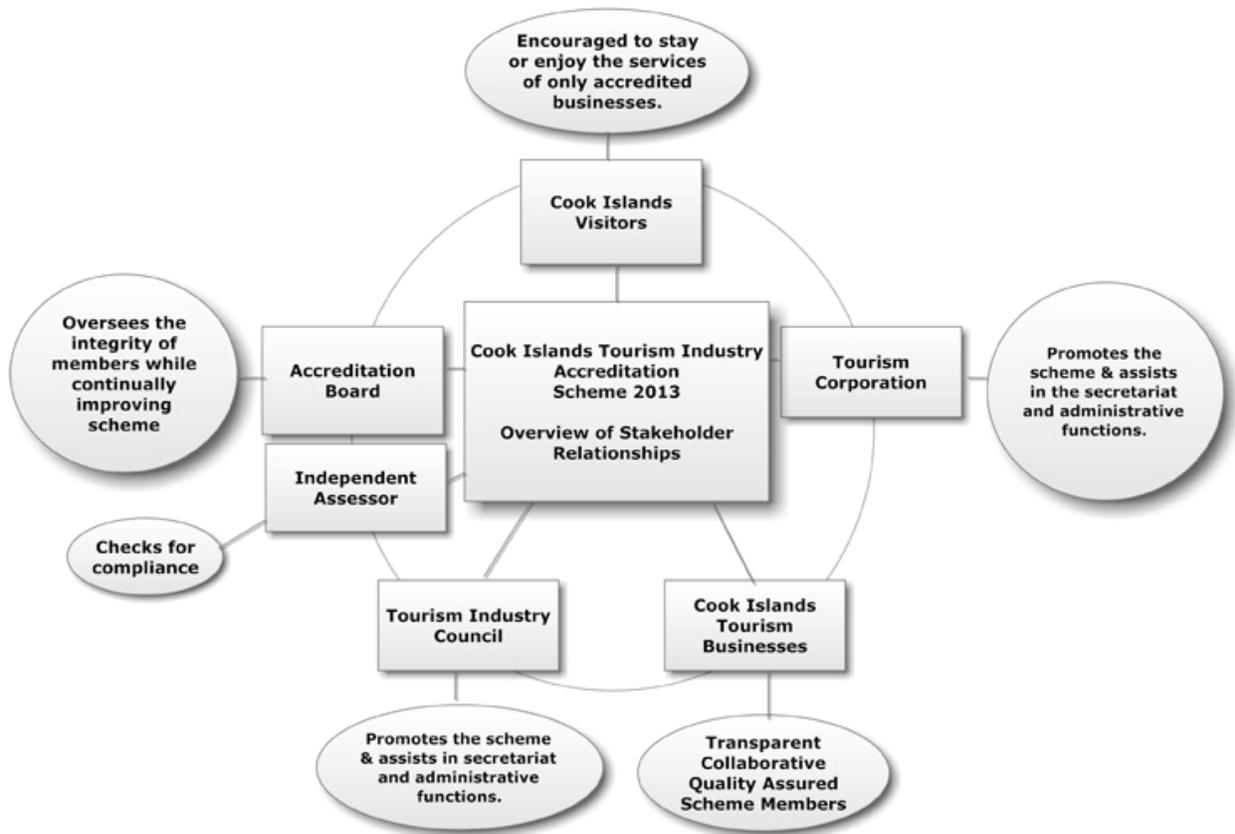
Self Catering = where more than one unit is on the same property.

### **PAYMENTS**

Annual fees are to be paid in full for membership to be activated. An invoice is either sent to you by e-mail as an attachment or can be collected from the Tourism Corporation Office. Print the Invoice and fill in your relevant details. Cheque payments to be made out to the "Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council" and must have both Business and Trading Name on the back of the cheque. Post the cheque and the invoice to; Cook Islands Accreditation, PO Box 622 Rarotonga, Cook Islands, or alternatively drop off to the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation Office in Avarua.



## *Stakeholder Relationships*





## *Terms and Conditions*

Accreditation annual membership term is between 01st January and 31st December.

Annual fees are to be paid in full for membership to be activated. An invoice is generated by the Accreditation Coordinator and sent to you by email or post. Cheque payments to be made out to the "**Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council**" and must have both Business and Trading Name on the back of the cheque. Post the cheque and the invoice to; **Cook Islands Accreditation, PO Box 622 Rarotonga, Cook Islands**, or alternatively drop off to the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation Office in Avarua.

Member businesses must be located in the Cook Islands.

Membership is open to any and all businesses/companies/persons providing goods and services to the tourism sector.

When requested, members must provide accurate statistics to the Tourism Corporation.

Members must not falsify or fail to uphold the minimum compulsory standards.

Members must be compliant with all government regulations.

Members must provide access to the independent assessor (scheduled in off season and with a two week notice of arrival) .

Self assessment forms must be filled in accurately and honestly by the owner or appointed representative of the business.

All existing businesses who indicate (through the self assessment process) that they do not comply with a standard(s) have 3 months to fully comply. All new businesses must be fully compliant before accreditation will be approved.

Fees are non refundable/non transferable/and will not be prorated.

If you operate several businesses under different trading names then a separate application must be made .

Once accredited, only the current year's Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council Accreditation Scheme logo is to be displayed in a highly visible area at the member business premises and on their business website. All previous Cook Islands Tourism Accreditation Scheme logos, i.e. "Tick" must be removed from display.

If your business is a member and you represent a facility that has decided not to join the scheme, you must clearly state beside any reference to that property on your website or on any printed collateral that property is a "**Non-member of the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Accreditation Scheme.**"



**COOK ISLANDS**  
**QUALITY ASSURED**

As a member you absolve the Tourism Industry Council, Accreditation Board or the Corporation from any legal implications which may arise from your voluntary membership of the scheme.

Should a membership be suspended, all Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council Accreditation Scheme logo's must be removed from display.

### **Use of the Logo**

The Cook Islands Quality Assurance logo may only be displayed on the marketing material and property of the business that is accredited. The logo remains the intellectual property of the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation. The logo is not to be modified from its original design in any way, including cropping, colour changing or realignment. The digital logo in various sizes can be requested from the accreditation coordinator.

### **Release of Liability and Indemnity**

As a Member you agree to release the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council and the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (including their respective board members, officers, employees, agents and representatives) from all liability of any kind whatsoever in relation to your membership of the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Accreditation System.

As a Member you also agree to indemnify the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Council and the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation (including their respective board members, officers, employees, agents and representatives) against any and all claims, losses, damages, costs and liability of any kind whatsoever that may arise from your membership of the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Accreditation System.



## *Frequently Asked Questions*

Here are a series of frequently asked questions that will assist you in better understanding the scheme.

### **1. When does the new scheme start?**

January 1st 2013. Upon submitting your completed paperwork, and if no follow up is required, you will have your invoice within 2 weeks, and upon payment, will receive your accreditation pack with stickers and links to downloadable logos.

### **2. Is it compulsory for me to be a member of this scheme?**

No - the scheme is voluntary but we believe it will be compelling to become a member and ensure the destination as a whole provides a unified minimum level of quality standards.

### **3. What are the benefits of being accredited?**

- Corporation web site inclusion
- Usage of accreditation logos
- Benefits from accreditation brand promotion which sees visitors encouraged to only stay at accredited properties
- Representation on Tourism Corporations road shows and at CI Visitor Information Centres (domestic and international)
- Tourism Corporation supported advertising
- Eligibility to benefit from Tourism Corporation & Tourism Industry Council sponsored training/seminars
- Tourism Industry Council full membership eligibility
- Eligibility Tourism Awards entry
- Eligibility for inclusion in Tourism Corporation supported Wholesaler programs
- Eligibility to participate in official visiting Agent/Media famils and programs organised by the corporation.

### **4. I pay taxes so why do I have to be an accredited member to be permitted to go on the website?**

This is the policy of the Cook Islands Government and supported by the Cook Islands Tourism Corporation and Tourism Industry Council.

### **5. How much is it for me to join accreditation?**

An annual fee \$75 (per accommodation property), plus \$10 per extra unit/room, with equitable thresholds for larger accommodation businesses.

### **6. How do you define each style of accommodation property?**

Tourism Corporation's website classifications overarch the scheme. Those classifications are:

- Backpackers, Budget and Hostels
- Guest Houses, Island Hosts and B & B's
- Holiday Homes
- Hotels and Resorts
- Self Catering

### **7. What if I complete the self assessment and I find an area I don't comply with?**



Be transparent and acknowledge the shortfall and establish a plan to address the issue. Still submit your form, if you have been accredited before you will still receive your accreditation sticker and will have 3 months to ensure you are fully compliant with the minimum compulsory standard.

**8. When I am officially assessed by the independent person or a statutory government body and I don't meet minimum criteria? What happens?**

Non compliance is referred to the Accreditation Board and they may advise steps for compliance or suspension of membership.

**9. What happens when I have a dispute with a customer that has not been resolved and they contact the Tourism Corporation or Tourism Industry Council?**

Tourism Corporation send out standard responses to both parties requesting copies of all communications and supporting information, then passes all information to the Accreditation Board for review. If complaints relate to a failure to meet standards, the board is likely to suspend the business from the scheme.

**10. How do we market and generally promote the scheme?**

Wherever the Cook Islands is promoted e.g. Tourism Corporation, Tourism Industry Council and individual property websites, individual brochures, advertisements, wholesaler brochures and Tourism Corporation collateral.

**11. What if I want to belong to other associations like SPTO, The Black Pearl Group, and Green Globe etc.?**

We encourage you to belong to these organisations too.

**12. Who do I see about becoming accredited?**

In the first instance – Tourism Corporation's Destination Development team or see the Tourism Industry Council website - [www.tourismindustry.co.ck](http://www.tourismindustry.co.ck) or send your request to [accreditation@tourismindustry.co.ck](mailto:accreditation@tourismindustry.co.ck).

**13. Do I have to be a member of the Tourism Industry Council to be accredited?**

No. Accreditation is a voluntary process and membership to the industry council is encouraged but not compulsory .

**14. Are the banks supporting this scheme?**

They support this initiative in so far as they see benefits for their clients in the form of greater professionalism, higher standards and these quality assurance processes having the potential to enhance business success.

**15. Will my peers (other tourism businesses) be involved in any action relating to my compliance?**

No. However some individuals may have some involvement through a position on the on the Accreditation Board. All information is to be held in the strictest confidence.

**16. Who invoices/receives/banks/administers the scheme.**

The Tourism Industry Council, Accreditation Coordinator and Treasurer.



**17. Is the scheme designed to make a profit?**

No

**18. How is the program funded?**

Initial set up funds have been provided by the Tourism Corporation as a Destination Development initiative and then annual operational costs will come from annual membership fees with the possibility of some top up from the Corporation if required on an ongoing basis.

**19. How often and when does the assessor visit the Cooks?**

A team of assessors will visit at least once a year, usually in the non peak summer season.

**20. What criteria do they use when selecting properties to assess?**

A random independent selection process will be used with a focus also on identified potential 'problem' businesses. It is possible that you may not be assessed in the first year of membership.

**21. Why do we have a Charter?**

To outline our foundation principles, and to provide a guideline for quality assurance processes for all stakeholders. It highlights the ethics that we operate by.

**22. Who sets the compulsory minimum standards?**

A continuous improvement process initially established by the Tourism Industry Council and the Tourism Corporation and then maintained/improved by the Accreditation Board. These compulsory standards are based on many of the parameters and compliance requirements of the original 1997 scheme.

**23. What will happen to private homes rented to tourists – if they and other businesses do not wish to join (or do not comply) and therefore cannot be accredited?**

Nothing - they can continue to operate. The scheme is voluntary and market and regulatory forces will apply, (but they will not receive the benefits of being an accredited member).

**24. As a rental or holiday home agent can I represent non members of the scheme.**

Yes of course. But if your own business is accredited then when you represent/advertise any non-accredited home on printed matter or on websites, you must insert the following text beside any reference to that property **"Non-member of the Cook Islands Tourism Industry Accreditation Scheme"**.

**25. Will accreditation criteria include proof that tax is being paid on income?**

If the independent Assessor asks to sight a recent VAT return then yes - the Charter underpinning Accreditation requires compliance with all government regulations.

**26. Who can I complain to if I think the accreditation requirements for my business are unfair or incorrect?**

The Accreditation Board can make the ultimate decision to limit or remove a member's privileges and membership as well as continually reviewing the minimum compulsory standards associated with each sector.



**27. What if I want to appeal a decision by the Accreditation Council?**

An independent adjudication committee of 2 non-tourism people (from the justice or legal fraternity) will review the process and make a binding decision. (You will need to pay any costs associated with the adjudication process).

**28. Who will pay for the works required to become compliant?**

All businesses are responsible for their own costs to ensure compliance.

**29. Will there be standards grading scheme or star rating system included in the scheme?**

No at this stage but there is likely to be development in this area in time.

**30. What does the new logo look like?**

The corporate version is at the top of this page. Once you are accredited you will receive a peel off sticker with a different version of the logo featuring the current year. You will also be given instructions for access to an electronic copy of the logo to display on your business. It replaces the 'tick' logo associated with the old and now superseded Tourism Accreditation Program established in 1997.