



Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand – Submission Form

How to provide us with feedback

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is collecting written submissions to gather a range of views on the Government's proposals to improve the management of freedom camping in New Zealand.

This submission form brings together all the questions asked throughout the discussion document *Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand – Proposed changes to support effective management of freedom camping in New Zealand*.

Please feel free to answer as many or as few of these questions as you wish.

For more information and discussion about these topics please refer to the discussion document available at <https://www.mbie.govt.nz/have-your-say/supporting-sustainable-freedom-camping-in-aotearoa-new-zealand>.

Your submission can be returned by email to responsiblecamping@mbie.govt.nz. Submissions are due by midnight on Sunday 16 May.

Use and release of information

After the consultation period has closed, MBIE will publish a summary of submissions on our website at www.mbie.govt.nz.

We will not be publishing any individual submissions or names of individuals who made a submission. We may wish to include part of your submission in the summary of submissions; in that case, MBIE will first ensure we have your permission to do so.

If you are submitting on behalf of a business or organisation, MBIE will consider that you have consented to the content being included in the summary of submissions unless you clearly state otherwise. If your submission contains any information that is confidential or that you do not want published, you can say this in your submission.

The Privacy Act 2020 applies to your submission. Any personal information you supply to MBIE through your submission will only be used by MBIE for the purpose of producing a summary of submissions. The summary will present themes and no personally identifiable information will be included. The summary will be reported to the Minister of Tourism and be published online.

Submissions may be subject to requests for information under the Official Information Act 1982 (OIA). If your submission, or part of it, comes within the scope of an OIA request, MBIE would normally release it (excluding any personal information) to the person who asks for it. If you consider there are reasons for MBIE to withhold any of the information you are providing, please indicate these reasons in your submission.

Your details

What is the name of the person making this submission?

Alix Crosbie – Senior Strategy Advisor

If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of that organisation?

Central Otago District Council

Is it okay for your organisation's details to be published if we publish which organisations made a submission, or include part of your submission in the summary of submissions?

- Yes, you can publish my organisation's details with information from my submission.
 No, keep my organisation's details confidential.

Can we use information in your submission as a case study in the summary of submissions?

- Yes, you can include information from my submission as a case study in the summary of submissions.
 No, keep my information confidential.

Please provide us with your email address in case we need to contact you about your submission.

Email

alix.crosbie@codc.govt.nz

What sector(s) does your submission most closely relate to, if applicable?

For example, the sector in which you may work or operate, or which you represent.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Accommodation provider | <input type="checkbox"/> Other tourism business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Rental vehicle business | <input type="checkbox"/> Non-tourism business |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Iwi, hapū or Māori organisation | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local Government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual or camper | <input type="checkbox"/> Club or club representative (eg camping club) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other _____ | (please specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> N/A | |

Context to Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand

1.1 How much do you agree that certain types of vehicle-based freedom camping is a problem? Please write a (Y) next to the option which applies to you				
Strongly agree	Agree Y	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
<p>1.2 What are your views on freedom camping in vehicles?</p> <p>When answering this question you may like to think about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is vehicle-based freedom camping an issue in your area? • Have you observed any specific issues? • Are there specific behaviours which impact on your use of local amenities/infrastructure? • What benefits does vehicle-based freedom camping provide for your region? 				
<p>The Central Otago District Council (CODC) has a ‘destination management’ approach to camping. Responsible camping is welcome. The preference is an emphasis on educating campers and providing appropriate areas for camping, rather than focusing on restrictions. This approach has worked well for the district, for example, since taking this approach the number of concerns raised from the public has significantly reduced.</p> <p>The Council recognises the benefits of freedom camping, including the unique role it plays in New Zealand accommodating seasonal workers connected to the region’s horticulture industry. There are, of course, challenges presented by the influx of visitors to a geographically large region with a relatively small population. The Responsible Camping Fund has been the single most successful intervention in the Central Otago area. Continuation of these initiatives are vital to the continued success in managing responsible camping.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Infrastructure requirements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Further infrastructure investment is required to minimise the impacts of camping, protect the environment, and provide a safe and positive experience. • Funding certainty <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Council has previously received funding via the Responsible Camping Fund (to manage camping issues on both Council and LINZ land). ○ The process of reapplying for this funding each year makes future planning difficult and results in managing issues reactively rather than proactively planning for growth. ○ There is uncertainty about the availability of funding in the future. • Smaller population over large area presents further funding challenge <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ The Central Otago district is the fourth largest district in New Zealand by area, however it is characterised by wide open spaces with a smaller population – just 23,900 people as of June 2020; and far fewer ratepayers. ○ This presents significant funding challenges as the number of overnight stays by campers in just three popular camping spots nearly doubles our ratepaying population each summer. ○ Central Otago District Council recommends that the future funding of freedom camping is explored as a national framework would be far more effective if there is a national funding approach. The current reliance on local government funding places an unfair burden on 				

those regions such as Central Otago that are popular freedom camping destinations but have few ratepayers to share the financial burden among.

- Multiple government and territorial agencies
 - In addition to Council land, the sites most often utilised by freedom campers in the region are owned, and therefore managed, by the following crown agencies: The Department of Conservation (DOC); Toitū Te Whenua Land Information New Zealand (LINZ); Waka Kotahi. Another site is owned by Contact Energy.
 - Council has partnered with these agencies with success in recent years on managing camping in the region, however there are not always processes or funding mechanisms in place to allow for a coordinated approach.
 - For example, LINZ currently do not have budget allocated to manage camping at their Lake Dunstan sites and is unable to retain any revenue collected from camping at LINZ sites. LINZ would need to seek a separate appropriation from the Treasury to manage the camping activities/improve infrastructure at the LINZ sites. Or alternatively, it would be beneficial if LINZ could directly access government funding to manage freedom camping.
 - If the Responsible Camping Fund is not renewed, LINZ currently do not have funding for freedom camping at their sites and will need to consider alternatives (such as charging, closing or re-prioritisation of budgets). If LINZ were to close or charge for their sites, this will result in immediate and serious challenges for Council with campers dispersing onto council land.
 - The choice by one agency to close or alter the approach to freedom camping has an immediate impact on all other nearby sites.
 - Education and coordination is required across all communities and stakeholders to drive cultural change
- Other priority issues identified for the Central Otago district and relevant to the discussion document include:
 - Difficulties of enforcement
 - Impact of campers on day visitors (especially around Lake Dunstan and access to boat ramps) and other traditional camper groups
 - Horticultural workers choosing to camp as an accommodation option
 - Environmental impact of human waste and litter
 - Impact of free camping on commercial camp operations.

How much do you support the proposal to make it mandatory for vehicle-based freedom campers to use a certified self-contained vehicle?

2.1

Please write a (Y) next to the option which applies to you

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree Y
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Do you support this proposal?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

2.2

- Do you consider this option will improve camper behaviour?
- Will this option support or improve tourism outcomes in your region?
- Will this option decrease pressure on the environment and local government infrastructure?
- Are there impacts of this proposal that you are concerned about?

- Central Otago District Council does not support option one as it is not likely to improve camper behaviour in the area and may even lead to further challenges.
- Under this proposal it appears it would be legal to camp in a vehicle that is not self-contained if the camper camped beside the vehicle in a tent. In practice, this would lead to enforcement challenges, the waste issue of any cheap camping equipment, and would not resolve any of the existing challenges.
- This may increase the pressure on the environment and on local government infrastructure: the degradation of land and reserves near popular camping locations and solid waste challenges from discarded camping equipment – particularly if cheap camping gear is purchased that is not suitable to the Central Otago environment.
- This proposal does not include any changes to legislation that would give enforcement officers power of entry and as such it could be difficult to enforce.
- Funding enforcement remains a significant challenge for Central Otago District Council. As a large area geographically, with a small population, the cost of funding freedom camping would be a significant burden on our ratepayers. Council would prefer a centralised model that put this cost back onto campers or is funded through the New Zealand tax system.

How might this proposal impact you?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

2.3

- Will this proposal increase or decrease the likelihood of you camping?
- Will this proposal have a direct financial impact on you or your business?
 - If yes, please indicate if this is a personal or business expense, and quantify how much you estimate it would impact you.
- Will this option increase or decrease the attractiveness of visiting other regions in New Zealand?

- This proposal would have significant enforcement difficulties for Central Otago District Council. The proposal does not target behaviour and we immediately foresee significant challenges with tent camping beside vehicles, exacerbating the environmental impact.
- Council is concerned the tent camping loophole could have a financial impact through damage to grassed areas and solid waste from cheap camping equipment.

- This option pushes people toward the heaviest, highest emission vehicles. There is possibly an equity issue also with the higher cost of these vehicles.
- The cost of enforcement would be a significant challenge for Central Otago.

What things should Government consider to implement this option?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- 2.4
- What exceptions should Government allow under this proposal?
 - Do you have any ideas about how this proposal could be implemented?
 - Should this option be considered alongside other options proposed in this discussion document?
- Government should consider a centralised model that ensures the costs associated with freedom camping are spread more evenly. The current model means some small groups of ratepayers face significant cost pressures.

How much do you support the proposal to make it mandatory for freedom campers to stay in vehicles which are certified self-contained, unless they are staying at a site with toilet facilities (excluding public conservation lands and regional parks)?

3.1

Please write a (Y) next to the option which applies to you

Strongly agree	Agree Y	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
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Do you support this proposal?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- Do you consider this option will improve camper behaviour?
- 3.2 • Will this option support or improve tourism outcomes in your region?
- Will this option decrease pressure on the environment and local government infrastructure?
- Are there impacts of this proposal that you are concerned about?

- Council prefers this option to option one (assuming bylaws can be used to identify the areas where campers in non-self contained vehicles can go, and exclude other areas with toilets that are not suitable for these campers). It is largely consistent with our current approach to proactively manage responsible camping through education, infrastructure, and some enforcement.
- Council is, however, concerned at the financial impact of the cost of enforcement.
- Notwithstanding the comment on bylaws above, Council also believe a national enforcement system to replace the use of bylaw provisions would ultimately provide a better experience for campers. Differences between local authorities can be difficult for travellers to understand, let alone know they are in a different area from the previous night with different rules.

How might this proposal impact you?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- Will this proposal increase or decrease the likelihood of you camping?
- 3.3 • Will this proposal have a direct financial impact on you or your business?
 - If yes, please indicate if this is a personal or business expense, and quantify how much you estimate it would impact you.
- Will this option increase or decrease the attractiveness of visiting other regions in New Zealand?

- Funding enforcement remains a significant challenge for Central Otago District Council. As a large area geographically, with a small population, the cost of funding freedom camping is a significant burden on our ratepayers. Council would prefer a centralised funding model.
- Council welcome freedom camping when it is, in fact, responsible camping. Some toileting facilities have been provided and previous education campaigns have had success when combined with enforcement. This is the preferred approach and is consistent with this proposal.

3.4 What things should Government consider to implement this option?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- What do you think is required to achieve this option?
- What exceptions should Government allow under this proposal?
- How far from toilet facilities should a person be able to freedom camp if not in a vehicle with a toilet? eg, 100 metres, 200 metres?
- Should this option be considered alongside other options proposed in this discussion document?

- It is unclear whether this proposal would require councils to provide toilet facilities and clarification on this is required. It is this Council's position that it should not be a requirement. It is also unclear if this proposal would allow for staying outside a private site with toilet facilities. Again, it is this Council's position that it should not. These factors could lead to difficulties for local authorities and would need to be clarified if this option is progressed by government
- The Central Otago rate paying population is small in comparison to the size of the region and its popularity as a freedom camping destination. Funding enforcement under the proposed model would be a significant challenge.

How much do you support the proposals to improve the regulatory tools for government land managers?

4.1

Please write a (Y) next to the option which applies to you

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree Y	Strongly disagree
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Do you support this proposal?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- Are there any specific parts of this proposal you support or propose?
- Do you consider this option will improve camper behaviour?
- Will this option support or improve tourism outcomes in your region?
- Will this option decrease pressure on the environment and local government infrastructure?
- Are there impacts of this proposal that you are concerned about?

Council has significant concerns with this proposal.

Council recommends a national enforcement regime is considered over a reliance on each council to create different bylaws.

As vehicles are transient by nature, they move quickly between territorial authorities. This means repeat offenders are very difficult to identify as they have quickly moved into a different jurisdiction without information sharing mechanisms – and potentially with privacy concerns if they were to be created.

It is also difficult for campers to understand the differing standards when they could drive through several territorial authorities in one day.

The largest and most important concern, however, is the challenge presented by the costs of managing freedom camping. The Central Otago rate paying population is small in comparison to the size of the region and its popularity as a freedom camping destination. Funding enforcement under the proposed model would be a significant challenge.

Council does not support the proposal for territorial authorities to undertake enforcement on crown land. There are significant concerns around the resourcing, funding, and requirements of this proposal.

Council does support measures to increase the rate of payment of infringement fees.

How might this proposal impact you?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- Will this proposal increase or decrease the likelihood of you camping?
- Will this proposal have a direct financial impact on you or your business?
 - If yes, please indicate if this is a personal or business expense, and quantify how much you estimate it would impact you.
- Will this option increase or decrease the attractiveness of visiting other regions in New Zealand?

The sites most often utilised by freedom campers around Lake Dunstan are owned by LINZ, DOC, Waka Kotahi, Council and Contact Energy. There is currently no funding mechanism for the three crown agencies to manage freedom camping. None of the proposals under Proposal 3 open up a mechanism for crown agencies to manage or maintain their own sites, and council is concerned that the proposal pushes further responsibility onto territorial authorities.

Enforcement costs will have a significant negative financial impact due to our large geographic area, popularity as a freedom camping destination, and small rate paying population.

What things should Government consider to implement this option?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

4.4

- What would you like to see in practice?
- Should this option be considered alongside other options proposed in this discussion document?

Without the Responsible Camping Fund, many territorial authorities do not have the ability to fund enforcement. The government should consider centralised measures to fund freedom camping enforcement, moving this cost off ratepayers and onto campers. A national system of funding should be considered, allocating based on areas of need. The current system is unfairly burdens residents in regions popular with camping that have a small ratepaying base, such as Central Otago.

The government should consider ensuring crown agencies can access funding to manage issues on their own land.

Freedom campers are transient by nature, moving quickly between regions governed by various territorial agencies. This proposal includes further penalties for repeat offenders, however there is currently no mechanism for information sharing between organisations in order to identify repeat offenders.

Councils do not have power of entry to enter a vehicle. Any enforcement undertaken would be based on the stickers on a vehicle and reliant on the word of the owner of said vehicle.

What would be an appropriate penalty?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

4.5

- Should non-compliant vehicles be confiscated? If so, under what conditions?
- If vehicles are confiscated, what conditions should be placed on returning the vehicle?
- Should fines be similar to those for not holding a valid Warrant of Fitness for a motor vehicle?
- What levels should fines be set at?
- Who should collect a fine?

Council has concerns around the logistics of confiscated vehicles and the responsibility of territorial authorities to manage this.

A fee of \$1000 for freedom camping appears to be out of step with our infringement rates for other, arguably worse, offences. Council supports an infringement scheme closer to \$200 per offence.

Although understanding the financial hardship currently faced by rental companies due to the challenges associated with Covid 19, this council supports initiatives to strengthen the infringement scheme and pass on infringement notices. Council note a bond system or similar may lessen the burden on these companies.

Do you think that the requirements for self-containment should be strengthened?

5.1 Please write a (Y) next to the option which applies to you

Yes Y

Neutral

No

Is the current standard fit for purpose?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

5.2

- Should there be a requirement that self-contained vehicles have fixed toilets?
- Should there be specific reference to the types of vehicles that can be self-contained?

Council believe there should be a required and certified standard for self-contained vehicles (eg similar to the national vehicle Warrant of Fitness system). These vehicles should have greater freedom of movement, while non self-contained vehicles should be required to park near toilet facilities.

Who should certify to the Standard?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

5.3

- Should any Plumber registered under the Plumbers, Gasfitters and Drainlayers Act 1976 be able to certify to the Standard, or should certifiers be separately recognised and licensed?
- Once a vehicle has passed its initial certification, should other entities be able to re-certify it?

Council is supportive of the standard being certified and supports the industry in determining how these standards would be licensed.

What transition arrangements should be in place?

When answering this question you may like to think about:

- 6.1
- How long should Government give people to upgrade or dispose of their vehicles?
 - Should currently certified self-contained vehicles be exempt from any new rules?
 - Are there any other transition arrangements we should consider?

The government needs to work with territorial authorities to ensure there is resourcing for the required education and infrastructure to increase rates of compliance, rather than relying on territorial authorities to be able to enforce any changes.

How could Government ensure vulnerable groups are not further disadvantaged?

- 6.2
- Could Government make homelessness exempt from any new regulatory system? What might this look like?

Council supports exempting homelessness from any new regulatory system, though notes identifying those as homeless versus other campers is not necessarily straightforward and national guidance would be beneficial.

7.1 Is there anything else on the proposed changes or discussion document you would like to mention?

Council has seen a number of cheap slider vans disposed of and quickly replaced by tourists after encountering issues. We have a concern that these measures focus on the vehicles rather than measures that can impact behaviour: finding and publishing places to camp, education, and providing infrastructure and facilities (including toilets). Although these measures should be partnered with an appropriate enforcement regime, it is vital they are in place first.