

Key to hear industry's pressing challenges

**By Tim Cossar, Chief Executive
Tourism Industry Association**

TIA is holding ten workshops throughout the country next month to give tourism businesses the opportunity to discuss and prioritise the pressing challenges facing our industry. We will then take these challenges and potential solutions directly to the Prime Minister at a Tourism Leaders Symposium in Wellington in early October.

The NZ Tourism Regional Leadership Series workshops and the invitation-only NZ Tourism Leaders Symposium are new TIA* initiatives, designed to ensure that tourism and the challenges facing our industry stay very much on the Government's radar in these challenging times. These high-profile events will also continue to reinforce to political, public and private sector leaders and the New Zealand public that tourism is a bedrock of our nation's economy – of fundamental importance to our financial wellbeing, to job creation, to our way of life.

In the year since we published the Tourism Industry Election Manifesto, TIA has been advocating strongly to the new National-led Government on the top priorities for New Zealand tourism and the action we seek from them to help us lift our game. We've made a lot of progress, such as the Prime Minister taking on the tourism portfolio, increased investment in the Australian market, and a new employment skills training programme under development. These regional workshops take us back to the coalface to get your latest views so we can continue to build that partnership with the government and keep the momentum going.

More than ever before, our industry needs to work together to ensure that government receives clear and succinct messages from us. Tourism will be critical in helping New Zealand pull out of the recession, but to make certain we not only survive but emerge ready to grow market share as consumers start travelling again we need government support in areas like increased investment in international marketing and reducing bureaucratic red tape.

The first part of the half-day workshops will discuss and prioritise the issues. When you register to attend you will be asked to fill in a short questionnaire around things like the top challenges facing your business and sector and the key infrastructure areas you think government should focus on. With the information gleaned from your replies, we'll be able to hit the ground running in the workshops.

The second part of the workshops will feature practical marketing and business information, such as on-line marketing trends, that can be incorporated into your business immediately to help you cope with the tougher market conditions as we head into the 2009/10 season.

Regional Tourism Organisations, who are providing significant support for the workshops, will also select several tourism leaders in their region who are doing really well; these operators will share their tips and learning on how to thrive in the current environment and into the future.

The issues identified at the workshops will be put before the Prime Minister for further discussion at the Leaders Symposium in Wellington on 6 October, which will be attended by some 200 invited tourism leaders.

Workshop dates and locations

1 September	Dunedin
2 September	Queenstown
7 September	Nelson
9 September	West Coast (Hokitika)
11 September	Christchurch/Canterbury (Christchurch)
14 September	Hawke's Bay (Napier)
16 September	Wellington
21 September	Wanganui
24 September	Rotorua
TBC	Auckland

To register

For more details and to register, see the TIA website www.tianz.org.nz.

*TIA has developed the Tourism Regional Leadership Series and Tourism Leaders Symposium on behalf of the Tourism Industry New Zealand Trust. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise is a strategic partner in this event which is sponsored by Air New Zealand.