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CIVIC
TRUST**

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June 10, 2020

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern
Parliament Buildings, PO Box 18 888
Wellington 6160

Dear Prime Minister,

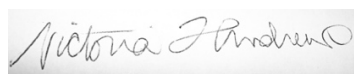
We are sure you are aware that there has been concern in Akaroa about the impact of mass tourism on our small town, particularly the large numbers of cruise ship passengers and younger freedom campers who have been visiting Akaroa in recent years.

We have taken advantage of the pause in the visits of cruise ships to New Zealand and the reduced number of freedom campers resulting from the Covid19 crisis to discuss widely in the community how the town should respond to the likely resumption of such visits once the crisis is over. The attached paper details our concerns. We have summarised Akaroa's experiences with cruise ship passenger and 'freedom camper' visits and suggested what we believe is a way forward.

We are hoping that as the Government develops a tourism strategy for the post-Covid19 world it will take into account Akaroa's experiences in the years before the pandemic. We believe that Akaroa could provide a valuable case study to establish how a small community can welcome visitors on a sustainable basis, to the benefit of the local and national economy, without suffering the adverse effects on the urban and natural environments that we have been experiencing.

We ask that the lessons that can be learned from what Akaroa has experienced be applied throughout the country to ensure that New Zealand remains an appealing destination and a country which is managing its tourist industry in a sustainable way.

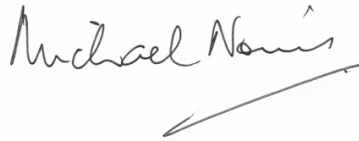
Sincerely yours,



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Cc Hon Ruth Dyson, MP Port Hills

Hon Grant Robertson, Finance Minister and Associate Minister Arts, Culture and Heritage
Hon Phil Twyford, Minister of Transport, Economic Development and Urban Development
Hon David Parker, Minister for the Environment
Hon Dr Megan Woods, Minister Research, Science and Innovation
Hon Kelvin Davis, Minister for Tourism
Hon Dr David Clark, Minister for Health
Hon James Shaw, Minister for Climate Change
Hon Eugenie Sage, Conservation Minister and Associate Environment Minister
Simon Upton, Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment
Prof Dame Anne Salmond, Auckland University
Dr Janet Stephenson, Associate Professor, Centre for Sustainability, University of Otago
Professor Michael Lueck, Associate Director of the New Zealand Tourism Research Institute, AUT
Dr Sabrina Seeler, Postdoctoral research in experienced-based tourism, Nord University, Bodø,
Norway

Executive summary

For many years, the economy of Akaroa has benefited from visitors attracted by the historic charm of a small town in a dramatic natural setting. Recently, the landing of large numbers of cruise ship passengers in Akaroa and the town's popularity with younger international freedom campers have had adverse effects on the town. These new sorts of visitors have benefited some businesses but undermined efforts to sustain the town's traditional tourist industry. Large numbers of passengers from cruise ships crowding the town through the summer season have diminished the town's appeal to domestic visitors and longer-stay international tourists who have in the past supported local businesses. In addition, the large number of cruise ships entering Akaroa Harbour has had a harmful effect on the natural environment.

The Akaroa Civic Trust and the Akaroa Ratepayers and Residents Association believe that it is possible to have a tourist industry which does not damage the natural environment of Akaroa and maintains the town's appeal to visitors who stay longer and spend more in the town than cruise ship passengers. To achieve this, visits to Akaroa by large cruise ships must be strictly monitored and controlled and the activities of freedom campers must be regulated.

TOURISM: Understanding and Learning from the Akaroa Experience

Akaroa and Mass Tourism

Akaroa and the Banks Peninsula region have generally benefited from tourism, but have also suffered negative impacts as visitor numbers have grown dramatically in recent years.

In the decade prior to 2010, Akaroa was developing into an interesting and sophisticated visitor destination. We welcomed day-trippers from Christchurch as well as an increasing number of visitors from other parts of New Zealand who, along with independent international travellers, stayed overnight or for longer in local accommodation, patronised local cafes, restaurants and shops, and took local excursions. There were quality shops and galleries, a range of interesting restaurants, harbour activities, and opportunities to explore the diversity of the wider Banks Peninsula region.

The town was well known for its picturesque harbour setting. The local community took pride in sharing the township's French and Maori connections and in maintaining its charming heritage buildings. Tourists, who had been contributing significantly to the local economy for well over 100 years, were welcomed.

Through the second decade of this century two new groups of visitors – passengers arriving on cruise ships and younger tourists travelling in cars and vans – began to arrive in increasing, and eventually overwhelming, numbers. These new visitors had serious adverse impacts on community life and the environment without providing economic benefits sufficient to offset those adverse impacts.

A Golden Opportunity

The Covid-19 crisis has given New Zealand an opportunity to develop a new tourism model – one that is nationally co-ordinated, and forward looking. We have a chance now to improve on the successes of the past, and work on resolving the recent problems with assistance from and oversight by the Central Government.

We know that tourism can be managed so that it is sustainable, brings economic benefits to businesses, adds value to our local community, and delights visitors wherever they are from.

We are submitting this paper as a contribution to the development of a national tourism strategy. Developing a particular strategy for Akaroa must also involve the Christchurch City Council, the local territorial authority for Akaroa, and Environment Canterbury (Ecan), which has responsibility for monitoring and regulating the environmental impacts of tourism.

Global Mass Tourism

Most New Zealanders now accept that the country has not dealt well with the impact of mass tourism over the last 20 years. Increasing numbers of tourists have arrived, attracted by low cost travel options. They have come expecting a 100% pure clean-green experience, perhaps with some good wine and adventure tourism thrown in. Much of the increase in tourist numbers has resulted

from the cruise ship industry sending increasing numbers of vessels to New Zealand destinations and from the popularity of New Zealand among younger travellers, many of whom purchase or rent vehicles in which they travel around the country independently.

But the sheer numbers have been a major factor in degrading the experience that the visitors had come to enjoy. In addition, in Akaroa, the daily lives and wellbeing of local residents were “thrown under the bus” for the sake of illusory progress and financial profit – a bus full of tourists, heading away on a day excursion from a cruise ship.

The impact of mass tourism on Akaroa over the last 10 years, driven largely by the cruise ship industry but also by the increase in the number of freedom campers, has not been handled well. Akaroa is a case study in the national failure to manage change in a positive way.

The Cruise Ship Industry

In the last 20 years the cruise industry has vastly expanded its operations in the southern hemisphere summer, mainly as a way of utilizing excess ship capacity during the northern hemisphere winter. The industry promotes New Zealand as a place of good weather, luxury, adventure, and exciting destinations, usually at a minimum cost per person. Once the passengers are aboard, there is a disincentive for them to spend money in communities such as Akaroa. The passengers are regarded by the cruise companies as captive consumers, patronising shopping arcades and casinos and enjoying recreational activities and entertainment all on-board.

There is an unseen side to this self-serving industry, which casts a long shadow over the glossy, picture-perfect holiday image the cruise companies project. The reality is that:

- Ship operators are effectively stateless and pay minimal tax anywhere in the world.
- Crew are employed at very low rates, well below minimum wages in the countries visited.
- Ships are noticeably contributing to global pollution and climate change, and owners comply with only bare minimum environmental standards when forced to do so.
- Operators take every step to maximise the onboard expenditure by passengers, and extract the biggest possible cut from shore-based excursions, thereby minimising any expenditure that might instead financially benefit local communities.
- Cruise ship environments are well known to incubate disease. Their part in expanding the Covid-19 pandemic, regionally as well as internationally, was reprehensible.
- The unseen costs, such as search and rescue, health and medical support and pollution control risks, are borne by the country being visited.
- The industry has no respect or consideration for the impact of overwhelming visitor numbers on local communities.

The industry promotes the supposed economic benefits of cruise ship visits, with dubious figures claimed for passenger spending. The reality is that cruise ship passengers are tourists who are:

- Based in a floating hotel, and spend nothing on local accommodation.
- Very unlikely to buy a meal onshore, given that there is ‘free’ food onboard.
- Rarely in a port for long enough to make any considered or substantial purchases.
- Take shore excursions which are designed so that the biggest profit slice goes directly to the ship operator.

The contrast with domestic and international tourists who actually stay in Akaroa is obvious.

So – is the cruise industry of any significant net benefit to New Zealand?

At New Zealand ports which have large local populations, the arrival of a few thousand extra day tourists is seen as positive, with little downside. But often, even in these larger centres, cruise passengers simply displace domestic and international visitors who would have been of far more economic benefit to local businesses.

For smaller communities like Akaroa, in New Zealand and overseas, cruise ship tourism rapidly becomes a burden with negative financial impacts. Smaller communities can become completely overwhelmed. Their local economies, based on residents and visitors who stay in local accommodation, eat in local restaurants and buy in local shops, suffer. Cruise passengers from large ships spend very little in the town. Many return to the ship for the free lunch on board to save money, and then return to Akaroa later in the afternoon.

Cruise ship tourism can be likened to modern-day piracy. The ship operators are ‘playing the system’ for their own financial benefit while skirting both Flag State and international law, crushing other forms of tourism, and destroying the wellbeing of many communities. While in New Zealand’s territorial waters the cruise ships are subject to New Zealand law, but local laws are observed in a patchy fashion and enforced in a limited way. The rapid growth of the cruise industry in the South Pacific, and its consequences, were not anticipated by regulators and law-makers. There is now urgent catch-up to be done, in both framing and enforcing laws which regulate cruise ship activity in New Zealand waters.

The Onslaught on Akaroa

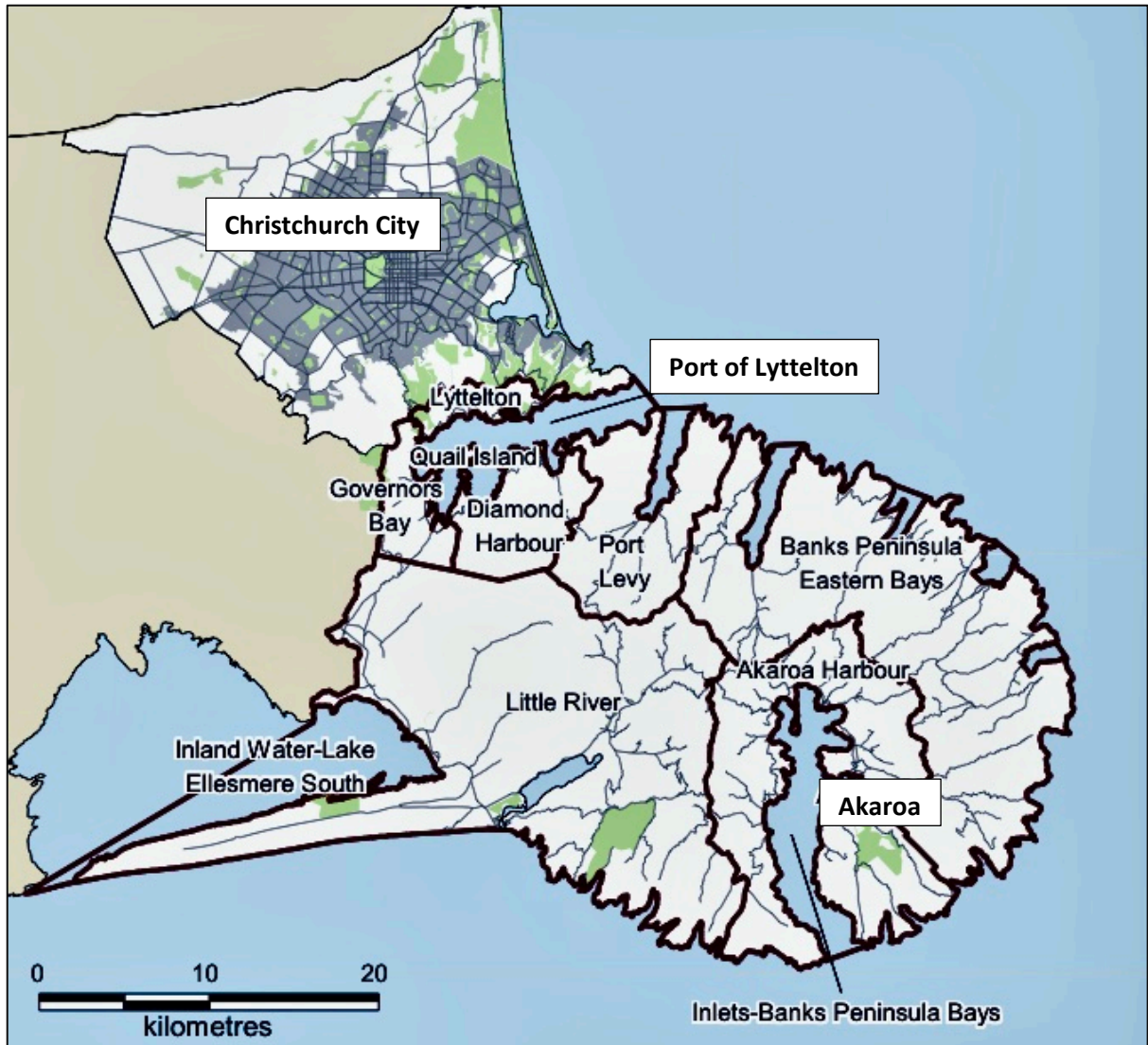
The cruise industry “discovered” Akaroa after ships were turned away from Lyttelton due to earthquake damage to that port in 2010/11. Ships that had been booked for Lyttelton were diverted to Akaroa which quickly became a routine, and preferred, port of call. The ship operators liked Akaroa because it was considerably cheaper than Lyttelton; the tourists liked the town because it was picturesque and cute.

Akaroa is a small, rural historic town¹. The town’s permanent population is around 640 and it has facilities and services appropriate to that number - a small supermarket, one bank, a limited health hub, a tenuous water supply, a substandard waste treatment system and a volunteer fire brigade that also attends medical call outs. When emergency services are required they must come from Christchurch or Lyttelton, both around 80 kilometres from Akaroa. Akaroa is an isolated township with rudimentary emergency services.

Into that environment, two or more ships with up to 7,000 passengers and crew aboard (the highest number in one day was 9,739 in 2014-15) might anchor in the harbour on the same day, and offload their human ‘cargo’².

¹ Heritage New Zealand historic registrations 7330; 7443

² In fact, Section 198 of the Maritime Transport Act defines passengers on these ships as “cargo”. And that is exactly how the cruise industry treats them.



Of all New Zealand ports visited by cruise ships Akaroa is by far the smallest to receive such high numbers of passengers and ships in a season. (92 ship visits were scheduled for the 2019/20 season). Auckland, Tauranga, Wellington and Dunedin can absorb thousands of cruise passengers at a time with little adverse impact, but even a few thousand passengers and crew coming ashore overwhelms Akaroa and taxes its infrastructure close to breaking point.

The town is so inundated by tourists from October through March that it becomes impossible for residents to conduct their lives in a normal manner. Streets are congested, roads are blocked, and the town has an unpleasant, crowded atmosphere.

Older residents stay at home on “cruise days” to avoid the crowds. This becomes a significant issue when ships arrive, for example, on six consecutive days. A trip to the supermarket or bank becomes almost impossible for many. A large percentage of the population is retired and no public transport exists.

Akaroa’s reputation among New Zealand tourists (the traditional mainstay of the local visitor industry) has gone from “charming and quaint” to “too crowded – don’t bother going there”.

In recent seasons, the number of cruise ship visitors has steadily increased. Because many passengers are enticed to take bus tours (to maximize the ship operators' profits) the "curse of the cruise ship bus" has overtaken Akaroa. Up to 40 or 50 large tour buses arrive from Christchurch and drive back and forth through the town to pick up and drop off passengers at the wharf, before returning to the city in the late afternoon. The cycle is repeated daily throughout the season. Akaroa has a single, narrow main street – the situation is both hazardous and unpleasant for visitors, pedestrians and local drivers attempting to navigate the chaos.

Public Health Issues

Since cruise ships started to frequent Akaroa Harbour, residents, tour operators, shop owners and staff have been on the front line in terms of exposure to viruses, including norovirus. Indications are that the prevalence of the Covid-19 virus on affected cruise ships is likely to have been underestimated.

In the 2019/20 season the *Ruby Princess* made eight stops in Akaroa. On its last visit on 13 March 2020, there were definitely undeclared Covid-19 cases on board, but passengers were allowed to disembark and buses departed on excursions throughout Canterbury. There were no reported cases of Covid-19 in Akaroa linked to cruise ship visits, but Wellington and Napier were not so lucky.

Ministry of Health officials finally appeared in Akaroa on 15 March when it was reported that passengers on board the *Golden Princess* were unwell. The passengers on that ship were not allowed to disembark. Because there is a moral obligation on towns like Akaroa to care for critically ill passengers, any future pandemic like Covid-19, or even the presence of other viruses aboard, could seriously impact our community and strain Akaroa's limited medical facilities.

Environmental Impact

The dramatic landscapes of Banks Peninsula, and its rich biodiversity, make it a fabulous environment that is treasured by residents and tourists alike. There is an active Geopark project, with plans to seek UNESCO Geopark status for the region³.

Within this setting, a ship at anchor in the harbour on a calm and sunny day can be a visually stunning addition to the scene. But all too often, the spectacle is ruined by a huge plume of harbour sediment around the ship. These giant mud-puddles, disgracing the harbour and disturbing the seabed, are stirred up by the ships' thrusters and anchors as they manoeuvre to counter the wind and currents.

That this activity degrades the harbour is obvious. It is commonly believed that there is a direct link between disturbance of the sea floor, and the other impacts of cruise ships on the marine environment, and the dramatic decline in the numbers of Hector's dolphin calves and adults that was observed⁴ in the summer of 2019/20.

³ For more information on this, see www.bpgeopark.com and roddonaldtrust.co.nz/banks-peninsula-geo-park/

⁴ Refer to the Otago University study by Profs E Slooten and S Dawson, where they found that dolphin numbers this last summer were lower than had ever been recorded in 30 years of surveys. sciblogs.co.nz/making-waves/2020/03/31/alarming-decrease-in-calves-increases-fears-for-endangered-hectors-dolphin/

There is also concern in Akaroa that discharges of sewage and other waste water into the harbour are not being monitored. Even discharges which meet present New Zealand standards are likely to damage the maritime environment and to pose a risk to human health in Akaroa and the other harbour-side settlements. Local opinion strongly favours adoption for enclosed bodies of water like Akaroa Harbour of a zero waste water discharge regime and strict monitoring and control to ensure enforcement of the necessary restrictions.

Maintaining and enhancing the natural environment of Akaroa and its harbour are the best foundation on which to build a sustainable future for residents and a viable tourism industry. Environment Canterbury is effectively powerless to deal with the environmental issues arising from cruise ship visits.

In the case of Akaroa Harbour, which is not an operational port in any sense⁵, we are in the ridiculous situation where local government declares that it is “not possible” to prevent a cruise ship from visiting the harbour, anchoring and landing passengers, except on very narrow navigational safety grounds⁶.

Use of the Main Wharf at Akaroa by cruise ship tenders is also a matter of local concern. The historic wharf, built in 1887-88, is only adequate for use by the public, recreational users, members of the local Fishermen’s Association and local tourism operators.

The Christchurch City Council, which owns and manages the wharf on behalf of ratepayers, has told residents that there is nothing that it can do to restrict the size of the vessels or number of visits, except on specific points relating to public health and safety. These matters aside, the number of passengers landing on the wharf grossly over-taxes it. Akaroa residents have effectively lost the use during the tourist season of a valued amenity. Cruise lines and tour operators have largely privatised open public space.

Given the lack at Akaroa of the support vessels and emergency services which are typically found in an operational port, there is a real risk that any marine incident may turn into a human or environmental disaster. The costs of any clean-up in the case of an oil spill or other pollution would ultimately be covered by the New Zealand taxpayer, in the same way that we provide a “free” search and rescue service on call for foreign visitors. The downstream cost of any “incident” would significantly impact the New Zealand economy, in addition to damaging the country’s image as being environmentally safe, clean and green.

Akaroa – Cruise Ship Facts

- Despite not being an operational port, Akaroa has a similar number of cruise ship visits to major ports such as Wellington or Tauranga⁷.
- The number of ship visits per summer season has increased from 75 in 2013/14 to 92 in 2018/19. Typically, in recent seasons, 200,000 passengers and crew enter Akaroa Harbour annually on cruise ships. Most come ashore.
- During 2019/20 there were 59 days when ships carrying more than 2000 passengers arrived.

⁵ The Coastal Plan for his region specifically states that it is only Timaru and Lyttelton that are operational ports.

⁶ A very small number of ship visits have been cancelled due to the wind on the day exceeded the maximum level permitted by the Harbourmaster.

⁷ In the scheduled 2019-20 season, visits to Akaroa 90, Wellington 90, Tauranga 112

- The multiple tender operations from around 90 cruise ships per season using the wharf have become a serious problem.
- The charge levied by the Christchurch City Council to use the wharf, for a ship carrying 2000 passengers, is only \$13,150, which is about 8% of the amount typically charged at a major port.
- The tourists arriving by ship in Akaroa over the summer season outnumber local residents by a factor of 300:1.
- Over the Christmas to New Year holiday period 2019/20, when the township would traditionally have already been “full” with domestic tourists and holiday makers, 27,000 passengers were landed from ships.
- In a survey conducted in 2019, 80% of local respondents believed that the local infrastructure for handling the ship visits was inadequate.
- In the same survey, only 5% of respondents thought that the Christchurch City Council adequately represented Akaroa’s interests regarding cruise ships.
- The Port of Lyttelton has invested \$67 million to build a cruise ship facility which provides an option to deny permission to large cruise ships to use Akaroa as a “port”. At Lyttelton there will be professional oversight and management of the ships. Because Lyttelton is close to Christchurch the organisation and management of shore excursions and sightseeing in the wider Canterbury region will be easier. Hospitals and other emergency services can be accessed far more quickly and easily from Lyttelton than from Akaroa.

Freedom Camping in Akaroa

The most severe impacts of mass tourism in Akaroa arise from the number of visits made by large cruise ships. Adverse impacts also flow from visits to Akaroa by large numbers of mostly younger tourists travelling in cars or small vans.

In Akaroa, despite the existence of some restrictions (which are often ignored), we routinely see freedom campers sleeping in old vans, station wagons and cars, and using existing public toilet facilities to bathe, wash pots and pans and do their laundry instead of paying a fee to stay in a commercial camp ground with facilities for such activities on hand. The Minister of Tourism commented that “New Zealand was a long way from being at risk of over-tourism and needing to limit visitor numbers”⁸. Clearly the Minister has been in an isolation bubble for too long a time, and has not visited tourist destinations around the South Island, like Akaroa, between November and March. The abuse of local hospitality by some visitors would open his eyes to a very real problem.

In our experience, many younger overseas visitors abuse the privilege of being a guest in New Zealand. They leave behind toilet paper and other refuse to prove their disregard for the need to be socially responsible.

Can Modern Mass Tourism be Sustainable?

Akaroa’s experience with high numbers of cruise ship passengers coming ashore in the town and the disregard of the Council’s freedom camping bylaw suggests not.

New Zealand now has a brief opportunity to evaluate what has been happening in places like Akaroa and create a truly sustainable⁹ tourism industry, one which benefits local economies, as well as

⁸ Source: The freedom camper who wants to ban freedom camping, *The Press*, Feb 04 2019

⁹ That does not mean sustainable, in the sense the word is used as a buzz word, a camouflage for “business as usual”. It means sustainable in its true form, where a process can go on indefinitely without degradation.

national businesses, but also recognises and minimises the negative impact that mass tourism is having on the lives of New Zealanders and on the country's natural environment.

Political and tourist industry leaders have talked recently about profoundly re-setting the way tourism is managed, ensuring it has a sustainable future. Much of this talk smacks of "being wise after the event" and political "greenwash". But in some cases it amounts to a genuine admission of past failures, and acknowledgement that New Zealand had, prior to the Covid-19 crisis, fallen into an unpleasant mass tourism hole. Positive action is required:

- New Zealand will be on a road to disaster if we return, after the Covid-19 crisis is over, to "business as usual" with regard to mass tourism, particularly cruise ship visits which are not being effectively controlled and freedom camping which is not being adequately regulated.
- Businesses must focus on domestic tourism in the short term and base long-term plans on smaller-scale, independent international tourism.
- The promotion and regulation of international tourism must be coordinated nationally.
- The bodies that have a role in encouraging and promoting tourism must be reprogrammed to place a much higher value on limited numbers of quality tourists, and to abandon the "any tourist is a good tourist" mentality.
- Those involved in the tourism industry must be paid at least the living wage.
- New Zealand needs to be viewed as a high-end destination that is valued for its unique culture, scenic beauty and natural environment.
- New Zealand should stop promoting itself as 100% Pure New Zealand; this was only ever marketing hype and is far from the truth.
- New Zealand must accept responsibility for mitigating climate change and for the contribution mass tourism is making to climate change. Unless this is addressed, there will soon be nothing left to "promote" or sell.

It is clear that with the easing of the Covid-19 crisis pressure will be forthcoming from short-sighted businesses and possibly Chambers of Commerce and other business organisations to "get back to normal". However, the path to long-term wellbeing for New Zealand is not going to be found in a hasty return to the downward spiral into which mass tourism has locked the country in recent years. Instead, we need to carefully balance the wellbeing of communities with a sustainable economy, while also safe-guarding natural resources and the environment for all future generations.

In December 2019 the Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment published a report¹⁰ entitled "Pristine, popular...imperiled? The environmental consequences of projected tourism growth".

To quote from Page 73, under the heading of "Understanding host perceptions"

- Some communities are 'tourist towns', familiar with seasonal peaks and troughs, whereas residents in a small and previously quiet town may struggle with even a fairly minor increase in visitor numbers.
- Growth in visitor numbers can exceed what a community is willing to accommodate and disrupt its functioning.

¹⁰ The report can be downloaded from www.pce.parliament.nz/publications/pristine-popular-imperilled-the-environmental-consequences-of-projected-tourism-growth

- Communities may become fragmented due to seasonal peaks in visitor numbers, a transient workforce, displacement of population (falling permanent residents affecting school rolls and viability) and/or impact on local volunteer services such as fire and ambulance.
- Resentment towards visitors can easily develop, as guests may be seen to be getting a ‘free ride’ at the expense of ratepayers.

All these points are true. The Christchurch City Council and government agencies, including Tourism New Zealand, the various ministries which have responsibility for different aspects of the tourist industry, and the Department of Conservation need to take notice. We now know, as New Zealanders who were well guided through the Covid-19 crisis, that government departments and agencies can be decisive and effective, given the right inspiration and leadership.

Tourism – Just Who is in Charge?

Perhaps the answer is ‘Nobody’¹¹. There is no organisation or department responsible for overseeing the tourist industry as a whole, particularly for managing the negative impacts of unrestrained mass tourism on local communities.

New Zealand has dealt poorly with the issues relating to mass tourism. The international cruise corporations have been allowed to dictate the terms on which cruise ships sail in New Zealand waters and enter New Zealand ports. The terms include the reporting of illness on board, the scheduling of ship visits, and ease of access to specific ports. Despite some attention given nationally to the problem, the management of freedom camping has been left largely up to local bodies, with very uneven results.

In Conclusion:

We ask that appropriate regulations and legislation be put in place to enhance the long-term wellbeing of the environment and communities and the conservation of natural resources, while also providing a sound economic base for an on-going, sustainable tourist industry within New Zealand.

1. Visitor growth must be controlled, and numbers capped.

It is obvious that the wealthier residents of a single large country, such as China or India, could, as tourists, in a few years overrun New Zealand with numbers that strain the country’s capacity to accommodate visitors beyond breaking point. If it is not limited and controlled, international tourism is likely in the long run to “kill the goose that laid the golden egg”. There will be little comfort in being wise after that event. It will be clean, green, uncrowded New Zealand, no more.

2. The cruise industry must be monitored and controlled

Allowing cruise ships to continue to use New Zealand ports without adequate oversight increases the profitability of that industry at the expense of New Zealanders and the environment. It is evident that cruise ship operators are already regrouping and developing new plans to be able to continue asserting their dominance in the tourism market.

¹¹ Nobody is an ethereal relative of Somebody, Anybody, Busybody, and Everybody.

New Zealand must act swiftly to regulate the industry. Failure to do so would clearly be contrary to the long-term wellbeing of the New Zealand public. If a trans-Tasman “tourism bubble” is created, cruise ships should be prevented from entering New Zealand waters from Australian ports until there is total confidence that there is no risk to public health, that all safety issues have been addressed and that they will abide by any new legislation or regulations framed to protect the natural environment and the wellbeing of local communities.

- The cruise industry, led by Royal Caribbean, Carnival and Norwegian Cruise Lines, plans a strong return to the international market and is keen to include picturesque destinations such as Akaroa, considered a desirable and cheap “port”, in their itineraries.
- There is a continuing lack of understanding and concern by anybody in authority regarding the impact of cruise ships on communities such as Akaroa.
- The cruise industry determines where it can make the most money at the lowest possible cost. New Zealand has the ability to control the situation, but needs political will to do so.
- The chief executive of the New Zealand Cruise Association, Kevin O'Sullivan, was remarkably sanguine, and unreasonably confident that the cruise industry can resume operating in New Zealand as it has in the past, when he said¹² that “if restrictions on vessels coming here are lifted in time, there is no reason why up to 1200 port visits scheduled for the coming summer season should not go ahead”.
- Mr O’Sullivan must be hoping that New Zealanders will have a collective memory lapse, given that the cruise ship *Ruby Princess* was the irresponsible source of a cluster of coronavirus cases, resulting from its voyage around the country.

3. Freedom campers must be clearly guided and managed appropriately

Simply providing improved toilet facilities is not a solution to the problems which result from large numbers of visitors travelling around New Zealand in cars and vans which are not self-contained. Providing such facilities often simply encourages inappropriate behaviour.

New Zealand is undercutting itself by permitting mass freedom camping without adequate oversight and monitoring. Solutions include:

- Rigorous enforcement of the regulations regarding certification of ‘self-contained’ vehicles, particularly that the toilet (if portable) must be able to be used with the bed in place.
- Co-ordinating local government bylaws pertaining to freedom camping so they are consistent throughout the country, and stepping up monitoring and enforcement of bylaws to prevent abuse of the system.
- Urging, or even requiring, overseas visitors travelling in campervans and cars to stay in professionally operated campgrounds and hostels to support local tourism providers.
- Not using public money to develop free camping sites with toilet facilities, kitchens and showers because the provision of such sites undercuts legitimate campground businesses.

A Better Alternative

In recent years, regional as well as sophisticated international visitors have been avoiding Akaroa during the summer months, having been forewarned (often by social media) that the town is not a pleasant destination during the crowded cruise ship season.

¹² Source: *Sunday Star Times*, April 15 2020

The industry has designed the cruise experience to retain as much money as possible on board thereby enhancing corporate profit which is sent to overseas tax havens. Is there any sense in New Zealand allowing such activity to continue when greater revenue from other sorts of tourists could make a key contribution to the country's economic recovery after Covid-19?

There is a much better alternative than continuing to encourage and facilitate cruise ship visits to New Zealand ports. Akaroa, and other towns around New Zealand, can use the talents of their residents and their attractions to focus on drawing in visitors who will stay for a day or longer and who are prepared to spend money in the township and local area. Under the right circumstances, some cruise ship tourism would be a part of that future, with a managed number of smaller vessels adding economic value to a varied mix of domestic visitors and other international tourists seeking experiences different from those of passengers from large cruise ships. Akaroa could easily welcome the passengers of small expedition ships without suffering the adverse results of thousands of passengers swamping the town in a single day. These other international visitors will spend significantly more in New Zealand than the passengers from large cruise ships do.

This is clearly a superior option. Tourist revenue would be retained in New Zealand. We propose that Akaroa be made a test case for the sensible and sustainable management of tourism numbers, showing the rest of the country how it is possible to bring benefits and value to a small regional community, as well as to the nation, from visitors other than the passengers on large cruise ships.

There is an opportunity to take action on this now, and put in place appropriate legislation before the return of the cruise ships and the arrival of a new flood of international freedom campers.

Akaroa looks forward to your strong support in ensuring tourism is managed in such a way as to bring economic benefit to New Zealand without endangering local communities in the way mass tourism, in particular the accommodation of large cruise ships, has in recent years.