



28 June 2019

Ministry for Primary Industries
Walking Access Review Team
Environment & communities Directorate
PO Box 2526
Wellington 6140

Dear Sir / Madam,

Feedback on the Walking Access Act 2008 Review

Introduction

1. Hurunui District Council (HDC) is pleased to have this opportunity to provide feedback on the review of the Walking Access Act 2008.
2. This feedback is provided by and reflects the views and experiences of the elected members of the Hurunui District Council.

Are the Walking Access Act 2008 and the New Zealand Walking Access Commission needed?

3. HDC believes the Walking Access Act 2008 and Walking Access Commission provide a valuable service to ensure that access to the outdoors is encouraged, maintained and extended throughout our district.

What is working well?

4. HDC considers that the Walking Access Act 2008 is 'fit for purpose'. The Act and Commission provide the ability to negotiate and assist with landowner engagement to secure access via private land.
5. HDC suggests that the Act be amended to not only ensure access is available to the outdoors, but that access is also promoted.

Funding

6. Hurunui District Council considers that more funding is needed in order to better facilitate access in the District.

Do you think the New Zealand Walking Access Commission's name should be changed? To what?

7. It is noted that the Walking Access Commission seeks to work with communities to create and tend to tracks and trails, and that they are building a legacy of public access to the outdoors for everyone in New Zealand from walkers, mountain bikers, anglers to horse riders, landholder to trail runners and beyond. The website promotes cycle trails in addition to walking tracks. As such, The Council considers that the Walking Access Commission's name is misleading as the name only refers to walking access.

The name should be broadened to include other aspects of public access. As such, the Council suggests a name change to New Zealand Public Access Commission.

Addressing barriers to landowners providing access

8. The Hurunui District is traversed by thousands of kilometres of unformed legal roads. Whilst landowners may be happy to provide public access over their land, the alignment of the unformed legal road is often not the most practical route due to topographical constraints, seasonal arming operations or buildings and yards blocking the route. The process of re-aligning unformed legal roads to correct or improve access, is unduly difficult. As such, HDC suggests that changes be instigated under the Local Government Act road stopping process to better enable negotiations between parties in these situations.

Furthermore, the Council considers that all costs associated with road stopping procedures in relation to access matters, should be borne by the taxpayer, not the ratepayer of landowner, as this process is about facilitating 'public' access. Hurunui is a large district with a small rating base. Given the length of unformed legal roads in our district, our ratepayers / landowners could be faced with significant costs, compared to our neighbouring city of Christchurch which is comprised of a third of a million people who are unlikely to have the same issue and would be the major beneficiary of access. For similar reasons, landowners offering a land swap / boundary change should not have to fund the costs of proving for access.

The views expressed in this letter are made without prejudice. HDC welcomes further discussion on the above matters. Please contact myself in the first instance if you would like to discuss any of the matters further.

Yours sincerely,



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