

# SEA CHANGE FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN MANLY

## overview of the project

*Sea Change for Sustainable Tourism* is a program that has been adopted by Manly Council to address concerns over the potential negative impacts of tourism on the local environment and residents. The aim of the program is to encourage sustainable business practices that achieve compatibility between tourism, the environment and the community in order to preserve the values of Manly for future generations.

The program was developed by the University of Western Sydney and has been modelled on the highly successful Gumnut Awards, an environmental education program previously developed by the NSW Camping and Caravan Industry Association and the University.

Tourism businesses are supported through an educational program to adopt sustainable business practices, and to develop and implement an environmental management plan. Businesses who participate in the program are recognised through an accreditation scheme that acknowledges their achievement and promotes a positive business image to consumers and the local community.



Project staff and business owners at the *Sea Change for Sustainable Tourism* award ceremony

## how the project was carried out



Participating businesses are accredited using a 5-star rating system

The project commenced with a scoping meeting between Council and business representatives. A list of target businesses was compiled and input on the implementation of the program was sought from attendees. A steering committee was formed to oversee the development and implementation of the project.

Criteria and benchmarks were developed by University researchers and presented to the project committee who considered the relevance of each to Manly tourism businesses.

A series of training workshops tested the relevance of the program criteria to a diverse range of tourism businesses. Educational resources were produced for each of the five levels of accreditation within the program.

Businesses were recruited into the program through an intensive communication campaign including letters, email, telephone calls, networking and a presentation to the Manly Chamber of Commerce.

## outcomes now and in the future

A total of 27 businesses took part in the initial program with four group workshops and 12 individual workshops conducted during the project. *Sea Change for Sustainable Tourism* is now an ongoing program for Manly Council and there are currently 34 businesses working their way through the program.

The project has resulted in the development of an educational strategy tailored to meet the needs of tourism businesses in Manly. A promotional campaign has been implemented to engage businesses and to encourage visitors to support businesses who are accredited through the scheme. Promotional initiatives include a 5-star business accreditation scheme, prominent signage at key

tourist areas, media releases and advertising on Manly Council's website. These initiatives have resulted in the *Sea Change* branding gradually becoming more prominent in Manly.

## benefits, challenges & lessons learned

Although the initial participation rate was considered good in comparison to similar programs, the limited number is regarded as a barrier to entering the program by some businesses. A critical mass of numbers is needed to persuade undecided businesses to participate. One of the challenges that lie ahead is to continue raising the profile of the program so that visitors and the community understand what the logo means, and the accreditation becomes a marketable commodity for participants.

Some business operators queried the 5-star rating system used in the accreditation scheme because the 'star' rating is already used in the tourism industry as an indicator of quality. While it is agreed that there could be potential for confusion, it was suggested that the star rating was an incentive for businesses to progress quickly through the program in order to achieve a higher rating.

Implementation of the program has demonstrated that it is relevant to a wide range of business types, and there is potential for the model to be transferred to other local government areas. The program was presented at the 2006 NSW Local Government and Shires Association Tourism Conference where it was well received and created interest from a number of delegates.

*Sea Change for Sustainable Tourism* signage aimed at visitors to Manly

