



Aoraki Mount Cook National Park, New Zealand

Research to inform the Responsible Camping discussion document and regulatory impact analysis

Final Report

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Lake Wanaka, New Zealand

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FINAL REPORT: RESPONSIBLE CAMPING RESEARCH

1. SCOPE

The Minister of Tourism has expressed a keen interest in improving the regulatory system for freedom camping, with a specific focus on vehicles used for camping in New Zealand.

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's (MBIE) Tourism Branch required urgent research on responsible camping to support a discussion document and regulatory impact assessment (RIA). The research will be used to inform the planned public consultation for possible future regulatory changes to improve approaches to responsible camping.

For this research, responsible camping is defined as freedom camping in a vehicle with or without toilet facilities. However, many people who freedom camp also use other forms of accommodation, such as camping at commercial campgrounds with a range of facilities. MBIE is currently looking to change the language of freedom camping so that everyone who camps in New Zealand, in whichever form (commercial or for free) do so responsibly, therefore the term responsible camping is used more broadly.¹

Freedom camping can occur in vehicles which are self-contained (those which can meet the ablutionary and sanitary needs of its occupants for a minimum of three days without requiring any external services or discharging of any waste) or non-self-contained (those which do not have these facilities onboard). Freedom camping in a non-self-contained vehicle is currently lawful, but inappropriately disposing of waste while freedom camping is unlawful.

A self-contained vehicle (SCV) must have 12 litres capacity of fresh water per person for three days, a sink connected to a watertight sealed wastewater tank, 12 litres capacity of grey water (wastewater) per person for three days, an evacuation hose, a rubbish bin with a lid, and a toilet with a minimum of three litres per person for three days. The toilet must be able to be used inside the vehicle while the bed is made.²

Freedom camping is managed nationally under the Freedom Camping Act 2011, which gives local authorities (regional councils, territorial authorities and unitary authorities) and the Department of Conservation the flexibility to determine where freedom camping is prohibited or restricted. Many territorial authorities control freedom camping using a by-law.

The key research questions are provided on the overleaf.

¹ <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/immigration-and-tourism/tourism/tourism-projects/responsible-camping/results-of-the-201920-summer-research-into-responsible-camping/>

² <https://www.standards.govt.nz/sponsored-standards/self-containment-of-motor-caravans-and-caravans/>

The research aims to answer the following key research questions:

- 1. How many privately registered vehicles or rental vehicles currently modified to include sleeping facilities, including those with and without self-contained toilet facilities, are in New Zealand?**
- 2. What are the concerns related to responsible camping that have been raised by communities and how have these changed over the last three years (i.e. since summer 2017/18)?**
- 3. What are the current approaches used by territorial authorities to manage responsible camping and are these fit for purpose? If not, what new or improved tools or interventions are wanted?**
- 4. What are the current responsible camping data gaps that will need to be explored further through public consultation?**

2. METHODOLOGY

This report provides a summary of the qualitative and quantitative data that were collected to respond to the above research questions. This research was conducted over four weeks under tight time constraints throughout January and February 2021. Data were collected and analysed in a period of two weeks. Quantitative data were collected from Waka Kotahi New Zealand Transport Agency (Waka Kotahi), two issuing authorities³ and Camper Mate. Qualitative data were collected through key informant interviews. Further details about the methodology are provided below.

Some of the key trends and issues that emerged from the qualitative and quantitative data have been expanded in this report to provide further detail on particular areas that were of interest to the Tourism Policy Branch.

2.1. Quantitative data: Vehicle registers

There is no national database for vehicles that have purpose-built sleeping facilities or are certified self-contained. This section introduces the datasets that were used to attempt to identify lower and upper estimates for the number of SCVs in New Zealand, as well as the number of vehicles most likely to be converted to SCVs. Further information about how these datasets were analysed to quantify numbers of vehicles is set out in section 3.1 and 3.2.

Issuing authorities databases and registers

Two issuing authorities provided us with the number of vehicles that have been certified self-contained by their testing officers. Issuing authority A provided a written estimate, and issuing authority B shared their database, which is publicly available. The issuing authority B's register also includes vehicles registered with another large camping club (we did not speak directly with this club).

We combined the number of vehicles on these two registers to calculate how many vehicles are currently certified as SCVs in New Zealand. This is described further in section 3.1 (including caveats regarding this calculation). We spoke with a third issuing authority, however they were unable to provide us with a register of vehicles as they do not hold an electronic database.

Waka Kotahi registered vehicles database

We used Waka Kotahi's publicly available database of registered vehicles in New Zealand to calculate and estimate the different types of vehicles discussed in section 3.2. The database includes all vehicles registered up to 31 December 2020. We used pivot tables to count the vehicles by body type, make, model, age, vehicle usage, import status, and registered territorial licensing authority (TLA). The best endeavours approach to quantifying the number of vehicles likely to have purpose built sleeping facilities or be SCVs was tested with Waka Kotahi staff during a videoconference.

We were able to use this database to calculate the number of self-propelled caravans (motorhomes) and caravans that are registered in New Zealand. As there is no national database for SCVs, we could not calculate the number of other types of vehicles that may be certified self-

³ An issuing authority is an organisation or individual who can sign off the certified self-contained status of a vehicle under the Self-Containment Standard NZS 5465:2001

contained (for example, converted light and heavy vans, buses, minibuses and station wagons⁴). Further caveats around these data are provided in section 3.2.

Waka Kotahi registered commercial vehicles database

Waka Kotahi has a register of vehicles registered by businesses in New Zealand. As part of this research, Waka Kotahi conducted a search of all commercial vehicles owned by a selection of ten rental company brands to act as a potential indicator for the total number of vehicles with purpose-built sleeping or self-contained facilities across the country. This search did provide an initial figure; however, this number should be interpreted with care as it is the total fleet owned by the companies, rather than specifically those used for camping. Further information is provided section 3.2.

Camper Mate freedom camping data

Camper Mate is a popular camping phone app that provides detailed maps for tourists to find campgrounds, accommodations, activities, fuel stations, dump stations and public facilities. The app is available in New Zealand and Australia. It has had more than 1.4 million downloads, so is likely to be used by a large number of domestic and international tourists travelling across New Zealand.

We worked with the Products and Insights team at Camper Mate to access data on the most popular freedom camping locations in New Zealand based on the app users. Camper Mate's data starts from November 2018, which allowed for comparison of camping trends between before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Camper Mate prepared data from the app for us on:

- the top ten most popular freedom camping regions in 2019 and 2020
- the top ten free site searches in 2019 and 2020
- overnight recorded stays⁵ at paid and unpaid locations in 2019 and 2020
- public toilet and dump station searches in 2019 and 2020, and
- the most popular times of the day to search for and arrive at free sites.

While the results in section 4 provide a clear picture of campers who use the Camper Mate app, it is not possible to know how many domestic and international tourists use other phone apps and are therefore excluded from these figures. Furthermore, two of the seven rental company brands told us that they had their own apps with a similar purpose to Camper Mate, which likely excludes these customers from the overall Camper Mate trends.⁶

⁴ Waka Kotahi's database uses the body type 'station wagon' as an all-encompassing category. This category includes the typical station wagon style car (e.g. Subaru Legacy) as well as large SUVs and 4WDs (e.g. Toyota Highlander, Landcruiser) and very popular people movers (Toyota Estima, Previa).

⁵ An overnight stay is recorded as stay is populated when the last location event in the evening is in the same region as the first captured location event the next day. For the total provided, this could also include commercial holiday parks and freedom campsites (designated or not).

⁶ In addition, a further three rental brands use a simplified version of the Camper Mate app with the parent rental company's own branding on top of it. We assume that this is included in Camper Mate's data, as they own the back office functions of this rental brand's app.

2.2. Qualitative data: Key informant interviews

Qualitative data were collected via key informant interviews between 12 to 21 January 2021. The table below shows the number of key informant stakeholders who were invited to participate in the research and the number of interviews we conducted.

Table 1: Key informant interviewees

Categories of key informants	Invited for an interview	Participated in interview
Regulatory agency	1	1
Issuing authorities ⁷	4	4
Rental company brands	9	7
Territorial authorities	25	21
Total	39	32

Key informants were agreed between MBIE and the project team, and some key informants were made aware of the research prior to us making contact.

We began with an incomplete list of names and contact details for the key informants. We contacted all key informants via phone initially, and followed up via email if we were not able to get in touch. Due to the tight timeframes available for consultation, we reached out to each key informant a maximum of three times. We successfully interviewed 82 percent of identified key informants.

Interviews took place over the phone or using Zoom video conferencing software. The interviews were semi-guided, which allowed the participants to speak freely across a range of topics. Interviews ranged in duration from 15 minutes through to one hour, however, most took 30 minutes or longer to complete.

We were unable to engage with key informants for interviews after 21 January 2021 as we had agreed to provide a briefing with initial themes from the consultation and research (Aide Memoire) by 26 January 2021.

Once all the interviews were complete, the content from the interviews was split into topics so information could be grouped and analysed with other interviews that spoke about similar topics. This allowed us to summarise what we heard, identify key trends and issues, and provided opportunities to show areas where key informants had differing opinions. Summaries of the key issues and trends were provided to MBIE in the Aide Memoire. Some of these key trends and issues have been expanded in this report to provide further detail on particular areas that were of interest to the Tourism Policy Branch.

⁷ Organisations who sign off on the certified self-contained status of vehicles under the Self-Containment Standard NZS 5465:2001

3. ESTIMATED NUMBER OF REGISTERED VEHICLES IN NEW ZEALAND WITH PURPOSE BUILT SLEEPING OR SELF-CONTAINED TOILET FACILITIES

This section presents the initial findings from our work to estimate the number of registered vehicles in New Zealand with purpose built sleeping facilities, the number of vehicles currently certified as SCVs, and an estimate of the potential number of vehicles that could readily be converted to SCVs. This information relates to key research questions one and four.

Key context for this section:

- there is no register or database of vehicles with purpose built sleeping facilities in New Zealand because this information is not collected in a central location
- there is some information available on the number of registered SCVs, but this information has significant issues and is not complete
- there is almost no information on the number of vehicles with purpose built sleeping facilities that are not certified as self-contained, and
- the lack of up-to-date information on both SCVs and non-SCVs means it is very difficult to provide an accurate estimate of the number of registered vehicles in New Zealand with purpose built sleeping facilities.

We have made conclusions based on the confidence we have in the quantitative data in section 3. While the data provides a starting point for MBIE’s research, there are significant disclaimers around these conclusions and estimations that should be considered. More accurate data (or filling data gaps) should be a priority for MBIE during a full public consultation period.

3.1. Estimating how many vehicles are currently certified as SCVs

Issuing authorities A and B are two of the main national issuing authorities for certifying that a vehicle meets the requirements of the New Zealand Standard for Self-Containment of Motor Caravans and Caravans, NZS 5465:2001.

Issuing authority A is a large membership-based organisation and self-contained issuing authority who represent private motorhome and caravan owners. They informed us in a phone interview that it has 55,000 SCVs on its register; 5,000 are commercial and the rest are privately owned. The two most popular SCVs registered with issuing authority A are motorhomes and caravans.

Issuing authority B is a national self-containment issuing authority who support all types of camping. They informed us in a phone interview that it has over 13,000 SCVs vehicles on its register (which includes vehicles who are part of a large camping club that we did not speak with). In comparison to issuing authority A’s register, only 10 percent of the SCVs on the issuing authority B’s register are motorhomes and caravans; the rest of the vehicles are vans and ‘people movers.’

Taken together, these **two registers provide a total of 68,000 SCVs registered with these two authorities.**

Table 2: Estimated lower value for the number of registered SCVs in New Zealand

Estimated number of vehicles with sleeping facilities (with or without self-containment) in New Zealand
Data set 1: Registers of self-contained vehicles as at January 2021
Issuing authority A’s database: 50,000 privately owned SCVs and 5,000 commercially owned SCVs
Issuing authority B’s database: 13,000 SCVs (there is a breakdown of private versus commercially owned vehicles, however this is not readily available)
Conclusion 1: There are 68,000 SCVs registered with two issuing authorities in New Zealand.

This calculation does not include the vehicles that have been certified self-contained by issuing authority C, who specialise in fitouts and refurbishments of motorhomes, caravans, buses and other popular vehicles. They are also an issuing authority for SCVs. Issuing authority C does not have a database of vehicles that their testing officers have certified self-contained. Issuing authority C informed us they had certified over 4,500 vehicles in the last 12 years, however a proportion of these may no longer be self-contained, as the certification period lasts four years. Furthermore, issuing authority C estimates that 10 percent of these vehicles are registered with the issuing authority A and therefore included in their database. We do not feel confident in estimating the percent of the 4,500 vehicles from issuing authority C that may still be certified self-contained, so we have not included these numbers in any further estimates in section 3.2. If it is not possible to get a reliable number from issuing authority C, who are the third largest issuing authority, then it is unlikely this information will be readily available elsewhere.

3.2. Estimating the number of vehicles capable of being converted to SCVs

It is not possible to accurately predict the number of registered vehicles capable of being modified to include sleeping facilities (for self-contained or non-self-contained camping) because Waka Kotahi does not collect this information and there is no direct link between the Waka Kotahi database and issuing authority databases, which are the property of the issuing authorities.

Certain types of vehicles are more likely to be converted to become an SCV

Issuing authority B estimates there are between 86,000 and 130,000 certified SCVs currently in New Zealand, as they believe that their register holds 10-15 percent of the total SCVs in New Zealand. The majority of issuing authority B’s database includes vans and ‘people movers’ that are converted to be certified self-contained, while only around 10 percent are motorhomes and caravans. The rest of this section uses a range of other information to attempt to validate this estimate as a starting point for further conversation.

Waka Kotahi only holds limited information related to potential SCV status

Waka Kotahi collects only limited information about whether a vehicle has a purpose-built sleeping facility or whether it is self-contained, and their database is not designed to capture vehicle use in this way. Instead, the Waka Kotahi licensing information is used to ensure that

certain types of vehicles meet the safety and other requirements (such as maximum size) placed on those vehicles.⁸

The Waka Kotahi database of registered vehicles shows there are 14,731 vehicles registered as caravans and 9,113 vehicles registered as self-propelled caravans in New Zealand on 31 December 2020.

However, these data have some limitations, as not all vehicles registered as caravans necessarily have sleeping facilities or are self-contained. Furthermore, it is not possible for Waka Kotahi to know if the owner of vehicle has converted it to include a purpose-built sleeping platform. For example, it is unlikely that Waka Kotahi would be notified if a trailer was converted into a caravan by a private individual, so these trailers may be registered under a different category.

Waka Kotahi staff suggested that the Insurance Council of New Zealand may have further data on SCVs, as individuals are more likely to tell their insurer about a potential conversion, to ensure their vehicle is covered appropriately, than Waka Kotahi. Waka Kotahi also suggested exploring whether Redbook, a private, aggregate data company focused on vehicles in New Zealand, may have further data on SCVs.

There is no information about whether vehicles registered as caravans or self-propelled caravans have been certified as being self-contained, and there is no requirement for a caravan or to be certified as self-contained if it is not being used for freedom camping. For example, the owner of a vehicle registered as a caravan may elect not to have a vehicle certified as being an SCV if it was only used in powered campsites.

Table 3: Number of registered vehicles most likely to be currently certified as SCVs

Registered vehicles with sleeping facilities (with or without self-containment) in New Zealand
Data set 2: Waka Kotahi registration data as at 31 December 2020
Number of Waka Kotahi registered caravans: 14,731
Number of Waka Kotahi registered self-propelled caravans: 9,113
Conclusion 2: There are 14,731 caravans and 9,113 self-propelled caravans registered in New Zealand, but this does not represent all caravans with purpose built sleeping facilities, and not all vehicles registered as caravans or self-propelled caravans are certified as being self-contained.
<i>N.B. this estimate excludes light buses and heavy buses that may have purpose built sleeping facilities or are certified self-contained, as there is an unknown proportion of these vehicles registered in New Zealand that are not, and will not, ever be converted since they are used for other purposes.</i>

Identifying vehicle types most likely to be converted to SCVs

Our initial work indicates that **a realistic estimate of the number of currently registered cars that could readily be converted to SCVs is around 55,034.**⁹ To develop this prediction we

⁸ For more information on the Waka Kotahi definition of caravans and self-propelled caravans, see <https://www.nzta.govt.nz/vehicles/vehicle-types/motorhomes-caravans-light-trailers/>

⁹ Please note this number is different to the number presented in the Aide Memoire due to the inclusion of the Volkswagen Kombi (also known as the Transporter, Microbus, Bus and Camper).

attempted to find the types of vehicles that are *most likely* to be converted to SCVs by undertaking a desk-based search of rental company information on the vehicles currently available to rent for camping purposes that have purpose built sleeping facilities, including both SCV and non-SCV vehicles. We also undertook a search of the most popular camping/backpacking forums (based on Google searches for key terms related to SCVs and the conversion process) for the most popular vehicles to purchase privately for travelling New Zealand. These vehicles also match the issuing authority A’s temporary ban on self-contained certification on people movers (see section 4).

Table 4 sets out the results of this search for vehicles most likely to be readily converted to SCVs. The list includes potential plate name variations, which often occur with imported vehicles, however this is not exhaustive.

Table 4: Most popular people mover style vehicles converted to SCVs

• Honda Elysion	• Mitsubishi RVR	• Suzuki APV
• Honda Odyssey	• Nissan Caravan	• Toyota Alphard (Vellfire)
• Honda Stepwagon (StepWgn)	• Nissan Elgrand (Fargo, Homy)	• Toyota Estima (Estima Lucida, Previa, Tarago)
• Isuzu Mu	• Nissan Largo (Serena)	• Toyota HiAce (Ambulance, Granvia, Reguis Ace)
• Kia Carnival	• Nissan Mistral (Terrano)	• Toyota Noah (Voxy)
• Mazda MPV	• Nissan Prairie	• Toyota Qualis
• Mercedes Benz Viano (Vito)	• Nissan Prestige (Bassara, Largo)	• Volkswagen Kombi (Transporter, Microbus, Bus, Camper) ¹⁰
• Mitsubishi Delica (L300, L400)	• Nissan Vanette	

It is worth noting that the estimate of 55,034 currently registered cars that could be *readily* converted to SCVs excludes light and heavy buses, as these were not included in issuing authority A’s list of vehicles temporarily banned from being certified self-contained by their officers. Buses were also not commonly listed on popular camping/backpacking forums for conversion to SCVs.

Table 5: Predicted number of registered vehicles that are capable of being modified to include sleeping facilities

Predicted number of registered vehicles that are capable of being modified to include sleeping facilities
Data set 4: Waka Kotahi registration data as at 31 December 2020 based on popular people movers to become certified self-contained
Number of popular vehicles for conversion registered with Waka Kotahi: 55,034
Conclusion 3: There are at least 68,000 SCVs currently in New Zealand, but potentially up to 130,000 based on initial industry estimates.
Conclusion 4: We estimate that there are 55,034 vehicles registered in New Zealand that could become certified self-contained (based on popular models currently used).

¹⁰ The Volkswagen Kombi van is often seen as the ultimate retro camping vehicle. However, it may be unlikely many of these are converted due to their premium price and classic car status.

N.B. some of the 55,034 vehicles mentioned in conclusion 4 would already be registered as a certified SCV so these are not additional vehicles on top of the estimate in conclusion 3. This estimate excludes light buses and heavy buses that may have purpose built sleeping facilities or are certified self-contained, as there an unknown proportion of these vehicles registered in New Zealand that are not, and will not, ever be converted as they are used for other purposes.

However, the following caveats should be considered with the above prediction of vehicles that could become self-contained:

- it is based on the most popular cars so automatically excludes other, less popular, models that could become self-contained (we have heard of other vehicles becoming self-contained, such as a Toyota Yaris)
- it also excludes other vehicles used for freedom camping like larger SUVs, 4WDs and utility vehicles, which are, anecdotally, increasingly being used for camping with tents (standard or rooftop tents), however, based on our analysis and stakeholder engagement, it appears that these vehicle types are not converted to SCVs as often. One potential reason is that these are more expensive to purchase than readily available and popular people mover style vehicles
- it is likely to include a number of vehicles registered that are already SCVs and may be registered with issuing authorities A or B, and
- cars often have more than one model name, so this figure may exclude a number of cars that could be converted but have a different model name that we were not able to capture.

Validation of estimates of registered vehicles that are or could be modified to include sleeping facilities, including those with and without self-contained toilet facilities

The above number of currently registered 9,113 self-propelled caravans and 14,731 caravans and theoretical prediction of 55,034 vehicles that could be self-contained equal **an estimated total of 78,878 SCVs (currently or could be modified) in New Zealand**, which is between 60 and 92 percent of issuing authority B's above prediction. Comparing the estimate from issuing authority B with the combination data from Waka Kotahi and other datasets provides some confidence in the estimated range for the upper range of how many vehicles could become SCVs.

Conclusion 5: while imperfect, a workable estimate for the number of vehicles that could become SCVs in New Zealand is between **68,000 and 130,000**. We have high confidence in the bottom range of the estimate, and low confidence in the upper range.

3.3. A wide range of self-contained and non-self-contained rental vehicles are available for hire

We interviewed seven rental car brands who have a range of fleet sizes and products, and target customers within the leisure camping market. Some of the companies were concerned with commercial sensitivities around the size and make-up of their fleet and therefore did not give detailed stats on the type and make-up of their fleets. However, all companies provided at least high level, aggregated information on their fleets.

As a summary, the companies had fleet sizes ranging from 100 to more than 2,000 vehicles suitable for self-contained and non-self-contained camping. Some companies reported reducing their fleets due to the impact of COVID-19 and the lack of international tourists.

The companies had a mixture of vehicles in their fleets, including some having solely non-SCV vehicles, some having solely SCVs, and some having a mixture of SCVs and non-SCVs. Given that these vehicles range between people movers (e.g. Toyota Estima), light vans (e.g. Toyota HiAce) and self-propelled caravans, it is not possible to know exactly how many rental vehicles have sleeping facilities or are SCVs, and it is likely that some rental companies would not provide that information to that level of detail. Rental companies provided us with information about how they informed renters of the regulatory framework for freedom camping; one company with non-SCVs informs their customers that freedom camping is illegal in New Zealand.

Waka Kotahi conducted a commercial business vehicle search of ten rental companies in New Zealand and found that they owned over 4,300 vehicles. This figure does not include the proportion of vehicles with or without sleeping facilities or a SCV status. There are significant shortfalls with these data as it would include vehicles owned by each company that do not have purpose built sleeping facilities. Further, some companies had very few vehicles registered under their business name, suggesting that other ownership arrangements were used, which means we have low confidence in this figure.

Table 6 summarises the range of rental fleet vehicle estimates highlighted in this research. Waka Kotahi’s commercial vehicles registration search result of 4,300 rental vehicles is the average of these three figures.

Table 6: Range of rental vehicle fleet estimates in New Zealand

Rental companies from key informant interviews	Issuing authority A’s register	Waka Kotahi’s commercial vehicle registration search
Estimated rental fleet of 7 companies: 3,600 vehicles	Number of rental vehicles on issuing authority A’s register: 5,000 vehicles	Estimated rental fleet of 10 companies: 4,300 vehicles
Conclusion 5: We are confident that there are between 3,600 and 5,000 rental vehicles in New Zealand that could contain purpose built sleeping facilities and self-contained toilet facilities.		

3.4. Costs to become certified self-contained greatly depends on your preferences and vehicle

There are many factors involved in the self-containment process that can have an impact on the price. The type of vehicle, its previous uses, and what it will continue to be used for are important considerations. Similarly, there is a real difference between a facility that meets the bare minimum of the Self-Containment Standard NZS 5465:2001 and one that goes far beyond what is required. As issuing authority A told us, “There is a significant cost difference between setting up a baseline camper for self-containment and a fully equipped motorhome and caravan.”

The type of setup that campers choose to have will also affect the cost:

- **a basic SCV conversion costs around \$500-\$800** and includes a small 10-20 litre capacity portable toilet (portapotty), small fresh water and wastewater containers, plumbing and certification
- **a moderate SCV conversion range costs around \$1200-\$5000** and includes a 17-24 litre capacity fixed (cassette) toilet or a composting toilet, larger fresh water and wastewater containers, plumbing, waste removal modifications and pipes for the vehicle and certification, and
- **a higher end SCV conversion costs around \$5,000-\$30,000** and includes inbuilt, private facilities, large fresh water and wastewater containers, significant waste removal vehicle modifications and pipes for the vehicles and certification.

One New Zealand website¹¹ advertises a campervan self-containment kit from just over \$400 excluding the self-containment issuing certificate as the “cheapest and easiest way for converting your camper van.” In comparison, one issuing authority told us it could cost up to \$20,000 to make a vehicle comfortably self-contained. It also costs extra to modify the vehicle to include provisions to empty the waste from a fixed toilet from the vehicle.

It is common for people to install the self-containment facilities themselves (DIY), both to save money and because New Zealanders generally have a ‘can do’ attitude. However, there can often be difference in quality and durability of the facilities. One issuing authority told us that international tourists who purchase private vehicles are more likely to try make their vehicles certified self-contained for as cheap as possible, whereas in general, New Zealanders are more inclined to spend more money for a more thorough self-containment facility.

These initial findings may be a priority for MBIE in their public consultation to confirm the validity of costs for conversion.

¹¹ www.selfcontained.co.nz

4. KEY TRENDS OVER THE LAST THREE YEARS IN FREEDOM CAMPING

This section highlights key trends from both the data analysis and qualitative key informant interviews to provide an initial view of the changes in freedom camping since the Responsible Camping Working Group was established in 2018. This information relates to key research question two.

Key trend 1: Freedom camping visitor numbers are down, but the hot spots are still popular

We used Camper Mate data to analyse the changes in camping since it was established in November 2018. In 2019, there were a recorded 4,543,960 overnight stays,¹² compared to 2,273,089 in 2020 (a decrease of nearly 50 percent YOY). These figures show the clear impact that COVID-19 and the closure of New Zealand’s borders has had.

Table 7 shows the top ten most popular freedom camping regions¹³ in descending order of visitation numbers in 2019 and 2020. There were 1,078,212 freedom campsite arrivals in 2019, compared to 612,453 freedom campsite arrivals in 2020.

Table 7: Top ten most popular freedom camping regions by visitation numbers

Popular regions in 2019	Popular regions in 2020
Tasman District (56k)	Tasman District (32k)
Thames Coromandel District (51k)	Thames Coromandel District (30k)
Nelson District (49k)	Nelson District (28k)
Queenstown-Lakes District (48k)	Marlborough District (22k)
Taupo District (41k)	Western Bay of Plenty District (22k)
Dunedin City (37k)	Hurunui District (22k)
Western Bay of Plenty District (36k)	Whangarei District (20k)
Southland District (36k)	Southland District (19k)
Marlborough District (35k)	Taupo District (19k)
Hurunui District (35k)	Kaikoura District (18k)
Whangarei District (34k)	Queenstown-Lakes District (18k)

Based on these data, Queenstown-Lakes District saw the largest decrease in visitation between 2019 and 2020 with a difference of almost 31k recorded arrivals.¹⁴ Clutha District was the only

¹² This includes paid and unpaid site locations.
¹³ This is only unpaid freedom camping sites.
¹⁴ Note that the Queenstown-Lakes District Freedom Camping Bylaw was renewed in December 2019. This renewal included an expansion of freedom camping restrictions to several areas that did not previously have restrictions on freedom camping. This may have contributed to decreased numbers of visitors freedom camping in the area throughout 2020.

region to see a rise in campsite arrivals from 2019's 2.3k arrivals to 2020's 5k arrivals (a 117% increase). Kaikoura District was the only region to remain consistent between both 2019 and 2020 at around 18k arrivals.

Late in the afternoon (4pm) was the most popular hour of the day for travellers to use the app to search for a location to camp in both 2019 and 2020. In 2019, 1.6 million freedom sites were viewed between 50-100 km's from the location, compared to 900,000 views in 2020.

A number of territorial authorities that we spoke with also commented on the impact of COVID-19 on the number of freedom campers they were seeing. Most told us that before COVID-19 they were experiencing increased numbers of visitors that led to overcrowding and capacity issues, however the 2020/21 season had seen less pressure on capacity. The impact of fewer international tourists freedom camping was not equal across the country, with some territorial authorities still reporting steady numbers of visitors in their area.

Key trend 2: Central Government funding provided since 2017 has helped territorial authorities to manage freedom camping more effectively

A number of territorial authorities mentioned the positive impact of the Tourism Infrastructure Fund (TIF) since 2017 and the more recent Responsible Camping Fund (RCF). Territorial authorities used the funding in a variety of ways to manage responsible camping, including infrastructure development, employment of freedom camping ambassadors¹⁵ and enforcement officers, improvements to signage, data collection and camper surveys, advertising campaigns, and general site maintenance. Smaller territorial authorities with relatively small ratepayers bases in particular expressed how funding was a "game changer" for managing freedom camping in their district.

Territorial authorities often spoke of how they would not have been able to achieve the positive gains that they have made over the past few years without the funding, particularly regarding improvements to infrastructure and being able to employ ambassadors or enforcement officers. One territorial authority told us how they would have been "drowning in issues" without the funding they had received so far to help manage freedom camping.

Key trend 3: Domestic and international tourists tend to prefer different types of vehicles

Since the impact of COVID-19 and the closure of New Zealand's border, territorial authorities have anecdotally noticed some differences in the types of visitors and vehicles they have seen. They told us that in previous years there tended to be greater numbers of smaller vans, however this season there have been greater numbers of larger motorhomes. Both territorial authorities and rental companies suggested that this may be because international tourists are more likely to use or hire smaller SCVs or non-SCVs, while domestic tourists are more likely to use or hire motorhomes.

¹⁵ Responsible Camping Ambassadors are part of a government initiative to manage freedom camping through education. Ambassadors visit freedom camping sites to inform and educate campers on how to camp responsibly. Some also carry out enforcement duties.

The research report¹⁶ into the 2019/20 summer season also found that international visitors were more likely to purchase their own vehicle or hire budget vehicles from hire companies than hire premium vehicles from rental companies.

Key trend 4: Bylaw infringements may be decreasing

While we were not able to conduct a full review of infringement notice data for each of the territorial authorities we interviewed due to time constraints and a lack of a central dataset, most territorial authorities provided us with some general trends. This information on infringement notices ranged from verbal estimates, through to precise numbers of total annual issued infringements.

We spoke with 16 territorial authorities who had a bylaw relating to freedom camping, and four territorial authorities who did not have a freedom camping bylaw in place (see table 8 below). Some of the larger territorial authorities reported higher numbers of annual infringements issued (e.g., ranging from 100 to over 600 per year), while the smaller territorial authorities tended to report lower numbers (e.g., ranging from 1 to 200 per year).

Most territorial authorities who shared infringement information with us generally noticed a decrease in the total number of infringements issued over the past three years. The decrease in issued infringements often coincided with a combined educational approach, such as the introduction of ambassadors.

A selection of examples from the territorial authorities are provided below.

Case study 1: Some are seeing a clear decrease in the number of infringements issued

One territorial authority told us that they have generally been observing increasing levels of compliance from campers over the past few years. Upon examining their infringement notice data, they noticed a clear decrease in the number of infringements issued annually since the 2018/19 season.

- 2018/19 – total of 191 infringement notices were issued (52% of fees were paid, 36% of infringements were withdrawn, and 11% were taken to court)
- 2019/20 – total of 20 infringement notices were issued (55% of fees were paid, 36% of infringements were withdrawn, and zero were taken to court)
- 2020/21 – total of 9 infringements had been issued at the time of the interview.

¹⁶ Commissioned by MBIE and undertaken in 2020 by *Fresh Info*
<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/11909-responsible-camping-research-2019-20-pdf>

Case study 2: The impact of camper education on infringement notice rates

Another territorial authority experienced a number of issues in one of their freedom camping sites during the 2017/18 season and told us that they issued many infringement notices that season. In the 2019/20 season they took a greater focus on education by introducing ambassadors and found that the number of issued infringement notices dropped immediately, issuing zero infringements that season. This decrease was maintained throughout the following year, seeing only one infringement notice issued in the 2020/21 season.

With a general increase in compliance from campers and reduced infringements being issued, a few territorial authorities expressed concern around the cost of enforcement and how the revenue from infringement fees was not sufficient to cover this cost. Several territorial authorities reported relatively low infringement fee collection rates, with most reporting that around less than 60 percent of infringement fees are paid.

Table 8: Comparison of which territorial authorities currently have a bylaw on responsible or freedom camping

Territorial authorities that have a bylaw		
• Auckland City	• Mackenzie District	• Taupō District
• Buller District	• Marlborough District	• Tauranga City
• Christchurch City	• Manawatu District	• Thames Coromandel District
• Dunedin City	• Napier District	• Waikato District
• Gisborne District	• Nelson City	• Wairoa District
• Grey District	• New Plymouth District	• Waitaki District
• Hauraki District	• Queenstown Lakes District	• Waitomo District
• Hurunui District	• South Taranaki District	• Wellington City
• Kaikōura District	• Southland District	• Westland District
• Kāpiti Coast District	• South Waikato District	• Western Bay of Plenty District
• Kawerau City	• Tasman District	• Whangarei District
Territorial authorities that do not have a bylaw		
• Ashburton District	• Kaipara District	• South Wairarapa District
• Carterton District	• Invercargill District	• Stratford District
• Central Hawkes Bay District	• Masterton District	• Tararua District
• Central Otago District	• Matamata-Piako District	• Timaru District
• Chatham Islands District	• Ōpōtiki District	• Upper Hutt City
• Clutha District	• Ōtorohanga District	• Waimakariri District
• Far North District	• Palmerston North City	• Waimate District
• Gore District	• Porirua City	• Waipā District
• Hamilton City	• Rangitīkei District	• Whakatāne District
• Hastings District	• Rotorua Lakes District	
• Horowhenua District	• Ruapehu District	
• Hutt City	• Selwyn District	

Key: Most popular regions in 2020 as per Table 7 above are **bolded**

Key trend 5: Due to issuing authority A placing a temporary ban on certification of people movers and similar small cars as self-contained in 2018, owners of most people movers and other smaller SCVs now use other licencing authorities to certify their vehicles

In 2018, issuing authority A's Board introduced a temporary ban on their self-containment officers certifying people movers and similar small cars. One of the reasons this temporary stay was introduced was to reduce the "environmental effects associated with these small vehicles some of which are certified under NZS 5465:2001." Their Board plan to review this stay in early 2021.

As a result, non-members and owners of those vehicles were required to have their vehicles certified self-contained by another issuing authority. This is likely why around 90 percent of the vehicles on issuing authority B's register are the people mover style. This temporary ban may also have contributed to the inaccessibility of data on the number of SCVs across New Zealand, as issuing authority A, the largest issuing authority, not certifying these vehicles increases the likelihood that the owner sought certification through other avenues, including by issuing authority C or independent plumbers, and therefore the vehicle is not held within a register. It is not possible to estimate the number of vehicles that may have been certified by issuing authority C or plumbers rather than the two main licensing authorities.

One rental company did comment that this temporary ban has made it impossible for campers in smaller people mover vehicles to be able to do the "right thing" as the threshold to reach self-containment status has become more difficult.

Key trend 6: Territorial authorities are noticing that the number of homeless people sleeping in their cars is increasing, and these people are being mistaken as freedom campers

Some territorial authorities noted that it has become increasingly challenging to distinguish between people who are freedom campers, and those who are sleeping in their cars because they are unable to access housing or have alternative lifestyles. These comments came from a mixture of city councils and smaller district councils.

Territorial authorities commented that the current tools available to manage freedom camping, such as enforcement through infringement notices, were not appropriate for managing issues of homeless people sleeping in their cars. While we did not ask territorial authorities, this may also have an impact on community views of freedom camping.

5. COMMUNITIES' VIEWS ON FREEDOM CAMPING

This section summarises what territorial authorities told us when asked about the views of their communities on freedom camping. This information relates to key research question two.

Territorial authorities have found that their communities hold varied views about freedom camping

The majority of the territorial authorities interviewed reported varied feelings about freedom camping among their communities. Most found a mixture of people in their community who were tolerant or supportive of freedom camping, as well as people who were strongly against freedom camping. It was noted that those who were strongly against freedom camping tended to be a loud minority or small subset of the community.

Territorial authorities noted that the most common complaints that were raised by communities included concern around large volumes of freedom campers, having reduced or blocked access to local spots that are used by freedom campers, and concern for the environmental impact of freedom camping (i.e. littering and human waste).

Territorial authorities found that negative public perception of freedom camping was challenging to manage

A few territorial authorities expressed how their local community's perception of freedom camping tended to be more of a challenge than the issues themselves. They found that sometimes community members would perceive issues to be larger than they actually were, particularly regarding overcrowding at sites and instances of inappropriate toileting practices. A few thought that an attitude of 'Not In My Back Yard' might be playing a role in community members inflating issues around freedom camping.

Case study 3: Public perception vs the reality of freedom camping issues

Overcrowding of freedom campers was one of the most common complaints that one territorial authority reported receiving from their local community. However, when undertaking research to investigate instances of overcrowding at their freedom camping sites, they found that none of their sites were experiencing any actual overcrowding. The territorial authority considered the complaints to be a case of their community seeing more freedom campers out and about rather than the sites actually being overcrowded (i.e. the sites were equipped to cater for the numbers of freedom campers).

Two rental companies with fleets in Australia mentioned that Australians did not see freedom camping as a problem in the same way as New Zealanders. One company suggested that this view may be attributed to the geographical size of their country, which spreads out the volume of campers in key locations and makes problems seem less visible. One rental company thought that New Zealand has a lack of infrastructure compared to Australia, which can create issues if the capacity of facilities are regularly exceeded. They added that Australia also has quality and well-located facilities, and good technology for visitors to use.

Case study 4: The impact of public education on community views

While one community is relatively tolerant of freedom camping now, one territorial authority that we spoke with reported that this was not always the case. They told us that their community had previously held particularly negative perceptions of freedom camping, however this had changed over time through public education. The territorial authority undertook a roadshow to present facts and explain key aspects about freedom camping, including where the council did and did not have power to intervene, and what it was currently doing to manage freedom camping. They found that complaints from members of the public soon dropped, indicating that public education had helped improve public understanding and perception of freedom camping.

6. KEY ISSUES AND CONCERNS ABOUT FREEDOM CAMPING

This section outlines key issues and concerns relating to freedom camping that were commonly raised by key informants during the interviews. This information relates to key research question two.

Key issue 1: Territorial authorities and rental companies were concerned with the lack of national consistency around vehicle certification and found different interpretations of the definition of 'self-contained' to be problematic

Around half of the territorial authorities that we spoke with raised concerns about the current self-containment standard NZS 5465:2001 or the certification process. They found a lack of national consistency around the certification process to be challenging, particularly highlighting:

- the lack of oversight around who can provide certification services
- the difficulty in distinguishing between vehicles that have legitimately received self-containment certification or not, and
- instances where self-containment stickers had been falsified.

Territorial authorities also spoke of challenges with differing opinions around the definition of self-contained, with a few finding it problematic to allow vehicles with portable toilets to be considered self-contained. One rental company told us that these were generally issues with privately owned, people mover style SCV vehicles, rather than commercial rental fleets.

One rental company believes that an industry standard for SCV testing officers would provide greater oversight and consistency over those who can provide certification services.

Key issue 2: Concerns were raised around campers choosing to not use the onboard toilets in their self-contained vehicles

Both territorial authorities and rental companies told us that the onboard facilities in SCVs are not always used by campers, which puts additional strain on council facilities. There were reports of campers preferring to use council toilet facilities instead of using the onboard toilets in their vehicle.

One rental company said "It is common knowledge that in any vehicle (even with a proper toilet cubical in a Motorhome) peoples' preferred option is not to use the on-board toilet. People want to use a proper toilet."

One territorial authority¹⁷ conducted a recent survey of campers and found that while 95 percent of respondents reported having a toilet in their vehicle, only 33 percentage of those same respondents reported using their onboard toilet. In comparison, 95 percent of respondents had dishwashing facilities in their vehicle and 91 percent of those same respondents reported using the onboard dishwashing facilities.

¹⁷ This territorial authority conducted a survey following the 2019/20 season of self-contained campers who stayed in their district. The data does not include responses from those with non-SCVs. This survey was conducted through funding from MBIE.

The research report¹⁸ into the 2019/20 summer season also examined data around the use of onboard toilet facilities and found some similarities.

- Of the respondents who reported having onboard toilet facilities, domestic tourists and international tourists who hired premium hire vehicles were more likely to use their onboard toilet facilities (around 96% and 74% usage rates, respectively) compared to international tourists who purchased their own vehicle or hired a budget vehicle (around 19% and 27% usage rates, respectively).
- The type of onboard toilet facilities appeared to have an impact on usage rates. In-built toilets were significantly more likely to be used than portable toilets for all camper categories (both domestic and international tourists regardless of vehicle type).
- In comparison, those that reported having onboard shower and/or tap facilities (around 92% domestic tourists; 55% international tourists who purchased a vehicle; 51% international tourists who hired budget vehicles; 85% international tourists who hired premium vehicles) also reported relatively high usage rates of those shower and/or tap facilities (93%, 89%, 90% and 79%, respectively).

Territorial authorities also raised concerns that some rental companies offer customers with incentives (such as a monetary rebate) to return the hire vehicle without having used the provided toilet.

Key issue 3: It is common to read stories about freedom campers breaking the rules, but most campers try to camp responsibly

Many key informants said that campers generally do camp responsibly and want to do the right thing. They noted however, that it can be common to read stories about freedom campers breaking the rules in the media. Troublesome campers are often portrayed as international tourists, however one rental company told us that issues are not necessarily with campers in rental vans, but rather the “local with the station wagon with a mattress in the back”. Another rental company said that domestic tourists are a huge part of the freedom camping problem. It was not possible to compare infringement data by nationality for this work.

There were mixed views among territorial authorities around the behaviours of freedom campers. Some reported that issues were more likely to be with international tourists who hire or buy smaller SCVs or non-SCVs than with tourists who use motorhomes. However, others did not find a difference in behaviour across different vehicles, noting that they experienced challenging behaviour from a range of campers in both larger and smaller SCVs.

Case study 5: International tourists are not always the problem-makers

One territorial authority found that, this season, while they were seeing around half the number of visitors that they would typically see in their region, the number of infringements issued was only down by approximately 20% compared to the previous season when New Zealand’s borders were still open. They suggested that that these numbers illustrate how freedom camping issues in their area are not always caused by international tourists.

¹⁸ Commissioned by MBIE and undertaken in 2020 by *Fresh Info*
<https://www.mbie.govt.nz/dmsdocument/11909-responsible-camping-research-2019-20-pdf>

Three territorial authorities noticed that domestic tourists were more likely to exhibit a sense of entitlement compared to international tourists. They said that this attitude was sometimes difficult to manage as these campers might ignore signage and camp where they wanted or refuse to follow the advice of ambassadors.

Case study 6: Domestic tourists more likely to have an attitude of entitlement

When considering the differences between the 2020/21 season and previous years, one territorial authority told us that they were noticing more of a sense of entitlement from domestic tourists compared to international tourists. They explained that some domestic tourists had an attitude of *'this is my country so I will go wherever I want'*, and explained how when approached by an ambassador asking them to camp elsewhere, international tourists may get annoyed but would eventually move on, whereas domestic tourists were more likely to debate why they did not have to move.

A few territorial authorities expressed frustration at a lack of repercussions when campers do not pay their infringement fees. They noted that rental companies do not appear to always pass infringement fees on to customers. They considered this to be an issue that impacted on compliance levels. However, all seven companies we spoke with told us that they do pass infringements under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 directly onto customers.¹⁹

Overall, several territorial authorities mentioned that complaints about freedom campers are generally decreasing. They told us that issues tend to be related to overcrowding or people camping in the wrong places, rather than environmental issues or antisocial behaviour from freedom campers. Four territorial authorities noticed that they experienced fewer environmental issues, such as incorrectly disposing of rubbish and finding human waste in public places, with freedom campers this year compared to previous years.

Key issue 4: Some stakeholders expressed concerns about unintended consequences of using more restrictive regulations on non-SCVs to manage freedom camping problems

During the interviews, a number of key informants shared views on other topics outside of the scope of the research questions. In particular, a number of key informants, including those from rental companies and territorial authorities commented on the potential for unintended consequences arising from potential attempts to manage freedom camping issues by limiting or prohibiting the use of non-SCVs. We assumed these key informants wished to share their thoughts following recent media interest in freedom camping.

One issuing authority told us that banning certain vehicles to manage freedom camping issues was like “whack-a-mole” because there will always be permitted vehicles that break the rules, and prohibited vehicles that can easily become certified self-contained. Two territorial authorities told us that they did not want to see further restrictions placed on freedom camping or vehicle types, with one suggesting that efforts be focused on providing education on responsible camping instead.

The rental companies that we spoke with highlighted how some people choose to hire smaller vehicles (SCV or non-SCV) like people movers over larger SCVs like motorhomes because they are easier to drive on New Zealand roads. They suggested that removing non-SCVs from the market

¹⁹ We note that [clause 29 and clause 30 of the Freedom Camping Act 2011](#) set out the circumstances for rental companies to charge infringement fees on to those who hire vehicles

may limit the options available for hire and push international tourists to buy cheap, privately owned SCVs.

One rental company commented that preventing non-SCVs from freedom camping could have unintended consequences for other outdoor recreational activities. They questioned whether bike-packing, backcountry tramping, hunting and other similar activities would also be banned unless individuals carried self-contained facilities with them.

Key issue 5: Some private accommodation providers see freedom camping as a source of competition

Some territorial authorities reported concerns from local accommodation providers and commercial campgrounds who viewed freedom camping as competition. They told us how some community members expressed concerns around the viability of commercial campgrounds given the impact of COVID-19 and the ability for freedom campers to stay somewhere for free.

Two territorial authorities were concerned that the current Freedom Camping Act 2011 does not allow for the consideration of commercial impact of freedom camping. One territorial authority suggested that freedom camping sites work best when there is a partnership between the public sector and private businesses in the area.

Key issue 6: Inconsistencies between regions make it difficult to manage responsible camping

Territorial authorities and rental companies that we spoke with both raised concerns with how New Zealand does not have a nationally consistent approach to manage freedom camping. They highlighted how freedom camping signage, messaging, rules, and bylaws currently varies across the country and that this inconsistency can create confusion among campers (particularly international tourists). As one territorial authority noted, international tourists do not know where one regional boundary ends and the other begins, and so do not know when freedom camping rules change based on the area – this can make freedom camping difficult to manage.

Key issue 7: The current freedom camping legislation is not fit for purpose

Several territorial authorities that we spoke with were in favour of making changes to freedom camping legislation. Some noted that the current freedom camping legislation was out of date and no longer useful. The Freedom Camping Act was described as being:

- weak or too permissive regarding where people could camp
- broken and requiring reform and,
- hastily put together around the time of the Rugby World Cup, and no longer fit for purpose.

Some territorial authorities that did not have local freedom camping bylaws mentioned how it was difficult to work under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 without a bylaw. They also mentioned how the Freedom Camping Act 2011 and other related legislation, such as the Reserves Act and campground regulations, did not work well together.

7. CURRENT APPROACHES TAKEN TO PROMOTE AND MANAGE RESPONSIBLE CAMPING

This section summaries information provided by key informants in relation to key research question three.

Territorial authorities used a range of approaches to promote and manage responsible camping, but tended to prefer taking an educational approach first

The majority of territorial authorities that we spoke with reported utilising some aspects of an educational approach to promote responsible camping in their area. This included:

- having ambassadors or other council staff visiting each site to talk to campers and provide information on how to camp responsibly
- increasing or improving signage at freedom camping sites
- advertising and promotion through both local media and social media platforms
- promoting the Tiaki Promise,²⁰ and
- providing information in brochures, or on websites and camping apps such as Camper Mate.

Generally, territorial authorities considered an educational approach to be effective at reducing issues and improving compliance. In particular, most spoke positively about the use of ambassadors or other council staff visiting freedom camping sites and generally considered this to be an effective tool at promoting responsible camping. They told us that education can be effective as most campers want to do the right thing, but may not know what the right thing is. Having someone present at sites provided campers with a focal point of information and helped improve compliance.

Case study 7: Local responsible camping ambassadors work well in some regions

One territorial authority told us about a local coffee cart owner who frequented freedom camping sites with their coffee cart. This territorial authority approached the coffee cart owner about becoming a responsible camping ambassador for the area and found that this was well received by campers. The territorial authority told us that many campers had left positive comments on the Camper Mate app about the coffee cart ambassador's presence, and that campers appreciated having someone to go to as a central source of information.

Territorial authorities had mixed opinions about the role of enforcement as a necessary component to manage responsible camping

While some considered an educational approach to be more effective than an enforcement approach, other territorial authorities found that taking a solely educational approach was not always effective at influencing camper behaviours without following up with a level of enforcement.

²⁰ <https://tiakinewzealand.com/>

A few territorial authorities told us they chose to utilise rigorous enforcement – and found this be generally effective at reducing some common issues - while others did not put as much emphasis on enforcement or would only turn to enforcement for the few campers who did not comply after being spoken with.

Case study 8: Enforcement is an effective tool for some regions

Taking a rigorous enforcement approach has worked relatively well for one territorial authority that we spoke with. They told us that prior to 2017 they were experiencing a large number of issues with freedom campers in their area. For their region, they found that ambassadors appeared to have little impact on freedom camping behaviours, whereas the introduction of rigorous enforcement measures worked quickly to improve compliance.

For those territorial authorities that chose to not focus on an enforcement approach, they noted a range of reasons behind this decision. The cost of enforcement was most commonly raised as a key reason for not focusing more on enforcement, particularly given the generally poor infringement fee collection rate that most territorial authorities receive. Others noted that the large geographical size of their district made it unrealistic to patrol and enforce.

8. FUTURE OPTIONS TO IMPROVE THE MANAGEMENT OF RESPONSIBLE CAMPING IN NEW ZEALAND

All of the key informants had a wide range of suggestions to improve the management of freedom camping across the country. The suggested future options can be led by a mixture of central and local government, and rental car companies. The suggestions include:

- **Central government:**
 - Have a national freedom camping strategy and consistent messaging to managing it across all territorial authorities, including consistent signage across the country
 - Have a national register of SCVs and an authority over the self-containment standard
 - Consider reducing the self-containment certification period from 4 years to 2 years for small people movers
 - Requiring certified vehicles to have their facilities re-tested if they are sold
 - Review the Freedom Camping Act 2011 to make it more fit-for-purpose and better aligned to other relevant legislation, such as the Reserves Act 1977 and Camping-Ground Regulations 1985,
 - Consider increasing the infringement fees in the Freedom Camping Act 2011
 - Continue to provide the Tourism Infrastructure Fund and Responsible Camping Fund, and
 - Consider additional exit taxes for international tourists to be used to fund tourism infrastructure.
- **Territorial authorities:**
 - Produce educational material (used by territorial authorities and rental companies) on responsible camping in one central application or website, and
 - Consider running publicity campaigns to promote the positive impacts of freedom camping.
- **Rental companies:**
 - Produce educational material (used by territorial authorities and rental companies) on responsible camping in one central application or website, and
 - Ensure all rental companies pass infringements onto campers.

Numerous rental companies told us that freedom camping is a key part of New Zealand culture, and emphasised their view that it is important people have the option to freedom camp to experience our country.