



PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE USE

March 31, 2008

Close consideration and legal advice has seen the Southland District Council decide not to change the District Plan to address the use of private homes for short-term visitor accommodation.

However, Council's Resource Management Manager Bruce Halligan is advising those who raised concerns about homeowners renting out their houses to tourists that they can lodge a privately initiated plan change application should they wish to do so, which would need to follow the form and information requirements of the Resource Management Act.

Mr Halligan said at the Resource Management Committee meeting on Friday concerns had been raised by moteliers, primarily in Te Anau, but also in other areas, such as Riverton, Winton and Stewart Island, that homeowners were letting their homes through internet sites.

The moteliers were concerned that it was not a level playing field as they had to pay commercial fees and ratings, while the homeowners did not.

When this issue was raised at a previous meeting, there had been some discussion on whether a plan change was appropriate considering there was no evidence of demonstrated adverse environmental effects, he said.

A plan change would also be extremely hard to police, with the costs of doing so going back on to the ratepayer.

Council's legal advisor Barry Slowley said changing the District Plan to address these concerns was not appropriate because of the lack of adverse environmental effects and this issue seemed to be more about trade competition, which was specifically excluded from consideration under the Resource Management Act.

Using a targeted rate would raise difficulties in identifying properties used for short-term accommodation and those properties would not fall under any Building Act requirements either.

"I think the short answer to the problem is that the legislation that the Council administers is not intended to regulate commercial activity or provide the level playing field sought by some of the owners of commercial accommodation. Efforts to make the legislation work for such a purpose will be likely to create very real difficulties for Council," Mr Slowley said.

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