

## SUBMISSION ON SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FREEDOM CAMPING IN NEW ZEALAND

TO: The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment

FROM: Forest and Bird Golden Bay

DATE: 8 May 2021

The default position of the Freedom Camping Act 2011 is to allow freedom camping within 200 m of a motor vehicle accessible area or the mean low-water springs line of any sea or harbour. This has led to pollution of our rivers, streams, estuaries and coastline. It is inherently faulty because it allows people to camp in environmentally sensitive areas.

While MBIE proclaim the financial benefits of freedom camping, consideration of the environmental costs need to be taken into consideration.

Forest and Bird Golden Bay object to any freedom camping site being designated adjacent to our rivers, streams or the marine environment. We support the Freedom Camping Act being changed to allow freedom camping only at designated freedom camping sites.

The Freedom Camping Act does not list as an offence people washing themselves in our rivers and streams, washing their clothes and dishes in our rivers and streams, washing their dishes and underwear in the basins of our public amenities or cleaning their teeth and spitting their toothpaste out into the natural environment - bushes at freedom camping sites are often white from this activity.

Nor does the Freedom Camping Act cover the impact of these people outside of freedom camping sites. They plunder our shellfish beds, they invade private property, they light fires on our beaches when they are prohibited, they light their gas stoves next to long dry grass. It is only through the vigilance of residents that we have not had a major fire in Golden Bay. The recent Tasman fires had a price tag of \$M12.

All of these activities are undertaken by owners of cheap vans with sliding doors NOT rental vans. It should be a requirement for international visitors who wish to purchase a vehicle in New Zealand to either obtain a New Zealand driver's license or for the government to ban internationals from purchasing vehicles. This would be a financial boost to vehicle rental businesses, commercial buses, shuttles and companies offering tours, rather than a cost to our environment.

While MBIE staff have proposed heavier fines for offences this would have no effect in Golden Bay. Enforcement in remote areas is impossible. Unless MBIE were to fund a full time enforcement office for Golden Bay the trashing of our environment would continue. One example I can make is the freedom camping site at Taupata which is adjacent to a scientific study site for shorebirds. Taupata is important regionally, nationally and internationally for collection of scientific data. This site is around a forty minute drive from Takaka and a two and a half hour drive from Richmond. When you have a child throwing stones at shorebirds that are threatened and at risk or campers playing frisbee or kicking a

soccer ball around at this shorebird roosting (resting) site it would not matter what the fine was because no one could action it. This is not to say that we do not support heavier fines but MBIE staff have to realise that what works in populated areas will not work here.

The myth of self-contained certified – unless you have holding tanks for greywater, fresh water and sewage, a kitchen sink, hand basin, shower and a plumbed toilet then you are not self-contained and should be camping in a camping ground. Freedom camping in vans that do not have these facilities must be confined to history i.e. this style of camping must be historical. Due to the large numbers of vehicles it is no longer sustainable. Our Golden Bay Community Board opposes non self-contained vehicles at freedom camping sites and asks that they go to our commercial camping grounds of which we have six. Golden Bay also has six backpacker hostels providing budget accommodation. The impact of freedom camping on these local businesses has been huge.

Tasman had more freedom campers last summer than any other district in New Zealand and it provided more sites per head of population than any other. We were over run by freedom campers and the greatest per centage of them came here in vehicles they had purchased.

The Freedom Camping Ambassador programme was of no benefit to Golden Bay. It was simply talking to freedom campers and providing them with visitor information. They were not present when much of the damage being done to our rivers, streams, estuaries and coastline was taking place. A full time freedom camping ambassador in Golden Bay could possibly make a difference.

We support Proposal 1 – making it mandatory for freedom camping to be done in a vehicle that is certified self-contained.

We support a new regulatory agency being created to provide national oversight of legislated requirement for self-contained vehicles along with creating a national database of certified self-contained vehicles.

We support Proposal 4 with some additions - the strengthening of requirements for self-contained vehicles. A permanently plumbed toilet, hand basin, kitchen sink and shower. Tanks for receiving black water, grey water and holding fresh water.

We do not support a transition period for upgrading or disposing of vehicles beyond 12 months.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit.

