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Media Release

Commitment to improve freedom camping management

The tourism industry, local government and other stakeholders have committed to working together to improve the management of freedom camping in communities around New Zealand.

At a meeting of the New Zealand Responsible Camping Forum, convened by Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA), attendees agreed to a three-pronged approach to tackling issues associated with freedom camping.

“We have identified three ‘ins’ to work on – information, infrastructure and infringements,” TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says. “We will review and update the information and educational material available to international and domestic visitors who want to freedom camp. We will work with local and central government to find ways to provide infrastructure that meets the needs of freedom campers and other visitors. And we will work on a strategy to better enforce an infringement regime for those freedom campers who breach local rules.”

The New Zealand Responsible Camping Forum was established in 2007 and brings together representatives from the tourism industry, rental vehicle operators and central and local government.

In reviewing the past summer, Forum participants were united in their view that freedom camping should not be banned but that improvements could be made to the way it is managed, Mr Roberts says.

Tourism Holdings Ltd (*thl*) has New Zealand’s largest fleet of campervans for hire. Chief Executive Grant Webster says stronger measures may be needed to ensure travellers without self-contained vehicles camp only where toilet facilities are available. Getting information about freedom camping to travellers using private vehicles was another challenge.

“The majority of rental vehicle operators support the aims of the Forum and strongly encourage their clients to stay in commercial holiday parks or other designated camping sites. But many visitors buy cheap cars or vans – social media may be the best way to reach out to this group.”

Holiday Accommodation Parks Association of New Zealand (HAPNZ) Chief Executive Fergus Brown says the Forum accepts that there will always be some people – both New Zealanders and international visitors – who do not want to stay in commercial or other designated camp sites.

“Communities must decide whether they want to allow freedom camping in their area and then have the ability to enforce the rules. Forum participants identified that current infringement regimes, such as being able to collect fines from international visitors, were not working effectively enough,” Mr Brown says.

“We also want to work with local councils to ensure freedom camping sites aren’t established in areas where they directly compete with local holiday parks.”

Ahead of the Forum meeting, TIA surveyed councils around the country.

Local Government New Zealand (LGNZ) President Lawrence Yule says the survey responses suggest that at the national level, freedom camping issues this summer were not markedly different to previous years. However, some regions experienced more challenges due to the rapid growth in visitor numbers. In some cases, the problems were exacerbated by seasonal workers.

Districts which don’t have a large ratepayer base and host high numbers of visitors sometimes need support in providing freedom camping infrastructure including toilets, rubbish and water facilities.

“The problems are different for each community but we recognise that the tourism industry brings economic and social benefits so we are keen to find ways to encourage those benefits while minimising the downsides,” Mr Yule says.

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Key Facts

- Tourism in New Zealand is an \$81.6 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$32 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$49 million in economic activity every day
- Tourism is one of New Zealand's biggest export industries, earning \$11.8 billion or 17.4% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2015)
- 12.1% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 295,908 people are working in the visitor economy
- The [Tourism 2025](#) growth framework has a goal of growing total tourism revenue to \$41 billion a year by 2025.

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