



Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment
PO Box 1473
Wellington 6140
Attention: Responsible Camping Submissions

15/05/2021

SUPPORTING SUSTAINABLE FREEDOM CAMPING IN AOTEAROA

We welcome this opportunity to make comment on the above discussion document. Our comments mainly relate to the Freedom Camping area in Warrington Domain north of Dunedin, which is owned and administered by Dunedin City Council. We believe that this area is one of the largest, and most successful, areas that permit non-self-contained vehicles to stay for up to two nights.

Background

In 2015 Dunedin City Council had made a decision to ban all freedom campers from Otago Peninsula, due to the lack of available spaces for the increasing large numbers of vehicles and complaints from some residents. Visitors were directed to two areas: Ocean View, south of Dunedin City which had space for around twenty small vehicles and the much larger Warrington Domain which is in our Community board area.

In the summer of 2015 - 16 we started to receive complaints from local residents about rubbish strewn around the place and human excrement in various places - somewhat crudely referred to as 'pooing in the bushes'.

We examined the situation and found that the facilities at the site were inadequate for the numbers of vehicles which were starting to arrive.

The Remedy

We worked closely with Dunedin City Council Parks & Recreation Department and, over the following two seasons, the main toilet block was upgraded; washing facilities were improved; multi-lingual signage was installed; rubbish disposal facilities were increased; four Portaloos were placed around the ground during the summer season; cleaning and maintenance of the facilities were adjusted as required and regular patrols of the area were carried out by council contractors.

The visitor numbers continued to grow and we often had in excess of 100 vehicles a night staying at Warrington. Problems were minimal and, in discussion with campers from various parts of the world, it became clear that Warrington was regarded as one of the best, if not **the best** freedom camping area in New Zealand. The highest number of vehicles staying overnight peaked at 174, on a weekend when Ed Sheeran performed in three sold-out concerts in Dunedin. The vehicles were both self-contained and non-self-contained and there were no problems.

Who are the Freedom Campers?

They are You; they are Me; they are young; they are old; they are Kiwis; they are overseas travellers from all over the world; all enjoying a holiday in our amazing country. They contribute to the Dunedin economy. It has been demonstrated that Freedom Campers inject more into the economy than cruise ship passengers do. Many of the younger travellers also find work fruit picking in the Central Otago orchards - filling a vital gap in the labour force in that industry. The

only negative comments I have received from the campers is that they are confused by the differing regulations in various parts of our country.

What now?

We have proved at Warrington that, by increasing toilet and rubbish collection facilities and installing appropriate signage, the previous concerns about freedom campers can be resolved.

We were disappointed at comments from Central Government about wanting to attract 'high value' tourists (and campers). We believe that this displays a lack of knowledge about what has been actually happening, and can happen, around the country.

Your Proposals

We do not support Proposal 1 and Proposal 4.

Your Proposal 2 is pretty much what has been happening at Warrington with both self-contained and non-self-contained vehicles being welcome into camping grounds with proper facilities and so we can support this.

At Community Board level, we are neutral about your Proposal 3.

Conclusion

There are various 'Apps' that are used by freedom campers to find their way around the country. Comments on them are often quite interesting. This below was posted on the 'CamperMate' site on 5th December 2019. It highlights what we have said above.

Thank you DCC, what a great camp!

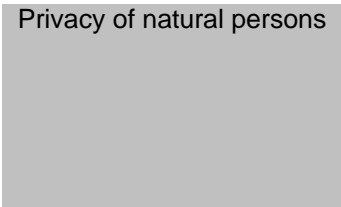
You have understood the needs of freedom campers and the provision of toilets, a dump site, water and plenty of rubbish bins is greatly appreciated and therefore used responsibly.

We are from Dunedin and are happy to see our rates being used to keep Dunedin beautiful by recognizing that people will free camp and, if you provide for them, they will respect the place.

I have gained great insight into the Freedom Camping issue over the past 5 years and I would be keen to discuss the topic with your staff should the opportunity arise.

Kind Regards

Privacy of natural persons



Alasdair Morrison
Chairman
Waikouaiti Coast Community Board
Email: info@calmarine.co.nz
Ph: 0274 354 384