



**Queensland Visitor
Information Centre (VIC)
Signage Policy**

The document has been developed and published by Tourism Queensland.

For information regarding this publication or to apply for Accreditation, please visit the Tourism Queensland website, www.tq.com.au/vics or contact:

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Acronyms used in this publication:

VIC: Visitor Information Centre

TQ: Tourism Queensland

RTO: Regional Tourism Organisation

LGA: Local Government Authority

LTA: Local Tourism Association

QTIC: Queensland Tourism Industry Corporation

DMR: Queensland Department of Main Roads

QICA: Queensland Information Centres Association

This document was published December 2010.

VIC ACCREDITATION

In recent years there has been increased recognition of the role of Visitor Information Centres (VICs) and their importance in providing high quality tourist information. In order to raise their standards of information provision and acknowledge genuine visitor information providers, State tourism agencies throughout Australia developed and implemented accreditation programs or standards for the provision of visitor information. After extensive consultation with industry and government, Tourism Queensland (TQ) developed the Queensland Visitor Information Centre (VIC) Signage Policy to achieve this end.

The Policy was officially launched by the Minister for Tourism and Racing, on 18 April 2000. At this time, the Policy (together with the Resource Kit, Application Form and Business Assistance Workshop flyer) was distributed to all VICs state-wide.

Tourism Queensland undertook a strategic review of the Policy in 2007 identifying issues and opportunities for the network of accredited centres. To ensure that the Policy continues to provide a high standard and in keeping with visitor needs the Policy criteria was reviewed in 2008.

THE ‘I’ SIGN

Currently, there are few restrictions on use of the white on blue roman ‘i’ (information) sign, and some businesses display it as a means of gaining custom rather than providing relevant, objective and valuable visitor and community information. While the white and blue ‘i’ sign is an internationally recognised symbol of ‘information’ (not just visitor information), it has traditionally been the only symbol available for use by both general information providers and quality visitor information providers. A yellow on blue italicised ‘i’ sign has therefore been developed to distinguish genuine visitor information providers who are achieving high standards of information provision.

After a lengthy process which began in September 1998, Tourism Victoria has been successful in trademarking the sign (on behalf of all States and Territories) and will sublicense each State and Territory to administer the sign. Trademarking of the sign provides protection against its misuse. Each State and Territory is responsible for initiating appropriate action should the sign be misused (ie a breach of trademark). Tourism Victoria’s trademark attorneys have prepared a letter to be used by each State and Territory for this purpose should the need arise.

NATIONAL MINIMUM STANDARDS

The Visitor Services National Working Party (of which TQ is a member) determined ‘national minimum standards’ of VIC operations and information provision for use of the sign. The sign has been trademarked on the proviso that it represents these standards, hence distinguishing it from the existing blue and white ‘i’ sign. Each State and Territory is responsible for administering the sign based on these standards as a minimum, although their accreditation programs or standards may operate above this minimum level if desired. This model enables State level flexibility whilst ensuring at least some consistency of minimum standards on a nation-wide basis. The Queensland VIC Accreditation Policy adheres to the national minimum standards.

1 ELIGIBILITY

- 1.1 Only Regional Tourism Organisation (RTO) or Local Government Authority (LGA) operated or funded (fully or part funded) VICs are eligible to apply for use of the 'i' sign. This ensures that only those VICs which are genuine providers of objective visitor information are acknowledged by the sign.
- 1.2 In addition to being associated with an RTO or LGA in this manner, eligible VICs are required to satisfy minimum standards established under the Policy in order to be able to display the 'i' sign.
- 1.3 Special Consideration to use the 'i' sign under the Policy may be requested where the VIC is not operated or funded (fully or partly) by an RTO and/or LGA. A letter explaining the reasons for application under special consideration must be provided in addition to meeting eligibility clause 1.2 above.

2 STANDARDS

- 2.1 The table in Appendix 1 outlines the standards which eligible VICs must meet in order to be granted use of the 'i' sign. These standards promote improved operational performance, higher quality information provision and improved networking of Queensland VICs.
- 2.2 The standards comprise numerous criteria which are ESSENTIAL for a VIC to display the new sign, and a number of HIGHLY RECOMMENDED criteria.
- 2.3 An Exemption may be applied for where the VIC is unable to meet the essential business hours criteria of opening 7 days per week (Appendix 1, Criteria 2.0). Exemptions may be granted to VICs on the basis of the following special circumstances:
 - Remoteness of location; or
 - Extreme weather seasonality.

An Application for Exemption must be completed explaining the reasons for exemption and must be provided in addition to meeting clause 2.1 above. VICs are required to meet the minimum 36 opening hours per week.

Tourism Queensland will review and assess all applications for exemption. Where appropriate the VIC Signage Policy Management Group may review and assess applications.

- 2.4 VICs are encouraged to work closely with RTOs, LGAs, Local Tourism Associations (LTAs), TQ, State Development Centres and other key organisations to achieve, maintain and exceed the standards.
- 2.5 Note that VICs which are ineligible to display the 'i' sign and/or do not meet the Policy standards, can continue to display the existing blue and white 'i' sign on their property.

3 RESOURCES

- 3.1 TQ has produced a Resource Kit which provides VICs with information that will assist them to achieve, maintain, and where possible exceed, the standards defined in the Queensland VIC Signage Policy.
- 3.2 The Kit includes 'self-help' information on:
- Business Plan guidelines (refer to Appendix 2 for an outline)
 - Operations Manual guidelines (refer to Appendix 2 for an outline)
 - Collecting Visitor Data
 - Staff Induction, Training and Professional Development
 - Customer Service
 - Regulatory Compliance
 - Workplace Health and Safety
 - Insurance
 - Funding, Assistance and Information Sources.

4 MARKETING AND PROMOTION

- 4.1 The Policy, Application form and Resource Kit is freely available online at www.tq.com.au/vics
- 4.2 Only those VICs which display the 'i' sign will be promoted by TQ through various promotional/information sources, including:
- Relevant Government agency publications e.g. Department of Main Roads
 - TQ Destination Marketing materials
 - TQ consumer websites
 - Proposed national promotions of the 'i' sign.
- 4.3 Further, VICs are required to include the 'i' symbol and promote its advantages in all applications (eg brochures, letterheads, advertising etc).

5 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT PROCESS

- 5.1 Tourism Queensland has tasked Visit Queensland the role of Secretariat of the Qld VIC Signage Policy to administer the accreditation and audit of VICs in Queensland.
- 5.2 Eligible VICs should review the Policy and undertake any actions required to meet the Policy standards should they wish to apply for use of the sign. VICs are strongly encouraged to use the Resource Kit as a valuable resource to assist them to meet the Policy Standards.
- 5.3 The VIC will complete a self-assessment application form. This form is to be lodged with the VIC Secretariat, Visit Queensland.
- 5.4 The VIC Secretariat will undertake an onsite visit of the VIC to verify the self assessment application form.

SECTION 2 – QUEENSLAND VIC ACCREDITATION POLICY

- 5.5 Accreditation fees will be levied on an annual basis and are based on the Australian Financial Year (July – June). This fee is non-refundable.

Please note that a separate application form must be submitted by each VIC that would like to display the ‘i’ sign (ie if a VIC operates in conjunction with several other ‘satellite’ centres, each centre must apply individually for use of the ‘i’ sign).

- 5.6 TQ will provide final approval of all applications to ensure state-wide consistency. It is envisaged that VICs will meet the minimum criteria in full prior to lodging an application for the sign, as the standards have been designed to ensure that eligible VICs can meet the criteria with minimal resource outlay and a primary focus on business planning.
- 5.7 VICs which meet the criteria in full will be granted the use of the sign (via a formal letter of verification) and will be provided with one new property sign.
- 5.8 Additional property and road signs are to be manufactured, installed and maintained at the VIC’s own expense. VICs should replace all existing white and blue ‘i’ signs with the italicised ‘i’ sign within a twelve (12) month period of being granted use of the sign. VICs which are granted use of the sign will be provided with a signage Style Manual to guide future reproduction of the sign.
- 5.9 VICs will need to coordinate the installation of new signs and/or replacement of existing signs within the road reserve with the relevant road authority (i.e. the Department of Main Roads for state roads and the relevant local government for local roads). When requesting a ‘i’ sign, VICs must present their letter of verification to the relevant authority to confirm that the VIC meets the Policy standards.
- 5.10 Any documentation and information provided to complete the Accreditation process will be treated as strictly confidential and will only be reviewed as part of the Accreditation process. Any Business/Marketing Plan will be kept strictly confidential.
- 5.11 VICs will be required to complete an annual audit against the Policy standards each year. An onsite annual audit of VICs will be undertaken every 2 years. A desktop audit will be required every alternating year. The VIC Secretariat will manage and undertake all onsite and desktop audits.
- 5.12 An online monitoring and auditing program will be used by the VIC Secretariat to manage the audit process (onsite and desktop).
- 5.13 A small Management Group consisting of TQ (as the Chair), Queensland Tourism Industry Corporation, RTO and Queensland Information Centres Association (QICA) representatives has been established to provide three key functions:
- A forum for assessing any applications which request special consideration or reconsideration, applications for exemption and for resolving any conflict which may arise throughout the process of administering the Policy.
 - To review and provide on-going direction, monitoring and advice concerning the Policy’s modification and further development.
 - To respond to industry and visitor concerns re misuse of the sign and non-maintenance of the Policy standards.

SECTION 2 – QUEENSLAND VIC ACCREDITATION POLICY

- 5.14 Where the Management Group receives an application under Special Consideration, this will be reviewed on an individual case-by-case basis.
- 5.15 VICs will be requested to sign an agreement whereby they commit to maintaining (and, where possible, improving) the Policy standards. VICs have an ethical and professional responsibility to maintain these standards. Any visitor and industry complaints received regarding non-maintenance of these standards will be forwarded to the Management Group. Where complaints are substantiated, VICs will be required to respond in writing and to commit to rectifying the issue within an appropriate time period.
- 5.16 The Management Group has the authority to remove the sign from a VIC (and disallow it to use the italicised ‘i’ symbol in all applications) if the VIC demonstrates a prolonged inability to maintain the standards, or if the Group receives a substantiated complaint reflecting a serious breach of Policy standards.

Should the VIC wish to re-apply for the sign at a later stage, the complete process of application and assessment is required.

A VIC has the right of appeal if their sign is removed, which will be assessed by the Management Group. An appeal must be lodged in writing with the Management Group through the VIC Secretariat (i.e. Visit Queensland) no later than fourteen (14) days after notice of the Group’s decision has been given.

- 5.17 Refer to Appendix 3 for a diagram of the Policy Implementation and Management process.

QUEENSLAND VIC SIGNAGE POLICY STANDARDS

CRITERIA	ESSENTIAL	HIGHLY RECOMMENDED
<p>1.0 BUSINESS & MANAGEMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriate insurance policies for VIC staff and volunteers ▪ Business Plan (including all sections of Guidelines supplied in Resource Kit). ▪ Operations Manual (including all sections of Guidelines supplied in Resource Kit). ▪ Environmental Policies and procedures concerning (primarily) recycling, energy saving, and water consumption. ▪ Marketing Action Plan (based on information from the Business Plan). ▪ Collection of visitor statistics including visitor number and origin and commitment to undertake regular visitor profile and satisfaction surveys (support resources available in the Resource Kit). ▪ Use of the VIC Kit Survey specifically for VICs. ▪ Evidence of support from RTO and LGA (ie letter of support from RTO and LGA). ▪ Membership of relevant RTO. ▪ Member of the Queensland Information Centre Association (QICA). 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p></p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>2.0 BUSINESS HOURS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ MINIMUM of 36 opening hours, 7 days per week (except in the event of flood, fire, extreme weather conditions or any other circumstances beyond the VIC's control). ▪ MINIMUM of 42 hours, 7 days per week, 362 days per year. ▪ Business hours to be prominently displayed (building, phone, web). 	<p>✓</p> <p></p> <p>✓</p>	<p></p> <p>✓</p> <p></p>
<p>3.0 CENTRE FACILITIES</p> <p>3.1 Premises</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The VIC is located in a shared tenancy with a compatible business/organisation or occupied independently with the primary purpose being the provision of visitor information. <p>If a shared tenancy, the information area must have a high profile location, be easy to see and access and be well signed from the entrance.</p> <p>3.2 Parking</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Adequate car, coach and caravan parking to meet demand within close proximity (ie within five minutes walk), including appropriate signage. ▪ Adequate on-site car, coach and caravan parking to meet demand, including appropriate signage. ▪ Disabled parking close by (onsite or within 5 min walk) in accordance with appropriate Local Government or Australian Standards. <p>3.3 Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated telephone line. ▪ Dedicated after hours answering machine/service. ▪ Dedicated fax machine. ▪ Dedicated email address for general inquiries. ▪ Personal computer with internet and email access/capacity. ▪ Dedicated computer with internet access for visitor use. 	<p>✓</p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p></p> <p></p> <p></p> <p>✓</p>

APPENDIX 1

<p>3.4 General Facilities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Public toilets (with disabled access) on premises or close by (ie within five minutes walk). ▪ Disabled access to building in accordance with appropriate Local Government or appropriate Australian Standards. ▪ Information/enquiry counter or desk. ▪ Brochure Display Area (eg. Accommodation, Tours, Attractions etc.), which is adequately signed and identified. ▪ Clean, tidy, well lit, well ventilated. ▪ Visitor seating area, consultation area, DVD/video viewing area. ▪ Toll free (1800) or low cost call number (1300). ▪ Credit card facility available (if applicable). ▪ Access to an electronic language translator. 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>4.0 STAFF, VOLUNTEERS & TRAINING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Minimum of one dedicated coordinator (part or full time, paid or volunteer), located on site with management assistance from RTO, LTA or LGA. ▪ Minimum of one full time paid OR appropriately qualified manager/coordinator with experience as a tourism officer/manager or other management experience. May be located on or off-site. ▪ Structured induction and training program including local and regional product familiarisations; professional development for management/coordinators; customer service; relevant computer training; workplace health and safety; and operational policies and procedures. ▪ All staff and volunteers to wear name badges. ▪ Display the italicised 'i' sign on name badges and / or uniforms. ▪ Minimum dress standards or uniforms. ▪ First Aid training for the manager/coordinator. ▪ Manager / coordinator completed a customer service program for employers. 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<p>5.0 NETWORKING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Commitment to network with other VICs and regional and local tourism organisations in the region and adjoining region. ▪ Attendance of Annual Queensland Information Centres Association Conference. 	<p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p>
<p>6.0 INFORMATION & DISPLAYS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VIC provides comprehensive destination information on the local area, local region and neighbouring regions. ▪ Ability to facilitate the booking process for the visitor. The VIC must be able to make enquiries on behalf of visitors and/or operate as a reservation agency. 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Dedicated website or section of LGA, LTO or RTO website. ▪ Display local merchandise/ product for sale. ▪ Provision of an online reservation service to facilitate bookings. ▪ VIC provides information on every RTO region in Queensland. ▪ Events Notice Board for current and upcoming events. ▪ Local area fact file on accommodation, attractions, activities etc. ▪ State, regional and local area maps available and/or on display. 	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Clearly displayed at the VIC entrance or adjacent window: VIC business hours; local emergency contacts for Police, Ambulance, Hospital; after hours display board; 24 hr contact number for RACQ Australian road conditions 	<p>✓</p>	

APPENDIX 1

<p>reports or local emergency service contact.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Brochure Management Policy (outlined in the Resource Kit) ▪ Provision of objective, appropriate, and accurate information. This does not exclude VICs from entering into commercial arrangements. ▪ Provision of up to date VIC contact information for the Australian Tourism Data Warehouse Qld VIC listing. 	<p>✓ ✓ ✓</p>	
<p>7.0 SIGNAGE & IDENTIFICATION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The VIC's Mission Statement to be prominently displayed in the centre. ▪ Advance warning sign/signs prior to VIC. ▪ Commitment to standardised use of the italicised 'i' symbol in all applications (eg brochures, letterheads, advertising etc.). ▪ Commitment to prominently display the italicised 'i' property sign within 30 days of receiving it, in an unobstructed position. ▪ Commitment to replace existing white on blue 'i' sign with new italicised 'i' sign on all other property, position and direction signs (pertaining to the VIC) within 12 months of obtaining approval to display new 'i' sign. 	<p>✓ ✓ ✓ ✓ ✓</p>	

BUSINESS PLAN & OPERATIONS MANUAL GUIDELINES

BUSINESS PLAN GUIDELINE

(Outline Only - Refer to Resource Kit for further details)

1. Business Profile
2. Recent Achievements of the Centre
3. Current Performance of the Centre
4. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats (SWOT) Analysis
5. Goal Setting
6. Human Resource Management
7. Marketing and Public Relations
8. Operational Procedures
9. Environmental Management Considerations
10. Program of Actions and Budget
11. Communicating the Plan

Appendix Regulatory Compliance Issues

OPERATIONS MANUAL GUIDELINE

(Outline Only - Refer to Resource Kit for further details)

1. Introduction to Staff
2. Emergencies
3. Security While on Duty
4. Risk Management
5. First Aid
6. Hours of Operation
7. Persons with access keys to the Centre
8. Opening Procedure
9. Closing Procedure
10. Cash Register Operation
11. Cash Balancing Procedure After closure of the Centre
12. Handling Visitor Enquiries (Customer Service Policy)
13. Recording Visitor Enquiries (Provision of Statistics)
14. Information Resources
15. Confidentiality Requirements
16. Brochure Display and Management
17. Booking Procedures for Tourism Product
18. Networking Policy
19. Souvenirs, Publications and Other Items for Sale
20. Care and Maintenance of Equipment
21. Purchasing Policy
22. Workplace Health and Safety
23. Other

APPENDIX 3

QUEENSLAND VIC ACCREDITATION POLICY IMPLEMENTATION AND MANAGEMENT

