

Inside Tourism – December 2010

2010 - a year of progress and change

Tim Cossar, Chief Executive, TIA

It's been a year of unprecedented change at the national level for our industry, with dissolutions, restructures and new directions. Some of it is positive. Some, it's too early to tell.

A welcome development has been the Department of Conservation's decision to work more closely and positively with private businesses. Its new Commercial Business Unit is a recent initiative towards a stronger partnership with tourism operators.

One of the biggest changes was the government's decision to dissolve the Ministry of Tourism into a Tourism Strategy Group within the Ministry of Economic Development, a move it said was aimed at lifting tourism's game. With it come a lot of industry expectations, especially in ensuring that the core tourism dataset remains strong. TIA looks forward to working closely with the TSG – it will be pivotal in helping the sector chart its pathway into the future.

Tourism NZ has also been undergoing a transformation. Over the past 12 months we've seen a new CEO take the helm, a change of guard in the Executive Team and a restructure of its offshore operations. TNZ has also released a new marketing strategy, and identified a new target audience (Active Considerers).

Qualmark has been undergoing a period of review as it looks to improve the value it delivers to licence holders and ensures its quality accreditation programme stays relevant to tourism operators and to travellers. Ensuring New Zealand delivers a consistently quality visitor experience is more critical than ever as we head toward Rugby World Cup 2011.

2010 also saw the new Auckland Super City come into being, An economic powerhouse, the new city will have considerable political sway, which means we might finally see some movement on a world-class cruise ship terminal, a national convention centre and other issues that have been stymieing the industry's international competitiveness. That said, we will need to ensure that other regions aren't overlooked by central government.

For TIA it has been an extremely busy year. We have made submissions to the government on behalf of members on a range of issues, amongst them the GST increase, ACC levies, depreciation, employment relations, holidays, mining on conservation land and local government amendments. We recently advocated directly to the German and UK governments arguing against their air travel taxes.

We've continued to provide industry leadership on freedom camping and the adventure tourism safety review, and represented tourism on the cross-sector Land & Water Forum which has made recommendations on how to improve management of New Zealand's freshwater resource. This is critically important given the importance of clean, fresh water to the visitor experience and perception of New Zealand, and the number of operators who make their living on our lakes and rivers.

Forging a closer relationship with local government has been a priority for TIA in 2010 in order to maximise the visitor spend in communities. Councils are arguably tourism's most important partners but it has traditionally not been a strong relationship. While there's still a long way to go, we are building momentum and look forward to continuing this in 2011. We have also worked to strengthen our relationship with organisations that make decisions that impact on our industry such as the Department of

Conservation, Immigration New Zealand, Department of Labour, Maritime NZ, Civil Aviation Authority and ACC.

This work complements the services and events we deliver and organise, such as TRENZ, our new Insights research report and workshops. These create new opportunities for tourism operators and improve our members' business capability.

I would like to acknowledge our members who continue to support the vital work of TIA in these tougher trading times and what has been a period of immense economic shift, domestically and in many of our key visitor markets.

Next year promises to be even busier for the Association and our members, with RWC 2011 and a General Election to add to the mix!

Wishing everyone a safe, happy and profitable summer.

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