

FREEDOM CAMPING DISCUSSION DOCUMENT – DRAFT AS AT 2 JUNE 2017

Context

Freedom camping is an activity that is valued by many New Zealanders and our international visitors, and has a long history in New Zealand.

Since 2011, we have experienced unprecedented growth in the number of visitors to New Zealand. In the year ended April 2017, 3.6 million people visited New Zealand, up from 2.5 million in 2011. Domestic tourism activity also increased over the same period.

Freedom campers make up a small number of visitors to New Zealand, but the number of people who choose to freedom camp while in New Zealand has grown, as has the number of New Zealanders who freedom camp.

[Spectrum of campers image]

The Freedom Camping Act was introduced in 2011 ahead of the Rugby World Cup to help manage numbers of freedom campers, by giving councils and the Department of Conservation the ability to issue infringement notices. At the time of the introduction of the Act, the main concerns from the public were around protecting the right of New Zealanders to freedom camp. The Act protected these rights by having a clause preventing councils from banning freedom camping across the district.

Because of the increasing number of people freedom camping, some communities are expressing concerns about the impacts of freedom camping on public places. There have been increasing calls for more to be done at a local and national level to manage these impacts.

Freedom camping, like any activity that takes place in a public space, will always have an impact on the surrounding area, whether that's through volumes of people, the amount of waste produced or simply by blocking people's views.

There are many different views about freedom camping in New Zealand, and as a country we need to make some choices about whether, when and how freedom camping takes place in New Zealand.

This document is designed to spark a discussion on these choices. Each section outlines a different choice we have to make, and gives you some information about why this choice is important.

We need your views on these choices so that we can ensure the way we manage freedom camping in New Zealand works for New Zealanders.

What do we mean by freedom camping?

First off, it is important that everyone agrees what freedom camping actually means and what activities it does (and doesn't) cover. This helps to make it clear which people, places and activities are covered by freedom camping rules.

What are the choices?

One option is to define freedom camping broadly and capture all behaviour that involves someone camping in a public place for free.

A broad definition like this would cover people who camp for any reason – including people doing things that we may not currently think of as freedom camping. Under this definition, a visitor to New Zealand sleeping in a vehicle parked in a public place, a surfer sleeping in a beach car park before a dawn surf, and a homeless person sleeping on a city street would all be treated as freedom campers.

The benefit of this approach is that it means a consistent rule for everyone and it is easy to understand and apply.

However, a broad definition would mean that we couldn't distinguish between the sort of freedom camping that we think has the most impact – for instance campervans parked near people's houses and a single trumper overnighting in an empty carpark in the bush would both be covered even though the impact is different. It also means that it would be more difficult to reflect different attitudes towards different reasons for freedom camping - for instance, many people would feel differently about a homeless person or a seasonal worker than a holidaymaker staying overnight in a car in a public place.

[Wide spectrum of campers image]

Another option is to define freedom camping narrowly, and focus just on the sorts of camping in public places that we think can cause the most harm. This would allow us to concentrate more on the types of freedom camping that people see as a problem, rather than on all people staying in public places. It would also allow us to potentially exclude groups like homeless people or back country trampers from the definition of freedom camping, so they would not need to follow the same rules.

The narrower the definition, however, the more difficult it is to avoid creating unfairness or inconsistencies between different groups. It can make it more difficult to enforce the rules if they only apply to some people and not others, especially where we cannot tell them apart – say if both trampers and holiday makers were staying in the same DOC carpark. A narrower definition also has the potential to create confusion, where people might not know whether they are covered by the rules or not.

The definition, and whether it is easy to understand or not, can also directly impact how expensive it is to enforce freedom camping rules. The issues around enforcement cost are covered [later in this discussion paper](#) [link].

[Narrow spectrum of campers image]

What we currently do

Under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 freedom camping has three main attributes:

- it is free – that is, the camper has paid no fee for staying there
- it takes place in a public place which is accessible by motor vehicle , boat or close to a Great Walks Track – this means that people camping in New Zealand’s back country are not considered to be freedom camping
- it involves activities associated with camping – e.g. sleeping, ablutions, cooking.

One important exclusion is where someone pulls off the road to take a rest from driving. NZTA actively encourages this type of activity to avoid driver fatigue, a known cause of crashes.

Freedom campers can only be restricted or excluded from land administered by the Department of Conservation (DOC) or councils under the Freedom Camping Act. The Act doesn’t cover private land - for example a farmer’s land that they might allow people to camp on for free is not covered.

Case study/Examples

Some examples here of different types of activities:

- Tramping/hunting/surfing
- Homeless
- Seasonal workers
- Grey nomads/NZ families
- International visitors

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

What people/activities/places do you think should be covered by the term “freedom camping”?

Are there some groups that should definitely be excluded from definitions of freedom camping?
Why?

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Does freedom camping still have a place in New Zealand?

A major choice we have is whether freedom camping is still something we want New Zealanders and our overseas visitors to have as an option when travelling around our country.

What are the choices?

One possible view is that freedom camping has had its day and is no longer an option we want to offer people.

As noted earlier, recent significant growth in visitor numbers, and the resulting growth in freedom campers, have meant that freedom camping is having a big impact in some places around New Zealand. The sheer numbers of people freedom camping in some places, particularly during peak visitor season, means that freedom camping is more visible and causing more pressures, even where people are camping responsibly. The number of incidents where people are not behaving as we would like them to has also increased significantly – even though this still makes up a very small proportion of all freedom camping activity.

Added to this, the government and the tourism industry have been focusing for some time on encouraging visitors that are going to spend the most money while they are here.¹ Freedom campers are often thought of as people travelling “on the cheap” and trying to avoid spending money on accommodation – and may not be seen as consistent with a focus on high value tourism.

On the other hand, freedom camping has a long history in New Zealand. Many New Zealand families as well as overseas visitors have enjoyed travelling around the country in motorhomes or caravans and being able to stay in beautiful, unspoilt places – and some see it as an important part of their birthright as New Zealanders.

It is also not necessarily the case that freedom campers are travelling on the cheap. Data suggests freedom campers stay longer and spend more on average than other visitors (though less per day). International visitors who did some freedom camping in New Zealand spent an average of \$5000 (per visitor), compared to the average for all visitors of around \$3,300 (per visitor). These visitors do tend to spend much longer in New Zealand. [\[Link to spend graph\]](#)

International visitors who freedom camped spent about \$380 million a year (based on a three year average). Freedom campers accounted for almost four per cent of total annual spending by international visitors, which reflected their relatively small numbers.²

In addition, freedom camping can be a great way to attract visitors to less visited destinations, and to provide an accommodation option in places that have less traditional tourism accommodation but still want to attract visitors to their region.

¹ One of the goals of the government’s tourism strategy is to attract high value visitors; Tourism New Zealand targets for value; and one of the targets of Tourism Industry Aotearoa’s Tourism 2025 framework is about identifying and pursuing opportunities that will deliver the greatest economic value.

² Statistics on freedom campers can vary significantly from year to year, and the numbers used are three year averages. This is because only around two percent of all international visitors undertook any freedom camping and because the International Visitor Survey samples only a small proportion of all international visitors. The average sample size over the past five years is around 200 for visitors who did any freedom camping, and 50 for visitors who mainly freedom camped. Individual figures and year on year changes should be treated with caution, but trends over many years are more robust.

What we currently do

The basis of the Freedom Camping Act is that freedom camping is something that we want to take place in New Zealand. It therefore focuses on how we can provide people with options for freedom camping, and giving DOC and councils the tools they need to manage the impacts locally.

Case study/examples

Spend profile of visitors (including freedom campers) [Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

Do you think freedom camping has had its day?

How do you think freedom camping fits with New Zealand's focus on attracting high value visitors from overseas?

How important do you think it is that New Zealanders are able to continue to freedom camp?

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Where should people be able to freedom camp?

If we agree that freedom camping still has a place in New Zealand, the next question is to ask where freedom camping should be allowed. Allowing freedom camping to take place means that freedom campers need to have a variety of places to stay that are close to the places they want to visit. But local communities will also want to have a say on where freedom camping should be allowed in their region.

What are the choices?

One option is to allow freedom camping to take place anywhere. This would most likely be supported by those who see freedom camping as something all New Zealanders are entitled to do, or who see it as an essential part of our offering to international visitors. This approach would also give freedom campers true freedom to move around New Zealand. It might even mean freedom camping becomes less visible as freedom campers will have more choices about where to stay and will be more dispersed around a region rather than all congregating in one area.

However, allowing freedom camping to happen anywhere could lead to situations where locals and other visitors are overwhelmed by visitor numbers in particularly popular locations, or freedom camping takes place in areas that are not suitable for freedom camping (for instance, environmentally-vulnerable areas or sports grounds). This is more likely with more growth in freedom camper numbers.

Another possible choice is to put wide-reaching blanket bans in place and then only allow freedom camping in specific places. Public landowners and managers (like councils, DOC, LINZ or NZTA) could be required to consult with communities when making decisions about where freedom camping should be allowed.

This approach would help ensure freedom camping didn't take place in unsuitable locations. It would also be likely to result in particular places being earmarked for freedom camping, making it easier to provide facilities like toilets.

The problem with this approach is that we might end up restricting the ability to freedom camp so far that it doesn't suit those who wish to use it as an accommodation option. This could mean that freedom campers have no places to go in a particular region, or can't stay anywhere near attractions they want to visit. As visitor numbers grow, this could also mean not enough room in an area for the level of demand. If there weren't enough designated areas available then campers might have to choose between paid accommodation or breaking the law.

Even if adequate places for freedom camping were provided, concentrating freedom campers in a few specific locations would mean that there is more of an impact on those locations.

In addition, this could mean inconsistencies where different rules are set by different landowners – leading to different rules on neighbouring land plots.

What we currently do

Freedom camping is permitted under the Freedom Camping Act, but councils (in consultation with the public) and DOC are empowered to make rules to restrict or prohibit access to an area where it is necessary to protect the area and environment, protect the health and safety of people who may visit the area and/or protect access to the area.

Councils must have identified a specific problem that can be addressed by a bylaw. They must also consult with the public on the bylaw, and cannot make bylaws that have the effect of prohibiting freedom camping in all the local authority areas in its district.

Rules are based on management of land – Councils and DOC can set rules on land they administer, but not on LINZ or NZTA land.

Case studies / examples

Overseas examples – France/Germany designate stopping areas with facilities (aires de service and stellplatz), Norway's right to roam and consequences. Australia's rules

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

What is the right balance between allowing freedom campers to choose where they can camp and allowing local circumstances to be taken into account when determining where freedom camping should happen?

What makes a place suitable or unsuitable for freedom camping? Is it location, facilities or something else?

Does it make a difference if land is rural or in a metro area?

Should we be encouraging campers to congregate together and increase the impact in these few locations? Or should we encourage them to disperse out to prevent overcrowding and spread out the impact?

How should people be able to freedom camp?

As well as **where** freedom camping takes place, we also need to think about whether we want to set rules around **how** people freedom camp. This could include:

- whether a freedom camping vehicle is self-contained or not
- how long freedom campers can stay in one place
- how many freedom campers are allowed in a place at any one time.

Note that this is a different question to how we expect freedom campers to behave, which is covered off in more detail later in this discussion document [\[link\]](#).

What are the choices?

One view might be that freedom campers should be able to choose how they freedom camp – including what they are camping in (e.g. a self-contained vehicle, a non-self-contained vehicle or a tent), how long they stay and no matter how many other people are staying there – assuming that they are staying in a place where freedom camping is allowed. This would give the widest range of choices to freedom campers.

Another view is that we should have much more control over the way in which freedom camping happens as well as where it happens.

One part of this might be that we ban or significantly limit freedom camping for all vehicles that are not self-contained.³ For instance, it could be a requirement that people camping without the means to deal with your own waste (for example in non-self-contained vehicles or tents) have to be within 100m of a toilet or facility block.

[Signs showing example restrictions]

This would probably help to reduce some of the environmental impacts associated with freedom camping. However, it would significantly constrain who could freedom camp and where they could freedom camp – for instance people sleeping in their car over night before heading off on an early morning hunting or tramping trip might not be able to do so. In addition, there are people who freedom camp responsibly with a vehicle that isn't self-contained.

Setting time limits for freedom campers, or setting limits on the numbers of freedom campers that can stay at one location is another way in which freedom camping can be managed. This would help to reduce the impacts on those places that get especially busy, particularly during peak season. Again, it does impact on the ability of freedom campers to choose where and how long to stay. The effects of these limits might be particularly restrictive if a region is also significantly limiting the number of places available to freedom camp.

A related idea is that we could require all freedom campers to have a permit to freedom camp. The rules of a permit might include restrictions on the types of vehicles, the duration of stay and other controls, and the permit could be cancelled if a freedom camper didn't obey the rules. This would give regions much more control over who is allowed to stay in a particular place or what sort of

³ A certified self-contained vehicle has been inspected and certified that it meets minimum standards for a toilet, storage of waste water, storage of rubbish and the supply of potable water for drinking and sanitary needs. The standard for self-containment is managed by the public and private sector.

vehicle they could use. Again, however, this would take away much of the freedom associated with freedom camping.

What we currently do

The Freedom Camping Act does not place any restrictions on how people should be able to freedom camp. But it does enable Councils to create bylaws restricting or prohibiting for the purpose of protecting an area (link to more info). Some types of restrictions placed include on length of time stayed or on whether the vehicle is self-contained or not.

When making these rules Councils must be satisfied that they are the most appropriate and proportionate way of protecting the area, protecting the health and safety of people who may visit the area and/or protecting access to the area.

Case study / examples

Places that freedom camping can happen, and ways in which people can freedom camp. Maybe carry through examples from trade-off 1.

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

Does **how** people freedom camp matter?

Should we restrict freedom camping based on whether the vehicle is self-contained or not?

If we were to restrict **how** freedom camping happens, should we make more places available to freedom campers?

Should freedom camping be subject to time limits and/or limits on the numbers of people allowed at any one spot?

What do you think about making freedom campers get permits?

Who should be responsible for making decisions about freedom camping?

One of the big choices we need to make about freedom camping is who sets the rules – particularly rules about where freedom camping should or shouldn't be allowed.

What are the choices?

We could decide to make central government responsible for deciding when and where freedom camping should take place. In this case, a set of rules around freedom camping might specify some types of places that freedom camping isn't allowed (for instance, freedom campers might not be allowed to camp too near to waterways, or might have to make sure they are within a certain distance from a public toilet). The same set of rules could then be applied across New Zealand.

The big benefit of this approach is that this is less confusing for freedom campers – we could provide them with one set of rules when they enter the country, and these would apply no matter where visitors went. Local government would also not have to go to the expense of making and consulting on local rules (bylaws), or on educating freedom campers about where they can and can't go.

However, regions and communities would have little say in where freedom camping is allowed, and local circumstances would not be able to be taken into account. Communities would still also need to meet the costs of freedom camping – such as providing and maintaining facilities.

On the other hand, we could allow councils to decide where and how freedom camping takes place in their region.

This would enable each community to make a decision about where they think freedom camping should take place in their region, or maybe even whether it should take place at all. Differences between regions – for instance in varying local attitudes towards freedom camping between regions or the need to protect places the community does not think are suitable for freedom camping - could be reflected in the rules for that region. This could also allow those regions that welcome freedom camping to attract more freedom campers, while other regions might discourage it.

The downside of this approach is that it would be much more confusing from the point of view of the visitor, who will not necessarily be aware of where different rules apply. This includes across different districts or even in the same district with different agencies responsible for managing neighbouring plots of land.

If regions had total control over freedom camping, some might ban freedom camping altogether, or put severe restrictions on freedom camping, which would prevent New Zealanders as well as overseas visitors from freedom camping in that region. Banning or severely restricting freedom camping in a region might also put increased pressure on surrounding regions.

A mix of these two approaches might see central government setting some national rules. For instance, central government could decide freedom camping is allowed everywhere (or only allowed in places identified by regions) with regions then identifying some places they don't (or do) want it to take place.

What currently happens?

The current rules are based on who manages the land. Councils and DOC can set rules on land they administer, but not on LINZ or NZTA land.

[Jurisdiction complexity image]

At the moment, freedom camping is allowed anywhere, unless an area is identified as restricted or prohibited by local councils or DOC. The reasons that councils can restrict or prohibit freedom camping to take place include protecting the area, protecting the health and safety of people who may visit the area or protecting access to the area.

DOC can also restrict or prohibit access to some areas, which allows them to take local situations into account.

Rules therefore change between districts and between agencies who manage land in the same district. To understand what rule applies where, visitors would need to know who is responsible for the land so they can identify the rule that applies.

Information to help visitors identify where they can freedom camp is often provided through apps and websites - these are often crowd sourced and the information is not always reliable (though the creators do work with councils to make changes as necessary).

Case studies / examples

Councils' different approaches to freedom camping bylaws (in a neutral manner).

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

What do you think is the right balance between having the same rules across the country or enabling regions to make their own decisions about where and when freedom camping takes place?

If you think having the same set of rules across the country is important, how do we get all regions to agree to this, given the difference in views across regions?

If you think enabling each region to make its own choice is important, how can we make things less confusing for our visitors in terms of where and when they can freedom camp in a region?

On what basis should regions or DOC be able to restrict or ban freedom camping?

Do we need to protect the rights of visitors – particularly New Zealanders - to freedom camp in regions that do not want freedom camping to take place?

Should the ownership of land in public places matter for setting the rules?

Who should be responsible for providing the facilities freedom campers need?

Another choice we have to make is how far central and local government should go in providing these facilities.

Many freedom campers rely on public facilities. The facilities needed by freedom campers will vary depending on the type of vehicle. Self-contained vehicles may have no need of a toilet, but they will require a dump station for the emptying of waste, somewhere to fill up with fresh water and to empty rubbish. Other campers may need toilets, showers and facilities for washing dishes.

What are the choices?

There is an argument that local government and DOC should simply respond to the demand for public facilities from freedom campers.

Local government provides facilities for the public which are used by visitors to their district, as well as locals – including public toilets, public spaces and pull off areas for cars. Similarly DOC is generally responsible for providing these facilities on public conservation lands. Other agencies, like NZTA, also provide public facilities on the land that they manage.

[Key freedom camper facilities images]

However councils and government agencies have other pressures and priorities on their finances – they can't fund everything. Central government has recognised this constraint with funding for infrastructure needs through the Mid-Sized Facilities Fund and the establishment of a new Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

Another issue is that government providing facilities to freedom campers might stop businesses from providing them or coming up with innovative ways to make money from freedom camping. For instance, there are new products on the market that allow people to rent a space on their property to people staying in a campervan, or that provide parking spaces and charge for the use of showers and laundry facilities. There might be less incentive for these products to be developed if such services are being provided for free by central or local government.

Local government providing facilities to freedom campers could even undercut businesses already providing these services – in particular, campgrounds. People who might otherwise have stayed in a private campground might decide to use free council-provided facilities instead.

What we currently do:

At the moment, there are a couple of options for low or no-cost camping.

DOC and many councils provide free and low cost campsites (often less than \$10/night). The private sector is also providing some innovative options – club services to access free sites, hiring spaces on private land, and providing free parking but charging for services used by campers (like showers and wifi). New Zealand also has a network of paid-campsites, and these can range in price, depending on facilities provided and location.

At the moment local councils bear the majority of the cost of providing the types of infrastructure used by freedom campers (with some support provided from central government). This includes facilities like car-parks, toilets, wastewater dump stations, rubbish and, in some cases, showers.

This infrastructure is used by more than just freedom campers – for instance, toilets and rubbish bins will be used by locals and visitors to an area, as well as freedom campers.

Campgrounds are covered by the Camping-Ground Regulations 1985, meaning anyone who sets up a campground has to comply with these rules.⁴ These regulations set out the requirements for fresh water supply, and for ablution and sanitary fixtures, and the hygiene requirements for campgrounds.

Case study / examples

Options for camping in New Zealand – free and paid. Innovation in freedom camping

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

How can we make sure adequate freedom camping facilities are provided while not discouraging private development/investment?

What is the role of government (local and central) to provide options for freedom campers?

How can we make sure private operators like campgrounds aren't impacted on by local councils providing facilities to freedom campers?

How can we ensure appropriate use and maintenance of facilities that have not been provided with freedom campers in mind?

⁴ Camp grounds may seek an exemption from the local council for special circumstances. One such reason for an exemption may be that the camp ground is only available to certified-self-contained vehicles and visitors are expected to meet their own sanitation needs.

Who should pay for freedom camping?

Despite the name, freedom camping isn't free. For freedom campers, many of the day-to-day living needs are met through free public services including toilets and other facilities (installing and servicing) and making sure people obey the rules. One choice we need to think about is who should pay for these costs.

What are the choices?

One option is that councils and DOC (and ultimately ratepayers and taxpayers) pay for the costs of freedom camping.

There are three ways that councils can raise revenue to fund the costs of building and maintaining facilities –charging a fee for use, revenue from ratepayers and government grants.

Funding from ratepayers doesn't reflect the demand for services and this means that, in popular destinations where there are few ratepayers, funding those public services is likely to come at the expense of other community services. Charging fees for services directly may also make freedom campers less likely to use them.

In addition, while councils get funding from rates, they are limited in their ability to raise further revenue in response to increased visitors and therefore increased demand on services. Councils cannot raise revenue directly from people freedom camping in order to meet the full costs of providing facilities.

DOC is currently only able to collect fees from users of specific facilities, like huts and campgrounds. Toilet and waste facilities on public conservation land used by free campers are paid for by taxpayers.

Another option is that these costs are met more by freedom campers through a fee or levy charged when someone uses freedom camping facilities, or when they hire a vehicle to freedom camp. This could be seen as more fair because those using the services are the ones paying for them.

One big issue with charging for facilities is that locals will have paid for these facilities through rates and taxes - so a charge for using facilities might not be as fair as it first sounds. And, as noted above, charging for facilities does not tend to cover the full costs of providing them.

Levying a tax on freedom camping vehicles - hired campervans for example - would also be problematic. It would not cover all freedom campers as those who use tents or those who purchase or own their own vehicle would not be captured. A tax on specific types of vehicle would either miss those who sleep in vans (or other vehicles not specifically designed for sleeping in), or capture those who use those vehicles for purposes other than sleeping in.

A further question would be how to fairly distribute the revenue received from such fees/levies or taxes on campers. Freedom campers move around the country, and working out which regions bear which costs (and therefore what proportion of the revenue they should receive) would be hard if not impossible.

What we currently do

Councils provide infrastructure used by freedom campers and others. Central government provides some funding – through the Tourism Infrastructure Fund, and through NZTA, LINZ and DOC on land owned or managed by these agencies.

As an alternative to these facilities, paid campsites (with a range of costs and facilities) are also provided for a fee, by DOC and also commercial operators and community trusts.

Case studies / examples

MBIE's Mid-sized Facilities Fund and Tourism infrastructure fund broadly – examples of what has been built

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

Who do you think should pay for the costs of freedom camping and how?

DRAFT
Released under the Official Information Act 1982

How do we deal with problems caused by freedom camping?

No matter what approach we take to freedom camping, we will need to find a way to deal with any problems that is effective in both preventing and addressing these problems, while also being value for money for taxpayers and ratepayers.

What are the choices?

One option could be to design a wide-reaching, comprehensive system with constant monitoring at busy sites, but such a system would be very expensive. When determining whether these costs are worth it we need to look at other priorities for the agency responsible for enforcing the rules, and also at how much revenue would be raised compared to the cost.

On the other hand, there is no point in having a system that is cheap to enforce but does not act as a deterrent to breaking the rules.

We also need to look at how the enforcement regime fits in with New Zealand's overall justice system, and whether any punishment is proportional to the harm caused by the activity.

One possible approach is to require international visitors to pay any outstanding infringement fees at the border before leaving New Zealand. This would require a change to how infringements are recorded, and then shared with the Ministry of Justice and the border sector agencies. It would also be out of step with other parts of the justice system – currently only border security infringements are collected from international visitors prior to departure and large court fines.

Another approach is that fines should be paid at the point they are issued. New Zealand does not currently have a system to allow for this type of fine to be issued – the right to dispute a fine before paying is an important part of the Summary Proceedings Act. It would be possible to implement such a system, but this would likely require changes that would have implications far wider than freedom camping.

One way to deal with problems is to prevent them in the first place. We can do this by setting clear expectations on what the rules for freedom camping are, and to communicate these rules clearly and consistently.

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What we currently do

The current infringement system is based on \$200 infringements to people who do not comply with the bylaws, for example those who stay within a prohibited area. In contrast parking infringements are between \$40 and \$150 for parking in a prohibited area. Freedom camping infringements can be given out by Council officers or DOC, and are payable within 28 days of receipt.

DOC and Councils currently meet cost of enforcement, and the amount of money a council chooses to spend on monitoring is a decision made by each council and not consistent across districts. Most councils recover between 40% and 60% of freedom camping infringements.

Some councils and DOC focus on responsible camping educating campers as part of their freedom camping management strategy, and the Responsible Camping Forum led a responsible camping etiquette social media campaign over the most recent summer peak season. This was effective, reaching 38,350 people. NZMCA also has a code of conduct that encourages responsible camping.

Case studies / examples

Challenges with the current enforcement system

[Case studies will be shown in pop-up boxes or clicked through to]

What do you think?

What is the right way to deal with problems caused by people not following the rules for freedom camping?

How do we balance the cost and the effectiveness of an enforcement system?

Should we put more resources into educating campers or into taking enforcement action?

Central and local government and the tourism industry all have a role to play in relation to education of freedom campers. What should be the role of each group?