# **Environmental Auditing for Sustainable Tourism Development in Australia**

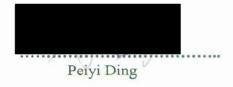
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A thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy of the University of New England, Armidale, Australia

1997

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis, and all sources used, have been acknowledged in this thesis.



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## Chapter in the Book

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### Abstract

Tourism, in Australia and globally, is a growth industry. With this growth has come concern about its environmental implications. As a result, the tourism industry has experienced increased scrutiny in regard to environmental management, and efforts are being made to achieve more sustainable forms of tourism development.

The case for the tourism industry in Australia to develop an effective approach to improve its environmental performance is compelling. The industry depends primarily on conserving and improving the environment which is its main resource. For this reason, the improvement of environmental performance is likely to grow in importance.

This study examined the principle of sustainable tourism development and analysed the current environmental impact assessment process in Australia, The study argued that the current EIA process has shortcomings. It cannot provide sufficient information for effective environmental management, and cannot meet the requirement of sustainable tourism development. Given these shortcomings, it appears that improved and effective environmental impact assessment relevant to tourism development must extend beyond impact statements to include continual monitoring and evaluation of objectives, and operational procedures and performance. To this end, it is further argued that a new approach which provides a continuing management tool that can play a key role in the environmental management for tourism is needed. It also can overcome the shortcomings of current EIA process and complements EIA. This approach is termed environmental auditing, and is seen as more beneficial and

effective for improving the environmental performance of tourism development. It is stressed that environmental auditing should become a key element in an integrated environmental management system, in particular when adopted by management as an approach for providing feedback about particular problem areas and overall environmental performance.

The study, by discussing the relationship between tourism and environment and reviewing the existing research, emphasised the importance of monitoring and evaluation for environmental auditing. It further examined the existing management organizational structure and the responsibilities which have been created to deal with the environment in tourism industry in Australia. Emphasis was given to the roles played by three levels of government - Federal, State and local, and the community and tourism industry. It addressed that the responsibility of environmental management for tourism in Australia is shared between the Federal, State and local governments and industry.

In order to assist in achieving the objectives and to guide the development of an effective and efficient environmental auditing program, this study identified some applicable, clear and well understood principles and discussed constraints may influence the implementation and effectiveness of environmental auditing process for tourism industry.

Based on the establishment and identification of objectives and principles, and consideration of existing constraints, this study presented a systematic framework for

an Environmental Management Performance Auditing (EMPA) program within which a series of activities and decisions can be made that help define a set of desired performance outcomes and the management actions necessary to maintain or improve this performance. It is seen primarily as an internal and voluntary audit.

With current tourism development trends in Australia, the study selected beach resort as a case study. The result of case studies demonstrated that the EMPA tends to be well understood and supported by resort management. Improving environmental management performance of resorts does not have to increase costs or reduce comfort and convenience of guests. As better environmental practices are being sought, more solutions which enable environmental, commercial and guests service goals to be met simultaneously are being found. It further showed that improving environmental performance enhances the resorts' reputation, and responsible actions of management are positive marketable commodities. As such, environmental auditing has great potential to make a valuable contribution to improvement of the environment.

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