



BRIEFING

New Zealand's approach to managing freedom camping

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|---------------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|-----------|
| Date: | 24 November 2020 | Priority: | Medium |
| Security classification: | In Confidence | Tracking number: | 2021-1265 |

| Action sought | | |
|--|--|------------------|
| | Action sought | Deadline |
| Hon Stuart Nash Minister of Tourism | Note New Zealand's approach to managing and supporting freedom camping Agree the immediate work priorities for supporting the management of freedom camping | 30 November 2020 |
| Hon Peeni Henare Associate Minister of Tourism | Note the contents of this briefing | N/A |

| Contact for telephone discussion (if required) | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|-------------|----------------------------|-------------|
| Name | Position | Telephone | | 1st contact |
| Danielle McKenzie | Policy Manager, Tourism Policy | 04 896 5113 | Privacy of natural persons | ✓ |
| Fraser Pearce | Senior Policy Advisor, Tourism Policy | 04 897 5174 | - | |

| The following departments/agencies have been consulted |
|--|
| Department of Internal Affairs, Department of Conservation, New Zealand Transport Agency |

Minister's office to complete:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Approved | <input type="checkbox"/> Declined |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noted | <input type="checkbox"/> Needs change |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Seen | <input type="checkbox"/> Overtaken by Events |
| <input type="checkbox"/> See Minister's Notes | <input type="checkbox"/> Withdrawn |

Comments



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Purpose

This paper provides you with a high-level overview of how central and local government supports the management of freedom camping in New Zealand.

Recommended action

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) recommends that you:

- a **Note** this briefing provides you with an overview of the current manage freedom camping in New Zealand

Noted

Responsible Camping Working Group

- b **Note** that the previous Minister of Tourism, Hon Kelvin Davis, set up the Responsible Camping Working Group (the Working Group) in 2018 to provide him with recommendations to improve the management of freedom camping in New Zealand

Noted

- c **Note** the Working Group is meeting next on 27 November 2020

Noted

- d **Agree** to meet some, or all, of the Working Group at your earliest convenience

Agree / Disagree

Improving the management of freedom camping in New Zealand

- e **Note** the work undertaken to support the management of responsible camping since 2018

Noted

- f **Agree** to discuss your priorities for managing freedom camping including proposed amendments to the regulatory system at your next meeting with MBIE tourism officials

Agree / Disagree

- g **Note** MBIE has work underway to undertake a comprehensive analysis of the regulatory environment for the Self-Contained Vehicle Standard, and that this work is due to be completed in the second quarter of 2021

Noted

- h **Note** that this work will inform any actions to strengthen the regulatory environment for freedom camping, including examining whether a compulsory self-contained vehicle standard should be introduced for freedom camping

Noted

- i **Note** that MBIE will continue to keep you updated on work related to improving the management of freedom camping through the MBIE Tourism Weekly Report, as well as answer any further questions you may have.

Noted



Danielle McKenzie
Policy Manager, Tourism Policy
Labour, Science and Enterprise, MBIE

..... / /

Hon Stuart Nash
Minister of Tourism

..... / /

Introduction

1. As Minister of Tourism you have indicated that an immediate priority for tourism is addressing the negative issues arising from freedom camping, particularly around vehicle compliance. This paper supplements the high-level overview of freedom camping issues (briefing 2021-1432 refers) and provides more detail on the broader issues and opportunities for improving the management of responsible camping in New Zealand.
2. This paper provides a summary of the priorities of the Responsible Camping Working Group (the Working Group), an advisory group set up by the previous Minister of Tourism to advise on issues related to the management of freedom camping.
3. The Working Group published a report in 2018 that set out a series of short-term actions and long-term recommendations that Government should take to support the management of freedom camping in New Zealand. The Working Group has had a number of successful improvements to the system but the top priority from the Working Group remains on improving the administration system for the Self-Contained Vehicle Standard.
4. The paper outlines the work currently underway to strengthen the regulatory system for the Self-Contained Vehicle Standard, which includes addressing a number of the issues you have identified with the current approach.

History of freedom camping in New Zealand

5. Freedom camping has a long history in New Zealand. Many international visitors and New Zealanders have enjoyed travelling around the country, staying outside established campgrounds. Some see freedom camping as an important part of their birth right as New Zealanders. Freedom campers come in all shapes and sizes: some choose to camp as an affordable way to have a holiday, while others spend their retirement touring the country in a motor caravan. Hunters and trampers also are covered under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 (the Act). **Freedom camping also takes many forms: from tents, to motor caravans and caravans, and other vehicles – both self-contained and non-self-contained, rented and purchased.**
6. The system New Zealand uses to manage camping in public places has developed over time, and there are many components. Central government sets the overarching policy direction; however the majority of the responsibility for managing camping has been devolved to local government, and to central government agencies that manage land on behalf of the Crown.
7. The Freedom Camping Act 2011 was developed to give councils and the Department of Conservation a tool to manage the expected increase in the volume of people freedom camping during the 2011 Rugby World Cup. **At the time many New Zealanders were concerned about protecting their rights to freedom camp. The Act protected these rights by having a provision preventing councils from banning freedom camping.**
8. Since then, the increasing number of people freedom camping has put pressure on some popular destinations. This growth occurred alongside the overall increase in visitor numbers (both domestic and international), which is putting pressure on tourism infrastructure, including mixed use infrastructure provided by local authorities. The pressure caused by this growth is also impacting on the social licence for tourism to operate. Increasing numbers of campers may also make the actions of a few irresponsible campers more visible.
9. Freedom camping complements the camping system in New Zealand more broadly, with people who want access to greater amenities (such as a kitchen or laundry) choosing to camp at either a commercial campground or a Department of Conservation campground.

Recent research commissioned by the MBIE found that many people who freedom camp also camp at commercial or conservation campgrounds.

Establishment of the Responsible Camping Working Group

10. In 2018, the Responsible Camping Working Group (the Working Group) was established by the then Minister of Tourism to identify ways to better manage the freedom camping system. The Working Group is a partnership between central government, local government and the tourism industry to ensure the views and needs of all are considered in designing a new or improved system.
11. The Working Group identified that there is a place for responsible camping in public places in New Zealand's tourism and recreation offering. The Working Group recommended long-term policy and regulatory changes to the responsible camping system, and short-term practical actions that can be taken to help councils manage camping in their regions during the peak summer season (see Annex four for the full report).
12. The Working Group has identified that a successful responsible camping system in New Zealand should deliver four outcomes. These are:
 - a. New Zealand maintains a network of camping places (commercial and non-commercial) which is sustainable, capable of managing different volumes of people camping and provides for a range of different camping experiences
 - b. responsible camping has a net positive economic and social impact on communities and the local environment
 - c. communities and land owners/managers have the tools needed to effectively manage camping, and actively work together within and across districts to do so and communities have trust and confidence in the system
 - d. New Zealanders and international visitors are able to choose camping as a way to experience New Zealand's tourism and recreation offering.

The long-term regulatory changes recommended by the Working Group

13. The Working Group has recommended a suite of regulatory changes that it believes would support improved management of responsible camping in New Zealand. This includes reviewing:
 - a. the Freedom Camping Act 2011 to decide whether it is still fit for purpose, or whether new legislation or regulations that encourage responsible camping is required
 - b. the Camping-Grounds Regulations 1985, which some operators believe are too restrictive and prohibitive to setting up new sites
 - c. the administration system for the New Zealand Standard for self-containment of motor caravans, otherwise known as the Self-Contained Vehicle Standard.

The short-term practical actions recommended by the Working Group

14. The Working Group also recommended three short-term actions to support freedom camping:
 - a. central government funding to support councils with infrastructure, education and enforcement over the peak summer season
 - b. a data and technology pilot with Geozone (for freedom camping zoning)
 - c. a marketing and education campaign to provide information to potential campers on the behaviour expectations of campers in New Zealand, with Tourism New Zealand.

The Working Group regularly meets to discuss freedom camping issues

15. The Working Group's next meeting will be on Friday, 27 November 2020. This meeting will be an opportunity for the Working Group to discuss engagement with you as the new Minister of Tourism, your priorities for improving the freedom camping system and their individual views on any proposed changes, and the Group's priorities for the upcoming summer season.
16. We recommend that you engage with some or all of the Working Group at your earliest convenience. An upcoming meeting would be an excellent opportunity to meet the Working Group, and engage with them on your priorities.

Understanding the value of freedom camping to New Zealand

17. MBIE officials' commissioned research over the peak summer season to understand the value of freedom camping to New Zealand. The data below captures the main findings from the research.¹ The figures
18. Just over 245,000 people responsibly camped in New Zealand in the 2019 calendar year, of which around 63% (154,000) were international visitors and the remaining 37% (91,000) were New Zealand residents. These campers generated 2.67 million freedom camping nights at an average of 10.9 nights per person.

International visitors who purchase their own vehicle, or who hire a budget vehicle, stay longer and spend more than those who hire premium vehicles

19. Domestic freedom campers spent an average of \$729 per person per trip. International freedom campers who purchased their own vehicles spent an average of \$7,912 per person per trip, compared with \$5,864 for those who hired a budget vehicle and \$4,890 for those who hired a premium vehicle.
20. International freedom campers who purchased their own vehicle stayed an average of 211 nights in New Zealand, with just over half being responsible camping nights. Those who hired a budget vehicle stayed an average of 47.5 nights in New Zealand (20.4 nights spent responsible camping) and those hiring a premium vehicle stayed an average of 32.3 nights (11.6 nights spent responsible camping).
21. There are also many indirect benefits from freedom campers in New Zealand. Industry and local government stakeholders have advised that many people on a working holiday visa choose to work in New Zealand because of their ability to experience our natural environment. These are visitors that often take jobs that are hard to attract New Zealanders to. In addition, many of these visitors become ambassadors for our countries overseas, and support regional dispersal – distributing benefits to less-visited parts of New Zealand.

Domestic campers tend to be older than international campers

22. The average age of a domestic freedom camper was 63 years of age. The average age of an international freedom camper who purchased their own vehicle was 26 years compared with 32 years for those who hired a budget vehicle and 42 years for those who hired a premium vehicle.

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

Most freedom campers are positively received by communities

23. Most freedom campers reported positive experiences with locals, with 86% to 94% of domestic and international freedom campers who interacted with local residents describing their interactions with local residents as very positive or positive.
24. Tourism New Zealand's own research found that most freedom campers want to do the right thing, and behaviour can be improved if visitors receive the right information at the right time.

Regulatory environment for freedom camping

The Freedom Camping Act 2011

25. In New Zealand, freedom camping is managed under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 (the Act). The Act is administered by the Minister of Local Government and the Minister of Conservation. The Act sets out how local government can manage freedom camping within their regions, including by setting bylaws that dictate where freedom camping is not permitted, or restricted. Local government can, through the Act, also restrict freedom camping in some areas to vehicles that are certified as self-contained.
26. The Act also sets out the range of freedom camping activities that are not permitted when an area is designated as a freedom camping site. These include depositing waste in an inappropriate waste receptacle and interfering or damaging flora and fauna. It also sets the penalties that can be charged, which are:
 - a. the amount prescribed by regulations made under section 43 of the Act, and no more than \$1000
 - b. \$200, where no amount has been set
 - c. \$10,000, where the offence is related to waste-discharge and in circumstances where the substance is likely to be noxious, dangerous, offensive or objectionable to such an extent that it will, or be likely to have, a significant adverse effect on the environment or cause significant concern to the community or users of the land
 - d. \$5000, where the offence relates to preventing or obstructing an enforcement officer from carrying out their duties under the Act.

Camping Ground Regulations 1985

27. The Camping-Ground Regulations (the Regulations) set out a range of requirements on camping grounds and those who operate them. These include the need to have camp plans and mark sites, keep records and provide infrastructure such as lighting, toilets and kitchens. Some stakeholders consider the high level of compliance associated with the regulations to be a barrier to entry, and a constraint on the supply of camping options in New Zealand.
28. Territorial authorities are tasked with enforcing the Regulations in their own districts, and with ensuring regular inspections are made of all camping grounds. Territorial Authorities can also grant exemptions to camping ground sites to these Regulations. These exemptions, however, do not exempt camping grounds from complying with other regulation (for example the Resource Management Act 1991 or Health and Safety at Work Act 2015).
29. The Regulations are made under section 120B of the Health Act 1956, signalling that their overall purpose is to promote and protect public health. There have been no significant amendments to the Regulations in the more than 30 years that they have been in operation.
30. The Regulations only apply to commercial camp grounds (for example, where people pay), and not to freedom camping sites.

NZS 5465:2001: Self Containment of motor caravans and caravans

31. The Self-Contained Vehicle Standard (SCVS) is a voluntary standard which sets out the requirements and process for certifying a vehicle as self-contained. A fully self-contained vehicle is meant to go for three days without needing additional water supplies or dumping waste. MBIE sponsored the standard to make it publically available without charge.
32. Any plumber registered under the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 1976 can be an issuing authority to certify a vehicle as self-contained. There are currently around 8,000 registered plumbers in New Zealand. A plumber can also certify a person to be an issuer of certification.
33. As it is a voluntary standard, the SCVS is not directly attached to any legislation or regulations. However, local councils can make by-laws that restrict freedom camping in specific areas to vehicles that are certified as self-contained.

MBIE reviewed the current support available for the Self-Contained Vehicle Standard

34. In 2019, MBIE officials undertook a review of the SCVS. This included looking at whether a compulsory SCVS was desirable, and how we could strengthen the current approach. At that time we recommended that the current approach was fit-for-purpose, although work could be done to build a national database of self-contained vehicles to support improved tracking and tracing, and to promote the SCVS more generally.

COVID-19 delayed much of the longer-term legislative and regulatory work

35. With the impact of COVID-19 on the economy and the closure of New Zealand's borders to international visitors, progress on reviewing the regulatory environment for freedom camping has been paused. MBIE has been focused on implementing the Tourism Recovery Package, and the administering agencies responsible for the Act (Department of Internal Affairs and Department of Conservation) and Regulations (Ministry of Health) have also been prioritising work relating to the COVID-19 response and recovery.

Immediate work priorities

Self-Contained Vehicle Standard

36. We understand that one of your more immediate priorities to support the management of freedom camping is to strengthen the regulatory regime for the SCVS. In particular, the lease, hire or purchase of vehicles with sleeping facilities but no fixed toilet.
37. The SCVS is one of the main tools used by local government to manage the impact of freedom camping on local government infrastructure. As mentioned earlier, councils can restrict freedom camping within their districts to vehicles that are certified as self-contained.
38. In August 2020, the then Minister of Tourism directed MBIE to progress work to review the current regulatory framework for the SCVS. This was based on the recommendation of the Working Group, who noted it as their number one priority issue for supporting the management of freedom camping. We agreed with the Working Group, and the subsequent paragraphs set out the work and analysis done to date.
39. We understand that you are interested in understanding how the system could be improved through legislation. This will require us to consider:
 - a. whether new or existing legislation should be used
 - b. what aspects of the current regulatory system should be carried over
 - c. the central government support required to introduce a legislated regime, including which agency would be responsible for administering and supporting implementation

- d. the role of local government and industry within a legislated regime.
40. Any considerations of the four aspects above would also need to consider the advantages and disadvantages of change, including cost, timing and effectiveness.

There are four issues with the current regulatory regime

The current standard is misunderstood

41. Many people do not understand the purpose and application of the SCVS. **Currently, a wide range of vehicles can legitimately be certified as self-contained under the current standard** – from large purpose built motor homes to converted ‘people mover’ vehicles, such as a Toyota Hiace. This is because there is no requirement for there to be a ‘fixed’ toilet in a vehicle, though the SCVS does specify that a toilet must be able to be used when a bed is made up.
42. Often people make assumptions around vehicles with the blue self-contained vehicle sticker on the back thinking the sticker is counterfeit and do not realise that many of those vehicles legitimately meet the standard. In fact, there has even been some success with a smaller self-contained rental vehicle for a single traveller.
43. We understand you are interested in exploring making it compulsory for rental companies to only lease or hire vehicles that are certified self-contained, or in amending the Act to limit freedom camping to certified self-contained vehicles only. Most rental companies currently certify and comply with the standard and a voluntary code where people hiring any vehicle that is not fully self-contained must overnight at camping ground with facilities. .

There are issues relating to the certification process

44. There is the potential for variance between certifying bodies in how vehicles are certified to the standard. The large number of individuals that can issue certificates, coupled with the fact there is no organisation to offer guidance and clarifications, increases the chance that there may be some issuing authorities who adopt a relaxed interpretation of the standard and no way to trace them. There is also no organisation to audit the work of issuing authorities, and as such, few consequences for certifying bodies that adopt a more relaxed standard.
45. The main issue with the system lies in the second hand vehicles purchased and modified by visitors – both domestic and international. These are likely to be the cheaper vehicles without a fixed toilet.
46. This also presents a difficulty for issuing bodies to seek guidance on how they can better certify vehicles to the SCVS. During our engagement with issuing authorities, most have been supportive of developing a voluntary database.

Enforcement measures for the standard are insufficient

47. The current regime has insufficient means to enforce compliance to the standard. The standard is voluntary so you cannot enforce against it. As mentioned, Councils use bylaws to restrict freedom camping areas in their district to self-contained vehicles only. Councils can penalise vehicles that do not have the SCVS certification from parking in a certain site to the maximum penalty allowed under the Act of \$200. This low amount may deter councils from enforcement actions, while not acting as a sufficient deterrent for non-compliant campers.
48. The lack of a central registry for self-contained vehicles may also make it difficult for councils to certify compliance to the standard. This is because it can be difficult for enforcement officers to determine whether a vehicle is legitimately certified as self-contained beyond the sticker and certificate that must be held inside a vehicle.

Many budget vehicles purchased and hired by visitors are not certified to the SCVS

49. Around 25% of purchased vehicles and budget vehicles hired by visitors are not certified as self-contained. 47% of budget vehicles hired by visitors and 67% of purchased vehicles (for the purposes of camping) are certified to the SCVS. The remaining vehicles have a SCVS sticker indicating that they are certified to the standard, though did not have the documentation to provide this. This data shows that some visitors are reliant on local government infrastructure to manage their waste. It also reinforces the issues around oversight of the current voluntary regime with regards to whether vehicles are certified or not.
50. The research also showed that 100% of premium vehicles are certified to the SCVS. These are vehicles that often have fixed toilets, and access to a tap or a shower.

There are a range of options to improve the administration of the SCVS and address these issues

51. These options include:
 - a. **Tightening the SCVS.** This would reduce the range of vehicles that could be certified as self-contained, and set a higher-standard by which self-contained vehicles would have to meet by a fixed toilet. New Zealand Motor Caravan Association is strong advocates for this option but there are other camping groups (many whom travel in vans/cars and camp in tents) who are opposed to tightening the standard.
 - b. **Increase enforcement penalties.** This would increase the deterrent factor for non-compliant campers, as well as make it more cost-neutral. Any increased enforcement penalties would require legislative or regulatory change.
 - c. **Introduce a national database for self-contained vehicles.** This would support enforcement activities, build trust in the regulatory regime and allow for the tracking of self-contained vehicles and their use.
 - d. **Improve understanding of the regulatory regime.** This would allow stakeholders, including local government and ratepayers, to understand how the SCVS is applied and to understand how they can use to manage camping in their regions.
 - e. **Make compliance with the SCVS compulsory.** There are a range of vehicle makes and models that can meet the SCVS, both privately owned and rented. This issue needs to be explored in further detail including which agency would have the resources to become the regulator. There may also be unintended consequences to limiting freedom camping to self-contained vehicles only. For example, many freedom camping sites are mixed-use and used by members of the public. Other freedom camping sites have the facilities to host visitors in non-self-contained vehicles, or allow for camping in tents.
 - f. **Introduce a fully regulated system.** This would involve establishing a fully regulated regime with a Government agency responsible for regulating to the Standard, and incorporate all of the above options. It would be supported by a national database of vehicles and certifiers/issuing authorities. It would require stronger enforcement mechanisms to increase compliance and recoup any costs associated with enforcing to the Standard. It would also require a tighter Standard.
52. A stronger regulatory system for the self-contained vehicles is unlikely to fully prevent people from camping in an irresponsible manner, particularly from the domestic visitor market. People might begin to freedom camp illegally, potentially in isolated spots without facilities.
53. The tourism industry has also advised that the vast majority of rental vehicles that are not self-contained stay the night at a location with toilet facilities, such as a Holiday Park, Department of Conservation campsite or council provided freedom camping site.

MBIE has work underway examining these issues

54. The management of freedom camping and the SCVS is of interest to the general public and received strong media interest in the range of views on the matter.
55. We think it is most likely that a new regulatory regime is required to manage self-contained vehicles but we are waiting on independent analysis on the matter.
56. In November 2020, MBIE went to the all-of-government Procurement Panel to seek an experienced policy provider to independently analyse the current regulatory framework for the SCVS. We have specifically asked for work to be done on:
 - a. A detailed description of the scope and scale of the issues caused by the current SCVS.
 - b. Detailed analysis, timings and costings of the options available to Government for improving its current approach to supporting the SCVS. This includes introducing a mandatory national database, increased education activities, introducing a mandatory regime, and any other options the service provider can suggest.
 - c. Recommendations for Government, and an action plan for implementing these.
57. The tender for this work closes at the end of November 2020, and we expect a provider to be selected and a contract signed by January 2021. We expect this work will be complete in the second quarter of 2021.

We recommend that this work continue

58. We recommend that policy work on reviewing the current regulatory approach to the SCVS be undertaken once the independent analysis has been completed. This will allow us to provide comprehensive policy advice to you (including potential regulatory or legislative change) that is underpinned by strong qualitative and quantitative evidence. It will also minimise the risk of adverse policy outcomes occurring, and be more likely to have the support of the sector.
59. Should you agree with this recommendation, we can work with your office to communicate this work publically.

Legal considerations with amending the regulatory regime

60. We are also in the process of seeking further legal advice on the issues you raised relating to the ban of the sale, lease and hire of vehicles without a fixed-toilet by summer 2021/22. This advice will be provided to you in a separate briefing.

Further progress to date on the work programme

61. Since 2018, Government has made significant progress in addressing some of the pressures facing local government in managing freedom camping in their regions.

What we've achieved – infrastructure and operational funding to councils

The Tourism Infrastructure Fund

62. The \$100 million Tourism Infrastructure Fund was established in 2017. Its primary purpose is to support local communities facing pressure from tourism growth, in order to protect and enhance New Zealand's reputation both domestically and internationally. Supporting robust infrastructure contributes to quality experiences for visitors and maintains the social licence for the sector to operate.

63. To date, \$58.4 million has been invested across a range of initiatives, including:
- a. building car parks and walkways around frequently-visited tourism attractions, such as the Church of the Good Shepherd
 - b. building or upgrading toilet and shower facilities
 - c. improving accessibility of tourism sites, for example road access
 - d. building waste management facilities
 - e. building or upgrading freedom camping sites
 - f. providing drinking water and ablution facilities at tourist sites, such as at Te Paerahi Beach.
64. Many of the initiatives funded through the Tourism Infrastructure Fund are mixed-use. This means they benefit a range of visitors, including locals, overnight campers (where appropriate) and daytime domestic and international visitors.

Responsible Camping Fund

65. The \$25 million Responsible Camping Fund was established in 2018, and is funded from the Tourism Infrastructure Fund. It has held three funding rounds of around \$8 million per annum, and supported:
- a. education and enforcement activities through responsible camping ambassadors
 - b. campground infrastructure
 - c. technology pilots, that sought to innovatively manage camping behaviour
 - d. CamperMate, which supports camping ambassadors and provides data to councils on responsible camping
 - e. increased waste management costs
 - f. research into the costs and benefits of responsible camping, which allows decision-makers to make informed decisions relating to investment and managing responsible camping.

Investing in digital technologies and data

66. The Responsible Camping Fund also supported technological innovation to improve the information that is made available to campers to support the management of freedom camping. Over 2019/2020, in addition to the Campermate data reports to councils, we ran three technology pilots:
- a. **Ambassador App** – to help councils' responsible camping ambassadors provide timely information and advice for visitors and share information across districts. Ambassadors searched over 22,000 times for vehicles over summer. 79,274 self-contained certified vehicles have been logged into the Ambassador App database. 4,701 interactions were recorded by ambassadors through the App.
 - b. **AI camera trial** – Heat sensor cameras were located at congested freedom camping sites monitoring capacity and sending information on site availability prior to a camper's arrival. There were 7,555 instances of a vehicle being successfully diverted from a full freedom campsite (November through to March). 91% of users were rerouted away from a full camping site from an average distance of 74km.
 - c. **Kaikōura Zoning Trial** – a trial to map the Kaikōura district into different zones of where you can and cannot camp was undertaken by the council over 2019/2020. The trial was designed to test whether displaying information in this way improves camper behaviour. 52% of users found the zones map 'very easy' for the visitor to understand where they could and could not camp. This trial was considered successful in managing camping in the district and educating visitors on where they could and couldn't camp but would be difficult to scale.

67. All three technology pilots were successful, and the lessons learned from each could be expanded to help with other parts of the freedom camping system, for example enforcement and creating a detailed self-contained vehicle database.

MBIE has provided funding to Tourism New Zealand to educate visitors on how to camp responsibly

68. MBIE provided \$400,000 to Tourism New Zealand in 2018/19, and \$300,000 in 2019/20, to contribute funding for a marketing and education campaign to provide information to potential campers on the behaviour expectations of campers in New Zealand.

Future work

Funding of tourism infrastructure

69. We are due to hold a fifth and final round for the Tourism Infrastructure Fund. This was initially due to be held in September/October 2020. However, this was delayed due to COVID-19, as we expect the increased pressure from the domestic market will not outweigh the decreased pressure from the international visitor market. Delaying the fifth funding round also provides Government with additional time to consider the future of tourism infrastructure funding.
70. We recommend that you continue with previous plans to hold a fifth infrastructure funding round in March 2021 once we understand how this season has played out.

We may need to explore expanding or introducing new options for infrastructure funding

71. Both the Responsible Camping Fund and Tourism Infrastructure Fund are, or will soon be, fully spent. It is important that tourism infrastructure continue to be funded in order to deliver on 'Brand New Zealand' and provide for a high-quality visitor experience, manage the impacts of visitors on the environment and communities, and address overcrowding issues at key visitor sites.
72. MBIE officials can provide you with further advice on this topic should you agree this is a priority issue for you. This could include advice on a future Budget bid, or exploring whether alternative funding avenues are available, such as the International Visitor (Conservation and Tourism) Levy (IVL). At this stage we would recommend making a Budget Bid for this initiative, as the IVL only captures a portion of the international visitor market and does not reflect that prior to COVID-19, 60% of visitor spend was domestic. There is also unlikely to be any notable IVL revenue this year.
73. Any work to support long-term tourism infrastructure funding would also need to consider whether more user-pays systems could be introduced to support local government and ratepayers. This could be done in conjunction with investing in further technology trials (see paragraph 77).

There are some calls for legislative reform

Freedom Camping Act 2011

74. There are mixed-views from stakeholders regarding the current fit-for-purpose nature of the Act. Some stakeholders believe that the Act as it currently stands provides them with the tools they need to manage camping in their district. Others are concerned that:
 - a. The current permissive approach (for example, designating areas that freedom campers cannot stay at) is more difficult to manage than a restrictive approach (for example, designating areas that freedom campers can stay at).

- b. Some of the language used in the Act is overly broad, and leaves room for council bylaws to be challenged. For example, 'area' is not defined in the Act. This means that some stakeholders have interpreted this as meaning only limited areas can be restricted, such as a road or park, as opposed to restricting a significant area of the district. Some councils have been legally challenge with their interpretation of the Act and implementation of their bylaws.
75. Should you wish to progress a review of the Act, you would need to consider the views of the Minister of Internal Affairs and Minister of Conservation, who are the Ministers responsible for the Act. There may be value in holding a meeting with both Ministers, particularly if the best approach to strengthening the regulatory regime of the SCVS is via the Act.

Camping Ground Regulations 1985

76. Some stakeholders are concerned that the Regulations are an unnecessary administrative burden for councils and businesses, and may be stifling commercial low-cost alternatives to freedom camping sites.
77. This work is not considered a current priority by the Working Group, as the current regulatory controls provide a means by which exemptions to the Regulations can be granted. In addition, these Regulations are a public health issue – and amending the Regulations is not seen as a priority by the Ministry of Health. The Working Group may revisit it if you are interested in changes to the full freedom camping regulatory system.

We could look to expand or undertake further technology trials

78. There are further ways that we could innovatively support local government to manage freedom camping in their districts. This could draw on the successes of past technological trials, and include:
- a. Further supporting the Ambassador App. This would need to consider the role of industry and local government co-funding this app.
 - b. Expanding the AI camera trial to other high-visitor regions. This would be costly, and cell phone coverage may limit the places that AI cameras are able to be placed.
 - c. Using technological solutions to introduce and develop more responsible camping hubs similar to those in the Queenstown Lakes District. These freedom camping hubs currently use mobile technology to seek donations for additional services (such as internet and showers, in addition to rubbish and recycling facilities).

Next Steps

79. We look forward to discussing your priorities at our next tourism officials meeting.
80. You have also commissioned specific questions on the SCVS which we will provide follow up answers to, in consultation with MBIE's legal team.

Annexes

Annex one: Responsible Camping Working Group members

Annex two: Self-Contained Vehicle Standard Regulatory Regime

Annex three: 2019/20 Responsible Camping report

Annex four: Responsible Camping Working Group Report

Annex one: The Responsible Camping Working Group

The current Responsible Camping Working Group members are:

- Mayor Hon Steve Chadwick, Rotorua District
- Mayor Jim Boulton, Queenstown Lakes District
- Mayor Tim Cadogan, Central Otago District
- Deputy Mayor Andrew Turner, Christchurch City
- Ms Freeman-Greene, CE Local Government New Zealand
- Chris Roberts, CE Tourism Industry Aotearoa
- Grant Webster, CE Tourism Holdings Limited
- Bruce Lochore, CE New Zealand Motor Caravan Association
- Fergus G Brown, CE Holiday Parks New Zealand
- Iain Cossar, Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
- Paul Barker, Department of Internal Affairs
- Bruce Parkes, Department of Conservation.

Annex three: 2019/20 Responsible Camping report

This annex is attached separately to this briefing.

Responsible Camping 2019/2020 Mid-Season Report



**MINISTRY OF BUSINESS,
INNOVATION & EMPLOYMENT**
HĪKINA WHAKATUTUKI

▲ **38** Councils received funding

▲ **135** projects funded

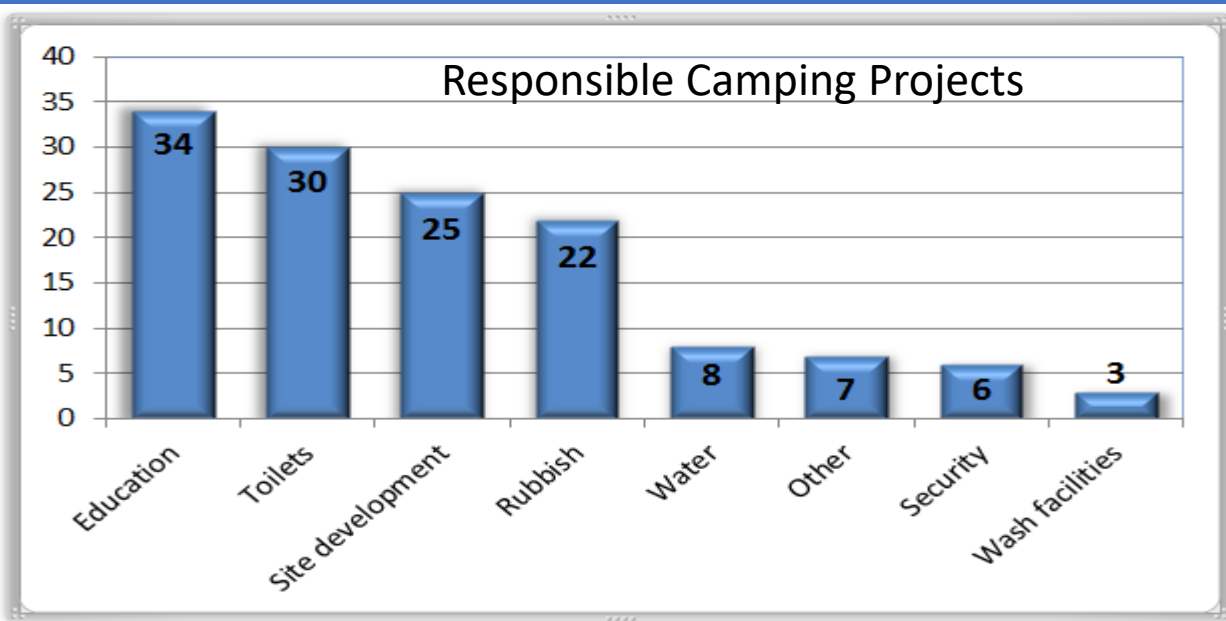
▲ **\$7,747,003.00** allocated to Councils

94% Councils reported positive camper behavioural change

4 Satisfied the project contributes to sustainability (out of 5)

3.8 Satisfied the project lowered impact on environment (out of 5)

Management of Responsible Camping Fund – Summer 2019/20



"Compared to two summers ago, things have improved dramatically"

Buller District Council

"An ambassador and education programme, with monitoring and enforcement and improved infrastructure have delivered significant benefit"

Whangārei District Council

"This funding has allowed council to increase the service provision at our reserves and enhance users experiences"

Manawatu District Council

▼ Complaints

72% Councils reported reduction in complaints

▲ Community response

Very positive
"Fewer complaints, greater compliance" Christchurch DC

▲ Media response

Significantly favourable
Positive press in response to Ambassador programme

Benefits

- Clearer and targeted information for campers
- Data to inform decision making
- Eased pressure on local resources
- Extended awareness with residents

Drawbacks

- Increases in servicing and maintenance will be expected in future summer seasons
- Homeless people are Freedom Camping without self contained vehicles

Ambassador Programme

- Ambassadors provided education on camping etiquette, and answered general questions
- Ambassador programme received favourably in the community and national press
- App enabled councils to identify hotspots and proactively increase services to meet demand

[The App] *"allowed ambassadors to register vehicle details, data and actions taken. Valuable for manager to analyse weekly reports and track high pressure areas"* Waitaki District Council

Ambassador App

| | | | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Registered Ambassadors 113 | No. Councils using App. 27 | Sites registered 413 | Number of interactions 4,701 | Vehicle database 79,274 |
| Vehicle searches 22,157 | Given leaflets 1,567 | Given rubbish bag 659 | Advised breach of bylaw 190 | Asked to leave 175 |
| | | | | Advised activities 174 |

Kaikōura Zones Pilot

- Survey responses found that 90% of users were likely to recommend the trial zone view for Freedom Camping to other travellers.
- Hard to scale the pilot given technical and legislative limitations of councils

Tourism New Zealand Responsible Camping Campaign

- Campaign launched alongside MBIE responsible camping package on 2 December 2019
- Media coverage for the launch was overwhelmingly positive across national press and TV
- Targeted digital advertising across social media & key camping websites and apps
- Digital toolkit for industry including brochures, videos, key messages, Tiaki t-shirts, posters & advertising
- >153,000 have watched the hero video.
- Camping.org.nz has seen quadruple growth

GeoZone/CamperMate Findings



10 live Camera sites
1 site with sensors



91% did not visit location once full



14,212+ users checked availability

Annex four: Responsible Camping Working Group Report

This annex is attached separately to this briefing.