Absolutely Positively
Wellington City Council
Me Heke Ki Pōneke

Proposed Freedom Camping Rules Update

Summary of submissions and officers' response

Introduction

The Council is proposing to update the freedom camping rules of the Public Places Bylaw 2022 (the Bylaw) to ensure the Bylaw is consistent with the Self-contained Motor Vehicles Legislation Act 2023, a recent piece of central government legislation which changed the freedom camping rules in New Zealand.

In addition, the Council is proposing to extend the four-day restrictions which currently apply to two designated freedom camping areas (Evans Bay Marina and Te Kopahau Visitors Centre carpark), to all freedom camping areas in the city. The four-day restriction would also apply to freedom camping using a tent or other temporary structure.

Public consultation was undertaken from 14 September to 13 October 2023 through the Council's Let's Talk page. A Statement of Proposal, along with specific survey questions, were published on the Let's Talk page for the consultation.

Number of submissions received

The Council has received 12 submissions on the proposed changes, with nine submissions from individuals and three made on behalf of an organisation. No submitters requested to make an oral submission to the Councillors.

Submissions received on specific survey questions

Q1 – Do you support or oppose the proposed changes that the four-day restriction currently applying to the two designated freedom camping areas (Evans Bay Marina and Te Kopahou Visitor's Centre carpark) for a motor vehicle should be extended to the whole city?

Twelve submissions were received on the proposed changes.

- Five submitters strongly support the proposed changes.
- One submitter supports the proposed changes. Specifically, the New Zealand Motor Caravan Association supports the Council's proposal to extend the four-day restriction to all freedom camping areas in the city, for the reasons noted online and in the Statement of Proposal.
- One submitter is neutral to the proposed changes.
- Four submitters somewhat oppose the proposed changes.
- One submitter strongly opposes the proposed changes.

Five submitters provided comments on the follow-up question *'do you have any further comments on the proposed changes?'*

- One submitter commented that we need to encourage visitors, not chase them away.
- One submitter commented that we should restrict to even fewer days (but did not specify the number of days), as freedom campers provide zero benefit to the city.
- One submitter commented that the restriction should be only three days maximum anywhere in Wellington.
- Two submitters commented that the restriction should be seven days as this is a more common holiday period. One of these submitters commented that Wellington would benefit from freedom camping, and that they would like to have more freedom camping areas including some of the currently prohibited areas, such as the Botanic Gardens.

Q2 – Do you support or oppose the proposed changes of including camping using a tent (or other temporary structure) in this four-day restriction?

Eleven submissions were received on the proposed changes.

- Four submitters strongly support the proposed changes.
- Two submitters somewhat oppose the proposed changes.
- Five submitters strongly oppose the proposed changes.

Three submitters provided comments on the follow-up question '*do you have any further comments on the proposed changes?*'

- One submitter commented that we do not need camping cities.
- One submitter commented that by banning tents we could be stopping someone camping overnight to go fishing or surfing.
- One submitter commented that homeless and long-term protesters encampments should also be included in the restriction.

Please provide any further comments you have on the Statement of Proposal.

Five submitters provided further comments.

- One submitter commented that there needs to be an easy way for locals to report freedom camping that has exceeded the maximum stay.
- One submitter commented that we should ban freedom camping altogether.
- One submitter commented that Responsible Camping Association Incorporated should be given the same camping accessibility as other vehicles that have a Certified Self-Containment sticker. This is because its members are required to take a test to prove that they understand what is necessary to be able to freedom camp, whereas the blue sticker for Certified Self-Containment only requires the necessary amenities to pass inspection to have it issued.
- One submitter commented that we need more camping locations. This is because in a natural disaster where their home is destroyed or they could not go to their home, they must use a camper van for residence for a long time.

- One submitter commented that they preferred a seven-day restriction. This comment is also included in the above question related to the four-day restriction.

Officers' response to the submissions

Officers have considered all the submissions and provide the following responses:

- A four-day restriction is reasonable, most visitors are staying within this restriction, and they can relocate to other areas in the city or to a regional camping location. We are not reviewing prohibited areas at this point.
- In terms of accessibility for freedom camping, self-containment is the legislative threshold. If they want to stay in Wellington, all freedom campers are subject to the same restrictions, including members of the Responsible Camping Association Incorporated.
- Freedom Campers are a key part of our domestic and international tourist market and spend time in the city. Officers do not consider that we should ban freedom camping, including camping with a tent.
- In terms of an easy way for locals to report freedom camping that has exceeded the maximum stay, we are aware that there have been a small number of issues that Council officers actively manage. This will be reflected in our enforcement measures if appropriate.