

# Tourism at the forefront

---

*By TIA Chief Executive Tim Cossar*

As I travel the country and speak to tourism operators, I'm struck by their commitment to building our industry.

There is no doubt we are all facing challenging times but the level of willingness to work together for the benefit of the wider industry is heartening.

Although individual businesses might be competitors on a daily basis, we will all suffer if we do not step back to look at the bigger picture. We must work together to attract visitors to New Zealand before we can focus on attracting them to individual operations.



Nowhere is this cooperation more important than in our work with Government. I really feel that tourism has made enormous progress in terms of political maturity in the last year.

We have strong support from the National-led government, as has been demonstrated recently by the announcement of extra funding for marketing in Australia. The fact that this was quickly matched by Air New Zealand, with its campaign to promote regional New Zealand in Australia, is an example of the type of industry cooperation we need at this time.

Prime Minister and Tourism Minister John Key has been quoted as saying this was only the first of a series of tourism-related announcements, so we look to working with the Government further.

I was delighted to join industry, government and community leaders at the Job Summit called by John Key in February.

The tourism industry was specifically mentioned at the Summit as 'strategic to our future' but also an industry that is highly threatened by direct exposure to the worst impacts of the global recession.

There was little doubt that other sectors are beginning to understand the power of tourism. It was clear that we are no longer regarded as a fringe player and despite the obvious challenges ahead, tourism is regarded as an industry working together increasingly effectively.

It is this sort of progress, both within the industry and in our relationships with other sectors, which will ensure we remain a key player in New Zealand's future and that we will be at the forefront in leading New Zealand out of the recession.

## **TRENZ 2009**

Like the wider tourism industry, TRENZ 2009 has not been immune from the more challenging business environment.

Exhibitor numbers are not as high as the last few years and though the quality of registered Buyers is high, registrations have been slower, reflecting the late booking patterns being seen across the industry.

However, TRENZ will continue to deliver high quality business opportunities. It's going to be a fantastic event that will really reflect the best of New Zealand's tourism industry despite the challenging times we are facing.