

Headline: “Prioritize Improving Tourism” – BYATA’s Call to Government

The Backpackers Youth Adventure Tourism Association (BYATA) has clear wants and needs from the Government, regardless of which party wins on October 14.

BYATA chair Haydn Marriner says that both major parties have presented “lackluster tourism manifestos” and states that if their manifestos represent their vision, we should be concerned.

“BYATA has long advocated for a more intelligent approach to understanding tourism and the factors influencing our tourism reputation and desirability.

“In strategic terms, both [manifestos] offer little in the way of a long-term vision. If this lack of vision translates into their action plans for our industry, we should all be concerned. The challenges that tourism face need engaged ministers, with the right information from their ministries.”

Regardless of this year’s election outcome, Haydn says BYATA wants to see a dedicated Ministry of Tourism and Hospitality, separate from MBIE, so tourism can achieve the smarter, longer term approach needed to succeed.

With BYATA representing and catering to the young and young-at-heart, Haydn says the association’s top priority is ensuring long-term sustainability and actively addressing climate change.

“We must view ourselves as stewards of our environment, and our brand is built on the promise of ‘100% Pure New Zealand. We need to be ensuring that our environmental practises across all industries are lining up against this brand. All New Zealand based industries benefit from the 100% pure brand, so it’s up to all NZ industries to try and keep that promise to”.

“Let’s not forget, it’s this market – aged 18 to 35 – are the major influencers on the desirability of New Zealand as a destination, and their values drive their choices. Our research through our Lifetime Model very clearly shows that a young traveller not only has the highest spend when they are here the first time, but they return at multiple points throughout their lives, extending their value for years beyond their initial visit. Often they become advocates for New Zealand, sending us their friends, whānau, children and in some cases grandchildren. The research is clear, get it right at the start and we have the right kind of visitor value for a lifetime.”

“We also advocate for substantial funding for tourism marketing and management to ensure our competitiveness globally. Additionally, we’d like to see TNZ expand its mandate to include the international marketing and promotion of our WHV scheme.”

Tourism Australia and Visit Canada are both national brand marketers and responsible for the driving WHV. It makes sense that TNZ is empowered to do this work, given their expertise in international marketing of New Zealand and their in market presence. Tourism Australia does it really well, and we would back TNZ to be equally effective if given the resources and mandate to succeed in this space. The benefits to the New Zealand economy would very self-evident.

A top priority for BYATA members is the regulation of peer-to-peer accommodation providers, such as Airbnb, and Haydn says the association feels this area has been neglected and needs to see motivated action.

“Currently, there's a significant imbalance: commercial hostels are subject to strict health and safety regulations, frequent audits, building WOF and prescriptive legislation, while Airbnb hosts face little to no compliance requirements, not even basic safety measures like fire alarms or sprinkler systems to ensure they are fit for purpose. This imbalance needs to be corrected”

The BYATA membership has also been particularly puzzled by the Freedom camping regulations and their uneven application.

“We have a large professional and compliant camper membership who are confused as to why the government has set two different goal posts for the freedom camping legislation. BYATA would like to see from any government set fair and consistent dates for regulation and this can easily be achieved by bringing into line the compliance dates for the new camper regulations for both private and commercial.” States BYATA Chair Haydn Marriner.

Overall BYATA is aware that the larger issues at play affecting New Zealand such as housing and water, are issues that affect the tourism industry as well. BYATA hope that whichever party comes in can deliver the policy needed to help grow New Zealand and of course our industry.

“New Zealand is a great place to live and work. But we have our challenges. Never more acutely has tourism felt pinch of our infrastructure deficient than over the recent weeks with downfall of the Queenstown water supply. We hope that whomever is in power will ensure that our infrastructure isn't third world and that our locals and our visitors can continue to have the quality experience we have been delivering for over a 180 years”.