

**MEDIA RELEASE  
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**New Leadership, Shared Purpose: BYATA Announces Its 2026/2027 Board**

Auckland, NZ - The Backpacker Youth and Adventure Travel Association (BYATA) has announced its 2026/2027 Board, bringing together experienced industry leaders from across New Zealand's youth, backpacker, accommodation and adventure travel sectors.

Brett Duncan, Managing Director of Adventure Hostels NZ, has been appointed Chair of BYATA. A strong advocate for New Zealand's youth and backpacker travel sector, Brett brings extensive industry experience and a genuine commitment to the people and businesses that make up the sector. He will lead BYATA as it builds on its strong foundation and continues to strengthen its advocacy and support for members.

Joining the executive leadership, Lucy Haslam, General Manager of Kiwi Experience, has been appointed Vice Chair and will continue as BYATA's Tourism New Zealand lead and lead for Association Relationships. Laura Crowther of Tourism Adventure Group continues as Treasurer, supporting the association's financial wellbeing and sustainability. Brian Westwood will continue as President, providing valuable experience and continuity as BYATA progresses its strategic direction and advocacy work.

The association also welcomes Nadine Hartl, Business Development Manager at Haka House, as a new Board member, bringing fresh perspective from the commercial accommodation sector and will contribute to BYATA's focus on industry connection, and communication.

"We're committed to strengthening the voice of the sector, supporting its continued growth and contributing to a strong, sustainable and connected future for youth and adventure tourism in New Zealand," said incoming Chair Brett Duncan.

"BYATA has a strong foundation, and the breadth of experience across the Board puts us in a great position to build on that work and continue delivering value for our members and the wider industry."

**BYATA's 2026/2027 Board**

**Leadership Team**

Brett Duncan  
Chair | Adventure Hostels NZ

Lucy Haslam  
Vice Chair | Kiwi Experience

Brian Westwood  
President | BYATA

Laura Crowther  
Treasurer | Tourism Adventure Group

**Board Members**

Sarah Christie | Willowbank Tourism Group, Christchurch  
Matt Southerden | Stray Travel  
Drew Hamilton | Experience Co — Skydive Australia & New Zealand  
Hannah Ploeger | Wild Kiwi Tours  
Leo Medina | AJ Hackett Bungy  
Nadine Hartl | Haka House

### **Advocacy Support**

Chris Sperring of WellingtonNZ will continue to support BYATA in his role as Relationship Manager – Advocacy, contributing to the association’s industry engagement and advocacy work.

### **About BYATA**

The Backpacker Youth and Adventure Travel Association (BYATA) is the industry association representing New Zealand’s youth, backpacker and adventure travel sector. BYATA connects industry, supports its members and advocates on issues affecting the sector, helping to strengthen the contribution of youth and adventure travel to New Zealand tourism.

Youth travellers aged 18–34 accounted for 31.5% of New Zealand holiday arrivals in the year to June 2026, with the youth tourism sector contributing an estimated \$2.6 billion to the New Zealand economy. These figures highlight the significant contribution youth tourism makes to New Zealand’s wider tourism industry and economy.

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