Hospitality New Zealand

TO MINISTRY OF BUSINESS, INNOVATION AND EMPLOYEMENT

SUBMISSION ON

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FREEDOM CAMPING IN AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

16 MAY 2021

CONTACT DETAILS: **Hospitality New Zealand**
Contact: Sam MacKinnon
Phone: 0800 500 503
Email: sam@hospitality.org.nz
www.hospitality.org.nz

About Hospitality New Zealand:

1. Hospitality New Zealand ("Hospitality NZ") is a member-led, not-for-profit organisation representing approximately 3,000 businesses, including cafés, restaurants, bars, nightclubs, commercial accommodation, country hotels and off-licences.

2. Hospitality NZ has a 119-year history of advocating on behalf of the hospitality and tourism sector. We work tirelessly on behalf of our members to promote the industry, partner with government to prevent restrictive legislation, protect commercial interests and to spearhead innovation for a sustainable future.

3. As the trusted body, we seek to unlock the industry's full potential as a significant engine for growth in the New Zealand economy and to ensure that the industry's needs are represented by engaging with the Government and wider industry.

4. Hospitality NZ has recently launched the Accommodation Association NZ. The purpose of the Accommodation Association is to ensure that the accommodation sector is well understood by central, local government and the regulators.

5. This submission relates to the 'Supporting sustainable freedom camping in Aotearoa New Zealand' Discussion Document.

6. Enquiries relating to this submission should be referred to Sam MacKinnon, Senior Policy Advisor, at sam@hospitality.org.nz or 021 026 72441.

Overview:

7. Hospitality New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to comment on the discussion document.

8. Freedom camping has presented an issue for local government in the last decade, and this was especially evident when international tourism was at pre-Covid levels and many tourists chose camping vehicles as their mode of transport while visiting New Zealand.

9. We recognise that freedom camping plays a key role in the regional dispersal of tourists, and will always be a part of the tourism ecosystem. We are not opposed to campervans, and freedom camping where appropriate facilities are not available, but we are encouraged to see more action being taken in this area.

10. It is worth noting that while community sentiment tended to be targeted at internationals, there is a large portion of New Zealanders that see freedom camping as a citizen's right – and have been worse offenders when it comes to the environmental impact than many internationals.

11. The wider industry feels their local councils need to do more to control this issue and are also concerned about the damage being done to scenic spots due to lack of appropriate facilities. When left unmanaged it effects the amenity of an area negatively through rubbish, waste and congestion in public areas.

12. While the Tourism Infrastructure Fund sought to solve some of the issues caused by putting public bathrooms in many popular tourism spots, this unintentionally created places where people could freedom camp – some of which were only a few kilometres from a holiday park.

13. In doing so, local councils have created a competitor for holiday parks in their region. We do not believe that is fair for holiday parks to essentially fund a competitor through their rates. It would be more appropriate for local councils and regional tourism organisations to further encourage those touring New Zealand in camper vehicles to use holiday parks and their facilities and Department of Conservation sites wherever possible, rather than providing facilities that take business away from local businesses and the wider community.

Specific Comments:

14. Hospitality NZ supports "Proposal 1: Make it mandatory for freedom camping in a vehicle to be done in a certified self-contained vehicle."

15. What is needed is more consistency in how freedom camping is regulated around the country. Current settings do not make for a good visitor experience when each territorial authority has their own way of managing campers. We believe these measures go some way to rectify the existing inconsistency, as well as providing more tools for dealing with environmental impact and inconsiderate campers – all of which improves the visitor experience.

16. It is key that this is supported by "Proposal 3: Improve the regulatory tools for government land managers", and "Proposal 4: Strengthen the requirements for self-contained vehicles".

17. We agree that there needs to be more ability to penalise those breaking the rules, provided areas where camping is banned are clearly signposted as such, and rules in each territorial authority are clearly communicated to prevent unintentional breaches. Likewise, we agree that more should be done to tighten up the requirements for what constitutes self-containment.

18. However, the fundamental challenge for this work is the ability to enforce these proposals. As we have seen with other issues around freedom camping, none of these proposals will change end outcomes if they are not enforced appropriately.

19. If it is considered that international tourists are the worst offenders when it comes to freedom camping, whether that be parking in the wrong places, littering or not using toilet facilities, we wish to see more detail on how Government proposes they will enforce infringement notices and fines on foreign nationals, given once those tourists leave the country, New Zealand has little recourse to enforce the payment of those fines.

Conclusion:

20. We thank the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment for the opportunity to provide input into the consultation. We would be happy to discuss any parts of this submission in more detail, and to provide any assistance that may be required.