

Sustainable Tourism Adviser in (North Canterbury) Regions 2009 Wayside Motel, March 2010

i. Business Vision

We see 'sustainable tourism' as simply talking a more responsible attitude toward where our accommodation business sits in the world, and understanding that how we choose to operate our business has a lasting effect on those people and places that we come into contact with. To us, in practical day to day terms, sustainability means making changes and decisions, wherever we can, to do things in a more environmental and socially considerate way than we had in the past.

ii. Business Background

Wayside Motel is a Qualmark 4 star rated motel complex consisting of 11 self contained units and 1 cabin situated on State Highway 1 in the town of Woodend, 20km north of Christchurch. The property has a mix of modern and older style units and is set on large grounds with a swimming pool and playground area. The motel has existed on this site in one form or another since the early 1970s and has been in the current leasehold ownership since October 2007.

The motel is popular with family groups, sports teams, the budget traveller and corporate clients alike owing to the mix of units and range of tariffs. The business is operated by the owners, with the assistance of 2 part time housekeeping staff who supply around 25hrs per week of labour.

iii. Sustainable Business Practice

While we have made many small and some larger changes within our business over the last 12 months, by far the most important has been the entrenchment of sustainable business practices as a cornerstone of our planning and decision making processes.

A recent example: Because of quality issues, we needed to change our linen supplier. We reviewed and considered a number of companies all of which priced their products competitively but none of them reached our expectations in areas of packaging and accounting. We chose to go with a particular supplier because of their approachability. We were concerned about their use of plastic wrap around their bundles of linen. We negotiated with them and explained our position on sustainability. They now deliver our linen in reusable cloth laundry bags. This change was made at no cost, only the time taken talking with the supplier. This is an important example to us because we have been able to get a supplier to make a change because of our expectations around packaging. We are now negotiating with them to introduce electronic invoicing.

We looked at our policies and procedures around the day to day use and laundering of towels within our motel. We had outsourced the supply and laundering of the towels. This meant that the towels were collected by truck and driven into Christchurch 3 times a week. We decided to purchase our own towels and wash and dry them in-house. This gave us the opportunity to batch wash the towels and (weather permitting) line dry them. We also displayed notices in the units and compendiums offering guests the opportunity to reuse their towels by hanging them up. By making these changes we have removed the need to transport the towels off site, reduced electricity consumption and water usage by batch washing, line drying and the guests opting to reuse their towels. The cost of making these changes has been the initial purchase of the towels and the extra time involved in the laundering process. These changes have however also resulted in a significant financial saving.

iv. Analysis of Sustainable Business Practices

The introduction of sustainable tourism practices into our business has had a marked effect on how we plan, operate and perceive our business. It has made us take a fresh look at our business and has been the catalyst for many changes which we believe we will benefit from into the future.

It is clear to us that the introduction of a number of sustainable business practices including the close monitoring of electricity and gas consumption, the replacement of older inefficient appliances, reducing the number of cleaning products and installing energy efficient light bulbs has already started to show a financial benefit despite being in its early stages. The recent awarding of a Qualmark Enviro bronze certification to our business will give us new marketing opportunities and appeal to potential customers.

We have reduced the quantity of waste our business produces by improving and refining our practises and encouraging our staff and guests to participate in our vision on sustainability. There has been a notable increase in the use of the recycling and food scrap containers and a related decrease in the quantity of general waste produced.

One of the interesting quandaries we have had when considering introducing changes to our business is that some, while having good environmental or social merit, have proved not to be economically viable. However, not always has the cost or financial gain been the deciding factor but it is important for our business to find that point of balance.

v. Assessment of the STAR programme

At the time we started the STAR programme we were a little despondent about our business. In fact, we were considering selling, however, the programme and the people we have met have helped generate new enthusiasm and direction for us. We have gained a greater understanding of where we and our business sit in our community and the importance that the responsible operation of our business has in the future.

The STAR programme has been instrumental in providing us with the systems, processes and understanding required to obtain our recent Qualmark Enviro certification. The skills and knowledge acquired have given us a foundation and direction on which we can build.

The programme in its present format is excellent. Increasing the opportunities to network with fellow participants on a regular basis during the programme would be beneficial.

vi. Future plans and outlook

We feel we have set our business on an excellent path for the future, with good systems and a clear vision of where we would like to be in terms of making it rewarding and sustainable for us. Our next target is an Enviro Silver certification, as a great indication that we are moving forward. The adoption of sustainable tourism practices, as a cornerstone of our planning process will see us always looking to improve our performance and looking for new opportunities to excel in this area.

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