



COVERSHEET

Minister	Hon Louise Upston	Portfolio	Tourism and Hospitality
Title of Cabinet paper	Major Events and Tourism Package	Date to be published	7 April 2026

List of documents that have been proactively released

Date	Title	Author
September 2025	Major Events and Tourism Package	Office of Minister for Tourism and Hospitality
8 September 2025	Major Events and Tourism Package CAB-25-MIN-0307 Minute	Cabinet Office
2 September 2025	BRIEFING-REQ-0020429: Implementing a Major Events and Tourism Investment Package	MBIE

Information redacted

YES / NO (please select)

Any information redacted in this document is redacted in accordance with MBIE's policy on Proactive Release and is labelled with the reason for redaction. This may include information that would be redacted if this information was requested under Official Information Act 1982. Where this is the case, the reasons for withholding information are listed below. Where information has been withheld, no public interest has been identified that would outweigh the reasons for withholding it.

Some information has been withheld for the reasons of:

- Confidential advice to Government
- Commercial information
- Privacy of natural persons
- Free and frank opinions



BRIEFING

Implementing a Major Events and Tourism investment package

Date:	2 September 2025	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:	Sensitive	Tracking number:	BRIEFING-REQ-0020429

Action sought		
	Action sought	Deadline
Hon Louise Upston Minister for Tourism and Hospitality	Provide feedback on the proposed implementation of the Major Events and Tourism investment package.	3 September 2025

Contact for telephone discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Telephone	1st contact
Nora Burghart	General Manager, Tourism and Hospitality	Privacy of natural persons	✓
Jessica Escaip	Principal Policy Advisor	Privacy of natural persons	

The following departments/agencies have been consulted

Minister's office to complete:

Approved

Declined

Noted

Needs change

Seen

Overtaken by Events

See Minister's Notes

Withdrawn

Comments



BRIEFING

Implementing a Major Events and Tourism Investment Package

Date:	2 September 2025	Priority:	Urgent
Security classification:	Sensitive	Tracking number:	BRIEFING-REQ-0020429

Purpose

To provide you with advice and seek your feedback on implementing a Major Events and Tourism investment package to boost economic activity and confidence in 2026.

Executive summary

Cabinet will shortly consider a range of initiatives to boost economic activity in 2026, including a Major Events and Tourism investment package. The package includes:

- a. **Events Attraction Package (up to \$40 million over two years):** targeted engagement with major promoters to strike deals attracting new large-scale events to New Zealand in 2026 and to ensure that we have the right settings to host them.
- b. **Travel, Stay and Dine Deals (\$30 million):** a campaign of special discounts and deals to attract international visitors starting in early 2026, with each package including deals on air travel, accommodation and hospitality.
- c. **Airline Connectivity** Confidential advice to Government: enabling Ohakea Airbase to be used as an alternate runway 24/7 to address air connectivity barriers Confidential advice to Government
- d. **Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme (up to \$30 million):** improving and upgrading tourism and events infrastructure that makes a major contribution to economic activity.

This paper provides you with advice on implementing this package, seeks your feedback on issues still to be resolved and identifies any delivery risks. Your feedback will be incorporated into the next version of a draft Cabinet paper seeking approval for the package.

Recommended action

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment recommends that you:

Events Attraction Package

- a. **Agree** to the proposed approach for the Events Attraction Package, including:
 - a. a total package of up to \$40 million, prioritised for events that can be delivered in 2026
 - b. investments targeted to large-scale commercial concerts, long-form theatre and sporting events
 - c. the establishment of an advisory panel to support the event identification and attraction process
 - d. the establishment of a dedicated project team within MBIE, including an external expert consultant, to facilitate the package development

- e. seeking Cabinet approval for the oversight of the package development, decision-making of investments and finalisation of investment deals to be delegated to you, as Minister for Tourism and Hospitality, jointly with the Minister of Finance

Agree / Disagree

- b **Indicate** whether the previously proposed Event Boost Fund should be delivered in addition to the new Events Attraction Package

*Event Boost Fund and Events Attraction Package /
Only Events Attraction Package*

Travel, Stay and Dine Deals

- c **Agree** to a staged approach to the implementation of the Travel, Stay and Dine Deals component, with:
 - a. an initial focus on initiatives that can deliver additional visitors in early 2026 and/or are related to the Chinese Lunar New Year
 - b. progressing work in parallel on other initiatives out to winter 2026, with decisions on other applications made by December 2025

Agree / Disagree

Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme

- d **Agree** to include in the Cabinet paper the list of projects identified to date, noting that we will confirm if further projects can be added to that list from the Department of Conservation

Agree / Disagree

Confidential advice to Government

- e Confidential advice to Government

Confidential advice to Government

Next steps

- f **Agree** to give key stakeholders a heads-up following Cabinet decisions before the investment package is announced.

Agree / Disagree



Nora Burghart
General Manager, Tourism and Hospitality
Labour, Science and Enterprise, MBIE

..... / /

Hon Louise Upston
Minister for Tourism and Hospitality

..... / /

Background

1. Cabinet will shortly consider a range of initiatives to boost economic activity in 2026, including a Major Events and Tourism investment package. This paper provides you with advice on implementing this package, issues still to be resolved and any delivery risks.

Proposed Major Events and Tourism Package

2. The proposed investment package includes up to Confidential advice to Government of investment as follows:
 - a. Events Attraction Package (up to \$40 million over two years): targeted engagement with major promoters to strike deals attracting new large-scale events to New Zealand in 2026 and to ensure that we have the right settings to host them.
 - b. Travel, Stay and Dine Deals (\$30 million): a campaign of special discounts and deals to attract international visitors starting in early 2026, with each package including deals on air travel, accommodation and hospitality.
 - c. Airline Connectivity Confidential advice to Government: enabling Ohakea Airbase to be used as an alternate runway 24/7 to address air connectivity barriers Confidential advice to Government
 - d. Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme (up to \$30 million): improving and upgrading tourism and events infrastructure that makes a major contribution to economic activity.
3. We are seeking your feedback on the proposed implementation of each of these components. We will incorporate your feedback into the next draft of the Cabinet paper.

Events Attraction Package

4. The Events Attraction Package would make up to \$40 million available over two years for large-scale events (over 20,000 people) that can be delivered in 2026, with potential to extend into summer 2027 if scheduling requires.
5. While the Events Attraction Package will target one-off events that take place in 2026, consideration can be given to events that require a multi-year investment commitment to be secured for New Zealand. Advice on these opportunities will form part of the investment package approach outlined below.
6. This package is intended to create positive sentiment and impact, with broad appeal and market popularity. Funding will be accessed via a direct engagement strategy, with events rights holders and promoters directly targeted to identify event opportunities. Confidential advice to Government

_____ An indicative list of potential events that could be available for New Zealand is at Annex One.
7. Funding will be contracted directly to promoters or rights holders, Confidential advice to Government

8. Host cities and host venues will be required to collaborate to secure the events, with allowances made for co-funding given these events are in addition to what is already confirmed for 2026.

We propose setting up an external panel to ensure we deliver an ambitious list of events

9. We have existing relationships with the major global promoters and events rights holders and have initiated conversations to identify potential events for the fund. We are collating a list of the most probable, desirable and complementary events for consideration.
10. We propose that you convene a panel of eminent New Zealanders who have global connections in the sport and creative event sectors to ensure a comprehensive and ambitious list of proposals. The panel will be tasked with identifying additional opportunities and facilitating direct engagement on behalf of the Crown. Suggested participants could be
Confidential advice to Government

MBIE requires additional resource to implement the proposals at pace

11. We propose to set up a small, short-term team within MBIE's Tourism & Hospitality branch to implement the proposal and contract events at pace. We propose that this team include an independent, well-connected and respected event consultant to support the implementation. The consultant would use their extensive global networks to surface additional opportunities and work with MBIE to produce a final package of events. In addition, we would bring in three short-term staff to procure the events: one senior investment advisor and two investment advisors between September 2025 and January 2026. The small team would be overseen by the existing manager for Major Events. If you agree, we will note this in the Cabinet paper to support implementation.

Other implementation considerations

12. Given the requirement to make expedient investment decisions to enable event content to be secured as quickly as practicable for 2026, Confidential advice to Government Investments would be made to reputable, commercial operators who have demonstrable capability and experience to deliver these type and scale of events. Existing MBIE investment agreements and systems can be used to simplify and expediate the investment contracting process.
13. The Minister of Finance and the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality will be delegated decision-making powers to finalise the package of investments. Confidential advice to Government
14. Given the likely recipients of this investment package, there are numerous wider benefits that could be realised for the Crown through these event investments Free and frank opinions. We suggest that the Minister of Finance and Minister for Tourism and Hospitality be delegated determination around what, if any wider benefits, are to be contracted for the Crown as part of their decision-making powers for the Event Attraction Package.

Possible implementation risks and mitigations

15. Implementation constraints for the Events Attraction Package include:
 - venues have already programmed much of their 2026 content, and there may be limited capacity for significant additional content
 - most 'world cup'-level sporting events have already secured host nations and/or cities for their 2026 iteration, so only commercial sporting properties are likely to be available with the lead time available
 - some events rights holders will be seeking a multi-year commitment to bring an annual recurring event to New Zealand, and as such may not be open to committing to a one-off New Zealand iteration, even with subvention funding support.

16. Free and frank opinions
 [Redacted]
17. Confidential advice to Government
 [Redacted]
18. There could be some confusion regarding the multiple event funding channels available at once. This can be managed through clear communication regarding the Event Boost Fund, the Major Events Fund, and the Event Attraction Package.
19. As the Events Attraction Package will be invitation-only, it is important for messaging to be clear as to who is eligible for approach/engagement. Free and frank opinions [Redacted] However, if this process is run in parallel to the Event Boost Fund, enquiries could be channelled into that funding mechanism, if eligible.
20. Confidential advice to Government
 [Redacted]

Indicative timeframes

21. MBIE has begun engaging with promoters and rights holders to identify potential event opportunities. Pending Cabinet and Ministerial decisions, we could begin the contracting process in early November. Indicative implementation timeframes are:

Date	Activity
9 to 24 September	MBIE (with independent consultant) work to identify potential events for package. Advisory Panel established and meeting facilitated to identify additional opportunities.
24 September	List of potential events provided to Minister Upston for feedback.
29 September	Meeting with Minister Upston to refine/expand list as required.
30 September – 17 October	MBIE (with consultant) refine event list, negotiate key terms with potential events, and produce package for consideration.
20 October	Meeting with Minister Upston to agree/refine proposed package.
21 October	Briefing provided to Minister of Finance and Minister for Hospitality and Tourism for approval.
W/C 28 October	Ministers reach consensus on final investment package.
W/C 3 November	MBIE commence contracting.

Travel, Stay and Dine Deals

22. This component would make \$30 million of funding available for a campaign of special discounts and deals to attract international visitors starting in early 2026, with each travel package including deals on air travel, accommodation and hospitality. This component will build on current marketing campaigns and explore new opportunities to incentivise people to act quickly and lock in their travel to secure time-sensitive deals.
23. Each Deal will include as a minimum an airline partner and/or a travel provider/platform (such as Ctrip), and multiple accommodation providers and hospitality operators who each offer complementary special prices and offers. The Travel, Stay and Dine Deals component of the investment package builds on the success of the Regional Tourism Boost, which attracted significant additional visitation in winter 2025.
24. The Deals will promote visitor dispersal, spreading the benefits nationally, and promote increased cooperation of Regional Tourism Organisations (an aim of the Tourism Growth Roadmap).
25. We have had initial discussions with Tourism New Zealand (TNZ) on their potential contribution to the Deals package. At this stage further work with TNZ is required to clarify their involvement in this proposal.

Implementation process

26. We envisage that the Deals would be implemented by groups of Regional Tourism Organisations, who will collaborate to design a package of specials within different regions of New Zealand soliciting specials from businesses.
27. Similar to the Regional Tourism Boost, implementation could include:
 - a. Regional Tourism Organisation identifying partners (including mandatory inclusion of airline partners and/or travel platforms, plus accommodation providers and hospitality businesses) to contribute significant discounts during the targeted period
 - b. the requirement for two or more Regional Tourism Organisations to work together to design a package to improve visitor dispersal
 - c. collection of data that measures impact, particularly from airlines who will track discounted bookings.
28. In addition, there would be a Deal refinement phase where applicants ensure that their offers are aligned for maximum impact in target markets.

We recommend a staged approach to implementation

29. A key learning from Regional Tourism Boost was that, with additional time, RTOs would have been able to develop stronger, and more, partnerships to maximise the benefits of their campaigns.
30. As the majority of international visitation to New Zealand for summer 2025/26 has likely been booked already and to allow RTOs time to develop strong partnership approaches across both tourism and hospitality businesses, we recommend a staged implementation approach:
 - Stage One: Delivering one set of Deals for the Lunar New Year traveller group
 - Stage Two: Staggered approach covering January to Winter 2026, ensuring RTOs are not competing for the same visitors.

Indicative timeframes

31. We will use a similar approach to the Regional Tourism Boost process. Indicative implementation timeframes are:

Date (week commencing)	Activity
8 September	MBIE provides further implementation advice and the Minister for Tourism and Hospitality agrees on detail, including funding criteria and implementation timelines.
15 September	RTOs and key hospitality and tourism partners briefed on the fund and application process.
15 September	Fund open for applications.
29 September	Stage One applications close for campaigns that can deliver in early 2026/those related to Lunar New Year initiatives.
Mid/late October	Assessment of Stage One applications, Minister to approve and contracts put in place.
Early November	Stage Two applications close.
Late November/Early December	Assessment of all further applications, Minister to approve and contracts put in place.

Airline connectivity

32. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED] Some airlines operating widebody aircraft rely on nominating Ohakea as an alternate runway for some ultra long-haul services (such as from Doha and other ports in the Middle East). However, the current ATC operating hours (from 0500-2230hrs on weekdays and 0500-2200hrs on weekends) often do not align with commercially-optimised scheduled arrival times, meaning Ohakea cannot be nominated as an alternate.

33. Commercial Information [REDACTED]
Implementing 24/7 ATC services to improve access to Ohakea will address a key connectivity barrier and incentivise airlines to add additional capacity, particularly from the Middle East (eg Doha to Auckland) and North America (eg New York to Auckland). We note an additional daily widebody aircraft (300 seat) service would bring additional capacity of around 96,000 seats per annum (assuming a load factor of 85 per cent).

Implementation

34. The Ministry of Transport will implement improving ATC services at Ohakea in conjunction with the New Zealand Defence Force.

35. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED]

Risks

36. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED].
37. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED].

Timeframes

38. We understand an announcement on improving access to Ohakea could be made following Cabinet decisions.

Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED]

39. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
40. Confidential advice to Government [REDACTED].
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme

41. This component would make up to \$30 million available for improving and upgrading tourism infrastructure that has a major contribution to economic activity. In addition to the tourism benefits, this proposal would result in additional work for a range of local tradespeople.

Investment opportunities

42. A list of possible 'shovel ready' infrastructure projects for investment totalling \$17.38 million is set out at Annex Two. These include:
- a. Visitor experience enhancements – \$11.83 million including:
 - i. a roof for the ASB Tennis Centre in Auckland – \$10 million
 - ii. Lowburn Inlet freedom camping and recreation site improvements – \$1.83 million
 - b. Cycle Trails Infrastructure Investments – \$5.55 million, including:
 - i. Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail – \$3.1 million
 - ii. Whakarewarewa Forest Loop Great Ride reroute – \$0.25 million
 - iii. Waimate Trail / Te Waimatamate Ara: Waimate to Waihao Forks – \$0.2 million
 - iv. Dunedin Tunnels linking Dunedin to Mosgiel and to the Clutha Gold Great Ride – \$2 million.

¹ Provisional unverified data provided by BARNZ – verified data will be shared later this week.

43. Many of the other projects we have previously advised you on for possible investment have already been funded, so are no longer suitable for this package. But we are in active discussion with the Department of Conservation to quickly identify any other 'shovel-ready' projects for inclusion in the Cabinet paper.

Implementation

44. Implementation will involve negotiation with sites identified to confirm funding needs and contract funding agreements. This would be led by:
 - a. Cycle Trail and other tourism infrastructure investments – MBIE
 - b. Lowburn Inlet improvements – LINZ
 - c. ASB Tennis centre improvements - another agency (likely Sport NZ to be confirmed).
45. We note that all the new projects would be able to be started in 2026 but we will still need to confirm likely completion timeframes for each project.
46. Negotiations would begin immediately, with contracts conditional on new work commencing in early 2026. Agreements would be announced individually once contracts have been signed.
47. Progress on a new roof for the ASB Tennis Centre is already underway but from public reporting we understand it would not be in place before 2028.

Next steps

48. We will reflect your feedback on these proposals in the next version of the Cabinet paper.
49. We recommend that you give key stakeholders a heads-up following Cabinet decisions before the investment package is announced.
50. Following Cabinet decisions, we will provide you more detailed implementation advice on the MBIE-led components of this package, including seeking your agreement to detailed fund criteria, decision-making processes and implementation timelines as appropriate.

Annexes

Annex One: Potential events for the Events Attraction Package

Annex Two: Potential projects for the Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme

Annex Two: Potential projects for the Key Visitor Infrastructure Programme

Project	Funding requirement	Details
Roof at ASB Tennis Centre	Up to \$10 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This investment would build a new roof at the ASB Tennis Centre in Auckland. It would benefit visitors arriving for major tennis events at the stadium like the ASB Classic.
Enhancing the visitor experience at Lake Dunstan and Lowburn Inlet	\$1.83 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lowburn Inlet is a major freedom camping and recreation site used by tens of thousands of visitors and locals. This investment would allow LINZ to respond to pressures created by very high number of visitors to the area as well as a growing local population. It would also help with social license as there have been numerous complaints because the existing facilities were not designed for current and forecast increasing use levels. Facilities are insufficient in capacity and all users would benefit from rationalisation of the site – including freedom camping, toilets, bins, picnic areas, walking and bike paths, parking, boat launch areas all occur at this space.
Cycle Trails Infrastructure Investments	\$5.55 million total <i>(detailed below)</i>	
Mountains to Sea Cycle Trail	\$3.1 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> NZ Cycle Trail funding has previously supported Te Ara Mangawhero around Mount Ruapehu / the Tongariro National Park, which is part of the Mountains to Sea trail. This further investment would fund: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> completion of the Te Ara Mangawhero Trail from Ohakune to Turoa – estimated cost \$2 million to get current trail end back to the road completion of the Te Hangaruru Trail from Horopito to Last Spike – estimated cost \$1.1 million. Funding would enable Ruapehu District Council to further progress these two trail sections and provide an economic boom for Ruapehu District particularly given the challenging circumstances of a poor ski season.
Whakarewarewa Forest Loop	\$0.25 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Whakarewarewa Forest Loop is one of the Great Rides and a popular mountain-biking trail in the Redwoods near Rotorua.

Great Ride reroute		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This investment would make improvements to the trail by rerouting it through the forest and away from the concrete pathway alongside busy SH5.
Waimate Trail / Te Waimatamate Ara: Waimate to Waihao Forks	\$0.2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Waimate Trail is a new 67km walking and cycling trail being constructed in the Waitmate District. • The community has raised 80 per cent of the funding required to complete Stage One of the trail. • This investment would fund a 13km stretch of Stage One part of the trail from Waimate to Waihao Forks. • Free and frank opinions [REDACTED]
Dunedin Tunnels linking Dunedin to Mosgiel and to the Clutha Gold Great Ride	\$2 million	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This investment would co-fund Stage One of the Dunedin Tunnels Trails: Wingatui to Green Island, providing off road access into Dunedin at Grade 1 experience. Stage Two is to Kaikorai Valley and into the Caversham Tunnel into Dunedin CBD with existing cycle trail. • Completing this would provide tourism (and commuter) access between Dunedin and Mosgiel and link to both Clutha Gold and Otago Central Rail Trail via heartland rides. The Dunedin population will have easy access to off-season use of especially Clutha Gold to add resilience to businesses.