

MEDIA RELEASE

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For immediate release.

Mackenzie residents support tourism but want impacts addressed.

Mackenzie District Council today released the findings from their first Views on Tourism survey which measures resident sentiment around tourism and unpacks the benefits and adverse impacts. The independent research, conducted by Angus and Associates in February and March of this year, is also used by Tourism New Zealand and other regions, allowing destinations to benchmark and compare.

The survey showed that the large majority (92%) of Mackenzie residents believe tourism is good for the region, however there is work to be done to address the adverse impacts. Results say 87% have personally benefited from tourism in the region.

“The survey echoes what we are hearing on the ground: we support tourism but urgently need to address the impacts - and top of that list is infrastructure.” says Acting Mayor Karen Morgan.

“You just can’t make the math work. Lake Tekapo needs a new wastewater treatment plant to accommodate the large visitor volumes. At an estimated cost of \$47 million, it is unaffordable by a district of 5,500 ratepayers alone – it would almost take the Council to their debt ceiling, and Lake Tekapo is only one of our townships.”

The region has returned to pre-Covid levels, especially over the summer season. In 2024, the Mackenzie District had the highest guest nights per capita in New Zealand at 130.7:1*. For comparative purposes, the national average was 7.3:1*, and Queenstown was 85.3:1*. The district is also disproportionately impacted by drive-through visitors who utilise infrastructure (e.g public toilets) whilst providing little economic impact to the district.

“Our Tourism Approval Rating (TAR) of 11 may be the lowest of all participating regions in New Zealand, and significantly lower than the national average of 49, however that is not a surprise given we have the highest visitor to ratepayer ratio in the country. It shows we desperately need central government assistance in the form of investment and greater regulatory levers.” Says Acting Mayor Karen Morgan

The survey was part of the Mackenzie Five Year Action Plan, a collaboration between industry and Mackenzie Tourism, the regional tourism organisation which sits inside Mackenzie District Council.

“The Views on Tourism Survey is an important piece of work. Not only for benchmarking and advocacy efforts, but it will help guide our own priorities. This includes a visitor education campaign for next summer. We know tourism brings economic value to the district, we just need to be equally aware of and address the negative impacts.” says Margaret Munro, Chair of Mackenzie Tourism Industry Association.

ENDS

Download the full report [here](#) (PDF)

Key Survey Findings:

- 92% Mackenzie residents believe tourism is good for the region.
- The vast majority (87%) of residents have personally benefitted from tourism activity in their local area.
- The most commonly observed benefits for Mackenzie District residents are opportunities for employment/income and more local businesses opening or being able to stay open.
- Almost all (99%) of Mackenzie residents have been adversely impacted by tourism in their local area.
- Overall resident sentiment towards tourism is substantially less positive than amongst the NZ population. The overall Tourism Approval Rating (TAR) is 11 which is characterised as ‘threatened acceptance’ and is the lowest of all participating regions in NZ. The National benchmark is 49, Queenstown’s is 20. The range is from -100 to 100.
- Key actions that residents believe will help to mitigate the negative impacts include:
 - Greater investment in infrastructure (especially roads, car parks, toilets)
 - Further education of visitors about environmental protection
 - Further education of visitors about road safety
 - Greater police / warden presence
 - More regulation / control of freedom camping
 - More regulation / control of short term rental housing
 - Measures to reduce cost of living for locals
- Residents would like the local tourism industry to focus more strongly on:
 - Improving community infrastructure
 - Reducing the impact of visitors on environment
 - Encourage visitors to travel outside of peak

- Attracting higher quality visitors

About the Views on Tourism survey:

- Conducted by Angus and Associates, the ‘Views on Tourism’ survey is used to measure and understand community sentiment around tourism, and unpack the benefits and adverse impacts.
- It is a respected international framework used by destinations around the globe, including by Tourism NZ, enabling the Mackenzie to benchmark against national, Canterbury and other destinations.
- The survey was open to residents (living in the district) over 18, across all aspects of the community. Sample profile is on final page (34).
- The survey received 343 responses, which is deemed a statistically relevant sample size for the district’s population. The final survey sample was weighted to reflect the characteristics of the Mackenzie’s adult population with regards to age and gender, using 2023 Census data.

*source for the guest nights per capita: <https://webrear.mbie.govt.nz/theme/guest-nights-per-capita/map/timeseries/2024/new-zealand?areatype=ta&right-transform=absolute>