



**Tourism  
Industry  
Association  
New Zealand**

**Tourism Industry Association New Zealand**

**Comments to the**

**Biosecurity Strategy Development Team**

**on the  
Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand  
Issues Paper**

**December 2001**

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## **About Our Association and Industry**

The Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ) represents the interests of over 3,500 businesses in the tourism industry.

Tourism is a \$9 billion industry and generates 15.8% of New Zealand's exports. The tourism industry employs 1 in 12 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. It is also:

- Highly employment intensive;
- Regionally dispersed;
- Has the flexibility to change its target markets quickly as conditions change;
- Can offer a good return on investment.

The tourism industry in New Zealand consists of approximately 16,500 small and medium sized businesses. Of these businesses, 13,500 employ less than five people.

New Zealand welcomes almost two million overseas visitors to its shores every year. The domestic tourism industry is also important in helping to sustain a vibrant tourism industry. TIANZ estimates that over 75 million visitor nights are spent by New Zealanders every year.

TIANZ welcomes the opportunity to comment on this issues paper and to making an ongoing contribution to discussions on biosecurity.

This submission comments on the issues raised in the Developing a Biosecurity Strategy for New Zealand Issues Paper, as they relate to the tourism industry, including:

- The relationship between tourism and biosecurity
- Border Issues
- Managing the risks to biosecurity
- Facilitation at the border
- Education and enforcement
- Funding issues
- Public/private sector co-operation
- Other Issues specific to the tourism industry

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## **Tourism and Biosecurity**

The level of biosecurity in New Zealand is important to the on-going sustainability of our tourism industry. As well as being a significant user of New Zealand's natural and physical resources, the tourism industry directly benefits from a high level of environmental quality and biodiversity. Unsustainable or damaging behaviour to our environment has the potential to cause disruption to our industry.

Tourism can play a role in helping to sustain the environment, through initiatives such as undertaking research and development into sustainable environments, and the Global Green initiative that encourages environmentally friendly tourism business practices.

In a nutshell, the environment sustains tourism and tourism must ensure that it helps sustain the environment.

At the same time, the tourism industry is made up of businesses. These businesses are competing in a competitive market. Therefore, the issue of compliance costs is important to our industry.

TIANZ supports sound biosecurity policies that manage and minimise risks to New Zealand's environment while keeping compliance costs to a minimum.

## **Definition of Biosecurity**

TIANZ generally supports the definition of biosecurity contained in the Issues Paper (P10), which was approved by the Biosecurity Council in 2000. This defines biosecurity as:

*Protection from risks posed by organisms to the economy, environment and people's health through exclusion, eradication and control.*

However, we suggest the addition of " and management of" after "protection from", to clarify the importance of ongoing management of risks to our country's biosecurity. We also suggest that "to the economy" be replaced with "to our open economy". This recognises the importance of trade with other countries, and visitors from overseas to New Zealand's economy.

## **Border Issues**

### **New Zealand is one of a few countries with biosecurity processing**

TIANZ recognises that the border is only one part of the biosecurity risk management process that must be used to protect our economy, environment and national health.

However, the efficient operation of our border controls is critical to ensure that visitors to New Zealand have a good initial experience on arrival. This initial experience can provide either a good or bad first impression that can 'colour' visitors' overall perceptions of New Zealand.

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New Zealand tourism competes in the international market place and visitors to New Zealand will compare their experiences at the border with other places they have travelled to. Many countries no longer have border processing (i.e. within the European Union) and where such controls exist, the focus is on customs and immigration. New Zealand is one of the few countries that also has biosecurity processing as part of its border processing, which creates an immediate disadvantage to New Zealand as far as facilitating the arrival of visitors is concerned. This makes it essential that our border processing is efficient, focused and operates with the highest standards of customer service.

### **Passenger Processing Times**

New Zealand is a signatory to an international agreement (ICAO) that defines times within which arriving passengers must be processed. While ICAO defines minimum standards, New Zealand's tourism competitors set the actual 'benchmark' standards. Our competitors provide visitors arriving in New Zealand with a service expectation. Visitors' overall satisfaction will depend on whether or not their expectations are met on arrival in New Zealand.

TIANZ recommends that central government (including the agencies involved in border processing) and industry work together to agree on some average clearance standards that protect and manage biosecurity risks while ensuring that visitors to New Zealand have a positive experience on arriving in New Zealand.

### **Passenger Service Standards**

To ensure high passenger service standards:

- Border staff must be well trained, friendly, and sensitive to the cultural/social needs of visitors. Staff must be carefully selected for this role and appropriate training provided
- Border staff must have access to the latest technology that facilitates a smooth and seamless arrival
- Agencies with responsibilities at the border must co-ordinate their services (and should ideally be merged) to ensure visitors are processed with the minimum level of inconvenience as possible.

### **Intelligent Processing**

TIANZ believes there is the potential to maximise border clearance efficiency through the use of intelligence-based processing and the deployment of new technology.

As an example of such technology, bags might be x-rayed prior to being loaded onto baggage carousels and only tagged bags subjected to further screening in the arrival hall.

TIANZ is willing to work with central government to develop border management techniques that facilitate visitor arrivals while managing biosecurity risks.

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## **Workforce Planning**

Tourism numbers are still growing quite rapidly. Airports are becoming 24 hours-a-day operations and border agencies must respond accordingly. Large charter flights create irregular peaks over and above scheduled flights. This means that flows of visitors and baggage can be 'lumpy'.

Our biosecurity strategy needs to recognise these peaks and workforce planning systems and staff schedules must be able to accommodate such variation without compromising processing standards and customer service.

## **Effective Risk Management**

Sound risk management techniques should be deployed to minimise risks to biosecurity while minimising disruption to the goods and people crossing our border.

Useful techniques might include:

- The development of pre-clearance checks visitors undergo before they leave for New Zealand, in association with other jurisdictions
- The establishment of MAF intelligence databases to help develop risk profiles of arriving passengers (e.g. less intervention for passengers with a lower risk profile)
- Harmonisation of procedures with similar overseas jurisdictions, i.e. Australia
- Disposal of risk material by MAF on airport sites rather than transporting materials to off-airport sites
- Managing only 'real' risks, i.e. New Zealand apples loaded onto a cruise ship at a New Zealand port should not be prevented from being offloaded at another New Zealand port.

In summary, TIANZ believes that these techniques would enhance both the facilitation of the entry of goods and services into New Zealand, AND enhance biosecurity risk management.

## **Resources should be appropriately prioritised**

Visitor arrival figures for the 12 months to April 2001 show that:

- 99.3% of passengers arrivals to New Zealand were via airports; and
- 69.7% of such passengers arrived through Auckland Airport.

TIANZ recommends that agency resources be deployed accordingly.

## **Single Border Clearance Agency**

Feedback we have received suggests that border users have noticed increased goodwill between the MAF Quarantine Service and the New Zealand Customs Service as a result of the Carter Report (New Zealand's Border-Effective and Efficient Management of Border Services, October 1999). However, it cannot be

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taken for granted that such progress will be maintained while there are multiple agencies involved at the border.

TIANZ recommends that the Quarantine Service be merged with the New Zealand Customs Service. We believe that such structural integration would enable both quarantine and customs officials to build up a portfolio of expertise and specialist skills that could be deployed across all areas of border activities, thereby improving operational efficiency and risk management. Such integration would also enable the creation of a 'one stop shop' for border management and would provide a clear point of contact for all stakeholders and customers.

### **Education and Enforcement**

TIANZ believes that sound biosecurity policies are not only important to our environment, they are also important to ensure that New Zealand continues to be a popular tourist destination.

TIANZ recognises that the tourism industry has a strong role to play in assisting in managing the risks to our biosecurity. We can do this by working with the agencies with a role in biosecurity management to ensure that international visitors to New Zealand have a good level of awareness about the delicate nature of New Zealand's biodiversity.

Our industry can do this through:

- Providing in-flight information about the importance of biosecurity to New Zealand and the role that visitors have in minimising the biosecurity risks to our environment
- leveraging off Tourism New Zealand's "100% pure campaign" and tying biosecurity messages to this campaign
- industry players encouraging visitors to "take-only photos, and leave only footprints"
- the promotion of environmentally friendly business practices such as Green Globe that generate an awareness among visitors and those working in the tourism industry of the strong relationship between the environment and the tourism industry.

TIANZ is willing to work with border agencies to develop messages conveyed through appropriate channels to reach target audiences. Such targets should include:

- passengers on aircraft
- passengers on ships
- travellers on yachts
- crew on vessels arriving in New Zealand
- corporate travellers
- ship agents and tour guides.

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Messages should take into account that some travellers will be inexperienced, while others will be frequent travellers. Further to this, some travellers will not speak any English. Therefore, messages must also be conveyed in languages other than English.

### **Evaluating the success of initiatives**

The evaluation of the effectiveness of programmes is essential. This is necessary to improve and maximise the effectiveness of programme design.

Evaluation should be based on:

- an assessment by target audiences, i.e. through a series of focus groups
- an assessment by communication experts
- the use of performance targets. Such targets might include: items in food bins versus seizures at the exit lanes; false declarations; and a lack of apparent awareness during interviews at customs.

TIANZ believes that enforcement should take a 'back seat' to education. Education and awareness raising should be the cornerstone of any risk management programme. However, where direct enforcement is utilised, measures should be promptly and professionally implemented in a clearly understood and consistent manner, without undue harshness.

### **Public/Private sector co-operation**

TIANZ strongly supports industry and other stakeholder involvement in managing biosecurity risks.

The Carter Report identified a need to involve stakeholders in decision-making on biosecurity policy. TIANZ considers that stakeholder involvement needs to be strengthened. Enhanced stakeholder involvement would improve both the quality of decisions made, and the effectiveness of initiatives.

To date, forums such as the regional and national Air Facilitation Meetings have played a useful role in improving the communication between stakeholders on the issues surrounding airport facilitation (including airports, airlines, border agencies, and tourism organisations). In our experience, these meetings have provided a valuable setting for discussions on biosecurity issues, and might provide a useful model that could be used to increase interactive stakeholder involvement.

The lack of shared information and communications between agencies is also an issue (refer to our earlier comments on the need for a Single Border Agency). Well-integrated services and the use of up-to-date technology are necessary to promote information-sharing and effective 'internal' communications.

### **Funding**

TIANZ believes that debates about cost recovery get in the way of decisions on appropriate risk management and best practice.

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However, this document provides an opportunity for comment and hopefully for the resolution of this issue.

TIANZ considers that central government should fully fund passenger clearance.

This is for the following reasons:

- border controls benefit the whole country, and not just one section of the country
- central government is best placed to determine (in consultation with key stakeholders) appropriate levels of biosecurity risk management
- in a cost recovery environment, those paying would have a stake in seeking the minimisation of interventions, creating potential biosecurity risks.

Overall, TIANZ believes that our national community, having identified biosecurity risks, must be prepared to fund the initiatives required to manage such risks. Such initiatives should not be imposed on any particular groups or sectors of the economy.

## **Other Tourism Issues**

### **Cruise Ships**

Cruise ship visits are rapidly growing in New Zealand. Cruise ships and passengers present different risks and challenges to biosecurity than air travellers.

Cruise ships companies, ships' agents and stevedores require clear information about biosecurity as it applies to cruise ships. Such information requirements include:

- information on the legislation affecting the cruise ship industry and its passengers, and the circumstances under which legislation applies
- regular updates on regulatory requirements and any new risks that are detected
- information on when pre-clearances are required, i.e. for arrivals to Milford Sound
- clear information on necessary processes for the disposal of ships' wastes (chemicals, food, garbage, water, sewage, and ballast water).

TIANZ considers that the dissemination of such information as part of a total border 'package' is essential and is becoming increasingly urgent as more ships visit New Zealand.

## **Summary**

In summary, there is a strong connection between biosecurity and the tourism industry in New Zealand. The tourism industry is built upon New Zealand maintaining its biosecurity, and the industry recognises that it has a strong role to play in helping to manage the risks to our biosecurity.

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Border management is one part of the risk management process that all overseas visitors are exposed to on their arrival in New Zealand. The experiences they have of this process contribute to visitors' impressions of New Zealand, and may affect their desire to make future visits to New Zealand.

TIANZ strongly supports sophisticated processing at our borders that minimises biosecurity risks to New Zealand while minimising the inconvenience of this processing to overseas visitors.

To achieve this requires the use of up-to-date technology, best practices, well-trained staff, a single border agency and a partnership between industry (and stakeholders) and the border agency.

TIANZ offers the use of its resources to assist central government with the task of enhancing our risk management processes while maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of such processes.

*Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIANZ)  
December 2001*

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