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## Media Release

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# TIA urges West Coast councils to reject plan to scrap local tourism organisation

Tourism Industry Aotearoa is urging district councils on the West Coast of the South Island to reject a plan to wind up Tourism West Coast, the local regional tourism organisation, and transfer its responsibilities to Development West Coast, the area's economic development agency.

TIA, the peak body for New Zealand's tourism industry, is adding its voice to local concerns.

Development West Coast wrote to the Buller, Grey and Westland District Councils earlier this month to request that they immediately take steps to dissolve Tourism West Coast, citing the recommendations of the West Coast Economic Development Action Plan.

However, Chris Roberts, Chief Executive of Tourism Industry Aotearoa, says the proposal is poorly timed, and accompanied by no supporting evidence that it will lead to better outcomes.

"TWC is performing extremely well, with highly capable staff supported by a very competent and dedicated board. Visitor spend for the year to January 2018 on the West Coast was up 12% to \$549m – the best performing region in the country. This is in no small part due to the valiant efforts of Tourism West Coast staff."

Tourism West Coast undertook a comprehensive rebrand in 2016 and last year was recognised at the New Zealand Tourism Awards, receiving the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment Industry Alignment Award.

The judges wrote that "the new 'untamed natural wilderness' brand has been enthusiastically accepted by the New Zealand tourism industry and international markets, and won applause from local mayors and councils" and that it was "a fantastic example of industry alignment that had helped drive up annual visitor spending on the West Coast."

"Given all this success," Mr. Roberts says, "the question that has to be asked is: what is broken?"

### TOURISM INDUSTRY AOTEAROA

Level 4, 79 Boulcott Street, PO Box 1697, Wellington 6140, New Zealand  
P +64 4 499 0104 [www.tia.org.nz](http://www.tia.org.nz) E [info@tia.org.nz](mailto:info@tia.org.nz)



Already one of the local councils, the Westland District Council, has voted unanimously to reject the proposal. The Buller District Council is set to vote on 28 March, and the Grey District Council on 9 April.

TIA is encouraging West Coast businesses to get in contact with their councillors and let them know how much they appreciate Tourism West Coast's work for the region.

To read TIA's letter to the local councils, go to <https://tia.org.nz/assets/Uploads/TIA-Letter-to-West-Coast-Mayors.pdf>.

**For further information, please contact:**

Ann-Marie Johnson  
Communications Manager  
Tourism Industry Aotearoa  
DDI: 04 496 5001  
Mobile: 027 600 4565  
Email: [ann-marie.johnson@tia.org.nz](mailto:ann-marie.johnson@tia.org.nz)  
[www.tia.org.nz](http://www.tia.org.nz)  
[www.tourism2025.org.nz](http://www.tourism2025.org.nz)

## KEY FACTS

- Tourism in New Zealand is a \$99 million per day industry. Tourism delivers around \$40 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributes another \$59 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism is New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$14.5 billion or 20.7% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2017).
- 14.5% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand work directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 399,150 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.

Visit [www.tia.org.nz](http://www.tia.org.nz) for more information

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