

Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand – Submission

Prepared by Amy Simpkin on behalf of Northland Inc

Amy Simpkin

Destination Management Plan Portfolio Support

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Your details

What is the name of the person making this submission?	
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If you are submitting on behalf of an organisation, what is the name of that organisation?	
Northland Inc	
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?	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes, you can publish my organisation's details with information from my submission.	
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Please provide us with your email address in case we need to contact you about your submission.	
Email	Amy.simpkin@northlandnz.com
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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other Regional Tourism Organisation _____ (please specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> N/A	

After consultation with local stakeholders and Councils within Northland that are impacted by Freedom Camping, and as the Regional Tourism Organisation and economic development agency, Northland Inc have the following comments to contribute on the proposals provided.

Proposal One: Make it mandatory for freedom camping in a vehicle to be done in a certified self-contained vehicle.

Northland Inc support this proposal.

The natural inclination of many freedom campers would be to seek out free camping spots, which in itself is in the spirit of the activity and feedback suggests many New Zealanders want to be able to engage with the activity in a responsible way.

While there will be a cost impact on current non-self-contained vehicle owners to meet the minimum self-contained requirements of the proposal, this is a necessary step to meet environmental and sustainability standards in all of Aotearoa. The definition of, and specifications for, a 'self-contained vehicle' would need to be very clear.

We understand this proposal will not affect people who freedom camp in tents, or where people are already excluded under the Freedom Camping Act. However, our view is the current exceptions should remain, and there should be more clarity around temporary or short-term parking, day trip excursions, and resting or sleeping at the roadside in a caravan or motor vehicle.

Proposal Two: Make it mandatory for freedom campers to stay in a vehicle that is certified self-contained, unless they are staying at a site with toilet facilities.

Northland Inc support this proposal as it will direct non-self-contained vehicles to designated sites, such as commercial holiday parks, DoC campsites and camping grounds.

We would support Proposal 2, only on the proviso that local councils or appropriate entity are willing and able to provide and maintain the appropriate facilities to accommodate self-contained vehicles at designated sites.

It is noted that this is the last round of the Tourism Infrastructure Fund. We would be concerned that the loss of this funding source, without any other resource being available to continue providing adequate toilets and waste disposal facilities, and not having continuing funding for maintenance, will create its own set of problems. This may erode community support if local ratepayer funding is allocated to mitigate these issues.

This proposal will encourage better behaviours, and with a national framework it should be easier for visitors to understand the regulations pertaining to where they can or cannot camp. This should reduce the incidences of waste, anti-social behaviour and other activities that communities see as undesirable.

Proposal Three: Improve the regulatory tools for government land managers.

Northland Inc support this proposal to improve the regulatory tools for government land managers.

The current infringement penalty is not enough of a deterrent for those breaking rules and a higher fine could mean that those not abiding by the laws would take this more seriously. However, confiscation or clamping of vehicles should be a last resort.

There is a lack of clarity as to which entity is the recipient of the fines collected, and Northland Inc would have some concern if these end up in a centralised fund not specifically tagged for re-investment at place to benefit the regions actively managing freedom camping.

Local government, as the on-ground enforcement agency, will bear the brunt of proposal 3, and therefore should be recompensed for their endeavours to account for the cost of enforcement and manpower required.

Proposal Four: Strengthen the requirements for self-contained vehicles.

Northland Inc support strengthening the requirements for self-contained vehicles, and again see the opportunity to enforce these through the Warrant of Fitness process. This must be compulsory.

A national entity will need to take responsibility for this and compile a national register of certified self-contained vehicles.

In regard to the type of toilets, we believe that the requirement for a plumbed toilet is not necessary as there are some excellent composting/portable toilets currently available in market. Northland Inc would recommend the use of this portable toilet also be contained within the vehicle and disposal of waste be regulated.