

Terms of reference for the freedom camping working group

Purpose

1. The working group is a partnership between central and local government. Its purpose is to provide recommendations to the Minister of Tourism on policy, regulatory and implementation options for improved management of freedom camping in New Zealand, to address issues associated with the impact of freedom camping on local communities and the environment while allowing local communities to take advantage of the opportunities presented by freedom camping.

Background

2. Freedom camping has a long history in New Zealand, and is one of the many ways that international and domestic tourists choose to travel around the country. Since 2011, New Zealand has had strong growth in visitor numbers and there has been an increase in the number of people freedom camping in line with this growth.
3. The Freedom Camping Act was introduced in 2011 ahead of the Rugby World Cup to help councils and the Department of Conservation better manage freedom camping. At that time, many New Zealanders were concerned about protecting their rights to freedom camp.
4. Since then, increasing numbers of freedom campers have put pressure on some popular freedom camping locations. Some communities are expressing concerns about the impacts of freedom camping and there are increasing calls for more to be done locally and nationally to manage these issues. Effectively managing freedom camping requires a partnership between central and local government, with the support of the tourism industry.
5. Some of the key issues that councils have been experiencing are:
 - the volume of campers
 - poor behaviour of a small number of campers
 - a need for more infrastructure to support freedom camping and funding of this infrastructure
 - difficulties with enforcement regime, including the collection of infringements.

Objectives

6. The objective of the Freedom Camping Working Group is to make recommendations to the Government on changes to the way freedom camping is managed in New Zealand (including policy, regulatory and implementation options) in order to address issues with freedom camping such as volumes of people, waste produced, environmental impacts and impacts on amenity.
7. In creating its recommendations, the Working Group should consider in particular the following:
 - what should the place of freedom camping be in New Zealand's tourism and recreation offering; taking into account different types of freedom camping such as travellers (in self-contained or non-self-contained) vehicles, a tramer camping

- overnight in an empty carpark in the bush or a surfer sleeping in a beach car park before a dawn surf?
- what outcomes does New Zealand want from our freedom camping system?
 - what are the best policy, regulatory and implementation solutions for managing the impacts from freedom camping?
 - what opportunities are there for regions to benefit from freedom camping?
8. The Working Group should recommend practical, short-term actions for providing support for councils ahead of the 2018/19 peak season, as well as make recommendations for the freedom camping system in the long-term.

Parameters and scope

9. The scope of the Freedom Camping Working Group is the entire freedom camping system, including (but not limited to):
- whether the existing system is fit for purpose
 - whether changes need to be made to the Freedom Camping Act 2011, or other relevant legislation
 - the application of the self-containment standard
 - the roles of central government and local government, the tourism industry and freedom campers in managing the impacts of freedom camping and funding freedom camping facilities.
10. The focus of the Working Group is limited to matters related to freedom camping and wider issues in the tourism sector are outside the scope of the working group. For example, the provision of infrastructure for freedom camping is within scope, but the wider issue of funding for tourism infrastructure is out of scope.

Membership

11. The Freedom Camping Working Group will be a partnership between central and local government, with the support of stakeholders.
12. The Freedom Camping Working Group will be made up of the following:
- three local government representatives (nominated by Local Government New Zealand's National Council)
 - three Central Government senior leaders, from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, the Department of Internal Affairs and the Department of Conservation
 - three representatives of the tourism industry and freedom campers (Tourism Industry Aotearoa, as representative of tourism businesses and the convener of the Responsible Camping Forum; Tourism Holdings Limited as representative of the rental vehicle companies; and the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association as representative of vehicle-based campers)
13. The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and one of the local government representatives will Co-Chair the Working Group.
14. The Working Group will be supported by a joint secretariat of the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment and Local Government New Zealand, supported by the Department of Internal Affairs and the Department of Conservation. The Ministry of

Business, Innovation and Employment will be accountable for the secretariat support. The secretariat will ask for input from other government agencies where they have particular interest or expertise.

Reporting and Timeframes

15. The Working Group should have its first meeting no later than Friday 4 May 2018.
16. The Working Group will report to the Minister of Tourism no later than 31 July 2018:
 - a) Recommending on the place of freedom camping in New Zealand's tourism and recreation offering, and the criteria by which to assess options for changes to the system.
 - b) Providing a plan for the Working Group to develop options and recommendations for changes to the freedom camping system over the long-term.
 - c) Providing an outline of the practical actions the working group considers are needed to provide support to councils to manage freedom camping ahead of the next peak season, and progress on any action taken to date.