

## **Have your say on freshwater management**

**By Geoff Ensor, TIA Advocacy Manager**

Managing New Zealand's freshwater resource effectively is vital for the tourism industry and our ability to deliver a quality visitor experience. New Zealand's clean, green image relies on plentiful freshwater. Photos of pristine lakes and rivers underpin the 100% Pure brand and scores of kayaking, rafting, river boarding, cruise and fishing operators have built thriving businesses on the water.

Over the past 18 months TIA has been an active participant in the Land and Water Forum, ensuring the tourism industry's interests are strongly represented when it comes to deciding how to improve freshwater management. This isn't something that is going to have immediate returns, but it was vital a tourism representative was around the table when the decisions were being made in order to help protect the environmental and economic sustainability of our industry (and New Zealand) for generations to come.

While water is one of New Zealand's most precious resources, there has been growing anxiety and a lack of information about the way it is being managed, with issues around shortages, quality and development of water infrastructure, expensive clean-up operations on iconic lakes, disputes about intensification of farming and run-off, and who should be involved in its management.

Formed by the government, the Forum consisted of around 60 representatives from all the major stakeholders, including agriculture, forestry, energy, iwi, tourism and environmental, local and central government. Over 18 months of vigorous debate, we collaboratively developed a set of outcomes and goals to improve freshwater management, with recommendations on the major areas where change is needed.

The report and recommendations were released last month and the government is now seeking feedback before it decides how to proceed. As part of that consultation, the Forum is holding meetings around the country to discuss the findings and get the views of stakeholder groups and the public.

The key recommendations are around setting standards, limits and targets for water quality and quantity. These take into account the variety of New Zealand's geography, and the diversity of cultural, economic, environmental and social interests in water; water allocation and the transfer of water permits; and governance arrangements.

TIA is encouraging tourism operators to attend these meetings. We will continue to act as a conduit to ensure the views of our members are heard.

Some of the most significant recommendations for tourism are around the governance model. The Forum has proposed the establishment of a National Land and Water Commission (on a co-governance basis with iwi) which will be all things water - responsible

for developing and overseeing implementation of a water strategy and advising ministers on the management of the water resource.

It is vital we get the governance model right. The Forum found that councils already have a lot of water management tools and processes, but for a range of reasons they have not been consistently applied – a commission would help set standards and ensure they are followed.

There is still a lot of work to be done in terms of the detail, but what the Forum report does is put water firmly on the government's radar. If the right decisions are made now, we will preserve our precious water resource for generations of Kiwis and visitors to come. See [www.landandwater.org.nz](http://www.landandwater.org.nz) for more information or email Geoff.ensor@tiansz.org.nz