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Media release

Consistent national approach needed for freedom camping – TIA

The Government's review of freedom camping is an opportunity to create a nationally consistent approach to managing camping around the country, Tourism Industry Aotearoa says.

While the Freedom Camping Act provides national direction, the requirement for local bylaws to restrict or prohibit freedom camping has resulted in different approaches across the country, creating confusion for travellers, TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says.

In its submission to the [Discussion Document Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand](#), TIA says it supports many of the proposals.

"Visitors who camp in a vehicle are a relatively small but important sector of New Zealand's tourism industry. The New Zealand camping community travels regularly. International campers travel widely through the country and tend to stay a long time. Both groups spend money on a wide range of goods and activities. It is simplistic and inaccurate to label freedom campers as 'low-value visitors'," Mr Roberts says.

TIA says that it should be mandatory for freedom campers to stay in a vehicle that is certified self-contained unless they are staying at a site with toilets. The association also says there should be restrictions on the number of people that can stay at a site with toilets, to ensure the facilities can cope.

While it offers support in principle for a stronger infringements scheme, TIA strongly opposes making rental vehicle companies responsible for campers' unpaid fines.

"Rental companies should not be held responsible for the actions of the hirers and this proposal doesn't address the wider market of those who borrow or buy vehicles."

TIA agrees that a regulatory system for self-contained vehicles is needed and recommends that Waka Kotahi NZTA takes on responsibility for enforcing the regulations.

However, TIA does not support the proposal to strengthen the requirements for self-contained vehicles.

"The standard was strengthened in 2017. The issues surrounding management of freedom camping will not be solved by further focus on what constitutes an on-board toilet. Whatever their vehicle facilities are, many campers prefer to use external amenities," Mr Roberts says.

TIA convenes the [New Zealand Responsible Camping Forum](#), which brings together about 60 representatives from the public and private sectors, including rental vehicle operators,

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tourism associations, camping app developers, local councils and government agencies. The Forum has agreed on some key approaches for managing camping issues, which include a mix of good information, appropriate infrastructure and enforcement measures.

TIA administers the responsible camping website www.camping.org.nz which provides comprehensive information on camping in New Zealand.

Mr Roberts is also a member of the Responsible Camping Working Group established by the previous Minister of Tourism in 2018. The work of the group has led to a series of measures including education, enforcement and new infrastructure, supported by improved council bylaws.

To read TIA's full submission, go to <https://www.tia.org.nz/advocacy/submissions/read-our-recent-submissions/>

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KEY FACTS

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Tourism in New Zealand was a \$114.8 million per day industry. Tourism delivered more than \$48 million in foreign exchange to the New Zealand economy each day of the year. Domestic tourism contributed another \$66.7 million in economic activity every day.
- Tourism was New Zealand's biggest export earner, contributing \$17.5 billion or 20.1% of New Zealand's foreign exchange earnings (year ended March 2020).
- 13.6% of the total number of people employed in New Zealand worked directly or indirectly in tourism. That means 384,186 people were working in the visitor economy.
- The [Tourism 2025 & Beyond](#) sustainable growth framework/Kaupapa Whakapakari Tāpoi has a vision of growing a sustainable tourism industry that benefits New Zealanders.

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