

Submission Document



Date: 16 May, 2021

Subject: **Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand**
Public Discussion Document April 2021

From: **All Points Camping Club of New Zealand Incorporated**

To: **Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment**

Cc: Minister for Tourism, Hon. Stuart Nash

Forward

This submission is furnished by the **All Points Camping Club of New Zealand (Inc)** in response to the Hon. Stuart Nash's proposals titled "**Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand, April 2021**"

The following terms and abbreviations will be used in this submission

APCNZ	All Points Camping Club of NZ
SSFC	Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand document
MBIE	Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment
Minister	Minister of Tourism Hon. Stuart Nash
NZMCA	New Zealand Motor Caravan Association
DIA	Department of Internal Affairs

The **All Points Camping Club of New Zealand** is a national camping support organisation established in December 2015 to support all campers in NZ due to an imbalance in the representation of NZ campers with only campers in 'premium' (MBIE definition) campervans and caravans having effective national representation.

In May 2017 when the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association (as Issuing Authority for Certified Self Containment) unilaterally advised that it would no longer complete and issue self containment documentation for non members of it's organisation APCNZ stepped up to take on this support role NZ wide. The activity of Self Containment Issuing Authority was transferred to NZ Lifestyle Camping Ltd in April 2018 due to the administrative and business nature of the task.

"The objects of the society shall be the promotion of the interests of the Members and other individuals and families in relation to camping in New Zealand; - providing the best outcomes for all involved parties, - liaising with other organisations, agencies and authorities that have a role in managing and directing the future of camping in New Zealand, - encouraging safe, sustainable and enjoyable camping." (All Points Camping Club Constitution)

APCNZ recognises and asserts that the Minister publicly stated his intentions, as Minister for Tourism for this proposal on 18 November 2018 and that the Minister's comments indicate that the Minister's primary focus is on image and high end tourism and a wish to get small campervans off NZ roads. The intended increased regulation on a 'class' of camper defined by MBIE as 'budget' as opposed to 'premium' (MBIE definition) reinforces the discriminatory, 'classist' approach taken in these proposals.

APCNZ further asserts that the approach taken by the Minister and MBIE in this matter has caused unnecessary stress and anxiety to many thousands of New Zealand campers and that the Minister has failed to consider the mental health implications of his predetermined actions.

Camping is defined as a recreational activity and falls under the responsibility and control of the Minister for Recreation and sport and related portfolios.

Government changes to Freedom Camping in NZ must be driven from a domestic, recreation perspective and not from a profit driven tourism perspective.

History

On November 18 2020 the newly appointed Minister for Tourism in his Ministerial role stated *"We get all these vans driving round at the moment that are not self-contained, so if the driver or the passenger wants to go to the toilet - we all know examples of this - they pull over to the side of the road and they shit in our waterways."*

The Minister followed this up by stating *"Do you think that we want to become a destination for those freedom campers and backpackers who don't spend much and leave the high net worth individuals to other countries?"*

Comment: To date the Minister has been unable to supply any evidence to support these assertions despite being requested under the official information Act. In contrast to his predecessor Hon Kelvin Davis and recommendations from the DIA Situational analysis report Minister Nash has used a propaganda technique in an attempt to sway public opinion against a class of freedom campers deemed as not having a 'high net worth'

This has set the foundation for the Minister's proposals which are predominantly a narrative based on selected research, innuendo and media reporting that supports his objectives rather than balanced, factual and substantiated evidence.

The Minister's Government Working Group on Freedom Camping established 'by the Minister' comprised representation from selected Local Authorities, tourism industry businesses and the NZ Motor Caravan Association (primarily 'premium' campers) but **included no representation from the public** 'budget campers' who are primarily targeted and affected by these proposals. This identifies an immediate bias in the Minister's intention and subsequent proposals which have been formulated from a tourism industry basis.

The minister's heavy handed regulatory approach ignores the fact that camping (including in small vehicles) is a defined recreational activity and comprises people from across all socio economic groupings, ages and lifestyles with significant social, and health benefits.

The Prime Minister's Office guidelines require that the affected public is consulted and engaged with at the earliest possible opportunity in any policy development however in this case the public has been excluded, up to this point. ***The reasoning behind this and the Minister's intention is the subject of an 'urgent' Official Information Request which at the time of this submission has not been answered.***

Conversely to the recommendations of the Prime Minister's office the Minister's proposals and public meetings have been rushed through in a tight timeframe with meetings only held in selected 'high tourism' locations despite the intention to create national regulation which will affect all New Zealand's campers, now and into the future. This is effectively consulting a small minority to implement significant national change.

Since the Minister's four proposals, under the consultation document Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand, were publically launched in April there has been a public backlash, often contemptuous from the 'budget' camping population in NZ directed at the Minister. Division has been created between those who idealistically believe that all campers should travel in 'premium' vehicles against those who argue for the equal rights (non discriminatory) for all responsible campers to be able to freedom camp no matter their financial status or the 'size and style' of their equipment.

As more and more New Zealanders become aware of the impact of the Minister's restrictive proposals, should they go ahead, they are becoming more vocal.

"These changes will sweep up everybody and it appears the minister is only interested in the wealthy and doesn't seem to either realise or care about the average New Zealander with limited means," Cr O'Malley said.

The Dunedin City Council advocates being welcoming to campers and takes an educative approach to encourage the conduct it wants. The council has achieved a 31% decrease in Camping Control Bylaw infringements and a 20% decrease in complaints related to freedom camping.

"I feel like all our hard work and the good outcomes we've achieved have been reversed by a minister who has proven throughout his career, in my opinion, to be a friend of the privileged and the powerful," Cr O'Malley said. (Source: Otago Daily Times)

The alienation that has been caused by the manner in which these proposals have been formulated and launched without due engagement with those campers most affected is both unnecessary and unwarranted.

NZ's small vehicle Freedom Campers comprise Families, Retirees, Sporting enthusiasts, holiday makers, homeless, tourists and visitors with working visas (often engaged in NZ's seasonal demand horticulture industry)

Camping is defined as a recreational activity and falls under the responsibility and control of the Minister for Recreation and sport and related portfolios.

**The Government Ministries responsible for Freedom Camping in New Zealand are the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Ministry of Conservation.
The Ministry for Tourism has no identifiable responsibility for Freedom camping in NZ**

The Perceived Problem as stated in the consultation document

"In recent years the increasing number of freedom campers has raised concern from some communities around freedom campers' cumulative impact on the environment, and the cost to host them. In particular, this concern has focused on the subset of freedom campers who stay in cars, or vans with sleeping platforms, that are not self-contained. This is impacting communities' attitudes towards visitors and their willingness to host them – and impacting on the social licence for tourism." (source: SSFC p 5)

Parameters of Consultation on 4 Proposals only

MBIE in the SSFC discussion document advise that they are not seeking feedback on the Government's broader approach to supporting responsible camping including reforms to the Freedom Camping Act and the Camping Ground Regulations and states definitively under the scope of discussion **p6, SSFC**

"The Government is interested to hear your views on how it can support vehicle based responsible camping in New Zealand - for both New Zealanders and International Tourists" and emphasises the consultation is only of 4 proposals "A package based on some or all of these proposals is likely to be most effective in reducing the impacts of freedom camping on communities and the natural environment" **P6 SSFC**

The All Points Camping Club of NZ strongly objects to the narrow parameters of this discussion document / review and considers that the only way to effectively develop a sustainable camping industry, including freedom camping is to review the industry as a whole. Every part of the industry is interrelated and creating national regulation based on one small part may have considerable consequences for the industry as a whole.

Submission Focus:

- 1) This submission will not focus on the Minister's (Hon Stuart Nash) rhetoric or false or misleading statements (propaganda) used to promote his proposals or intentions, as previously detailed, but focus on the perceived issues, research and referenced materials relating to freedom camping issues while looking at the causes of the perceived issues.
- 2) This submission will list and identify affected parties under these proposals and make projections on the the consequences of the proposals should they proceed
- 3) This submission will recommend possible solutions or pathways to improving the future sustainability of recreational and responsible camping in NZ as opposed to the narrow 'self containment' focus of the Minister's proposal.
- 4) This submission will show that applying a 'one fit approach' to freedom camping in New Zealand, as suggested in this proposal, will cause more harm and degrade the experience of camping in NZ for current and future generations of New Zealanders without rectifying the problems.

Supporting Material for this submission

Department of Internal Affairs- Situational Analysis on Freedom Camping - November 2016

In November 2016 the Department of Internal Affairs published a [Situational Analysis on Freedom Camping](#). This extensively researched document is a valuable resource when considering perceived Freedom Camping issues but appears to have been ignored in the representation of the minister's proposals, which run contrary to the findings of the DIA report.

The DIA report states:

"There is an increasingly pervasive perception that freedom campers are responsible for litter, human waste and anti-social behaviour. This is demonstrated in media reporting on freedom camping and submissions to council bylaw making processes. There is little evidence to support this proposition."

Further : "A lack of community support has contributed to the reduction of freedom camping available areas in some regions. However the perceived harms are not necessarily as a result of freedom campers as there is insufficient information available to be able to determine if harms are as a result of freedom campers, day trippers or indeed locals. Improving information collected on freedom camper profiles and freedom camping as an activity will assist in targeting messages to improve behaviour and thus compliance."

The DIA Situational Analysis goes further in considering what the evidence says as follows:

Under Littering and Waste

"The problem of littering in certain remote locations is not new: "We already have a big job to clear up the rubbish including human and dog faeces, dirty nappies and household waste." It is hard to discern what litter is left by campers and what is left by day trippers or locals. The question is how to gather clear evidence of harm when there is no clear indication who is responsible – there may be more litter, but how do we know who is littering?"

Under Enforcement

"Increasingly, councils are working with social media providers, commercial camping grounds and campervan hire companies to promote a message of voluntary compliance. If a region does not provide sufficient capacity to appropriately host freedom campers for a range of freedom camper types, this strategy is unlikely to be effective. Freedom campers must be given a reasonable opportunity to comply with regulations and to enjoy their activity."

Under Reputation

"There is a risk that international visitors could be put-off as a result of increased restrictions of freedom camping and negative public attitudes. Reputational damage could result in commercial losses to tourism providers, impacting particularly upon holiday parks and campsites where most campers stay for most of the time."

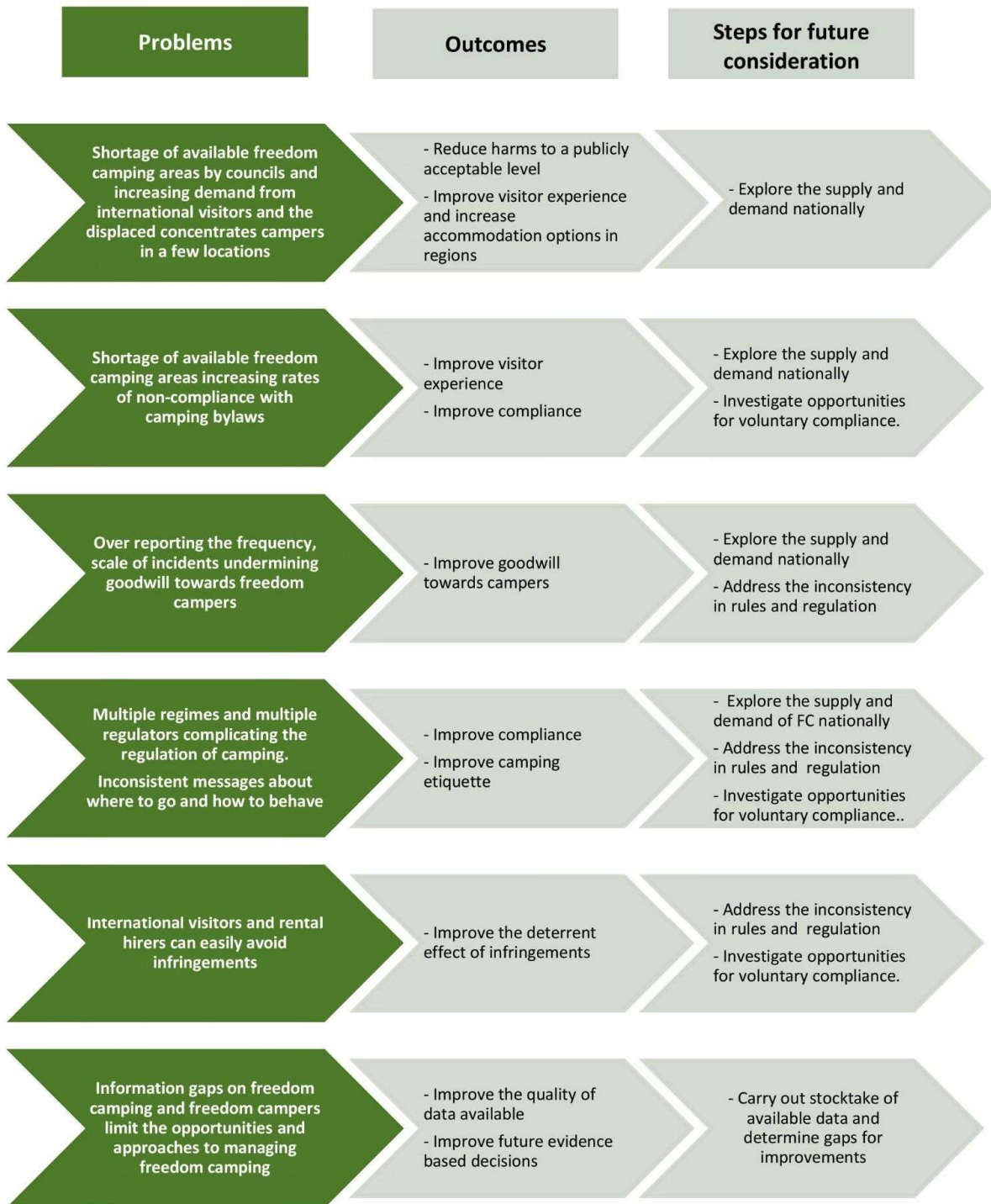
Under bad for Business

"Feedback ... suggests non-commercial camping is a complementary accommodation option for a majority of visitors using campervans and motorhomes. However, there is a tension between commercial camping facilities and the establishment of freedom camping areas."

The Department of Internal affairs also found that : *"The freedom camping regime appears to be based upon a presumption that there is deliberate offending. The likelihood is that visitors are unaware of the extent to which their choices are restricted. They have been marketed a product in their visit to New Zealand – independent travel – that is not always available 'on the ground' where they want to stay. This is indicated by the response from campers who receive infringement tickets. **Further research could be undertaken to understand the reasons why campers infringe.**"*

"The freedom camping regime (bylaws and enforcement) does not address the underlying needs and effects from the increasing number of local people and seasonal workers who live temporarily or permanently in motor vehicles"

Figure 1: Summary of problems, outcomes sought and next steps



Source: Managing Freedom Camping in Public Places National situational analysis

[https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Freedom-Camping/\\$file/Freedom-Camping-Situational-Analysis.pdf](https://www.dia.govt.nz/diawebsite.nsf/Files/Freedom-Camping/$file/Freedom-Camping-Situational-Analysis.pdf)

Statement of Position - Argument

- 1) The All Points Camping Club of New Zealand considers the Ministers Supporting Sustainable Freedom Camping in Aotearoa New Zealand Proposal fundamentally flawed. **APCNZ finds no content in the Minister's proposal that 'supports' sustainable Freedom Camping in NZ.** The Minister's proposal instead seeks to control by increased regulation restrictions on the movement and lifestyle of NZ and international travellers to correct a perceived image issue.
- 2) The Minister's proposal ignores the 'evidence' as advised by the Department of Internal Affairs and instead makes unfair assumptions, without evidence, that Freedom campers in NZ create a greater problem for communities and the environment than other recreational users, travellers and day visitors.
- 3) APCNZ asserts that the proposals put forward and the Minister's public comments will (if not already) damage the reputation of Freedom Campers in NZ while putting in place no solutions that will reduce the 'perceived' problems moving forward.
- 4) APCNZ asserts that the Minister's proposals further extend a growing, divisive 'class' of camper' culture between 'premium' and 'budget' campers MBIE wording and discriminate against NZ travelling campers who may choose to camp in a vehicle that is unable to meet the requirements of the NZ Standard for certified self containment.
Note: The minister's proposals have immediately caused stress and anger amongst the so called 'budget' campers that have been targeted in these proposals.
- 5) APCNZ asserts that to have an effective, sustainable national camping industry, including Freedom Camping, in NZ which benefits residents, tourists, local communities, accommodation providers and businesses, all facets of the industry must be reviewed and all affected parties engaged in the development process.
- 6) APCNZ strongly objects to the intention to increase regulation on other publicly owned land e.g. Waka Kotahi as stated in the consultation document but not publicised in the same way as Proposals 1 to 4 which raises significant national concerns.
- 7) Applying a National fix to perceived regional problems by regulating freedom camping, on NZ coastlines and council controlled land undermines the power of local authorities to effectively manage freedom camping in their authority area while restricting the recreational use of public spaces for the NZ camping public including outdoor activity and educational groups.

Freedom campers Stay longer / spend more - Spreading the wealth

The consultation document has been driven predominantly from a 'High Value' tourism focus. Various research documents over the past few years, including MBIE's own research has identified that freedom campers generally stay longer and spend more than other tourists. The economic power of this group in contributing to the prosperity of NZ businesses and regions far exceeds the costs of any supplied infrastructure and responsible management. This goes against the Minister's own statements and shows an attempt to publicly devalue and discredit the freedom camping group of tourists.

An often made comment is that all campers should stay in campgrounds and some local authorities has expressly restricted freedom camping to support these businesses. However, the spending power of freedom camping tourists, domestic and international, is widely spread across all NZ economic sectors and businesses not just tourism and accommodation related businesses. This wide spread of the tourist spending power is a significant contributor to the viability of NZ's small businesses.

Progression of tenting to small vehicle camping - discrimination by government?

New Zealand has a long and traditional history of camping, ranging from temporary accommodation, family holidays and travelling both domestic and international to explore our wonderful country.

Caravanning grew considerably in popularity in the period of the 1950's through to the 1970's with thousands of families packing up at weekends and hitting beaches, reserves and campgrounds throughout NZ. The Caravan Club community comprised clubs throughout NZ, some with more than 100 family unit members. The recreational activity of camping was seen as a way to get away and relax, be reinvigorated and explore the country. Camping has traditionally built social cohesion, breaking down class barriers and providing significant health benefits as well as an appreciation of nature.

Whether camping by tent or vehicle, camping has traditionally followed the 'Leave no Trace' mantra (pack in, pack out and leave only footprints) and this continues to be the operating base for most of NZ's camping clubs.

In the 1970's the NZ Government decimated the NZ Leisure camping and caravan Industry by applying a high sales tax rate to the sale of caravans. This created a significant affordability issue for families and caused many NZ manufacturers to go out of business. Camping grounds began to lose revenue and started to close around the country. Caravanning and camping around NZ became far more expensive and many lower income families lost that opportunity. Today there are thousands of NZ families where the children have never been camping and cannot afford to so.

The damage to NZ's leisure camping industry by an ill thought out decision in the 1970's caused irreparable damage to the industry and recreational activities of New Zealanders. It is important that this type of overzealous mistake by a Government Minister is not allowed to happen again.

Younger campers and many families have traditionally started their camping experiences in tents. Whether in small pup tents or larger family tents it does not matter. There is no public shame, or media targeting, in having a small tent and campers are not expected to have a portable toilet, although these are beneficial.

Some campers prefer to do vehicle based camping. With NZ's unpredictable weather this can provide a safe warm alternative to camping in a tent. Whether in a large or small vehicle, the added benefits of weather protection, insulation and locking security has become popular. Often larger than a small tent, small vehicle campers users have access to power and communication and can move easily for safety and further exploration. (International research has shown that all types of campers are more prepared and better able to cope, with resilience, in an environmental emergency than non campers.)

Expectations have grown that vehicle users will have an on board toilet and small vehicle users have in recent years been unjustly, and without factual evidence (- refer DIA Situational Analysis) targeted by the NZMCA, NZ politicians and the NZ media.

The advent of a self containment standard by NZMCA in 1990 went some way towards addressing the health concerns and waste management in respect of people living and travelling in campervans and caravans and the volume of waste that could be discharged and the risks of this. As the standard developed into a voluntary national standard, minor tweaks were made and waste dumping stations were slowly established around NZ.

At the same time misreporting and attacks on freedom campers continued to grow, fed in part by NZMCA lobbying through media and Local Government NZ. A myth being created that only campers in self contained vehicles are responsible has been promoted through the media over the past decade. Stories were created and published to promote this myth. iiThis has created an environment whereby those campers with the financial means to operate a larger self contained vehicle are seen as responsible whereas those with smaller or non self contained vehicles are not. There is however no factual evidence that identifies any one group as being more responsible or less harmful to the environment than any other.

Small vehicle camping, historically in cars and station wagons with sleeping room, awnings or rooftop tents has evolved to MPV's and minivans which are designed for sleeping and in many cases can be comfortably modified to incorporate a sink and waste facilities including a portable toilet. These lifestyle vehicles are generally used for sleeping and cooking while the occupants participate in activities throughout the day. In NZ there is a growing trend for families and retirees to set up a well equipped small van for weekend camping to travel and explore the country or to assist with other activities such as tramping or cycling.

The advent of the MPV has significantly increased the opportunities for lower income, budget conscious, New Zealanders and overseas visitors (including workers) to explore our travel. Thus allowing access to affordable camping in NZ that would otherwise be the the realm of those more financially secure. This includes people who are transitioning through housing or are homeless and the thousands of seasonal workers who are employed in select NZ regions without adequate accommodation provided.



Note: The Minister's discriminatory proposals are primarily targeted at small vehicle campers, and are accusatory in nature without any factual basis and supporting evidence. An emphasis, in recent published reports, has been placed on the anecdotal issue that many small vehicle campers prefer not to use the toilets in their vehicles but this happens across all levels as it is preferable to use public and commercial toilets and fails to address the day trippers and travellers who do not have a toilet to use. No consideration has been given to the fact that individuals do not use toilets 24 hours a day or that they take part in activities, shopping etc throughout the day where facilities are provided.

Who are the small vehicle campers in NZ? The high demand for seasonal workers in New Zealand's horticultural and tourism regions has annually created a peak in Freedom Camping numbers toward the end of the Summer Season. Wooed to NZ by Tourism's '100% pure' marketing to explore the beauties of our country while working in low paid tourism related businesses and orchards and farms across the regions has resulted in thousands of low paid international, 'working tourists' who require a way to travel and somewhere to sleep. A shortage of affordable, seasonal, rental accommodation or host supplied accommodation leaves many of these young workers, often on their first big OE struggling financially, while also wanting to explore the country outside of working. Thousands of MPV's and small vans are sold or converted into habitable units every year to accommodate these workers and enable them to travel and explore the country.

Research shows that freedom campers from overseas stay longer and spend more than other tourists and many of these support NZ's summer industries. Moving from place to place between or after jobs, or taking a well earned break for a few days, these workers congregate at some of NZ's most picturesque locations, relaxing and socialising with their peers. A society or community of workers, sleeping in their well equipped vans or campervans, some with toilets. These people are a valuable part of NZ's population and economy yet have been ostracised and demonised by some politicians and communities.

Camping is a highly popular recreational activity going hand in hand with other recreational pursuits, retirement and holiday travel, and as low cost temporary accommodation. From tents to small mobile homes on wheels the nature of travelling accommodations has changed. Regions throughout NZ benefit enormously from the money that is spent by low budget, travelling tourists. Some regions receive a much greater share of the revenue than others, plus receive large government funding. Yet these regions which rely on the overseas workers and pocket the profits and government money often refuse to adequately accommodate their visitors and provide the necessary infrastructure to support them.

Successfully supporting sustainable freedom camping in NZ and in particular the increasing number of vehicle campers in NZ, whether tourist or worker, requires a concerted tourism and recreation industry wide approach involving all parties. Targeting and restricting the travels of small vehicle campers while not providing the infrastructure to manage this economic bounty is both foolhardy and discriminatory.

The NZ Tourism Industry, horticultural growers and the NZ government must take some responsibility to ensure that sufficient infrastructure, like toilets and showers, is installed to support travelling campers and create a sustainable leisure camping industry. Workers will continue to be needed and will become tourists. Vehicle camping will continue as a way to both travel and accommodate. Profits will continue to be made.

The opinions of attendees at the recent Tourism Industry Summit attended by the Minister Summed it up as "Too many tourists was not necessarily the problem, but asking thousands of visitors to queue for a handful of toilets was always going to lead to trouble". Source Tourism Ticker

At the 2021 TRENZ conference in May 2021 Chief executive of Tourism Industry Aotearoa Chris Roberts summed it up: "Many of the problems we had before the pandemic were not actually about having too many visitors, we just didn't have the right infrastructure in place to manage them when they did come." Source Tourism Ticker

Education

The education of campers and the general public is critical to the generation and retention of the **"social License"** and perception of all campers in the community. Camper education for local and international tourists on the correct use of onboard facilities along with what is and is not expectable or allowable behaviour along with appropriate signage at camping sites to re-enforce this education would greatly reduce infringements.

APCNZ response to the 4 Proposals

Proposal 1: Make it mandatory for freedom camping in a vehicle to be done in a certified self-contained vehicle

Under this proposal a NZ wide law / regulation will require that only vehicle campers in certified self contained vehicles can freedom camp in areas currently controlled by local authorities and the Department of Conservation but that people camping in tents will not be affected. ***This proposal applies a national solution to regulate what is effectively a regional problem occurring in a small number of regions primarily caused by seasonal workers / tourists and 'marketed' tourism activity areas.***

This proposal is discriminatory against individuals and families who prefer to camp in a vehicle rather than a tent. This proposal creates an assumption that vehicle campers are less responsible than those in tents and will lead to an increase in discriminatory practices and negative public perception of vehicle campers.

The Department of Internal Affairs has stated that *"There is an increasingly pervasive perception that freedom campers are responsible for litter, human waste and anti-social behaviour. This is demonstrated in media reporting on freedom camping and submissions to council bylaw making processes. There is little evidence to support this proposition."*

Proposal 1 overrides the ability of local authorities and the Department of Conservation to regulate on a regional basis where non self contained vehicles campers can stay and undo the good work that many local authorities have done in managing freedom camping and promoting local tourism.

Proposal 1 will effectively close off all of NZ's coastline to NZ recreational users who choose to camp overnight in vehicles to further their recreational pursuits.

Proposal 1 is effectively unenforceable as a vehicle camper will be able to freedom camp by erecting a tent except where this is excluded by the local authority.

Proposal 1 fails to consider the increased use by NZ's recreational users of hybrid vehicles such as trailer tents and outback campers or the likes of teardrop campers which have a lower carbon footprint and cannot be certified as self contained under the NZS5465:2001

All Points Camping Club of NZ Recommendation

APCNZ considers that this proposal is unworkable and will reduce the access rights of NZ recreational users to the NZ coastline and other land managed under the Freedom Camping Act. APCNZ is unable to support proposal 1 in any form and recommends that a full review of the NZ recreational camping industry be conducted including representation from NZ campers (as per the guidelines of the Prime Minister's Office).

Proposal 2 - 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

Under this proposal all freedom campers would be required to stay at sites with toilet facilities or use a vehicle which is certified self contained.

Proposal 2 overrides local authority powers under the Freedom Camping Act to manage where people may camp.

Proposal 2 restricts the opportunity for tenting families, including those from lower social economic groupings and activity based groups with tents or hybrid camping vehicles (including teardrop campers) from camping

Proposal 2 fails to recognise that a small vehicle camper, or tent users, may be self sufficient, with a toilet in a tent or awning, but unable to be technically certified as self contained under NZS 5465:2001.

All Points Camping Club of NZ Recommendation

APCNZ considers that this proposal is unworkable and will reduce the access rights of NZ recreational users to the NZ coastline and other land managed under the Freedom Camping Act. APCNZ is unable to support proposal 2 in any form and recommends that a full review of the NZ recreational camping industry be conducted including representation from NZ campers (as per the guidelines of the Prime Minister's Office).

Proposals 1 and 2 fail to recognise that a small vehicle camper may be self sufficient, with a toilet in tent or awning, yet be unable to be technically certified as self contained under NZS 5465:2001.

Proposal 3 - Improve the regulatory tools of land managers.

APCNZ recognises that the regulatory system concerning Freedom camping and the SCVS does need work as suggested by the Ministers own responsible camping working group. Increased and enforceable penalties for infringement would be a greater deterrent to offenders.

The introduction of a SCVS oversight body to administer a national database of compliant vehicles, oversee and audit issuing authorities and their testing officers together with the utilisation of existing SCVS issuing authorities and testing officers would help to keep costs down. The creation of a new administrative body will significantly increase the cost to the end user, the responsible camper. The current system works well and is affordable to the majority of campers. Any increase in the cost of obtaining a certified self-containment could put that option out of the reach of the average and low/ fixed income camper.

The addition of an oversight body would give the current system some teeth when dealing with offenders, providing the scope of control is not limited to just self-contained vehicles. Contrary to what the Media would have us believe, the vast majority of the waste problem, both human and general, is not caused by the self-contained camper. (*Refer DIA situational analysis of Freedom Camping, 2016*). APCNZ submits that day trippers and locals contribute to this issue to a larger extent as they have no facilities available on board or at many sites and can currently get away with it by passing the blame on to the campers present. Any new regulatory body requires the ability to deal with all possible breaches and offenders within a recognised camping site.

The confiscation of a camper vehicle for breaches of local camping rules or notices is preposterous. There already exists in law the ability to confiscate vehicles for serious criminal offences. Camping in the “wrong spot” at a site does not warrant vehicle confiscation. Many camper vehicles are in effect the persons HOME, not just the homeless. An increasing number of people are choosing to live fulltime in their camper vehicle to explore Aotearoa. This has become an affordable and sometimes only option for many on a low or fixed income. The confiscation of such vehicles changes the occupants from being a camper to being part of the increasing number of homeless.

Allowing Local Bodies to have administrative and enforcement control over land currently administered by the Crown and in particular Waka Kotahi (page 23 SSFC) would have far reaching detrimental effects on more than just camping. Many outdoor sports enthusiasts, fishers, surfers, cyclists, and hikers to mention a few, would be affected as New Zealand beaches are classed as roads. The ability to use a rest area when traveling in a camper vehicle would come into question and the rules would change in each district.

It is unfortunate that the Minister proposes draconian, heavy handed legislation that will have wide reaching negative effects across the entire camping public, camping industry, tourism, and the general New Zealand Public. The tools already exist for land managers to regulate and enforce camping standards and behaviour within their respective regions. Education of campers and the public of the appropriate use of facilities, camping sites and the environment would relieve the issues and benefit all concerned parties.

APCNZ Recommendation - Proposal 3

- The introduction of a SCVS oversight body is Required.
- Utilising existing SCVS issuing authorities and testing officers is the most cost effective and timely method of moving forward.
- The confiscation of a camper vehicle for breaches of local camping rules or notices is not acceptable.
- One standardised national rule for all regions, although ideal, would remove control of local areas from their respective regional bodies. Issues vary from region to region and require local control and administration.
- APCNZ recommends that a plan of best practice be developed in conjunction with Local Government NZ to help Local Authorities maintain effective Freedom Camping Bylaws.

Proposal 4 - Strengthen the Requirements for Self-Contained Vehicles.

The current Self-contained Vehicle standard, NZS 5465:2001 is out of date and does require updating to bring it in line with modern campers and plumbing equipment.

The lack of a central / national database of vehicles that meet the SCVS is a flaw in the existing system and must be addressed asap. This lack of a database has been mentioned on many occasions by local bodies, the two main issuing authorities and the Ministers own Responsible Camping Working Group. The implementation of such a database would alleviate many of the current issues relating to the administration and enforcement of the Standard.

The Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, in his report **Not 100%- But four steps closer to Sustainable Tourism**, notes that “all certified self-contained vehicles should be required to have permanently plumbed toilets. He considers the language used in the current Standard of allowing many types of portable toilet to be vague and lends itself to abuse. Both the PCE and the Minister are relying on “Anecdotal” reports (anecdotal; meaning, not necessarily true or reliable, based on personal accounts rather than fact or research.) to support their agendas.

Any change in the language of the current standard to restrict the type of toilet allowable under the standard would be unacceptable and counterproductive. Any toilet with a camper vehicle, whether within the vehicle or in an adjacent toilet tent or awning is far better than no toilet at all. Limiting the type of toilet to being fixed or plumbed will restrict many responsible campers in smaller vehicles from the ability to meet the SCVS. The issue that the Minister wishes to address will not be solved by restricting the type of toilet available.

Education of campers and the general public is critical to the generation and retention of the “**social License**” and perception of campers in the community. Camper education for local and international tourists on the correct use of onboard facilities along with what is and is not expectable or allowable behaviour along with appropriate signage at camping sites to re-enforce this education would greatly reduce infringements.

APCNZ Recommendation - Proposal 4

APCNZ is unable to support proposal 4 as this has not been factually researched or quantified and is based on anecdotal evidence and innuendo. The substantial cost to NZ campers under this proposal will greatly restrict the ability of many thousands of New Zealanders.

The answer lies in reviewing and providing more facilities for the camping public in the form of toilet facilities and freedom camping sites and working with private landowners (*Camping ground regulations*). By providing more better equipped sites to ease and spread the load from existing overcrowded sites will alleviate much of the problem. APCNZ recommends that a full review of the NZ recreational camping industry be conducted including representation from NZ campers (as per the guidelines of the Prime Minister’s Office).

- APCNZ recommends that the definition of, and types of toilets currently listed in the SCVS remain unchanged. Any change to the toilet requirements of the SCVS would greatly disadvantage many thousand New Zealanders and restrict freedom camping to the wealthy.



Summary of Recommendations

The All Points Camping Club of NZ suggests the following possible solutions or pathways to improving the future sustainability of recreational and responsible camping in NZ as opposed to the narrow 'self containment' focus of the Minister's proposal.

- Of primary importance, the education of campers and the general public is critical to the generation and retention of the "social License" and perception of campers in the community. This should include camper education for local and international tourists on the correct use of onboard facilities along with what is and is not expectable or allowable behaviour along with appropriate signage at camping sites to re-enforce this education would greatly reduce infringements.
- APCNZ recommends that a full review of the NZ recreational camping industry be conducted including representation from NZ campers and all affected parties (as per the guidelines of the Prime Minister's Office).
- APCNZ recommends that the campground regulations be reviewed or steps taken to enable rural 'host' property owners to more effectively offer camp over properties without being forced to register as a campground, which will decrease the burden on local authorities.
- APCNZ recommends that a plan of best practice be developed in conjunction with Local Government NZ to help Local Authorities maintain effective Freedom Camping Bylaws.
- A National SCVS database is essential to the administration and enforcement of the Standard.
- Education for all parties in the camping industry, including domestic and international campers is paramount to a sustainable camping future.
- Any change to the SCVS requirements, regarding toilet types or the exclusion of portable toilets from the SCVS would be counterproductive.
- The confiscation of a camper vehicle for breaches of local camping rules or notices is not acceptable.
- One standardised national rule for all regions, although ideal, would remove control of local areas from their respective regional bodies. Issues vary from region to region and require local control and administration.
- APCNZ recommends that a commitment into further investment in camping infrastructure is made ,as per the DIA report, as the economic benefits to NZ regions and the benefits to the health and wellbeing of New Zealanders far exceed any costs incurred.

Concluding Statement

There is no question that the management of camping in New Zealand, including freedom camping, requires a reset but this must be looked at as a whole rather than by taking a piecemeal approach. The Minister's proposals while appearing to only address perceived and promoted negative issues with self containment and small vehicle campers has the potential to cause immeasurable harm to the future recreational camping opportunities of all New Zealanders.


To effectively manage freedom camping in New Zealand and develop economic and recreational opportunities into the future it is imperative that a wider industry approach is taken. By simply forcing regulated restrictions on NZ Campers, through aggressive imposition of exclusions and fines, future development opportunities for regions, business and recreation will be lost.

Placing increasing camping restrictions and costs on budget NZ campers, including low income families and retired travelers igneous the social and health benefits that freedom camping provides. It is far more beneficial, in both health (physical and mental) and economics, I to New Zealanders to traveling, camping and actively engaging with wider society than sitting at home, feeling isolated and depressed.

Dictating by law that only campers with a specific class or setup of vehicle using a type of toilet discriminates against campers without factual basis, as shown in extensive research by the Department of Internal Affairs. There is already discrimination shown by some NZ residents and local authorities against certain classes of camper and the Minister's proposal will compound this. In our society a person should not be ostracised or bullied because they choose to camp in a vehicle that does not fit a 'premium' subset.

The lack of evidential and factual research by MBIE and the Minister to identify any measurable harm caused by freedom campers in NZ as opposed to day trippers, other travelers or other recreational users has effectively made the proposals farcical and without foundation.

**The All Points Camping Club of New Zealand is unable to support in principle
any of the proposals put forward
and requests a full and fair review of the NZ Leisure Camping industry
including considering alternative accommodation options.**

Signed:  Wayne Ravelich
President, All Points camping Club of NZ (Inc)

Dated: 16th of May 2021

I wish to acknowledge the extensive contributions of Mr. Gary Stoneley, the APCNZ Club Founder, in the compilation of this submission.

*We trust in the advisors in the Responsible Camping Team
at the Ministry of Innovation and Employment
to give serious consideration to our submission
and make suitable recommendations to the Minister.*

*Maintaining a fair and sustainable camping industry in New Zealand
including Freedom Camping is not about 'High Value' tourism
but is about the future of the New Zealand camping industry for New Zealanders.*

***Decisions must be made with a social conscience
and the awareness that a decision made today
will direct the future of camping in NZ
for our whanau,
their mokopuna,
and their mokopuna...***