



tourism
INDUSTRY
ASSOCIATION NEW ZEALAND

Walking Access Review

30 June 2006

Introduction

1. This submission is from the Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand (TIA), located at level 4, Travel and Tourism House, 79 Boulcott Street, Wellington.
2. Attached as Appendix 1 are details about our organisation and who we represent.
3. If you wish to contact us regarding this submission, in the first instance, please telephone Geoff Ensor, Sector Manager on 04 496 4889 or e-mail him at geoff.ensor@tianza.org.nz Should there be an opportunity, we would also be interested in making an oral presentation to support this submission.
4. Our submission comments on the Walking Access Review. This paper provides comment and analysis on the proposals and the extent to which we feel they will impact on the tourism industry.
5. TIA wishes to indicate its interest in being consulted and included by the Walking Access Consultation Panel in future discussions about changes arising from the review.

Overview

6. TIA appreciates the opportunity to comment on the aim, principles and issues related to walking access. A number of our members own commercial accommodation and run activities along the margins of our coastline, rivers and lakes. This is also a destination management issue; adequate walking access for domestic and international visitors is integral to New Zealand's reputation as a world class destination and the following comments reflect our initial thoughts on outdoor walking access.
7. Is there really a (national) problem with current levels of walking access? We think this question must be fully researched and answered before too much time is spent debating solutions. To our knowledge, TIA has not yet received any complaints from domestic or overseas visitors about restricted walking access – to the contrary, comments are usually very positive about levels of access and the response of landowners to access requests, if approached in a respectful and responsible manner.
8. TIA believes that if local access issues exist then these should be handled locally. A national 'one size fits all' approach to this extremely sensitive and emotive issue is likely to end in failure. What is 'fair and reasonable access' and what constitutes a 'significant' river?
9. Walking access is sacrosanct to many communities and it is communities who know exactly what local access is important to them - and what is not. Community members will be the best watchdogs for ensuring that key access is retained. Neither the issue nor the political climate favours a prescriptive approach from central government.

10. We believe that local government and communities must work together to address walking access in their area. In some cases this may mean simply meeting and talking - for others a more formal process may be required involving consultation with affected parties. This is completely congruent with the intent of the Local Government Act 2002.
11. Regional land-use variations will challenge any attempt to develop a 'one size fits all' policy. For example, in some areas high stock densities may be encountered while in others luxury lodges built for seclusion and security may predominate. The appropriate access strategy for the different types of resident activity demand local knowledge and consultation.
12. Information about existing access – the development and maintenance of maps and signposts to show the location of existing public access could be a huge and expensive process. Would the resource required to do this be better directed to ongoing development of tracks and facilities on existing public land?
13. The issue of reinstating paper roads has the potential to create a lot of ill will. Most people wishing to traverse an unformed paper road across private property quite correctly don't assume right of access – the owners of the land are asked as a courtesy. If long-forgotten paper roads are 'rediscovered' and it is suggested to landowners that fences and shelter belts etc may need to be removed to provide access – a huge amount of conflict is a likely outcome; this may result in a backlash against the whole concept of public access.
14. Establishing new access - it is not clear to us what would encourage landowners to agree to 'formal, certain and enduring access' – this is a question that only they can answer. What is clear is that access across private land is a privilege not a right and landowners should be approached with this in mind.
15. New Zealand is lucky to have vast areas of public conservation land that are available to all New Zealander's and provide a range of recreational opportunities.

Summary

16. Is there really a significant problem from a lack of outdoor walking access? TIA believes a more in depth study of this question is required before seeking solutions.
17. Emphasis should be on retention of walking access not restoration.
18. Central government should not seek to enforce a 'one size fits all' public walking access policy.
19. Local government should work with communities and landowners to ensure appropriate walking access is maintained and/or developed i.e. a collaborative, non prescriptive approach should be adopted.

20. Regional land-use variations will greatly challenge any attempt at a prescriptive central government approach. The appropriate access strategy for the different types of resident activity demand local knowledge and consultation.
21. Access across private land is a privilege and not a right.

Appendix 1

Background Information on the Tourism Industry Association of New Zealand (TIA)

1. The Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) advocates for the interests of the tourism industry in New Zealand. The businesses we represent generate more than 85% of New Zealand's tourism-related revenue.
2. Tourism is a \$17.2 billion industry (\$7.4b from international and \$9.8 from domestic tourism) with international tourist expenditure accounting for 18.5% of New Zealand's total export earnings.¹ The industry, directly and indirectly, employs 1 in 10 New Zealanders in a diverse range of businesses – the majority of which are small and medium sized enterprises. Not only is tourism important because of its size, representing 9.4% of New Zealand's GDP, it is:
 - Highly employment intensive;
 - Regionally disparate; and
 - Very diverse - ranging from large stock exchange listed companies to small cottage industries.
3. These businesses cover a range of tourism-related activities – hospitality, transport, adventure and activities, attractions and retail and related tourism services. In many cases, regional tourism businesses have developed around regional assets divested by other industries and have revitalised those assets and the communities that depend on them.
4. The tourism industry in New Zealand consists of more than 8,000 small and medium sized businesses. Of these businesses, most employ less than five people.
5. New Zealand welcomes more than two million overseas visitors to its shores every year. The domestic tourism industry is also important in helping to sustain a vibrant tourism industry. TIA estimates that over 75 million visitor nights are spent by New Zealanders every year.

¹ “Key Tourism Statistics – March 2006”, Ministry of Tourism website