

NZTS 2015 launch – Speech by the Chair of TIA, Norm Thompson

Banquet Hall, Beehive. 12-1.30pm, 7 November 2007

Tena koutou, tena koutou, tena koutou katoa.

Prime Minister, Minister, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

The Tourism Industry Association, as representative of the tourism industry, has been pleased to work with government on developing the Strategy.

At times it's been challenging to reconcile the interests of central and local government, with the interests of private sector operators.

But we all agree that sustainability – environmental, social and financial – is the priority for the tourism industry.

New Zealand's potential visitors – particularly those from UK and Europe – are increasingly concerned about the environmental impacts of their travel globally.

What we think about climate change and its impacts is irrelevant. What is relevant is what our potential visitors think – especially those from the northern hemisphere.

We must understand and meet their environmental expectations.

It's vital to ensure 100% Pure is 100% Pure.

Our government has put climate change and environmental sustainability firmly on the table.

But even without government leadership, there is a market incentive for tourism businesses and the wider tourism sector to protect and enhance New Zealand's environment.

Our environment is the main reason why international visitors come here, and New Zealanders consider it a birthright to be able to travel to and enjoy untouched wilderness.

The 2015 Tourism Strategy's goal is ambitious – for the tourism industry to take action and show leadership on environmental sustainability to the rest of New Zealand and the world.

But it is achievable, with support from central and local government in areas like recycling, energy efficiency, water efficiency and conservation projects.

Tourism operators have the immediate opportunity to develop 'green' or 'responsible' tourism products, including opportunities for visitors to contribute to the conservation and management of New Zealand's environment.

Operator action is also required in five areas:

- Waste management
- Minimisation of energy use
- Minimisation of water use
- Construction of environmentally friendly buildings
- Replacement of vehicles/fleet with models that meet minimum European emission standards

We have the opportunity to ensure international visitors feel compelled to travel to New Zealand because of the way we interact with our environment – because we really are 100% Pure and we offer outstanding, world class, ‘responsible travel’ choices.

Ladies and Gentlemen: we don’t have a choice – there is no plan B with climate change.

For most tourism businesses, financial sustainability must take priority if the business is to survive. But financial sustainability – i.e. the bottom line – can be enhanced by:

- environmental sustainability (ensuring your business looks after the environment in which it operates) and
- social sustainability (ensuring your business is a valuable and responsible member of your community).

Thus each outcome of the strategy is interdependent.

Development of the Strategy has been a top priority for TIA and we will be leading the implementation planning for the industry in conjunction with sector trade associations and TIA Members.

For 2015, we have a vision: that visitors arriving to New Zealand will have a world-class experience at every stage of their trip – from the time they step on the plane, through border control, to their accommodation and activities, the service they experience and the environment they enjoy.

We will have strong, environmentally responsible tourism businesses that we are proud to have represent their communities and New Zealand.

I’m delighted to see the offerings from our tourism industry are continually improving in quality, and recent Tourism Industry Award winners like NZONE, KEA Campers and Dive! Tutukaka provide examples for others to aspire to.

We must deliver consistently remarkable experiences to all visitors, international and domestic, to stand out from our competition.

As a result, our visitors stay longer, spend more and encourage all their friends and relations to travel to this world-leading destination.

Tourism already earns \$8.3 billion in foreign exchange annually – more than any other single export sector. More than dairy, more than meat and more than wood.

Combined with the \$10.3 billion domestic visitors spend each year, tourism contributes \$18.6 billion to New Zealand's economy. Achieving the vision of this Strategy will only increase that contribution and benefit the entire country.

Achieving this vision will involve many more people and organisations than those directly involved in tourism. This is a Strategy for the whole of New Zealand and it's pleasing to see officials from a variety of government agencies here today, supporting our industry to make this happen.

We need to be innovative around these challenges and work together, to set us apart from our competition.

Finally, in 2015, I want to see Al Gore making a new movie: *The 100% Pure Truth*, about how New Zealand's tourism industry has confronted and solved its climate change challenges.

Earlier we heard from our industry colleagues about the first two outcomes of the strategy. Let's now take a look at outcomes 3 and 4.

Outcome 3 is: the tourism sector takes a leading role in protecting and enhancing New Zealand's environment

Outcome 4 is: the tourism sector and communities work together for mutual benefit.

Let's take a look at what they have to say.