



Australian investment could be good for NZ tourism

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New Zealand should be seizing opportunities to work with Australia when it comes to promoting and growing our tourism industry, say the organisers of a New Zealand ecotourism conference.

More than 200 delegates from New Zealand and overseas are expected to attend the Ecotourism in New Zealand conference in Greymouth, on the South Island's West Coast from 1-3 August.

Closer co-operation between Australian and New Zealand is on the agenda at this year's event, hosted by Tai Poutini Polytechnic and featuring Ecotourism Australia chairman Alastair McCracken as a keynote speaker. Mr McCracken will discuss standards and benchmarking for ecotourism businesses.

Ecotourism NZ chairman Brian MacKenzie says the takeover bid by Australian-owned MFS Living and Leisure Group of Tourism Holdings is an example of how Australia and New Zealand can work together.

While he cannot comment on the specific case, on a broader scale New Zealand should be looking for opportunities to work alongside Australia when it comes to tourism promotion and management.

"At a time when Australian and New Zealand tourism interests are coming closer together and an Australian company is set to make a substantial investment in the New Zealand tourism market, it is worth acknowledging that, in relation to ecotourism, the two countries can leverage off each others' strengths," Mr MacKenzie says.

"It's an important component of ecotourism ventures that they are locally owned and operated. However, many visitors to this part of the world treat Australasia as one destination, so there is real potential for creating networks of operators in each country that can market each others' products to their customers.

"Already, much of what we offer sets world benchmarks, but we have to work hard to maintain this. If we combine, and work to our strengths we can provide a diversity of ecotourism adventures for others on the world stage to compete with."

Ecotourism is the fastest growing sector of the New Zealand tourism industry, with 2000 to 3000 new jobs expected to be created in the next five years.

The rapid growth of the Ecotourism in New Zealand Conference reflects the level of interest in the industry, Mr MacKenzie says.

“The event is only in its second year but already it seems there will be more people wanting to come than we can accommodate.”

The annual event aims to enhance New Zealand’s burgeoning ecotourism industry by highlighting success stories and debating key issues around the sector - including how best to promote and manage it.

This year’s conference will examine a range of issues including how the country can deliver its 100% pure promise while continuing to grow and develop, and the impact global tourism trends will have on ecotourism in New Zealand.

Discussion topics include how to manage the carbon emission debate and the potential for Maori ecotourism.

Representatives from Tourism New Zealand and the Department of Conservation, international environmental experts and leading tourism operators will also address the conference.

For further information please contact: Brian MacKenzie - 03 769 9431 or 021 166 0708; or Conference Coordinator Sarah Caseley - 03 769 9652 or 027 252 4447. Or check out www.ecotourismnz.com