

Thursday 25 June 2020

To: Tourism Futures Taskforce [By email](#)

Terms of Reference for Tourism Futures Taskforce

Tourism Industry Aotearoa (TIA) welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Terms of Reference for the Tourism Futures Taskforce.

TIA is the peak body for the tourism industry in New Zealand. With over 1600 members, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including hospitality, accommodation, adventure & other activities, attractions, retail, airports & airlines, transport, as well as related tourism services.

TIA led the development of the Tourism 2025 Industry Framework. Initially released in 2014, it has twice been updated, mostly recently in May 2019 as *Tourism 2025 & Beyond - A Sustainable Growth Framework Kaupapa Whakapakari Tāpoi*. This release was coordinated with the release of the first Government Tourism Strategy in a decade, the *New Zealand-Aotearoa Government Tourism Strategy*.

The Government Strategy and the Industry Framework are two halves of a whole – one activating the public sector and the other activating industry, with both openly acknowledging the indispensable role of the other. This has created a rare opportunity to align and coordinate efforts to grasp opportunities and tackle difficult issues.

In the spirit of this government and industry alignment, TIA is strongly supportive of the establishment of a Tourism Futures Taskforce. However, we have some comments and recommendations regarding the draft terms of reference. Some general observations follow and attached is a marked-up Terms of Reference with our suggested changes.

Taskforce Focus

A common industry expectation when the Taskforce was announced in the May 2020 budget was that it would produce a Tourism Recovery Plan for the next 3-5 years. It appears from the stated Objectives/Outcome (para 17) that the focus is somewhat narrower than this, as the Taskforce is to limit its work to recommendations for policy and regulatory reforms.

TIA believes a Strategic Tourism Recovery Plan remains essential and will look to work with government and its agencies on developing this strategy pathway, separate to the work of the Taskforce.

The Challenges

The draft terms of reference correctly identify that the growth of the tourism industry did bring with it some challenges. However, it fails to acknowledge that the industry had, since at least 2015, acknowledged these challenges and was committed to finding a sustainable tourism future. It also makes no reference to the many positive attributes of New Zealand tourism.

The words of TIA's Chair, which open 2019's *Tourism 2025 & Beyond* Framework Document, remain entirely relevant:

New Zealand does tourism well. We are becoming increasingly adept at generating demand and hosting both domestic and international visitors to very high levels of satisfaction. From this platform, we must take a long-term view on who and what we are as a destination, and as a nation for that matter. This means we must all act now to embed the sustainable future of tourism: to make sure we nurture the environment and communities in which we operate; to continue to make our visitors feel welcomed and valued; and to ensure we are financially prosperous so we can invest back into this sustainable future.

Tourism should be good for New Zealand and good for New Zealanders. The long-term success of the tourism industry requires all of us to play our part. Let's not be passive about this: let's get into it – Richard Lauder.

The taskforce would do well to be guided by these words. The industry was committed to a sustainability journey well before COVID-19.

COVID-19's impact

The draft terms of reference appear to presume that international tourism in New Zealand will return to 2019 levels, it is just a matter of when (para 6). There is no clear indication that the Taskforce will consider the permanently changed nature of global travel and the impacts on New Zealand. This includes issues like: attracting a workforce; changed travel patterns; permanent travel health requirements; reduced air services; regional tourism bubbles; and a focus by every country on domestic tourism.

Solutions to the issues that existed before COVID-19 may not be the right answers to the world that exists post COVID-19.

The Visitor

Other than a reference to it being a goal of the Government Tourism Strategy, there is no comment on the need to meet the expectations of visitors, domestic and international. The visitor is the fourth spoke of the sustainability wheel; we can only meet our desired environmental, community and economic outcomes if we are delivering ever-better visitor experiences.

Infrastructure

Previous work, including MBIE's Tourism Infrastructure Report (2016), the National Tourism Infrastructure Assessment commissioned by TIA from Deloitte (2017), and NZTE's Project Palace Reports (2017-19) and Tourism Attraction Programme (2019) have highlighted that infrastructure deficits are a key issue for tourism in New Zealand. The growth of New Zealand's resident population, as well as international visitation, has outstripped the capacity of infrastructure development to keep up. Infrastructure should be included as a specific issue to be addressed by the Taskforce's recommendations.

Tourism's contribution

The stated ambition (para 12) is to have a tourism system that contributes more than it consumes of the four capitals of economy, society, environment and culture. Given the significance and breadth of the New Zealand tourism industry, it would be presumed that it is already making a positive contribution. It is not clear that there is any measurement available to demonstrate this contribution or record any changes. It may be problematic to have a primary purpose for the Taskforce if it cannot be measured.

Informing the Taskforce

Paragraph 15 states that the Taskforce will be informed by existing thinking on the future of tourism and lists a set of previous initiatives. We recommend that the Tourism Sustainability Commitment and Tiaki - Care for New Zealand are added to this list. We also recommend that some international benchmarking is undertaken to inform the Taskforce thinking.

Membership

The media release and draft Terms of Reference would indicate there are two groups being formed – the core Taskforce group and a larger secondary group. This needs better clarification and explanation, including how engagement with the secondary group will be managed. The role of the MBIE secretariat also needs greater explanation.

Inclusivity

We recommend that a short explanation is provided on 'inclusivity' to clarify the use of the term in this context.

We trust our feedback is useful. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any queries.

Ngā mihi

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Roberts'.

Chris Roberts
Chief Executive
Tourism Industry Aotearoa

Attachment: Marked up draft Terms of Reference.