

16 May 2021

## Submission on the Review of Responsible Camping

Mad Campers is a Kiwi owned and operated campervan rental business with depots in Auckland and Christchurch. We run a fleet of fully certified self contained campers and our demographic is typically the high value 22-40 year old traveller. Pre covid our average traveller booked for 20 days at a value of \$5-8k. These travellers would then spend thousands of dollars supporting local businesses as they explored and enjoyed the country.

We are actively involved in the industry per below:

- Member of TIA's Responsible Camping Forum
- Director Andy Haslett is a council member for the Rental Vehicle Association
- Finalist in TIA's 2019 Tourism awards for Best Visitor Experience
- Actively involved in sustainability initiatives:
  - Partnership with Trees that Count, enabling our travellers to donate trees when they travel with us.
  - Attend numerous tree planting days each year to support the regeneration of our native flora.

Mad Campers appreciates the opportunity to engage with and support MBIE in its ambition to improve the Responsible Camping industry in New Zealand. We absolutely support the intentions of the proposals and are committed to working collectively with private and public stakeholders to further improve the industry and reduce its impact on all parts of the environment as we ready ourselves for the return of (post covid) tourism.

Freedom camping is a complex issue. It is an industry that is given public consideration by the actions of the few while the many behave in a more than acceptable manner. There is no doubt more can be done by both government and the tourism business sector to improve the standard of the industry, such as better education, improvement of facilities, and more rigid enforcement.

1. It is our opinion that the single biggest action the government could take would be to support and implement parts of proposal 3 and establish a nationwide regulatory system governed by one agency (such as Waka Kotahi NZTA). This would ensure that all certified vehicles are standardised and would enable a nationwide register - allowing front line rangers / officers to quickly identify a non-certified vehicle. The resulting infringements would very quickly filter out any vehicles that don't achieve standards and rapidly improve the national fleet.
  - a. The improvement in standards to the national fleet would automatically improve the standard / quality of travellers by significantly reducing the amount of entry level vehicles and pricing from the market.

2. We feel there needs to be a way to separate the private sector from the commercial sector. These proposed changes are impacting the entire industry when the reality is the majority of problems and negative public perception comes from the private sector (privately traded and certified vehicles, often older and catering to the low quality traveller).
  - a. The vast majority of rental operators provide functional vehicles to engaged, high value travellers and also take the time to educate and guide them on the best way to explore NZ responsibly.
  - b. These operators deliver huge value to the economy and are one of the biggest drivers of regional dispersal in the country.
3. Reports show that most international visitors who are responsible campers do not exclusively freedom camp but also stay in a variety of commercial and campground accommodation during their trip. These visitors frequent our local communities, they stay for long periods, spend more time in the regions, spread their stay into the shoulder and off seasons, and engage with rural NZ and its communities. These travelers support cafes, bars, tourism operators, purchase petrol etc the length and breadth of NZ. These are types of high valued tourists that the Minister of Tourism is seeking to attract more of in the future.
4. Successful initiatives put forward by Government such as the Tourism Infrastructure Fund must remain. This fund has invested \$60M into developing better roadside amenities such as toilets, showers, car parks and bus shelters. The responsible camping fund has invested \$25m into education, enforcement, and technology schemes like the ambassador app. But more funding is required.
5. We strongly oppose a system where the liability of fines or infringements would ultimately rest with the rental companies, this is unfair and presents as a difficult precedent once set.
  - a. Where fines are issued to the operator, these come by mail long after the hire is completed and the customer has potentially left the country, making it incredibly difficult to recoup these debts.
  - b. A nationwide register would enable digital issuance of infringements and vastly improve the ability of the operator to assist with retrieval of fines.
6. Limiting the types of vehicles which can be self-contained per proposal four will stifle innovation in the industry and should not be required if the certification process is regulated as per Proposal Three.
  - a. We feel the market is best placed to make judgments on the appropriateness of which vehicles should have self-contained facilities.

I am available at any stage to discuss the above - Mad Campers is very passionate about the industry and welcome the opportunity to be a part of positive change as we look to protect our incredible country for generations to come.

Best Regards,

Andy Haslett

Privacy of natural persons

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