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PAPER:

***ECOTOUR GUIDE PERFORMANCE: FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS  
OF A STUDY ASSESSING WORKPLACE COMPETENCE***

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Abstract:

There is much cynicism and concern among ecotour operators, protected area managers, and education providers about the explosion of training courses in recent years targeted at current and future nature guides and interpreters. The impetus for at least some of these courses appears to have been institutional self-interest rather than industry needs, and few if any have produced evidence to demonstrate that their graduates are able to do the job of an ecotour guide or interpreter.

In an effort to address these and other issues, a research project was carried out with funding from an Australian National Training Authority Research Advisory Council grant. This paper reports on the outcomes of this eighteen-month research project, which aimed to develop, pilot test, and evaluate a methodology for assessing the competencies and skills which ecotour guides demonstrate on-the-job, and to critically evaluate these in relation to the job ecotour guides are supposed to do.

The strengths and weaknesses of various methods for evaluating tour guide performance are assessed, particularly in terms of their usefulness as a basis for developing a national guide certification program. The findings regarding competencies of the guides in the pilot study and the implications for training are also discussed.