

Submission to Hurunui District Council on Proposed Freedom Camping Bylaw

From The St James Premium Accommodation Ltd

We own and operate The St James Premium Accommodation situated at 20 Chisholm Crescent Hanmer Springs. The Chisholm carpark is directly opposite our entrance and we strongly oppose the proposal to permit Freedom Camping in the Chisholm carpark under the proposed Responsible Freedom Camping Bylaw. We believe that Freedom Camping should be prohibited in Chisholm carpark and the carpark included in Schedule 1 of the proposed bylaw along with the rest of the Hanmer Springs Settlement Area. Our reasons for this objection are:

1. Noise and pollution - resulting in potential health issues and loss of enjoyment for our (paying) guests.

A tranquil relaxing experience is at the heart of The St James accommodation experience and is a key reason why guests choose to return. Freedom camping in Chisholm Park has the potential to destroy this experience through:

- Rubbish and used sanitation products blowing into our carpark
- Music and general noise into the night as the carpark becomes a communal gathering area at night
- Banging of Toilet doors during night
- Early morning start-up to run campervan services/charge batteries
- Noise when packing up pre 8am
- Clanging of bottles in steel re-cycle bins

Because the Council carpark is on our northern boundary the noise and rubbish issues are amplified with our prevailing north westerly wind. Even though freedom camping has supposed to have been banned in the carpark we have had rubbish including "tissue wrapped faeces" blowing into our carpark in the past so imagine what it will be like if freedom camping is legalised!

2. Enforcement difficulty and cost

Given it's central location we would expect that this will become a very popular freedom camping site, widely advertised on freedom camping apps and there will be competition every day to access the two available sites. This will create parking and enforcement issues:

- Will the site be patrolled several times each night to see that there are only two freedom campers and that the rules are being complied with?
- How will "visitors" be controlled and at what point will a visiting vehicle be deemed to be a freedom camper?
- The St James has a no noise policy for guests. What controls will there be on noise in the Freedom Camping area and how will this be enforced?

Overall we believe that the cost of enforcement will more than outweigh any benefit of allowing such limited Freedom Camping in the Chisholm Carpark.

3. Precedent for more

If there is justification for allowing freedom camping in Chisholm carpark (and we don't believe that there is) why limit it to two parks? With the high expected demand and all the issues around enforcement Council will quickly come under pressure to increase the number of spaces permitted

4. Parking issues

Wide publicity of this very central freedom camping site is likely to attract more traffic to this carpark as well as kerbside parking on Chisholm Crescent. This along with increased traffic expected for the Boulder Point shopping development will exacerbate the existing congestion on Chisholm Crescent at peak times increasing the risk of accidents.

We believe that the above issues more than justify Council prohibiting Freedom Camping in Chisholm Carpark under section 11(2) of the Freedom Camping Act.

General Comment

We have some more general concerns about the impact of Freedom camping on tourism businesses. While these may not be considerations for the current Freedom Camping Act we would hope that Council would take them into account when considering this By Law and in any future discussion with central government about Freedom Camping.

We accept that many New Zealanders see the opportunity to experience the beauty and tranquillity of our great outdoors as a birthright. This is what we believe most Kiwis see as “freedom camping”. Most do not expect this to extend to “camping for free” in urban areas or locations where commercial options are available for them to use. Legalising Freedom Camping in these areas as is proposed for Chisholm carpark raises questions about market distortion and equity:

- Why should some visitors have to pay for the views and central location of Chisholm Crescent while others get it for free ...and the Council pays for their water and sanitation!
- Commercial operators like ourselves pay a premium in rates for these locations while the Council provides the location for free for visitors through the Freedom Camping bylaw. Such law distorts the market and has the potential to discourage future business investment.
- We accept that we have to pay high rates for a premium site in the centre of the Village but we object strongly when those rates are used to fund free accommodation directly opposite, especially when it disrupts the premium accommodation experience that our guests expect.

In conclusion, we strongly oppose the proposal to permit Freedom Camping in the Chisholm carpark and urge Council to include the Chisholm carpark in Schedule 1 of the proposed bylaw along with the rest of the Hanmer Springs Settlement Area.

Thank you for the opportunity to make this submission. We would like the opportunity to speak to it when submissions are heard.

Paul & Rae Baigent
Managing Directors

