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Media release

TIA disappointed by premature return of concession fees

The Department of Conservation's announcement today that the concession activity fee waiver will end on 31 December is hugely disappointing, says Tourism Industry Aotearoa.

"The decision may well lead to tourism operators choosing to withdraw some of their products, such as scenic helicopter flights," says TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts.

"These operators whose businesses rely heavily on the international market have held on for as long as possible and can almost see the light at the end of the tunnel, but this could be the final nail in the coffin for some."

In May 2020, in the first Government support package for tourism businesses impacted by the pandemic, the Department of Conservation received a \$25m allowance to allow it to waive concession activity fees for 12 months. In May 2021, this waiver was extended for another six months, to 31 December 2021.

These were welcome measures which assisted some of the 1000 concessionaires to adjust their prices for a solely domestic market.

But TIA says the pressure on those concessionaires remains just as severe now, with current restrictions reducing domestic visitors, on top of continued closed borders.

TIA wrote to Conservation Minister Kiritapu Allen in September asking for the fee waiver to be extended for another six months but has not received a reply.

"It is in the best interest of the Department of Conservation and the Government to recognise that tourism operators who have long worked with the department to manage visitors on the conservation estate are able to survive, to contribute those concession fees for many years to come," Mr Roberts said in the letter.

"The concession fee relief needs to continue at least until our borders are open to our main markets of Australia, China and USA. This is the approach taken by Government-owned Qualmark, which will remain free of charge until those three markets return."

When the acting minister announced the first waiver extension, she said: "The waiver will be reviewed again later this year to either confirm the reinstatement of fees on January 1 2022, or provide a further waiver if extraordinary circumstances warrant it."

TIA says we are still in extraordinary times and a further waiver is absolutely justified.

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KEY FACTS

- TIA is New Zealand tourism's peak industry body. We are the only independent association that represents all sectors of New Zealand's large and diverse tourism industry.
- TIA has about 1300 member businesses from across the industry, ranging from small owner/operators to large publicly listed tourism corporates and international hotel chains.
- TIA is deeply involved in discussions on recovery and what the future of tourism in New Zealand will look like.
- TIA leads implementation of the industry's **Tourism Sustainability Commitment** which aims to see every New Zealand tourism business committed to sustainability.
- TIA delivers a comprehensive and diverse range of industry events including TRENZ, New Zealand Tourism Awards, Discussing Tourism regional events and the Tourism Summit Aotearoa.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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