06 March 2026

Mayor John Glover
Queenstown Lakes District Council
Private Bag 50072
Queenstown

Dear Mayor Glover

Freedom camping solutions for the Queenstown Lakes District

Last December, Deputy Mayor Smith invited suggestions from NZMCA on how to better manage freedom camping in the Queenstown Lakes District. As a local ratepayer and representative of tens of thousands of responsible campers, we indicated at the time that we were open to meeting with you to discuss pragmatic solutions.

We acknowledge that you have had a busy schedule over summer and note the Council is holding a freedom camping workshop on 16 April. We suggest meeting with you beforehand to discuss three practical solutions outlined below, which are aimed at reducing pressure on the Council's existing freedom camping areas while offering better support to residents and responsible campers.

Over summer, we received feedback from residents and our local members highlighting issues relating to overcrowding and the need to better support responsible campers. This feedback aligns with the Council's recent public updates confirming strong visitor demand, poor behaviour from some campers, and that many visitors are camping responsibly (Appendix 1).

Practical solutions

1. **Revisit the decision to exclude reserve land from the process that led to the 2025 Freedom Camping Bylaw**
   This involves reversing the previous Council's decision to exclude reserve land from consideration, and to instruct staff to prioritise the investigation of suitable reserves. As the Council acknowledges, demand for freedom camping has been strong. Reintroducing reserve land into the assessment process for Council's response to freedom camping is a relatively easy step to increasing capacity, responding to visitor demand, and alleviating community concerns with overcrowded areas.

4 Graham Road Takanini 2112
PO Box 72147 Papakura 2244
E enquiries@nzmca.org.nz
P 09 298 5466
F 09 298 5646
www.nzmca.org.nz

2. **Review planning rules to support small scale overnight parking options on private land**
   Incentivising small businesses and private landowners to operate small scale, well managed overnight parking areas will provide additional capacity and reduce over-reliance on freedom camping areas.

3. **Jointly advocate for clarity on self-containment regulations**
   If the Council has clear evidence of vehicles displaying invalid green warrant cards or failing to meet the fixed-toilet requirements under the new self-containment regulations, we will welcome the opportunity to jointly engage with the Regulator, MBIE and the Minister of Tourism. Clarifying the regulations to ensure they align with the Regulator's guidance to certification authorities (Appendix 2) might help strengthen compliance and ensure the regulations are properly upheld.

Our strong view is that the first solution regarding use of some areas of reserve land is both essential and urgent. It directly addresses the issues raised by residents, your Deputy Mayor, and our members, and it provides an achievable pathway to relieving pressure on existing restricted areas.

If the Council chooses not to honour its earlier commitment to now move to assess reserve land for potential freedom camping, NZMCA will have to consider carefully its options to test the lawfulness of the decision-making processes that Council has followed here. Another dispute is not a step we prefer to take given our expressed preference to work with Council to secure good outcomes.

However, we are concerned at recent indications from Council staff that consideration of reserve land might now be deprioritised and would like to clear up any misunderstanding about the importance of this with you directly. As you will know, in our view, parking the consideration of reserve land in 2025 has materially contributed to the overcrowding and community concerns reported this summer about Council's regulatory responses to freedom camping in this district.

We would welcome meeting with you ahead of the 16 April workshop to discuss these matters further and ensure that each of us understands the other's thinking on these issues.

Yours faithfully,
New Zealand Motor Caravan Association Inc.



Bruce Lochore
CEO
bruce@nzmca.org.nz

Copies sent to: topaz.river@qldc.govt.nz
niki.gladding@qldc.govt.nz