



Department of Biodiversity,
Conservation and Attractions



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Western Australia.

Commercial Operator Training Program

Information for Commercial Operators

Please read this program before completing the online questionnaire in your licence application via the Commercial Operator Licensing System.

The questionnaire will need to be completed when applying for and renewing a commercial operations licence.



Training and Information

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1. DBCA-managed land

DBCA manage land as defined in the *Conservation and Land Management Act 1984* (CALM Act) also known as CALM Act land.

This includes:

- National parks
- Conservation parks
- Marine parks
- Marine nature reserves
- Marine management areas
- Nature reserves
- Indigenous State forest or timber reserves
- State forest



2. Commercial operations licence

To operate on CALM Act land, you will need a commercial operations licence from DBCA. DBCA issue licences in accordance with Part VIII of the CALM Act, and Part 7 of the CALM Regulations.

Buying or selling a business

A licence cannot be bought, sold or transferred. When selling a business operators should disclose this to prospective buyers. Operators are required to notify DBCA within 21 days of change in business ownership.

Parks and activities

A commercial operations licence will list the parks you can access and activities that you are permitted to undertake. If a park or activity is not listed on the licence, you will need to submit an amendment application to have them added.

Renewing

It is your responsibility to make sure your licence is current. Licences can be renewed from 3 months prior to the licence expiry date via the Commercial Operator Licensing System.

Accessibility

Your licence must be on hand, either electronically or hardcopy, when operating on CALM Act land. Please ensure your employee, agent or contractor has a copy of the licence on hand before entering the park. DBCA staff may ask to see your licence before allowing you into the park.

2. Commercial operations licence

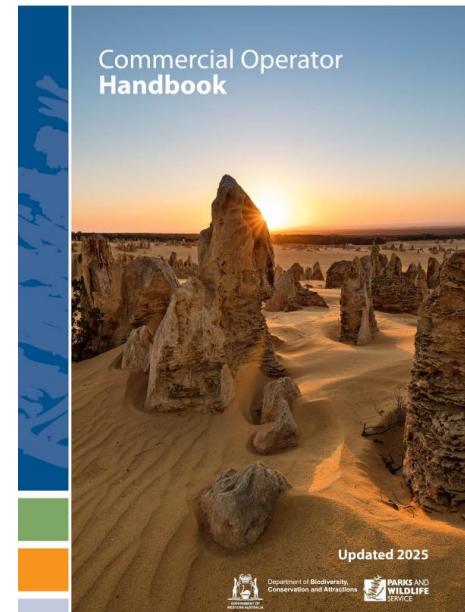
The Commercial Operator Handbook is the official manual which contains licence conditions that apply to **ALL** licenced commercial operators.

The conditions in the handbook are legal and enforceable.

The handbook must be on hand (either electronically or in hardcopy) when you are operating on CALM Act land.

The handbook is available online and can be downloaded onto your phone or tablet.

The handbook can be found on the DBCA website here: <https://www.dbca.wa.gov.au/parks-and-wildlife-service/for-business/commercial-operator-handbook>





2. Commercial operations licence

A licenced operator must comply with all laws relating to the conduct of the operations which includes, but is not limited to the following:

- [Conservation and Land Management Act 1984](#);
- [Conservation and Land Management Regulations 2002](#);
- [Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016 \(BC Act\)](#);
- [Biodiversity Conservation Regulations 2018](#); and
- any other Act, Regulation or By-laws.

Depending on where an Operator is conducting operations, other legislation administered by the department may also apply. This includes, but is not limited to:

- [Rottnest Island Authority Act 1987](#);
- [Swan and Canning Rivers Management Act 2006](#);
- [Botanic Gardens and Parks Authority Act 1998](#); and
- [Zoological Parks Authority Act 2001](#).



2. Commercial operations licence

Conducting a commercial event

Please speak with DBCA and its relevant district office when planning an event.

You will need to apply for an event licence to conduct a commercial event on CALM Act land and cannot begin advertising the event prior to being granted a licence.

Further information on commercial events see [DBCA Commercial Events](#)



2. Commercial operations licence

Cancellation and suspension of a licence

The Director General of DBCA may cancel, suspend or refuse to renew a licence on the grounds that an operator is convicted of an offence against the CALM Act and regulations or the BC Act and Regulations.



3. Accreditation

Commercial operators are required to hold tourism accreditation for licence terms of one year or longer.

Operators applying for a two-month licence are not required to hold tourism accreditation. Two-month licences are granted to operators that conduct seasonal tours only or to interstate Operators who do irregular tours to the state.

If you are applying for your first licence, you can apply for a 1-year licence without current accreditation and will be allowed 6 months to provide your accreditation certificate.

It is important that all operators have accreditation because it:

- provides tools to ensure quality assurance;
- assists with marketing;
- demonstrates best practice business procedures for operations in protected environments; and
- assures passengers that they will be provided an accurate, consistent and quality experience through the quality assurance program.

The Tourism Council of Western Australia and Ecotourism Australia provide training and certification. See [Accreditation - Tourism Western Australia](#), [Tourism Accreditation | Tourism Council WA](#) and [ECO Certification | Ecotourism Australia](#)



3. Accreditation

Operators can apply for 1, 3, 5, 7 0 or 20-year licences depending on the level of accreditation held. Operators must achieve and maintain accreditation through either:

- Tourism Council of Western Australia's Quality Tourism Accreditation(QTA)
- Ecotourism Australia's Eco Certification Program (ECO), or
- Christian Venues Association's National Accommodation Recreation & Tourism Accreditation (NARTA).

Licence period	Accreditation level required
Two months	No accreditation required
One year	QTF Sustainable Tourism Accreditation, NARTA, ECO Nature Tourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent
Three years	QTF Sustainable Tourism Accreditation, NARTA, ECO Nature Tourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent
Five years	QTF Sustainable Tourism Accreditation, NARTA, ECO Advanced Ecotourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent
Seven years	QTF Sustainable Tourism Accreditation, NARTA, ECO Advanced Ecotourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent
10 years	QTF EcoStar, ECO Advanced Ecotourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent
20 years	QTF EcoStar, ECO Advanced Ecotourism Certification or equivalent; Accessible Tourism and Tourism Emissions Reduction programs or equivalent



4. Tourism accessibility and emissions reduction standards

To support high performance in the WA nature-based tourism industry, from 1 July 2026, commercial operator licences of one year or more will require operators to achieve the **accessible tourism** and **tourism emissions reduction** industry standards, or equivalent.

As visitors increasingly seek genuinely sustainable and accessible experiences, the standards will help improve tourism operations and the information available to visitors, whilst driving WA's reputation as a destination of choice.

See the department's website for more info on how you can achieve the standards - [Commercial operations licensing | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions](#)



5. Fees and charges

The commercial operations licence application fee is **\$117**.

Commercial operations licence charges are shown in the table below.

A licence charge fee waiver trial of the annual T class licence charge was introduced on 1 July 2024 and will go for four years.

Licence period	Licence charges
Two Months	\$138
One year	\$406
Three years	\$1,218
Five years	\$2,030
Seven years	\$2,842
10 years	\$4,060
20 years	\$8,120



5. Fees and charges

Commercial operators are required to pay the below fees when conducting applicable operations.

- park entry fees
- camping fees
- special entry and activity fees (e.g. entry into Monkey Mia Conservation Park or the Tree Top Walk)

Park entry fees go towards management of the park and improvement of park infrastructure. Commercial operators are required to pay applicable park entry fees for all passengers (even if the gate is unattended).

Current commercial operator fees can be downloaded from the DBCA website [here](#).

Payment of park entry fees online

Park entry fees can be paid online via the Commercial Operations Licensing System (COLS).

Simply login to COLS and click the Park Entry Fees tab.

See the COLS user guide accessible [here](#) for a step-by-step guide on how to pay online.

Commercial operator docket books

Commercial operator docket books can be used to pay park entry, camping and attraction fees. Complete one docket each time you enter the park with the correct number of participants and provide credit card details or cash payment.

You can order docket books through COLS or by emailing licensing@dbca.wa.gov.au.



6. Public liability insurance

All operators must have a policy for public liability insurance that covers the areas and operations permitted in the licence.

This policy must cover a sum of at least AU \$10 million per event throughout the period of the licence.

A current certificate for insurance is required when applying for or renewing a commercial operations licence. A copy of your certificate should also be submitted via COLS if renewed during the licence period.



7. Employees, agents and contractors

Licenced operators must ensure that all employees, agents and contractors conduct themselves in accordance with customer service standards. These standards are set out in section 23 of the Commercial Operator Handbook.

The licensee is required to fully inform all employees, agents, contractors AND passengers of the commercial operations licence conditions, including those listed in the Commercial Operator Handbook.

The licensee is responsible and liable for the conduct of their employees, agents, contractors AND passengers. If there is a breach of licence conditions the operator will be held accountable.

Operators must comply with all verbal and written directions issued to them by an authorised officer. An authorised officer is appointed pursuant to section 46 of the CALM Act and means a wildlife officer, forest officer, ranger, and a conservation and land management officer.



8. Customer safety and visitor satisfaction

An operator's top priority should be the safety of their passengers.

Operators are required to:

- ensure first aid equipment is on hand and in good order;
- have competent, qualified guides/instructors, employees and contractors;
- ensure all guides/leaders have a current first aid certificate; and
- ensure a guide or leader supervises all passengers at all times.

Operators must report incidents to the nearest DBCA office **within 48 hours** if:

- emergency services were contacted; or
- the safety of passenger/s was at risk.

The Commercial Operator Incident Report Form is accessible here - [Commercial operations licensing | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions](#)

9. Australian Adventure Activity Standard

The Australian [Adventure Activity Standard](#) (AAAS) and related [Good Practice Guides](#) (GPGs) provide a good-practice framework for safe and responsible planning and delivery of led outdoor adventure activities with dependent participants.

Operators and their Leaders undertaking outdoor adventure activities should interpret and implement the AAAS to the specific needs of the participants, purpose and the complexity of each activity.

The AAAS provide an excellent resource and industry best-practice for developing safe outdoor recreation activities and appropriate risk management framework.

Operator need to apply the Australian Adventure Activity Standard and related Good Practice Guides to its delivery of led outdoor adventure activities with dependent participants.



10. Property damage and injury

Operators must report to the nearest DBCA office if there is damage to DBCA property caused by the operator, employees, contractors or passengers.

For a list of office contact numbers go to the DBCA website here:

[Contact us | Department of Biodiversity, Conservation and Attractions](#)

Contact details should also be available at park gates.



11. Respect for DBCA managed lands, and Aboriginal communities and registered sites

Operators and passengers should respect CALM Act land and other park visitors. Please make sure you and your passengers:

- removing their rubbish;
- leave native vegetation and animals alone;
- do not disturb other park visitors or impede their access to the park;
- are polite and respectful to others; and
- keep vehicles on designated tracks, roads and use appropriate parking areas. Creating new tracks is not permitted.



11. Respect for DBCA managed lands, and Aboriginal communities and registered sites

The department acknowledges the right of Aboriginal people to express and maintain their culture and it both engages and partners with Aboriginal people to help protect, conserve and enhance cultural values across the State.

It is important that operators are aware of and respect sites and landscapes of Aboriginal heritage value. Sites and landscapes of Aboriginal cultural and heritage value may include (but are not limited to) mythological places, fish traps, artefact sites, middens, scar trees or sites where Aboriginal people have painted or engraved surfaces. Landscape features which possibly contain Aboriginal sites include (but are not limited to) rock outcrops, caves, foreshores and coastal dunes or semi-permanent and permanent waterholes, natural springs and watercourses.

11. Respect for DBCA managed lands, and Aboriginal communities and registered sites

It is an offence under the *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* to excavate, destroy, damage, conceal or alter an Aboriginal site.

Operators are not permitted to enter any areas occupied by Aboriginal communities without consent from the community.

Prior to conducting Aboriginal cultural tours operators will need approval from either:

- the registered native title claimant- group where native title has not yet been determined; or
- the native title prescribed body corporate, where native title has been determined to exist; or
- The Operator shall receive written approval from the relevant Native Title claimant group or Native Title prescribed body corporate to access areas within CALM Act land that have been identified by Aboriginal people as containing areas of cultural significance or contain registered *Aboriginal Heritage Act 1972* sites.



12. Declared rare flora and fauna

Operators must not take or disturb native flora and fauna without authority. It is an offence under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016* to do so.

All native flora and fauna in WA are protected under the *Biodiversity Conservation Act 2016*. This includes all living plants, or parts of plants (including seeds), and all or part of any animal living or dead (including eggs, carcass, skin, plumage, shell and bones).



13. Closure of parks and reserves

DBCA-managed land may be subject to full or partial closure. An alert is sent out to operators as an email. To subscribe to these alerts please go to the DBCA website here: <https://alerts.dbca.wa.gov.au/>

Closures can be due to environmental factors such as flooding, to allow for road works and fire control, to limit the spread of diseases such as the plant pathogen *Phytophthora cinnamomi*; or to protect animal species at vulnerable periods such as nesting.

14. Commercial Filming

Once granted a commercial operations licence, commercial operators have preapproval to conduct certain types of commercial filming activities on CALM Act land through licence conditions outlined in section 7.12 of the [Commercial Operator Handbook](#).

Operator's may conduct commercial filming and photography activities within the parks and reserves pursuant to activities under the operator's licence where the filming activity:

- i. is undertaken to produce promotional material related to the licenced operations of the business or to produce film product to be provided to passengers;
- ii. does not involve large scale crew or equipment or restrict access to the park by the general public; and
- iii. complies with conditions related to the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPA) if using RPA during the filming operation.

Remotely piloted aircraft (RPA) can be used in the filming operation provided the conditions related to RPA use outlined in section 7.13 of the handbook are complied with.

If an operator intends to film Aboriginal cultural sites or material, written approval is required from the relevant Aboriginal traditional owner group prior to undertaking the filming operation.

Where an operators proposed filming operation on CALM Act land does not fit within the above definitions, authority to film can be obtained by submitting a [commercial filming application](#).



15. Commercial Operator Licensing System (COLS)

Managing employee access to your organisation in COLS

The first person to login to COLS and link to an organisation will be have access to the organisation's pin codes as an administrator (accessible from the options menu).

This administrator can provide these pin codes to other employees so they can submit a request to link to the organisation. The administrator then approves or declines the request.

All employees linked to the organisation will be able to apply for and manage licences on behalf of the organisation.

See the COLS user guide accessible [here](#) for more information on how to manage your organisation account.



You are ready to complete the
training questionnaire online in your
application!

Access your application at <https://cols.dbca.wa.gov.au/>

If you have any further questions please contact the
Commercial Business Unit on (08) 9219 9978 or email
licensing@dbca.wa.gov.au.