



8.0 Accreditation Policy

Maintenance of Accreditation (Certified Members Program) and Preparation for Accreditation (Accreditation Program)

Definitions

Accreditation is a process in which *certification* of competency, authority, or credibility is presented.

Introduction

This policy details the method for maintaining Certified status and preparing the rest of the membership for Accreditation through the Zoo and Aquarium Association's Accreditation Program.

The model outlined in this policy addresses concerns that members have on additional financial burdens for full accreditation as it currently stands (2012). Accredited members will be able to manage the maintenance of their certified status through a mutually supportive peer system, thereby allowing the Association to shift resources towards supporting non-accredited members with managing their own development in preparation for certification.

This policy will lay the foundations and benefits of the co-management¹ concept which forms part of the government strategy.

The Philosophy

The Accreditation policy has been informed by many years of development with input from within the industry, other accreditation programs, through the development of the Association's Animal Welfare Position Statement, the Australian Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Exhibited Animals and the New Zealand Zoo Code.

The Accreditation seeks to provide assurance that contemporary animal welfare thinking is embodied in operational practices. The concept of *ongoing development* and *better practice* (as opposed to best practice²) has been adopted. The philosophy of Accreditation is one of mutual trust and respect within the Association. It revolves around shared responsibility for the welfare of animals

¹ Co-management is the sharing of responsibilities and obligations between the regulators and the industry.

² The term 'best practice' commonly implies that improvement is finite therefore leaving no room for improvement once a standard is achieved.

As the philosophy of Accreditation is a focus on animal welfare standards, Accreditation is not concerned with the broader business operations¹ or additional programs that sit outside of usual operations, such as conservation, research and education programs. In providing the assurance of animal welfare standards, Accreditation is based on the belief that an animal's welfare is not static and therefore cannot be reliably measured at a single point in time. Therefore the philosophy is one of continuous measurement and action to allow for dependable assurance of standards.

The Association's remit is not one of compliance. There is an expectation that members meet regulatory requirements and that they will provide assurance to other members through the Association that this is being achieved. With this in mind Accreditation aims to avoid any repetition with regulatory obligations to minimise business burden. The Accreditation Program can be viewed as a development program that can be utilised to meet regulatory requirements whilst striving for better animal welfare practices.

Guiding Principles

The guiding principles of Certification and the Accreditation Program are that it:

- is credible;
- is animal welfare focused;
- harnesses the philosophy that animal welfare is a shared responsibility;
- is outcomes focused;
- is a peer review based assurance;
- is aligned with current practises and welfare concepts;
- incorporates ongoing assurance;
- incorporates validation of information on recording and reporting that supports sound business practices;
- is considered core business and is paid for in a way that reflects the resources required to implement and deliver it;
- does not replace regulatory inspections;
- recognises the importance of biosecurity for our industry to be safe and sustainable; and
- provides professional development opportunities for staff working in member organisations.

The Policy

Participation

This policy applies to all institutional members (both Full and Associate members holding animal collections)

Other Policies

This policy is to be read in conjunction with:

- 2.0 – Membership Policy

- 2.1 – Membership Fee Policy

Overview

This policy is divided into three sub-categories which are to be applied depending where each member is situated within the Accreditation process. The categories are:

- Certified Members Program;
- Accreditation Program;
- Membership Applications (new members).

Policy Detail

Intent

The intent of this policy is to:

- Assist members in meeting legislative requirements;
- Recognise and maintain Certification among already Certified organisations;
- Prepare non-accredited members for Accreditation; and
- Ensure new members meet the standards of the Association.

Certified Members Program

This program is for members who have completed the accreditation process and are required to maintain their certification.

Requirements

Accredited members are expected to maintain certification by:

- Providing an annual declaration stating that they have a quality assurance system in place which maintains current appropriate regulatory standards and better practices throughout the year; and that any deficiencies encountered during this time have been recorded and addressed in a timely manner;
- Demonstrating to a peer³ Animal Welfare Officer (AWO) that the standards and Association expectations are met through an ongoing quality assurance system and that any deficiencies are recorded and addressed in a timely manner. The peer validation is to be completed at least every three years, with the 'validation' report provided to the Association for the record;
- Maintaining an Association trained AWO to support ongoing certification; and
- Member organisations are encouraged to communicate 'major' incidents and action taken to the Association⁴ in a timely manner to ensure transparency and credibility (also to enable the Association to provide support to the organisation if there is interest in

³ In conducting the peer reviews there is additional requirement that the reviews will not be conducted via reciprocal arrangements between members.

⁴ The information provided will remain confidential. Providing action is being taken, accreditation status will not be affected.

the incident from external stakeholders).

Benefits

The benefits of this policy to Accredited members include:

- Ongoing assurance in the quality and confidence of the member in its standards regarding animal welfare;
- Continuation of the investment in the program to date;
- Peer confidence in partnerships and animal transactions regarding quality of care of the animals; and
- Standing with stakeholders.

Costs

The costs to Accredited members are:

- Annual membership fee;
- No additional Association fees to maintain Accreditation;
- Covering the costs involved in the peer review; and
- The Association will charge for training and development activities on a cost recovery basis.

Accreditation Program

This program is to support members through Accreditation to obtain certification.

Requirements

Full and Associate (animal holders) institutional members are expected to participate in the Accreditation Program and will need to:

- Maintain an Association trained Animal Welfare Officer (AWO);
- Support the AWO and other members of staff to attend training and development workshops to enhance the organisation's existing animal welfare practices. (For example: policy development, standards interpretation, contemporary thinking on animal welfare, biosecurity practices and internal quality assurance systems); and
- Provide an annual declaration stating that:
 1. The existing minimum regulatory standards are maintained;
 2. The organisation is working towards meeting or meets the new national standards (Australian or New Zealand); and
 3. The organisation is working towards the Associations Animal Welfare Standards.
- Attain Accreditation by the end of 2016.

Attaining Accreditation

When an organisation wishes to attain Accreditation certification, then it is to:

- Arrange for a 'validation' review by an AWO from an Accredited organisation;
- Provide the Association details of the validation review, i.e. when the review is scheduled to occur and the AWO's conducting the review; and
- Provide the 'validation' report to the Association for ratification by the Accreditation

and Animal Welfare committee.

Benefits

The benefits of this policy to Non-Accredited members include:

- Provides confidence to organizations and their Association partners that their animal welfare standards are (or will be) comparable with those of accredited organisations;
- Demonstration to community and visitors of continuous improvement in animal management practices;
- Members will experience business benefits by refining operations to better practice levels;
- Members will have confidence and be prepared in the application and interpretation of the Australian National Standards and new legislation in New Zealand;
- Member organizations will be able to confidently participate in the accreditation program and achieve certification when such opportunity arises; and
- Professional satisfaction with management and staff seeking professional development opportunities.

Costs

The costs to Non-Accredited members are:

- Annual membership fee;
- No additional Association fees to attain accreditation; and
- Covering the costs involved in the AWO review; and
- The Association will charge for training and development activities on a cost recovery basis.

Membership Applications (new members)

Requirements

Organisations who wish to become members are to:

- Submit policies for validation (as per application assessment process);
- Demonstrate a willingness to participate in the Accreditation Program; and
- Complete one of the following requirements:
 - a) Provide a regulatory authority inspection report against relevant legislation in Australia or New Zealand, completed within the last 18 months; or
 - b) Arrange for an Association trained Animal Welfare Officer to visit the site and conduct an evaluation against relevant animal welfare legislation.

Benefits

The benefits of this policy to new members include:

- New members can be assured that minimum welfare practices have been addressed and incorporated into their organisational operations;
- New members are prepared for new legislation; and
- The associated business benefits of Association membership.

Costs

The costs to new members are:

- Membership application fee (non-refundable);
- Any fees charged for site assessment activities;
- Any costs associated with attaining Accreditation; and
- Annual membership fee.

Association Support

The Association will provide support to members by:

- Providing advice and where possible mentoring with a fellow member for regulatory compliance;
- Providing advice and where possible mentoring with a fellow member for achieving Accreditation;
- Providing training for Animal Welfare Standards Officers and maintain a support network for knowledge sharing;
- Providing policy ‘templates’ or plan guidelines for the critical policies and plans for regulatory compliance and Accreditation;
- Providing guidelines on where and how minimum regulatory standards should be exceeded to meet Accreditation;
- Providing guidelines for achieving ‘good member’ status; and
- Providing guidelines to establishing and maintaining an internal quality assurance program.

Breaches to the Standards

If a serious matter impacting animal welfare is brought to the Association’s attention, the Association may seek clarification on the validity of the issue and request information on the action taken to remedy the situation.

Recognition

Certified Members will be able to use the following logos:



Approval

This Policy was endorsed by the Zoo and Aquarium Association Board on 27th August 2012.

ⁱ TQUAL Accreditation (Australia only)

TQUAL Accreditation is the Australian National Tourism Accreditation Framework developed by government and the tourism sector to promote quality experiences for tourism consumers by recognising sustainable and capable tourism operators nationally.

The Association's Accreditation is not intended to be a complying accreditation program with TQUAL. The Association's program focuses on animal welfare. In order to comply with the TQUAL requirements, the Association's Accreditation would need to be expanded to include areas such as business ethics, management and operational practices for visitors and customer experience. The additional resources required to meet the TQUAL program compliance do not present value for money to members and it is more cost effective to obtain TQUAL recognition via an alternative scheme.

Qualifying TQUAL accreditation schemes can be found at <http://www.australia.com/tqual.aspx>