



Submission to Ruapehu District Council on proposed changes to Long Term Plan

Dear Mayor and Councillors,

Bookabach is grateful for the opportunity to provide input on the draft Long Term Plan proposals for tourism and economic development funding.

As part of HomeAway/Expedia, Bookabach is a marketplace that provides travellers with a choice of approximately 450 homes within the Ruapehu District.

We understand Council's need to fund economic development and tourism infrastructure, and we support the proposal to replace the RTO rate with two targeted economic development rates – and to shift more of the rate burden to Commercial/Industrial ratepayers.

We also understand that some rate payers, e.g. the farming community, do not necessarily feel they benefit from regional tourism organisation activities. However, we do not believe a \$200 targeted levy is the best response, for the following reasons:

- This levy is a **punitive additional rate on homeowners** who already pay residential rates in order to enable any occupants of their home to benefit from local amenities;
- A \$200 levy **will not raise significant funds** towards tourism infrastructure. With approximately 500 short term rentals in the Ruapehu district, a \$200 levy would raise a maximum of \$100,000;
- **Targeting and collecting funds will be difficult** for Council and barely be worth the \$100,000 raised.

The stated goal of the levy is to ensure people who benefit from the work of the regional tourism organisation contribute their share of costs. Bookabach brings visitors to the region with zero effort on the part of the Regional Tourism Organisation and these visitors contribute through their local spending. We believe the wider issue of tourism infrastructure funding needs to be addressed. We would like to see an approach agreed and adopted nationally to resolve the issue of tourism infrastructure funding (including RTO funding). This issue is not restricted to the Ruapehu District, but exists in other places where tourist numbers are high relative to the rating base.

The compliance costs for Bookabach in dealing with different rules and planning provisions in each of New Zealand's 66 local and city councils are high. We would much rather work toward a universal approach to achieve simplicity and certainty in the interests of all councils and RTOs.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if I can assist with any further information about Bookabach and our activities in the Ruapehu District.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Miles
General Manager
Bookabach Ltd
Part of HomeAway and the broader Expedia Group