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Media release

Tourism industry supports better freedom camping management

Tourism Industry Aotearoa supports Government efforts to further improve the management of freedom camping in New Zealand but says the proposals must be fully tested and assessed.

TIA will make a detailed submission in response to the [discussion document](#) released by Tourism Minister Stuart Nash today.

“The tourism industry has done a lot of thoughtful research and policy development on this issue already, and we are looking forward to working further with the Government. We hope to be able to reach agreement on solutions that will stop the debate on how to manage freedom camping,” TIA Chief Executive Chris Roberts says.

“The issues are complex. Not all free campers are the same – they are made up of various groups including international and domestic travellers, ‘grey nomads’, seasonal workers and the homeless. The majority of campers act responsibly and obey the rules. It’s only a small number who create problems.”

TIA convenes the [New Zealand Responsible Camping Forum](#), which brings together about 40 representatives from the public and private sectors, including rental vehicle operators, 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.

The actions taken by both local and central government over the last three years have measurably improved the situation including the creation of more facilities, better allocation of allowable areas and the funding of responsible camping ambassadors. Councils report that the number of public complaints about campers’ behaviour has declined significantly. But concerns about the bad behaviour of a few undoubtedly remain.

“All of the proposals in the latest discussion document should be fully debated. It is important to get this right. As an example, the document rightly notes that homeless people, who are forced by circumstances to ‘freedom camp’ should not be further disadvantaged by any new rules or regulations,” Mr Roberts says.

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“We know that many New Zealanders enjoy the privilege of free camping so we must be mindful of their rights in this debate.”

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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.

Visit www.tia.org.nz for more information

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