

## **Our Cup runneth over**

By Tourism Industry Association New Zealand (TIA) Chief Executive Tim Cossar

On 9 September 2011, the All Blacks and Tonga will run onto the newly upgraded Eden Park to kick off the biggest international event ever held in New Zealand, the benefits of which will be felt throughout the country.

Amongst the world's top five sporting events, the Government forecasts Rugby World Cup 2011 will inject over \$500 million into the New Zealand economy and that it will attract over 60,000 international visitors and a global television audience of more than four billion.

It is an exceptional opportunity to showcase New Zealand to the world and to position Auckland as a major event destination. But it's not just tourism and hospitality businesses and the rugby fraternity that stand to gain from the Cup's long-awaited return to our shores.

The money generated through tourism and RWC 2011 will be spent throughout communities, from attractions, accommodation and transport through to restaurants and wineries, bars, nightclubs, cinemas, theatres, retail outlets, events and conference venues, supermarkets, museums, art galleries and hairdressers. The list is long and broad.

The decision was made to ensure as many regions as possible share directly in the excitement of RWC2011. Matches are being held at 13 venues; 23 centres large and small will host at least one of the participating teams. The New Zealand Rugby World Cup festival will run throughout 2011 and will see events run throughout the country that showcase our arts, culture and entertainment.

Major events like RWC 2011 are important for boosting New Zealand's national brand identity on the world stage. They provide the impetus for infrastructure improvements and new developments, create business and employment opportunities and leave a legacy of more skilled and trained staff. RWC 2011 was the catalyst for KiaOraMai Essential Service Skills, the new training programme designed to significantly lift service levels across tourism and the wider service sector.

A government strategy involving Tourism New Zealand and New Zealand Trade and Enterprise is working to maximise the benefits of hosting the Rugby World Cup for tourism, trade and 'New Zealand Inc'. TIA will be attending regular meetings with Rugby New Zealand, the "New Zealand 2011 office" (a one-stop-shop for New Zealanders and visitors to know what's happening and how to get involved with Rugby World Cup 2011), the Rugby World Cup Minister's office and other relevant agencies, and sharing information with our members.

It is sometimes suggested that tourism and hospitality businesses should bear the brunt of the cost of RWC2011 as they are the only ones who will benefit, but this event will generate economic, social and cultural benefits for all Kiwis long after the final whistle blows. (And tourism and hospitality operators will certainly make a significant contribution to the event through rates, taxes and investment in marketing and promotional initiatives.)

There are also the benefits we can't put a price tag on - the sense of excitement, pride and vibrancy this big international festival will generate throughout the country. And hopefully the exhilaration that will come from bringing the Cup home!