

Nelson City Council Draft Freedom Camping Bylaw 2017

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Submitter details

1. Nelson Marlborough Health (Nelson Marlborough District Health Board) (NMH) is a key organisation involved in the health and wellbeing of the people within Te Tau Ihu. NMH appreciates the opportunity to comment from a public health perspective on the Nelson City Council's Draft Freedom Camping Bylaw 2017.
2. NMH makes this submission in recognition of its responsibilities to improve, promote and protect the health of people and communities under the New Zealand Public Health and Disability Act 2000 and the Health Act 1956.
3. This submission sets out particular matters of interest and concern to NMH, particularly in relation to sewage and litter disposal and the location of safe drinking water.

Specific Comments

4. NMH supports Council's intent to make requirements around freedom camping more easily understandable for visitors, and as a result reduce any associated actual or potential negative environmental impacts. Additionally NMH supports the non-regulatory measures that underpin the proposed bylaws such as signage, education and working with camping grounds and accommodation providers.
5. NMH notes that the Tasman District Council also proposes to introduce freedom camping bylaws and as such, considers that the two councils should work together to ensure that bylaw requirements and other measures such as signage and education are consistent given that visitors may be unlikely to recognise the local authority administration boundaries, leading to unnecessary confusion.

Recommendation 1: that the Nelson City Council and Tasman District Council work together to ensure that bylaw requirements and non-regulatory measures such as signage and education are consistent across administration boundaries.

6. In order to ensure proper sewage disposal practices are followed, it is important that self-contained campers know where they are able to safely dispose of their sewage.

Recommendation 2: that the location of sewage disposal facilities be clearly communicated to those in self-contained campers

7. NMH reminds Council of its responsibility to ensure proper litter disposal and removal from all freedom camping sites. Section 9(5) of the Litter Act 1979 states "Every public authority shall also make appropriate provision for the emptying of the contents of litter receptacles situated within public places under its control or

in its district and for the removal and disposal of those contents. The work shall be executed promptly, efficiently, and at regular and prescribed intervals to the satisfaction of the Medical Officer of Health appointed for the health district in which the public place is situated." Improved waste disposal should reduce the number of complaints received by Council relating to freedom camping

Recommendation 3: that Council reviews the frequency in which litter receptacles are emptied in light of the proposed amendments to the bylaw.

8. Information about safe drinking water should also be communicated to freedom campers to reduce the risk of waterborne illnesses. Council should ensure that other water sources which are not suitable for drinking, e.g. from taps in public toilet facilities, are clearly signposted to warn campers that the water is not of drinking quality and should be boiled before use.

Recommendation 4: that Council ensures those in self-contained campers know where they can refill potable water

9. It is important that information, especially relating to toilet facilities, sewage disposal, litter disposal and drinking water, is effectively relayed to campers in a manner that is easily understood as English is a second language for many campers.

Recommendation 4: that all information communicated to freedom campers be simple, clear and available in multiple languages.

10. Some people who freedom camp do not do so out of choice but because they are homeless. It is important that Council give careful consideration to the possible effects the proposed amendments may have on homeless people. It is unlikely that homeless people will have access to fully self-contained campers and they may therefore be in breach of the bylaw if they continue to camp in non self-contained vehicles. Given the significant stigma around homelessness, Council needs to ensure enforcement of the proposed amendments to the bylaw does not contribute to this stigma and further shame or financially penalise these already vulnerable people.

Recommendation 5: that Council allows a grace period for homeless freedom campers and links those people with local services that can offer assistance with housing issues.

Conclusion

11. NMH thanks the Nelson City Council for the opportunity to comment on the Draft Freedom Camping Bylaw 2017.
12. NMH believes that the recommendations contained in this submission will go towards reducing any actual and potential environmental effects associated with freedom camping.
13. NMH **does not wish to be heard** in support of its submission.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large loop followed by a long horizontal stroke that ends in a small loop.

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