



STATEMENT OF PROPOSAL

Draft Freedom Camping Bylaw

1. Proposal

Tararua District Council (Council) proposes that a new bylaw (the Freedom Camping Bylaw 2025) should be made. This new draft Freedom Camping Bylaw is made under the Freedom Camping Act 2011 (FCA).

The proposed bylaw includes Schedule 1: Prohibited Areas and Schedule 2: Restricted Areas. Names, addresses and maps are shown of specific areas.

This Statement of Proposal is issued in compliance with sections 82A, 83, 83AA, 86 of the Local Government Act 2002.

2. Consultation

Council has prepared and adopted the draft bylaw for public consultation. Council invites you to have your say on the bylaw and the two schedules.

Any person can make a submission on the draft bylaw.

Consultation opens 8am Monday 19 May and closes 5pm Friday 20 June

How to have your say

You can fill in your submission online at www.tararua.govt.nz/consultation.

You can fill in a paper submission form which you will find at all Council service centres and libraries. Paper submissions can be:

- **handed in** at Council offices in Eketāhuna, Pahiatua, Woodville or Dannevirke
- **mailed to** Freedom Camping Bylaw, Tararua District Council, PO Box 115, Dannevirke 4942
- **emailed to** submissions@tararua.govt.nz

Facebook comments are not considered submissions.

If you would like more information, please contact the Policy and Planning Advisor at Council on 06 374 4080 or via submissions@tararua.govt.nz.

Your Privacy

All submissions are public information. This supports our drive to be as transparent as possible, but, if there are any personal details you don't want made public, please let us know.

Hearings

Anyone wanting to present their submission in person or by audiovisual link to Council will be given the opportunity to do so. If you wish to make a spoken or NZ Sign Language submission to Councillors, please indicate YES on the submission form and ensure you have included your contact details. We will contact you to arrange a time for you to speak.

Deliberations

Council will then formally consider all submissions and make decisions on the content of the bylaw and the two schedules.

3. Background

The Freedom Camping Act 2011 was updated in 2023.

Currently Council has a Freedom Camping Policy in Schedule 2 of its Public Places Bylaw. Council seeks to implement a bylaw under the Freedom Camping Act 2011. If this new bylaw is adopted the policy will be revoked.

Council has received funding from the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) to develop a Freedom Camping Bylaw, and for signage after the bylaw has been adopted.

The Freedom Camping Act and the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 and bylaws

Council is making this bylaw under sections 11 and 11A of the Freedom Camping Act (FCA).

The draft Freedom Camping Bylaw is an appropriate and proportionate way to address freedom camping in the Tararua District in order to:

- protect local authority areas;
- protect the safety of people who may visit local authority areas;
- protect access to local authority areas.

Also, the bylaw may not be inconsistent with the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990 (NZBORA).

The NZBORA sets out specific rights and freedoms which are protected by legislation. The NZBORA states that the rights and freedoms covered by the Act, *may be subject only to such reasonable limits prescribed by law as can be demonstrably justified in a free and democratic society.*

The draft bylaw is designed to regulate activities in public places only as far as necessary to ensure the area is protected, the health and safety of people who may visit the area are protected, and to protect access to the area. This bylaw does not unreasonably interfere with any of the rights in the New Zealand Bill of Rights Act 1990.

What is freedom camping?

In the FCA, **freedom camp** means to camp (other than at a camping ground) within 200 m of an area accessible by motor vehicle or within 200 m of the mean low-water springs line of any sea or harbour, or on or within 200 m of a formed road or a Great Walks Track, using either or both of the following:

- a tent or other temporary structure;
- a motor vehicle.

What’s NOT freedom camping?

- temporary and short-term parking of a motor vehicle:
- recreational activities commonly known as day-trip excursions:
- resting or sleeping at the roadside in a motor vehicle to avoid driver fatigue.

The FCA also explains that a person is not freedom camping if they are unable to live in appropriate residential accommodation and because of that, they are living in a tent or other temporary structure or a motor vehicle.

Also camping grounds are subject to the Camping Grounds Regulations 1985 and may be a site where a fee is payable for camping. This bylaw does not cover camping grounds.

Permitted, restricted, prohibited

- freedom camping is permitted in a local authority (Council) area unless it is restricted or prohibited (refer to the two schedules to this draft bylaw).
- Freedom camping using a non-self-contained vehicle can only be done if it is permitted (see schedule 2).

Reserves Management Plan

Council is currently consulting on its draft Reserves Management Plan. This plan provides for specific areas to be addressed by the Freedom Camping Bylaw. Some of these areas are addressed in Schedule 2.

4. Public Engagement

Council conducted engagement in February 2025. Half of the respondents normally lived in the district and half normally lived outside the district. Council also directly contacted Community Boards and Committees, camping ground operators, domain management committees, iwi, camping organisations, private landowners where freedom camping is promoted.

Facebook comments were included in this engagement. 27,876 views were recorded. *(Note that consultation is a more formal process and submission forms must be completed.)*

Engagement question	Engagement responses	Council’s response
Where do you live?	2 or more nights is an appropriate maximum stay at freedom camping sites.	N/A
Where do you currently freedom camp in the Tararua District?	In order of popularity, the top 4 areas were: Ferry Reserve, Woodville ĀKitio Mangatainoka Reserve ANZAC Park, Norsewood	N/A

Problems at these sites	Overflowing rubbish bins, mess left behind, fire lighting, inappropriate behaviour, apparently permanent stayers.	Limiting the number of nights that people can stay at an area.
Enough freedom camping sites	Of 149 responses, 68 said not enough and 52 said just right. The same proportions were represented by respondents who lived inside the district and those who lived outside the district.	Council considered its strategic priorities and Long-Term Plan commitments. Council will manage its existing freedom camping areas.
Maximum night's stay	Respondents who live outside the district mostly thought 2 nights. Respondents who live in the district thought 3+ nights	Council decided that generally a 5-night maximum stay was appropriate with some specific areas having a shorter length of time.
Limits on the number of vehicles at a site	Two thirds of respondents thought there should be a limit.	Council has not set limits as campers will be able to see how full a site is and if it is too full it is easy to access other freedom camping sites or camping grounds.
Types of camping, eg self-contained	Three quarters of respondents who lived outside the district said self-contained vehicles only. Over half of respondents who live in the district said both self-contained and tents or non-self-contained vehicles.	Council understands district residents like to go camping so most areas include non-self-contained camping.
Sites to be included or excluded for freedom camping	Include: beaches, rivers Exclude: Victory Park, Pahiatua and the Denmark St (Dannevirke) carpark.	The FCA allows for freedom camping. Council only seeks to restrict or prohibit freedom camping at certain sites. See schedules.
What makes a good freedom camping site	Enough rubbish/recycling bins. Maintained toilets. Signage.	Council has facilities management processes to clean and maintain facilities, and for rubbish collection. Council plans to have signage to explain good freedom camping

		behaviour, eg taking rubbish away if bin is full.
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5. Considerations and Options

Council considered the engagement responses; what it knows about the freedom camping use at currently promoted freedom camping areas in the district; complaints received by Council about freedom camping activity, and its history developing freedom camping in the district.

Council weighed up:

- known problems with freedom camping generally and at specific area;
- general concerns for area-user safety;
- how areas can be protected for their unique qualities and access for everyone;
- the Freedom Camping Ambassador report of 2022/23.

Option 1: Continue with current Freedom Camping Policy as a schedule to the Public Places Bylaw

This policy is old and does not take into account the 2023 amendments to the Freedom Camping Act 2011.

Council is restricted in its enforcement options by keeping the policy as a schedule to another bylaw. While the Freedom Camping Policy sits under the Public Places Bylaw Council can only prosecute an offender. A Freedom Camping Bylaw allows Council to utilise compliance measures (see [Part 3 of the FCA](#)).

Option2: Create a bylaw

Council was fortunate to receive funding from MBIE to cover the cost of a freedom camping ambassador, the development of the bylaw (which includes legal advice and consultation), and for signage.

This situation provides Council with the opportunity to look more closely at freedom camping in the district and create conditions or rules that are appropriate for this district, meet the current law, and that through the bylaw Council is able to take action when people do things that break the rules.

This means that Council creates an appropriate freedom camping environment for locals and visitors, is able to better protect areas and people’s access to areas, and the health and safety of those people while they are at those areas.

Bryan Nicholson

Chief Executive

6. Attachments

Draft Freedom Camping Bylaw

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TARARUA
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Dannevirke Service Centre

26 Gordon Street, Dannevirke
PO Box 115, Dannevirke 4942
Monday - Friday
8:00am - 5:00pm
Phone: 06 374 4080 (24 hours)
Email: info@tararua.govt.nz

Pahiatua Service Centre

136 Main Street, Pahiatua
Monday - Friday
8:00am - 4:30pm
Phone: 06 376 0110 (24 hours)
Email: info@tararua.govt.nz

Eketāhuna Service Centre & Library

31 Main Street, Eketāhuna
Monday - Friday
10:30am - 12:30pm & 1:00pm - 4:30pm
Phone: 06 376 0110 (24 hours)
Email: info@tararua.govt.nz

Woodville Service Centre & Library

45 Vogel Street, Woodville
Monday - Friday
9:00am - 12:30pm & 1:30pm - 5:00pm
Phone: 06 376 0200 (24 hours)
Email: info@tararua.govt.nz