

## **Rugby World Cup 2011 – 85,000 rugby fans expected**

Tim Cossar, Chief Executive, Tourism Industry Association NZ

With just over one year to go to kick off, rugby fever is starting to mount as an expected 85,000 fans from around the world prepare to travel to New Zealand for Rugby World Cup 2011.

This will be the biggest international event ever held in New Zealand. It will last six weeks (9 September – 23 October) and is expected to inject over \$500 million into the economy, offering an unprecedented opportunity for our industry.

### **Plenty of accommodation options**

While the influx of 85,000 additional visitors will undoubtedly stretch some regions, TIA and other industry leaders are confident there will be plenty of accommodation options available for both rugby fans and the 180,000 visitors who traditionally travel to New Zealand for spring holidays. Combined, this is still less than the number of visitors we welcome during the peak summer season.

Individual regions will face high demand around big match days, particularly Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch during the final stages of the tournament. In some of our fantastic regional centres which have only a limited supply of rooms, visitors may have to sleep further away, but we are sure everyone will find suitable accommodation within a reasonable travelling distance.

Rooms in many hotels are still being held in the RWC Official Accommodation Bank (OAB) to meet the tournament accommodation needs for the teams, officials, and sponsors and to provide assistance to the official travel and hospitality agencies bringing customers to New Zealand.

The OAB is a partnership between the tournament organisers Rugby New Zealand 2011 (RNZ) and the NZ hotel industry and has the support of more than 300 3-5 star hotels across the country. As it becomes clear where there is excess capacity, rooms are being released from the OAB which means they will be available for the general public.

We also expect more rooms will become available around a year out from the tournament as many hotels only post their rates to the public 12 months ahead.

### **Cruise ships boost capacity**

Three RWC-dedicated cruise ships will also be in use during the final couple of weeks of the tournament, adding 5500 beds into the accommodation mix. RNZ says two will be based in Wellington and one in Christchurch for their quarter-final weekends, after which all three will travel northwards and, amongst other port-hopping adventures, will be based in Auckland for both the semi-final weekend and the final weekend.

### **More than just rugby**

As rugby fever mounts, it is also essential that our industry doesn't lose business by focusing exclusively on RWC 2011. It is important we assure visitors who aren't interested in rugby that we are open for their business and have plenty of accommodation options available.

Whether or not they are into the oval ball, they will enjoy being in New Zealand during the tournament, with the excitement and buzz around our cities and towns and the numerous arts, cultural and sporting events being planned as part of the RWC festival.

### **Fantastic showcase**

The Rugby World Cup is one of the largest sporting events in the world in terms of cumulative television audience and attendance and offers a fantastic showcase for Destination New Zealand. Some accommodation operators have already taken advantage of the opportunity to promote themselves to international audiences on the [passiton.co.nz](http://passiton.co.nz) website, created to help share the best of New Zealand with the rest of the world between now and RWC2011.

TIA's website [www.tianz.org.nz](http://www.tianz.org.nz) has a RWC 2011 page in its Events section. It includes a link to the Major Events Management Act (MEMA) guide, which has been produced to help businesses get to grips with MEMA and how it impacts on what they can and can't do around RWC2011. The guide gives practical examples of MEMA in use for accommodation businesses.

[www.tianz.org.nz](http://www.tianz.org.nz)