



# North Coast Regional Tourism Awards 2026 Entrant FAQ

The North Coast Regional Tourism Awards are facilitated by [NSW Tourism Association](#). This FAQ has been developed to help you confidently navigate your awards journey – from registering your account to understanding how the program supports your business and what comes next.

---

## Getting Started

### How do I access the Awards Portal?

Use your business email to check for an existing account (most businesses previously accredited or entered in the last 5–6 years already have one). If unsure, contact the Awards Team to confirm or update access.

Awards Portal: <https://atic.qualitytourismaustralia.com>

If already a member of NSW Tourism Association, use the primary email address linked to your membership to access the member's only rate.

Businesses wishing to [join NSW Tourism Association](#), will receive the member's rate for entry and complementary access to the [Quality Tourism Accreditation programs](#).

### How do I nominate?

Once logged in, click the **Nominate** button (top right). You'll be asked for:

- Business details
- Regional & NSW Tourism Awards entry or Regional Tourism Awards only
- Category selection
- Payment

## Nominate

Nominations for the 2025 Australian Tourism Awards are now open for selected states.

Once payment is received, your nomination will then be approved, and you can start your entry.

### How do I submit multiple nominations?

You need to complete a nomination and payment for each category you wish to enter. This should be done from within the one portal account.



## What happens after nomination?

Once payment has been received, you will receive access to the submission questions and can start on the Business Standards and award submission.

## How much does it cost to enter?

### Regional & NSW Tourism Awards Entry Fee:

- \$350 +GST \*price available only at time of Regional Nomination
- \$262.50 +GST Members rate\*\*

### Regional Tourism Awards Entry Fee:

- \$295 +GST
- \$220 +GST Members rate\*\*
- Later date add-on NSW Tourism Awards entry fee \$100 +GST

No entry fee for **Outstanding Contribution to Regional Tourism**

Pay upfront for the **Regional & NSW Tourism Awards** for the same fee as entering the NSW Tourism Awards alone—effectively giving you entry into the Regional Awards at no additional cost. This includes six months of dedicated entrant support, the opportunity for two draft reviews and the ability to enhance your submission following judges feedback prior to submitting for NSW Tourism Awards.

**Regional Tourism Awards** entry fee provides entry to the North Coast Tourism awards only, with an 8-week entrant support program.

Refunds will not be provided for change of mind withdrawals after nominations have closed.

\*\*Use the primary NSWTA membership **email address** to access the membership price

---

## Business Standards & Accreditation

### What are Business Standards?

All entrants are required to demonstrate that they meet industry best practice standards. Businesses who already hold **Sustainable Tourism Accreditation**, as part of membership with NSW Tourism Association, have already demonstrated this. Businesses that are not Sustainable Tourism accredited, must complete the **Business**



**Standards** to be eligible to enter the Regional Tourism Awards. These standards include:

- Licences, permits, and insurance
- Policies on HR, marketing, risk, sustainability, customer service
- Evidence of good business planning and continuous improvement

The Business Standards tab will appear next to the submission questions for all non-accredited businesses. These must be submitted and approved **by 17 April**.



Business standards are not required to be completed again for the NSW Tourism Awards. Once business standards have been completed once, they only require updating for future year's participation.

### **What if I'm entering multiple categories?**

Business Standards can be duplicated across entries – contact the team to activate this feature.

### **How do I become formally accredited?**

You can formalise your Business Standards into Sustainable Tourism Accreditation by joining NSW Tourism Association.

## **Accommodation Categories**

### **We're not star-rated – can we still enter?**

Yes, but you must complete **both Business and Accommodation Standards** to demonstrate that you meet your category's star rating level (e.g. 4 - 4.5 Star Deluxe). These standards cover:

- Facilities and services
- Quality and condition
- Amenities and accessibility

You can formalise these into **Star Rating Accreditation** by joining NSW Tourism Association.

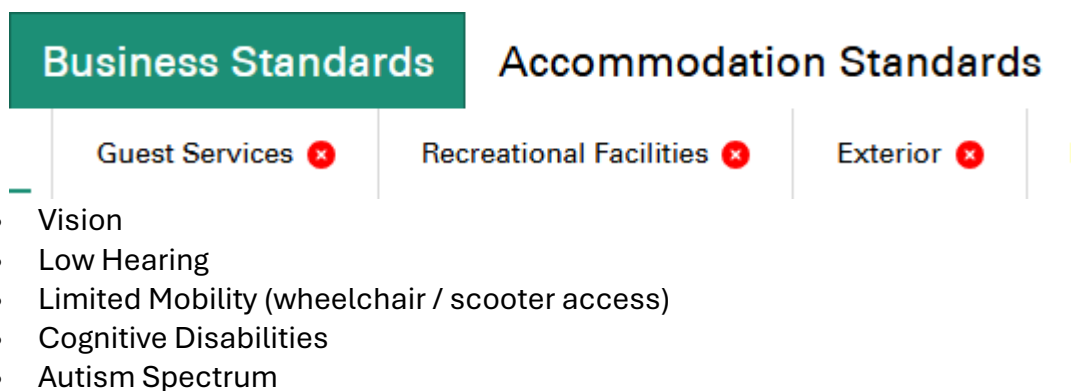


## Accessibility & Ecotourism

### We're entering the Accessibility category – what do we need to do?

If you are not Sustainable Accredited or Accessibility Accredited, you'll need to complete both **Business Standards** and **Accessibility Standards**. If the business is already **Sustainable Tourism** accredited, only Accessibility Standards will be required.

You must meet criteria in at least one of the following areas:



Accessibility standards require identification of the property's facilities, amenities, disability training and meeting of Australian Standards through multiple check boxes and short answer questions. Note: question sets will vary dependent on business type.

### We're entering the Ecotourism category – do we need to do more?

Yes. If you are not Sustainable Accredited, you'll need to complete both **Business Standards** and **Ecostar Standards**. If the business is already **Sustainable Tourism** accredited, only EcoStar Standards will be required.

Businesses must demonstrate they meet the following:

- Managing impact and disturbance on the environment
- Contributing to conservation and sustainability
- Establishing an environmental Risk Management Strategy
- Supporting and benefiting the local community
- Recognition of local cultural and heritage sensitivity



## How do I become formally accredited?

Both Accessibility and Ecotourism standards can be formalised via [NSW Tourism Association membership](#).

## About the Entry Process

### How are the Regional Awards different from the State Awards?

The Regional Tourism Awards align with the NSW Tourism Awards, using the same question sets and a reduced number of approved national categories. There are a few important differences that may affect your submission and opportunities to maximise the support provided.

- Word count: No minimum – maximum 7,500 words
- 18 category options – no ‘Major’ categories
- Qualifying period: 1 July 2025 – 31 March 2026  
(Note: For events held between 1 April – 1 July 2025, the qualifying period is 1 April 2025 – 31 March 2026.)
- Provide minimum examples required (must include min. 2 examples per question)
- Consumer Score (GRI) not used
- No onsite visits
- Digital review is included
- Total score: 120 points for some categories (due to Consumer Score removal), Accessible Tourism: 50 points
- If dual nomination is selected, the entry automatically progresses to NSW Tourism Awards (no guaranteed placing), with the ability to improve and update submission before the NSW Tourism Awards.

**NOTE:** The questions in the Awards portal are the full NSW question set. Only the minimum number of examples are required for the North Coast Regional Tourism Awards.

Refer to the Regional Tourism Award [category information](#) for specific regional level requirements.



## What if I'm progressing to the NSW Tourism Awards?

It's an easy transition to the NSW Tourism Awards. For those who selected the dual nomination upfront, there is an automatic pathway. If your business didn't opt for dual nomination, you can upgrade at any time for a reduced additional fee.

Entrants are encouraged to revise and strengthen their submission ahead of the NSW Tourism Awards. This includes:

- Incorporating Judges' Feedback
- Adding additional examples to meet maximum NSW requirements
- Including activity from the final quarter (April–June 2026)

Once updated, Regional Tourism entrants have another opportunity for a draft review to refine their submission before final lodgement.

NSW Tourism Awards Draft Reviews must be submitted by Friday 7 August.

This revision period takes place between the announcement of Regional Award winners on 30 July and the NSW Tourism Awards submission deadline on 19 August.

## Which categories are available in the Regional Awards?

There are 19 categories in the regional awards program, selected from the 30 categories available at state and national level. All categories use the approved national question set.

The exception to this is the Outstanding Contribution to Regional Tourism which is a Regional only category and requires submitting the entry via email to [programs@nswtourismassociation.com.au](mailto:programs@nswtourismassociation.com.au)

- Tourist Attractions
- Festivals & Events
- Ecotourism
- Cultural Tourism
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tourism Experiences
- Tourism Retail, Hire & Services
- Business Event Venues
- Tour & Transport Operators
- Adventure Tourism
- Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services
- Tourism Wineries, Distilleries and Breweries
- Caravan & Holiday Parks
- Hosted Accommodation



- Self-Contained Accommodation
- 4-4.5 Star Deluxe Accommodation
- 5 Star Luxury Accommodation
- New Tourism Business
- Accessible Tourism
- Outstanding Contribution to Regional Tourism – submit entry by email

## Where can I find the questions and response guides for my category?

The question sets are available on the NSW Tourism Association website – [North Coast Regional Tourism Awards page](#).

The questions are also available in the [QTF Awards portal](#) after nomination has been approved. Your awards submission will be automatically populated with the questions for your nominated category.

The Category Response guides are also available via the [Regional Awards Entrants Support Hub](#). You will be given access to this upon approval of your awards nomination.

## Can I change categories for the NSW Tourism Awards?

Yes. In cases where there is a more specific or relevant category at NSW level, that wasn't offered at Regional level, it is possible or may be required to be moved into that category for the NSW Tourism Awards. For example:

- Tourist Attractions with 100,000+ visitors annually *will be moved to* Major Tourist Attractions category
- Festivals and Events with 50,000+ attendees *will be moved to* Major Festivals & Events category
- Tour and Transport Operators with 15+ FTEs *will be moved to* Major Tour & Transport Operators category
- Tourism Restaurants and Catering Services *will have the option to move to* Excellence in Food Tourism category

Please discuss with the Program Manager if this applies to your entry.

---

## Draft Review & Judge Feedback

### Can I get feedback on a draft before final submission?

Yes. Submit a complete draft by **24 April** to receive judge feedback before the final submission deadline of **8 May**.

Draft Review fee: \$75 +GST for NSW Tourism Association members,  
\$100+GST for non-members



You'll receive a notification via the portal once your feedback is ready.

Show Incomplete

Saved ✓

Submit Assessment

Submit for Draft Review

---

TOP TIP: There is a strong correlation between those businesses who have had drafts reviewed prior to final submission and them placing in their category!

---

## Digital Review

### What is the digital review?

Up to 20% of your final score is based on a digital review by an independent judge who assesses:

- Website functionality and design
- Social media presence
- Search engine visibility
- Listings on external platforms like ATDW
- Regional alignment and promotional impact

This review is separate from the written submission and is a great opportunity to showcase your brand's digital strength.

Ensure your website and social media channels are at their best and consumer reviews are responded to, to receive maximum points.

---

## What Happens After the Regional Awards?

**Finalists are announced:** 17 June

**Winners are announced:** 30 July @ North Coast Tourism Gala Event, Pacific Bay, Coffs Harbour

**All entrants that opted to enter the NSW Tourism Awards** automatically progress to the state level – with the opportunity to update their entry.



- Your current submission will be duplicated in the portal to enable updates to be made following judges feedback.
- Judges feedback will be released on Friday 31 July
- Entrants can update their submission with any additional examples to meet maximum NSW requirements, include activity from the final quarter (April–June 2026) and incorporate judges feedback

Once updated, Regional Tourism entrants have another opportunity for a draft review to refine their submission before final lodgement.

NSW Tourism Awards Draft Reviews must be submitted by **Friday 7 August**.

This revision period takes place between the announcement of Regional Award winners on **30 July** and the NSW Tourism Awards submission deadline on **19 August**.

This seamless transition is designed to maximise exposure, enhance learning, and build your business reputation across all levels of tourism awards.

If your business didn't opt for dual nomination, you can upgrade at any time for a reduced additional fee of \$100 + GST.

---

## About the North Coast Regional Awards Program

The North Coast Regional Tourism Awards are delivered in partnership with NSW Tourism Association and Destination North Coast. They are aligned with the **Quality Tourism Accreditation** and **Australian Tourism Industry Council** and allow for easier entry at regional level, with strong support and an enhanced pathway to state and national. The entry process is designed to support tourism businesses grow through:

- Weekly webinars
- Expert judging
- Media and PR exposure
- Constructive feedback
- Pathways to state and national recognition

## Hear it from a Past Entrant

*“Winning Gold at the Regional and NSW Tourism Awards, and then achieving Silver at the Australian level, has been an incredible journey for the Northern Rivers Rail Trail.*

*The North Coast Tourism Awards laid the foundation for that success, providing invaluable feedback, expert guidance, and—thanks to welcome changes in 2025—a seamless transition from regional to state award programs.*



*The Regional Tourism Awards Program is a powerful tool. The program helps refine your operations, highlights your strengths, and drives continuous improvement forward. The opportunity to receive judges' feedback and gain industry-wide exposure has been a game-changer for us. Even six months after our State win, we're still benefiting from a steady stream of earned media.*

*If you're passionate about what you do and want to elevate your business, I highly encourage you to get involved. The rewards go far beyond a trophy—it's about growth, credibility, and taking your business to the next level”.*

**Dean Cooper, Regional Lead, Northern Rivers Rail Trail**

---

## NSW Tourism Association Member Benefits

Members of the NSW Tourism Association receive:

- Complimentary access to suite of **Quality Tourism Accreditation** programs
- Free **ReviewPro account**
- Resources, research and events
- Advocacy and business support
- Access to future services (HR tools, insurance, etc.)

<https://nswtourismassociation.com.au/membership>

---

## Contact the Awards Team

### **Sarah Kerrsmith**

Program Manager, Awards

✉ [programs@nswtourismassociation.com.au](mailto:programs@nswtourismassociation.com.au)

### **Domino Houlbrook-Cove**

Program Manager, Accreditation

✉ [accreditation@nswtourismassociation.com.au](mailto:accreditation@nswtourismassociation.com.au)