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Bruny Island Cruises wins Australian Tourism Award

Tasmanian eco-cruising pioneer Rob Pennicott and his team continue to win major awards on the national stage – at tonight’s Australian Tourism Awards at the Hotel Grand Chancellor in Hobart, Rob’s Bruny Island Cruises won the Australian Ecotourism category for 2009.

After sweeping success in the Tasmanian awards leading up to the Australian finals, Bruny Island Cruises had the unusual opportunity to win national awards three different categories:

- Tourist Attraction
- Ecotourism
- Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainable Tourism

“It’s a huge thrill to get national recognition like this, and a wonderful acknowledgment of all the people who work so hard to make our business a success,” Rob Pennicott says. “Since we started back in 1999, it’s been a total team effort, all the way – without our skippers, bus drivers, catering staff, deckhands, finance, marketing and promotion staff – not to mention all our partners and business colleagues in the Tasmanian tourism industry – none of these awards would ever be won.”

Bruny Island Cruises began when Rob, a professional fisherman, realised that the spectacular coastline where he made his living was a secret that most people never discovered.

“I used to take friends and visitors to Tassie along the South Bruny coast and it blew them away,” Rob says. “So I started the eco-cruising business to share the wonders of the region. In our first season we carried just a few hundred people – last year we took more than 26,000 guests to see pods of dolphins, fur seals, migrating whales, sea eagles, albatrosses, deep sea caves and huge sea cliffs.”

Rob’s custom-built yellow boats are designed to handle the sea conditions of Storm Bay and the Southern Ocean in comfort and safety. They can get close to crags, caves, coastal landscapes and wildlife, giving passengers an authentic and unforgettable eco-tourism experience.

There’s a strong environmental commitment behind the Pennicott family’s business.

“We are committed to sustainable operations, with minimal impact on the natural environment where our cruises operate,” Rob says. “We do this in a variety of ways. We offset our greenhouse emissions through Greening Australia’s carbon-offset programs; and we are Ecotourism Certified and a Green Globe Lite operator, achieving significantly above best practice levels for all indicators.”

The Pennicott’s also have a deep conviction about passing on benefits to the local community. As Bruny Island residents, Rob and his family share their success with fellow islanders through the generation of significant regional employment, as well as direct support and sponsorship of local schools, organisations and community groups.

“We also feel privileged to be able to continue our support for the Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund, which we established in partnership with WILDCARE and Tasmania’s Parks and Wildlife Service,” Rob says. “A proportion of our profits goes directly to this fund, to assist Parks and Wildlife in their programs of coastal conservation.”

To date, the Pennicott’s have donated \$65,000 to the fund – one important initiative under way is a program to eradicate feral cats on Tasman Island, to protect colonies of land-nesting seabirds.”

As well as the Bruny Island eco-cruise – which Travel and Leisure magazine has named as one of ‘The Greatest 100 Trips in the World – Pennicott Wilderness Journeys also runs Tasman Island Cruises along the dramatic coastline between Port Arthur and Eaglehawk Neck.

And with a brand-new booking office and city base just opened in the heart of Hobart’s waterfront precinct, it’s clear that this multi award-winning Tasmanian business intends to continue making its mark on the national and international ecotourism scene.

For more information on Bruny Island Cruises or Tasman Island Cruises, please contact

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Previously won Awards

Best Tasmanian Attraction 2006, 2008 & 2009 (Bruny Island Cruises)
Best Tasmanian Ecotourism 2006 & 2009 (Bruny Island Cruises)
Tasmanian Qantas Award for Excellence in Sustainability 2009 (Bruny Island Cruises)
Best New Tasmanian Product Development 2008 (Tasman Island Cruises)
Telstra National MYOB Small Business of the Year 2008
Telstra National Sensis Social Responsibility Award 2008
Telstra Tasmanian Business of the Year 2008
Family Business Australia's National Small Business of the Year 2008