
Department of Conservation Identifying Preferences for Booked DOC Facilities in New Zealand

Prepared for
The Department of Conservation

Prepared by
Michelle Irving – Mobius Research

Project Background and Objectives

The overall objective of this project was to identify how the Department of Conservation (the Department, DOC) can best meet the needs of current and potential visitors using booked or non-booked (free for all – but could become bookable in the future) accommodation. The specific research objectives were to:

- Identify the different markets that would be more likely to use DOC accommodation (huts, lodges and different types of campsites) if they were to become bookable
- Identify the different markets that are less likely to use DOC accommodation (huts, lodges and different types of campsites) if they were to become bookable
- Identify what aspects of booked or free for all accommodation are valued, and under what conditions
- Identify who the markets for DOC accommodation are, what they look like and what is influencing their behaviours and preferences, and
- Identify what types of facilities and accommodation they are most interested in i.e. DOC products such as huts, lodges, campsite types and locations.

Research Approach

This was a mixed method project, comprising 11 focus groups and surveys with members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand (MCA), members of Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC), and the general public who do not currently use DOC accommodation but have been identified as potential future users.

Focus Groups

Group	Participants	Region
Group 1	Mainly use bookable accommodation	Auckland
Group 2	Mainly use bookable accommodation	Auckland
Group 3	Mainly use free for all accommodation/use a mix of bookable and free for all	Auckland
Group 4	Mainly use free for all accommodation/use a mix of bookable and free for all	Auckland
Group 5	Potential users of DOC accommodation (not current users), lapsed users	Auckland
Group 6	Mainly use bookable accommodation	Tauranga
Group 7	Mainly use free for all accommodation/use a mix of bookable and free for all	Tauranga
Group 8	Mainly use bookable accommodation	Wellington
Group 9	Mainly use free for all accommodation/use a mix of bookable and free for all	Wellington
Group 10	Mainly use bookable accommodation	Christchurch
Group 11	Mainly use free for all accommodation/use a mix of bookable and free for all	Christchurch

Participants in Groups 1-4 and Groups 6-11 were recruited from a database supplied by the Department of Conservation of people who had booked DOC accommodation over the previous three months. Participants were selected randomly and invited to take part by email (with follow up telephone calls to ensure a good mix of demographics and usage types). Participants in Group 5 (potential users of DOC accommodation) were recruited from Mobius' qualitative research panel. Groups were two hours in duration and were held between Monday 24 March and Saturday 12 April 2014.

Online surveys

Survey	Participants
Online survey N=2028 Standard margin of error at the 95% confidence level of +/-2.2%	Members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand (MCA)
Online survey N=12	Members of Federated Mountain Clubs (FMC)
Online survey N=501 Standard margin of error at the 95% confidence level of +/-4.4%	Members of the general public – potential users of DOC accommodation (invited to participate from Mobius' research-only online panel).

A draft survey intended for members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand and members of Federated Mountain Clubs was prepared and sent to both organisations for their input. The MCA did not wish to make any changes and sent the survey out on DOC's behalf to their member database.

FMC initially declined to take part in this research but did in fact send the survey to their member clubs via a newsletter. It was intended that the clubs would send the survey to their own members. Given that only 12 members (individuals) of FMC completed this survey, these results have not been included as part of this report, but are available in a separate document.

Executive Summary

Research objective

The overall objective of this project was to identify how the Department of Conservation (the Department, DOC) can best meet the needs of current and potential visitors using booked or non-booked (free for all – but could become bookable in the future) accommodation.

Research approach

This was a mixed method project comprising 11 focus groups with a mix of people who mainly use bookable accommodation along with people who also use free for all accommodation, and three surveys – one with members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand, one with members of Federated Mountain Clubs and one with members of the general public who were identified as potential future users of DOC accommodation.

Key findings

The overall finding from this project is that there is support for increasing the number of vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages, and serviced huts able to be booked, among most current users of these types of accommodation. This finding is consistent *overall* between people who *usually* currently book DOC accommodation and those that *also* use free for all accommodation. This research has found that accommodation and booking preferences are strongly impacted on by life-stage – family groups (travelling with children) in particular are more likely than other segments to *actively seek* accommodation that is able to be booked in advance, in order to ensure that all members of the family (and most importantly children) have a bed. Other segments (as outlined in the table below) also value being able to book DOC hut and lodge accommodation however.

The advantages of being able to book DOC hut and lodge accommodation include having the certainty of a bed for the night (particularly for families and many older trampers 40+ who previously may have been comfortable with free for all accommodation). One of the key advantages of having pre-booked accommodation is being able to travel without a tent. Other advantages include being aware of how crowded the accommodation is likely to be (some trampers may choose an alternative accommodation if the hut is becoming full), being able to pay in advance and not having to ‘race’ to the next hut in order to secure a bed (thereby ensuring that the tramp itself is at more of an enjoyable pace).

A minority of people across the groups said they preferred not to have to book accommodation, but most said they would simply have to adapt to a new booking policy if it were to be introduced. The concerns raised here were mainly to do with having a lack of flexibility if the weather turns bad and plans/routes need to be changed. There was also an issue raised with having had to pay in advance and therefore possibly forfeiting that money. Some people were also concerned that increased bookability may change the nature of tramping in New Zealand (i.e. that it may negatively impact the New Zealand bush as accessible for all). This was a minority view however.

Most people felt that increased bookability of huts and lodges was more likely to be important during peak times including key holiday periods. Booking huts and lodges during non-peak times was not considered to be *as important* (although there was acknowledgement that popular accommodation can sometimes be busy during non-peak times as well). Most people felt that backcountry huts should remain as free for all.

There is less support overall for increasing the bookability of serviced campsites, including a number of \$10 a night or 'scenic' campsites. The main reasons for this are that (a) campsite users prefer to be (and can be) more spontaneous about where they will stay for the night and (b) there is less perceived need to pre-book a campsite. There is a perception that unless it is a peak period and the campsite is a very popular one, then there is no need to book.

The following table summarises the key segments identified as part of the focus groups and their attitudes towards DOC accommodation preferences.

Description	Preferences – bookable, free-for all, front country, back country
<p>(1) Family groups, parents aged in their 30s or 40s Often people who tramped/camped with their own parents when they were children – and now tramp with their own family. Usually with children under the age of 16 (upper age limit). Unlikely to be spontaneous</p>	<p>Strong preference for bookable accommodation (huts, lodges). Front country/Great Walk accommodation. Preference for serviced accommodation. Trips are planned, travel often during peak times/holiday periods Supportive of more bookable accommodation</p>
<p>(2) Young independents – very late teens, mostly in their 20s Often tramped as children with their parents (as above) and have now returned to tramping/camping with friends. More likely to be spontaneous</p>	<p>Will book accommodation but will also use free for all Sometimes will be spontaneous – and therefore willing to carry a tent Supportive of more bookable front country accommodation (huts, lodges)</p>

<p>(3) Older men, aged 40+ Longer-term trampers – possibly used to be part of ‘family groups’ or sometimes still are, but also enjoy tramping/camping with other male friends and sometimes alone. More likely to be spontaneous. More likely to hunt</p>	<p>More likely to use free for all accommodation (unless travelling with family). More likely to be spontaneous More likely to use backcountry huts Accepting of more bookable front country accommodation Reject any notion of backcountry accommodation becoming bookable</p>
<p>(4) Couples/Friends aged 40+ Longer-term trampers – often previously in Segment 1 and sometimes in Segment 3, now tramp/camp with a partner or other similar ‘life-stage’ friends</p>	<p>Often doing Great Walks/using front country accommodation. Some use of free for all and backcountry accommodation – but less so than front country and bookable Supportive of more bookable front country accommodation</p>
<p>(5) Older independents –30s, 40s+ Often tramp/camp with friends or fellow members of a tramping club, some possibly began tramping as adults</p>	<p>Uses a mix of front and backcountry, bookable and free for all accommodation. More willing to carry a tent Less supportive of more bookable accommodation because of a view on the need to have flexibility during tramps (often based on weather)</p>
<p>(6) New trampers, mixed age (potentially a small segment) Started tramping doing a Great Walk Tramping with friends/family – may include children. Not spontaneous</p>	<p>Preference for Great Walks/accessible tramps (at this stage) as an introduction to tramping. Preference for bookable accommodation Supportive of more bookable accommodation</p>
<p>(7) Campsite users only/mainly Mixed in age, prefer to visit a location/non-trampers</p>	<p>NB: focus groups only Prefer to have flexibility during trips Less support for more bookable campsite accommodation – other than for peak times, very busy sites, key holiday periods</p>

Research Findings

Usage of DOC facilities – background and overview

The people taking part in this research included a mix of long-term (30 year plus) trampers, new trampers (one time only - and generally this had been a Great Walk) and people with a range of tramping experience in between. Participants also included those who camp as part of their overnight or multi-day tramp or hike, and people for whom the campsite itself was the holiday (final) destination. Most people taking part tramp or camp with other people – friends/mates, a partner, other family members including children and fellow tramping club members. Some people were also hunters. There were very few people taking part in this research who tramp alone.

“I’ve been using DOC facilities for more than 30 years. I started off tramping when there was no booking system with friends and work colleagues, just a bunch of guys. Now it’s just me and my wife, so we mainly use huts overnight. Once a year we might do a multi-day tramp. Probably get out around six times a year”

“I’ve been tramping since 2007, I started out with the Great Walks and now I belong to a club and tramp around two or three times a year, mainly in the South Island. I use campgrounds and huts, mostly multi-day trips and some overnight”

“I’ve been tramping about three years. I mainly do long trips, multi-day hikes, one night at each place, Nelson Lakes, Lake Waikaremoana, Stewart Island, travelling mainly in a group”

“I’ve done one trip only, the three day Wanganui River walk, but I’ve just joined a tramping club”

“I discovered DOC campsites in 2007. I try to stay at DOC as much as possible, it’s closer to nature and I use tents and vans. Usually spend about two days at each place, usually long weekends or in the holidays, like at Easter”

“I’ve been tramping with my family since I was about 10, mostly around Mt Egmont and then I tramped with friends, I did the Duke of Edinburgh and then I tramped with my kids but now they don’t want to come with me and now we tramp with another couple”

Tramping included a mix of longer trips/multi-day hikes and overnight trips. A mix of DOC accommodation had been used by participants from fully serviced huts, lodges and campsites through to non-serviced backcountry huts and scenic campsites.

People generally only referred to three broad types of DOC accommodation in their descriptions of what they use – huts (including backcountry), lodges and campsites. People rarely referred to serviced or non-serviced huts and campsites unless they were specifically asked. Overall, there was some confusion

over the definition of a serviced hut – specifically whether it included gas facilities. Some people would take their own gas cylinder anyway, even if they were going to be using a serviced hut because of uncertainty around whether gas would be available. Some people noted that gas facilities can sometimes ‘run out’ at huts.

There was very limited evidence of spontaneous ‘trips’ i.e. deciding on *the day* to go tramping – most people said they planned their trips in advance. Younger people, without children were more likely to be spontaneous i.e. decide on a Friday to go away for the weekend. Under these circumstances, they wouldn’t book their accommodation before leaving (and generally this would be in the summer and they would take a tent with them). Other people generally needed to plan.

“I’d like to be spontaneous but I don’t have the time”

Some people would make spontaneous decisions however about where to stay and which specific route to take *during a tramp* (often this would be influenced by the weather i.e. bad weather forcing a change of plans or good weather impacting on decisions to ‘keep going’ for a while longer). These weather-related issues had an impact on some peoples’ attitudes towards bookable vs. free for all accommodation. This is discussed in more detail later in this report. In terms of spontaneity, campsite users were more likely to *want to make* spontaneous decisions about which campsite they would stay at for the night – usually impacted on by the look of the campsite and its surrounding area once they got there. In this respect, campsite users were less likely to be supportive of increased bookability of DOC campsites – serviced, scenic or another type. This is also discussed in more detail later in this report.

“I love the ease of driving around and you see a really cool DOC site and you can say, ‘let’s go in and see if they have any space’ and fill out the little form”

Use of DOC facilities tended to be seasonal for most – with higher use in the spring and summer months, especially people travelling with family, including children. Some people (a minority) tramped all year round. These people were more likely to be independent trampers (non-family) either young or older, with some belonging to a tramping club.

“It tends to be more seasonal, mainly summer but I also do some Alpine Walks but that can be a bit limiting because of the skill level and gear needed”

While this part of the project was qualitative in nature, there appeared to be the following key ‘general’ profiles of people taking part who use DOC accommodation. Please note that these segments are based on *observations and known information* about people taking part in the focus groups and not on any quantitative information. These segments exclude international tourists and school groups (who are also

user-segments). Not that based primarily on life-stage, there is some level of *movement* across segments (i.e. these segments will not always be mutually exclusive). The implications of these segments in terms of accommodation preferences is discussed throughout this report.

User segments of DOC accommodation – based on focus group attendees

Segment	Type	Description
Segment 1	Family groups, parents aged in their 30s or 40s	Often people who tramped/camped with their own parents when they were children – and now tramp with their own family. Usually with children under the age of 16 (upper age limit). Unlikely to be spontaneous. Anecdotal feedback across the focus groups suggests that once children reach their later teens the desire to tramp with their parents or to tramp at all seems to diminish. Often these children return to tramping later (in their 20s) – “they say why do I have to like tramping just because you do”
Segment 2	Young independents – very late teens, mostly in their 20s	Often tramped as children with their parents (as above) and have now returned to tramping/camping with friends. More likely to be spontaneous
Segment 3	Older men, aged 40+	Longer-term trampers – possibly used to be part of ‘family groups’ or sometimes still are, but also enjoy tramping/camping with other male friends and sometimes alone. More likely to be spontaneous. More likely to hunt
Segment 4	Couples/Friends aged 40+	Longer-term trampers – often previously in Segment 1 and sometimes in Segment 3, now tramp/camp with a partner or other similar ‘life-stage’ friends
Segment 5	Older independents – 30s, 40s+	Often tramp/camp with friends or fellow members of a tramping club, some possibly began tramping as adults
Segment 6	New trampers, mixed age (potentially a small segment)	Started tramping doing a Great Walk. Tramping with friends/family – may include children. Not spontaneous
Segment 7	Campsite users only/mainly	Mixed in age/non-trampers, value being able to be spontaneous on their trips

Perceptions of, and experiences with DOC facilities

The general view was that DOC accommodation can vary significantly but most people *are aware of* the level and quality of accommodation before they visit it. People said that their expectations of different types of DOC accommodation, for example non-serviced backcountry accommodation are realistic.

“But you’re usually quite well informed by DOC about what you’re going to get”

Overall people felt that DOC accommodation has been getting better and better but also that there are *some* huts (off the beaten track) that have either been allowed to fall into disrepair and are no longer usable, or have been removed altogether. Key changes that people say they have noticed are an increased attention towards safety, for example, track maintenance, bridge maintenance etc. – allowing more easy access to some types of DOC accommodation, and improved facilities at the huts themselves. People also noted an increase in large and relatively sophisticated lodge-style accommodation (for example, the Pinnacles). Improved facilities for people included more flush toilets, improved water quality, better layout of bunks and storage facilities.

“Amazing hut facilities, like at Kepler ... having flush toilets was just amazing”

“I was at the hut at Mt Aspiring and I was really surprised it had flush toilets”

“I started out on Taranaki where you don’t book and there’s 45 people and 10 beds and that’s just the way it was and what you do ... but now I’ve started doing the Great Walks and now my goodness, there’s a flush toilet, and it’s inside, I just couldn’t believe it”

Most of the people taking part in this research, including seasoned trampers were supportive of, and valued improvements to DOC accommodation. At the same time however, there was no expectation that other types of DOC accommodation needed to be upgraded to the same standard (other than changes for safety-related reasons), i.e. people using backcountry huts were satisfied with the quality of that accommodation as is. Some people (a minority) were concerned about DOC accommodation becoming too sophisticated (and possibly too expensive) and this having an impact on the tramping culture within New Zealand. Most people were happy with additional comforts however.

All of the current users of DOC accommodation taking part in this research were of the view that the standard of DOC accommodation is, overall, excellent. Current users of DOC accommodation who had lived or travelled overseas were of the view that the DOC accommodation offer is unlike anywhere else in the world and there was a general feeling of gratitude in terms of what is available to people in this country.

“In Europe there’s nothing like this, even toilet paper. Here you can go into the middle of nowhere and it’s amazing”

There were only a few issues raised with respect to DOC accommodation – and these were mainly related to other people, rather than to the accommodation itself:

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- Most groups raised issues regarding foreign tourists using DOC accommodation. The key issues here were to do with a perception that some foreign tourists do not pay for the accommodation (where there is no warden) that they use and/or are disrespectful in the way that they use the accommodation. There were mixed views here – some people thought that this was because of a lack of understanding of what is expected, while others saw them as having a ‘don’t care’ attitude
 - Most groups raised issues to do with *some* people (domestic tourists/trampers) not paying for DOC accommodation (where there is no warden)
 - Some people felt that some huts able to be accessed easily and quickly by vehicle can be ‘hi-jacked’ by groups of young people using the hut as a ‘party venue’ for the night (these issues were mainly raised by the two Wellington groups), and
 - Many people were frustrated by large groups of school children at huts and lodges – most people said that they are unaware that there will be school groups at huts when they arrive (and would change their plans if they had known) and that school groups can be noisy. Some people also noted that teachers sometimes give ‘lessons’ to these groups in the huts i.e. about what they may have seen during the day or what they may see the next day, and that this can be frustrating for trampers wanting to relax after a day’s hike.

“In the Tararuas there’s a big lodge where you get a lot of school kids”

Most people also said that they had experienced over-crowded huts (with people having to sleep on the floor) but that this mainly occurred when the weather was bad. People said that they didn’t mind unexpected and unbooked ‘visitors’ even if they had pre-booked the accommodation themselves, if the weather was bad and those people had no choice but to utilise the accommodation. This appeared to only be an issue with huts and lodges – not with campsites. Most people were of the view that there is usually enough room for everyone at DOC campsites. There was no evidence of frustration with over-crowded huts and lodges under these circumstances however (other than the fact that they can get hot and somewhat ‘smelly’). In fact, for many users of hut (both front and backcountry) and lodge accommodation there was a view that (under certain circumstances i.e. when the weather is bad) having to make space for others in a hut (whether the hut or lodge is bookable or free for all) is part of the New Zealand tramping experience and what tramping is all about.

Key reasons for choosing to book

The current users of DOC accommodation taking part in this research were recruited (as mentioned earlier) from the DOC online booking website – therefore they had all booked DOC accommodation at least at some stage. However, many also used free for all DOC accommodation at other times or had used it exclusively in the past.

There were very different attitudes towards the booking of hut and lodge accommodation compared to booking DOC campsite accommodation. Overall, people said that they would be more likely to book hut and lodge accommodation than they would campsite accommodation (note that by campsite accommodation here we are talking about stand-alone serviced and non-serviced/scenic campsites – not campsites that are part of DOC hut or lodge accommodation i.e. tent sites outside huts). The key reason for this difference in attitude is that there is less perceived need to book campsite accommodation than there is hut/lodge accommodation. Most people using DOC campsites said that they had rarely or never had a problem getting accommodation at a DOC campsite – and if a particular campsite was full, they could simply drive to another one. There was a perception that there is usually a choice of DOC campsites in a given area, but usually only one hut or lodge. Furthermore, most people using DOC campsites were driving to those campsites and therefore, with a vehicle available, had other options which people hiking to a DOC hut (which might be full) would not. Obviously however there are times when serviced campsites (in particular) will be full and have been pre-booked by most users (at peak times, key holiday periods).

The general view regarding booking DOC *hut and lodge* accommodation is that if it is able to be booked, then they will usually choose to book it, especially:

- During peak times or if the accommodation is known to be very popular (for non-peak, less busy accommodation it was generally acknowledged that being able to book was less important)
- If they are aware that the accommodation has a very limited number of beds
- If the accommodation is at the end of a very long hike (for example, seven hours)
- If they are travelling with a 'group' of people and want to be sure that everyone will have access to the same accommodation (inside)
- If they are travelling with children (including teenagers up to about 16 years) – none of the people taking part in this research who tramp with younger children in particular said that they would want to take the risk of not having a bed

- If they are travelling with certain other people – for example, one long-term trumper said that if he tramps with male friends they often don't bother booking but when he tramps with his wife they will always book.

“Like the Pinnacles, it's got really massive and you have to book. You can't just go 'oh that's an easy drive from Auckland, let's go this weekend”

“I always book, we did a tramp in the Nelson Lakes and that's seven hours, and the last thing you want after seven hours is to turn up on the off chance that there's going to be space and there's not”

“I think that if I had the choice I'd rather book because we went last Easter to Koranga Valley and I didn't know anything about it, and I didn't know what to expect and we turned up at Easter and we thought it would be quite full, but there was loads of space. But when we went to Jackson Bay in the Coromandel before Christmas, it's such a long way from anything, it's really nice to know that you're going to have a place when you get there”

“If there's a bookable hut available, I'll always book. If I have the option available I'd always use bookable huts because if you walk seven hours, then it's just pot luck and I don't want to carry a tent, it detracts from the enjoyment of it”

Life-stage issues have a strong impact on decisions to book or not – people more likely to *actively seek* bookable accommodation (and to not use free for all accommodation) are:

- Older (40+) couples/groups of similar life-stage friends, even if they are experienced trampers - ***“Because it's just me and my wife”, and***
- People travelling with (younger) children/in family groups.

Most of the people taking part in this research however (younger and older), said that if a hut/lodge was able to be booked, then they would book it – especially during the summer months when accommodation is likely to be busy. Booking accommodation for winter tramps (even with more extreme weather) was not considered as necessary because of a perception that accommodation is generally always available (i.e. there is always room) and if there is not room, space will be made available.

“[Women early 50s] I've done a lot of the tracks, the Great Walks. Not so keen to go where you can't book anymore because I don't want to carry a tent anymore, I've had a few back problems so yes, the booking's great for my age group now”

“[Man, 40s] I'm not really wed to the need to book, or the big huts, but it's the family that says 'we're not doing that'” (back-country huts]

“I want to book because I don't want to carry a tent and when you've got six people in the family and you've got to carry tents and enough food ...”

“I think what you're up against is whether you've got family or not. With families, you can't not book, you've got to have certainty, it's different when you're single”

“Say it’s a fine weekend and it’s four o’clock on a Friday and it’s rush hour traffic and no kids to worry about, I can say ‘let’s get out of Auckland and go and I’m happy to carry a tent so the implications [of not booking] are less because I don’t have the other things to worry about”

“There’s a difference between the wandering old and the wandering young”

Some people mentioned being aware of a hut that had recently become bookable out near the Karangahaka Gorge – trampers aware of this said they’d be more likely to use it now (although several had used it previously when it was free for all).

“I think its great, we used it in the last month and it was great that we could book it because we went in on a Friday night after work, so we knew that there’d be accommodation”

Attitudes towards booking campsites were different. The general view here was that there is no need to book a campsite unless it is a very popular campsite over a very busy holiday period. Other than this, most people said that campsite accommodation is generally always available and/or it is an easy to drive to the next campsite (most campsite users have vehicles) if the first campsite is busy. As mentioned earlier, campsite users tend to want to make more spontaneous decisions about where they will stay for the night. Note that *most* of the campsite users in the focus groups were travelling by car to campsites, with few using caravans or motorhomes.

“I think it’s really only over New Years that you need to book campsites”

“If I take a campervan I can just go and I don’t want to spend time looking at booking and all that, but with tramping it’s different you have all that gear ... and it’s the elements, you’re stuffed if the weather’s bad”

Advantages of booking

The advantages of being able to book DOC hut and lodge accommodation were identified as follows:

- Having guaranteed indoor accommodation and specifically a bed
- Not having to carry a tent
- Ensuring that all members of your ‘group’ will have the same accommodation
- Being able to see if a hut is getting ‘booked up’ and therefore choosing to change plans if it’s looking as though it might be busy (some people prefer to go to huts that are less busy). On this note, one of

the barriers for some people using free for all accommodation is a perception that it will be full (and there being no means of determining the likelihood of this prior to travelling)

- Ease of payment – you can pay online before you leave
- No need to hurry to the next hut or lodge in order to get a bed, no need to leave so early – many people spoke about there being a ‘race’ to get to the next hut on the tramp in order to secure indoor accommodation, which detracts from the enjoyment of the tramp or hike itself. This implies that people would *prefer* to have indoor accommodation if they can
- It is more likely to mean that the people using the hut or lodge have paid and are therefore contributing to the upkeep of the accommodation
- Perceptions of safety – both in terms of knowing that you will have warm, dry accommodation if the weather is not good and in terms of DOC knowing (approximately) how many people are in an area at a given time
- It might reduce the likelihood of people just turning up and the huts being over crowded.

Not having to carry a tent was considered to be a *major advantage* of knowing that there will be accommodation available. Tents are heavy and can be awkward to carry – and most people who book accommodation do not take a tent as well. The only people who used booked accommodation and also took a tent were those doing multi-day hikes with the intention of also camping if free for all accommodation was full. Some people said they’d take longer trips if they didn’t have to carry a tent.

“I tramp and we also use campgrounds, so I’ve been using DOC facilities for the last 20 years, we also use huts and also the tent sites when we’re tramping. If the huts are busy we carry our tents with us”

“The only reason I book is because I do not want to carry a tent and I do not want to sleep in a tent”

“If you don’t carry a tent you can go for a longer trip”

“Before, you used to have to go into a DOC office and buy some tickets, and now it’s all online”

“You can sit there at work and do it [pay]”

“[You can see how busy the hut is likely to be] so if you wanted to go to a hut and be a relatively small group, you can”

“[Good for coordinating groups] you can ring them and tell them there’s only four tent sites left or whatever, so you better get online and book”

“DOC would know, if there was a flood that for example, 20 people are booked into a hut in that area”

“I like to know I’ve got somewhere to sleep, even for short walks, because you know that you can take your time and mooch around”

“I like it when I book that I know that other people that are there have contributed”

“I think there’s a reason why we choose DOC over commercial campsites because you know that the dollars are going to be used for the upkeep”

“We were in Parongia and we carried a tent because we knew we might not get a space, the hut only sleeps about eight and we got there early and got a space, but then a family turned up, a mother and three kids and they had no tent and it was raining, so we gave up our space. If that hut was bookable, that might not have happened, they might not just turn up, so we would have had a more comfortable trip”

“It’s that safety factor, people know where you are, especially if you’re taking some older people with you”

There were fewer perceived advantages of being able to book DOC campsite accommodation, other than at peak times when some campsites may be very busy or people want to go to a specific campsite (i.e. at a beach) and/or when larger or family groups are travelling and accommodation needs to be guaranteed for everyone.

“I think a disadvantage with booking the campsites, especially the bigger ones is that if you’ve got three groups of people going and booking separately, you have no way of controlling that you’re actually going to be able to be sited together ... you can choose a pod but you can’t choose a site which is really frustrating”

Disadvantages of bookable accommodation

While most of the people taking part in the focus groups were supportive of (most people) or ambivalent towards (some people) increasing the amount of *hut/lodge accommodation* able to be booked, some people (a minority) raised concerns. One of the key concerns was to do with needing to change plans just prior, or mid-way through a tramp if the weather turns bad and therefore forfeiting the money paid in advance for the accommodation. Another key issue raised was to do with the prior purchase of backcountry passes, which cannot be used for bookable accommodation.

“So if its really bad weather and muddy tracks you might not want to go, but you’re only going to make that call one or two days out”

“We’d planned to do three passes, it was near Christmas but with the weather we knew we’d never get anywhere near, so we had to change our plans. I like to have the option, because if we’d booked we would have forfeited our money”

Other issues raised with respect to 'having to book' were as follows:

- Needing to book too far in advance to secure inside accommodation at small huts e.g. huts with only 12 beds – rather than it being free for all and first come first serve
- The possibility that errors will be made during the booking process – ***“you know, you think you’ve booked”***
- People who book accommodation and do not turn up – especially for lower cost accommodation. This would mean that people who want to book and use that accommodation would not be able to do so. Note that there is a perception that people do in fact book DOC accommodation and simply don't turn up
- Some people might choose to stay an extra night at a hut (but only booked for one night) – again, often a weather related decision
- That people will still just turn up (even if the hut is now bookable) and the huts will still be over crowded. This was a concern with huts where there is no warden. In this respect there was a perception that this may lead to confrontation among hut users (although overcrowding appears to happen now under certain circumstances at least, and confrontation between hut users does not *seem* to be an issue).

Overall, the main concern was to do with weather - the need to change plans and therefore lose money on accommodation, or to not to have booked and need accommodation for the night when the weather is very bad.

“You sometimes want to stay on in one hut for an extra night if the weather’s bad”

The main disadvantage of having to pre-book campsite accommodation was to do with a loss of spontaneity regarding which area and which campsite people choose stay in for the night. Spontaneity on tramps was significantly less of an issue when there is only one accommodation option available.

Key reasons for choosing to ‘not’ book/advantages of not booking

In most cases, people in the groups who did *not* book hut or lodge accommodation, said it was because the accommodation was not actually bookable. Some people (a minority) were happy to take their chances with accommodation – these were people traveling with other adults (no children) who were comfortable carrying (and sleeping in) a tent.

People who did not book campsite accommodation also said it was because the campsite was not bookable or that there was no need to make a booking (i.e. that they could just turn up and the campsite would most likely have room – other than peak-time and very popular campsites).

“Around Milford Coromandel there’s 8 or 9 campsites so it’s not an issue and I want to choose on the day”

“I grew up freedom camping so campsites for me are a bit upscale”

“Often you drive to campsites – so you can just keep driving or you’ve got the option of sleeping in your car”

People using DOC huts and lodges had a perception of people who actively reject the concept of booking accommodation:

“Old school trampers who don’t believe they should ... but it’s usually just a bit of a conversation about it”

“Old school trampers”

“Really, older men, they just don’t like the fact that they’d have to book”

Attitudes towards an increase in DOC accommodation able to be booked

People were told that there was the *potential* for DOC to make the following types of accommodation bookable:

- Vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages
- Vehicle accessible campsites, including all remaining serviced campsites and a number of scenic \$10 a night campsites
- Serviced huts.

Overall, the majority of the people taking part in this research *were supportive* of more huts and lodges becoming bookable, but were *less supportive* overall of increasing the bookability of campsites. Note that people were not very familiar with the accommodation terminology ‘cottages’ and ‘cabins’ and tended to include all non-lodge accommodation under the broad definition of ‘hut’. People were also told that there is the possibility for DOC to open up more accommodation to the public (DOC owned but not currently open to the public). There was very strong support for this.

The reasons for supporting increased bookability of vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages, and serviced huts were as per the advantages of booking identified earlier in this report. People travelling with children in particular tend to *only use bookable* hut and lodge accommodation and were therefore particularly supportive of more accommodation in different regions potentially being available to them.

Other people who only use bookable accommodation – in general, couples/groups of friends tramping together (30s, 40s+) – were also more supportive and again felt that more options would therefore become available to them.

A minority of people across the groups said they preferred not to have to book accommodation, but most said they would simply have to adapt to a new booking policy if it were to be introduced – at the same time, emphasising the concerns outlined earlier which were mainly to do with weather-related issues impacting on their trips and use of specific accommodation.

Most people felt that increased bookability of huts and lodges was more likely to be important during peak times including key holiday periods. Booking huts and lodges during non-peak times was not considered to be as important (although there was acknowledgement that popular accommodation can sometimes be busy during non-peak times as well).

People also acknowledged that their behaviour regarding people turning up without a booking if the weather was bad, would not change i.e. they would still make room for them.

“The more bookable, the more activity you’ll get”

“I don’t see that there’s any harm in making them bookable, you’d never turn anyone away if they turned up late at night and they’re wet and cold”

“They just might need to sleep on the floor”

In terms of campsites, other than for peak-times and very popular campsites, the general view was that booking was not necessary. Note that family groups travelling to serviced campsites during holiday periods will usually book anyway.

“I like to be able to think I could go somewhere spontaneously, but also so many campgrounds you can usually get in at the last minute anyway”

Preferences for the type of DOC accommodation that should and should not become bookable

People said the following types of DOC (non-campsite) accommodation should be bookable:

1. Larger, serviced lodges and huts that sleep more than 20 people – but also smaller front country huts (fewer than 10 beds)
2. Huts on a ‘fixed’ route or loop – at present some may be bookable and others may not, so not all accommodation on these types of trips is guaranteed (and you still have to carry a tent even though you might not need it for all nights)
3. Huts that can be accessed as part of an overnight trip/close to roads (3 or 4 hours)
4. All popular huts and lodges – on popular tracks.

“All bigger huts should always be bookable because they tend to have larger groups, family groups, people who are more planned, whereas some of the non-serviced huts which aren’t bookable now should probably remain so ... it’s not somewhere that me and my wife would use anyway”

“All huts should be bookable where you can get in and out on an overnight trip”

“These are going to be popular with everyone and it’s a chance to carry a pack, go in and try it out”

“There’s a walk somewhere out near [] I think it’s the Tramway one, nice flat walk, simple, easy, hut sleeps 10, anyone can get in there and its just a run to get to the hut ... so make it bookable”

“I think so many of our tracks are becoming popular and it’s a way of policing it so you don’t end up with 20 people trying to squeeze into a hut that takes eight”

“If it’s within driving distance or within three or four hours walk from a carpark, I think that’s fine as far as bookability goes”

A minority of people only said they would like to see more backcountry accommodation become bookable. Most people said that this was not necessary and most family groups (for whom booking is very important) said that they would be unlikely to use these huts anyway.

“Some of the more back country huts, in the Tararuas ... some of the larger serviced ones are bookable up on the ridges, some of the smaller ones mid-way aren’t, so you can book at either end but the ones in the middle aren’t bookable so it doesn’t make sense”

“I think the North Island doesn’t offer enough for North Islanders, and I think the Kaimais could be opened up a bit. If that was bookable I would definitely venture further into the

Kaimais but I don't want to be up there for more than a night with only a tent, and Parongia I think is perfect and they need another bigger hut"

"And you're out there and you're 15 miles from civilisation and you get there and it's totally full ... they should be made bookable as well, if I'm tramping, it's a safety issue"

"I don't want to get stuck outside if I'm tramping for three or four days and I can't get somewhere that's warm and dry"

People who currently use backcountry huts were of the strong view that these should not become bookable. In the focus groups these people were, *in general*, people (more men than women) aged over 40 or 50 years – long-term trampers (some hunters) travelling by themselves or with other similar friends.

"If you expand the bookable accommodation and it includes accommodation that you need to walk to, that takes time to get to, it will turn me off. I'll feel like ... there's a vision I have of New Zealand of being able to say, 'the weather looks good, I'm off"

"The last few years I've had to plan more around my kids. But with my kids leaving home now, I want to go back to my own stuff ... where I can just pack up for a couple of days. Booking changes the culture ... if it's booked and I turn up cold and wet you run the risk of someone saying 'you haven't booked, you can't come in'

Other concerns raised about increased bookability were as follows:

- It will create a 'greediness' in terms of people booking too far in advance and not actually using the accommodation
- The same family groups will book the same accommodation every year – although this mainly applies to campsites and appears (anecdotally) to happen already
- People will still turn up and not pay – there is a perception that increasing the bookability is not going to change those peoples' behaviour, at least in the short term and in the absence of a warden.

"It's useless having a booking system if no one's going to enforce it and then I question if someone turns up at a hut late at night and they haven't got a booking, I'm not going to throw them out, I don't need that drama and nor do I want to send some wally who hasn't booked out into the rain and cold to fall off the bluff"

"And the Heaphy [bookable] it was hailing and people's tents were getting blown away and it was bedlam, we could not move, there were a few people that got quite feisty, the people that booked were ok but there was this general attitude that we should accommodate everyone and there was no warden"

Preferences for the type of DOC accommodation based on segment (market) descriptors

The following table provides a summary of DOC accommodation preferences based upon the segments identified as part of the focus groups.

	Type	Description	Preferences – bookable, free-for all, front country, back country
1	Family groups, parents aged in their 30s or 40s	Often people who tramped/camped with their own parents when they were children – and now tramp with their own family. Usually with children under the age of 16 (upper age limit). Unlikely to be spontaneous	Strong preference for bookable accommodation (huts, lodges). Front country/Great Walk accommodation. Preference for serviced accommodation. Trips are planned, travel often during peak times/holiday periods Supportive of more bookable accommodation
2	Young independents – very late teens, mostly in their 20s	Often tramped as children with their parents (as above) and have now returned to tramping/camping with friends. More likely to be spontaneous	Will book accommodation but will also use free for all. Sometimes spontaneous – and therefore willing to carry a tent. Supportive of more bookable front country accommodation (huts, lodges)
3	Older men, aged 40+	Longer-term trampers – possibly used to be part of ‘family groups’ or sometimes still are, but also enjoy tramping/camping with other male friends and sometime alone. More likely to be spontaneous. More likely to hunt	More likely to use free for all accommodation (unless travelling with family). More likely to be spontaneous. More likely to use backcountry huts Accepting of more bookable front country accommodation. Rejects any notion of backcountry accommodation becoming bookable
4	Couples/Friends aged 40+	Longer-term trampers – often previously in Segment 1 and sometimes in Segment 3, now tramp/camp with a partner or other similar ‘life-stage’ friends	Often doing Great Walks/using front country accommodation. Some use of free for all and backcountry accommodation – but less so than front country and bookable Supportive of more bookable front country accommodation
5		Often tramp/camp with friends or	Uses a mix of front and



	Older independents – 30s, 40s+	fellow members of a tramping club, some possibly began tramping as adults	backcountry, bookable and free for all accommodation. More willing to carry a tent. Less supportive of more bookable accommodation because of a view on the need to have flexibility during tramps (often based on weather)
6	New trampers, mixed age (potentially a small segment)	Started tramping doing a Great Walk. Tramping with friends/family – may include children. Not spontaneous	Preference for Great Walks/accessible tramps (at this stage) as an introduction to tramping. Preference for bookable accommodation Supportive of more bookable accommodation
7	Campsite users only/mainly	Mixed in age, prefer to visit a location/non-trampers	NB: focus groups only. Prefer to have flexibility during trips Do not support more bookable campsite accommodation – other than for peak times, very busy sites, key holiday periods

Likely impact on behaviour if more DOC accommodation becomes bookable

The key finding from this research is that if DOC increased the number of huts and lodges that can be booked (vehicle accessible and serviced) that this will not have a negative impact on peoples’ desire to use this accommodation. Furthermore, it may (for some types of people) increase the likelihood that they will use this accommodation. This is particularly the case for people travelling with children and people for whom booking is already important. Increasing the bookability of these types of accommodation is, based on the focus group feedback, unlikely to deter people who usually don’t book, from using it. People in this category simply said that it would force them to be slightly more organised in their planning.

“I’d still do it, but I’d just have to plan it”

“[DOC wouldn’t lose me], no, not at all”

“I probably wouldn’t do the Caples again until I could book it. I did it with my parents and I ended up having to run so that I could get to the hut ... but there were all these hunters who had based themselves there in the hut. They’d paid their \$10 but I didn’t realise they were going to be there for a week or something”

“I think the Caples should be bookable because we did the Routburn and then we didn’t want get a shuttle bus back, so it was a good way to do a loop, so I think a lot of people must do that”

“Booking, I booked for the first time at Christmas, it was a cumbersome system but it was great, real positive in terms of that but there’s those negatives about people just booking because they can ... but if I had to book somewhere right now it wouldn’t bother me, I’d just book but most of the places I’ve gone to I’ve never had to book ... but if they became bookable I wouldn’t care, I’d just book it”

“I don’t normally book and I’m spontaneous ... but yeah there’s advantages in [booking] as well, at least you know if it’s booked out”

“I think the more that are bookable the more people will just say, ‘well we’ve got to book that”

There is likely to be greater opposition to the increased bookability of serviced campsites however, for the reasons described earlier in this report and in particular more of a desire for spontaneity among campsite users.

Potential users of DOC accommodation

N=501 people were surveyed who would consider staying in DOC accommodation and/or at a DOC campsite within the next three years but who have not done so in the last 5 years. This sample has a margin of error of +/-4.4% at the 95% confidence level.

Of these people 62% (n=210) said that they would possibly do so, 29% (n=46) said that they would probably do so while 9% (n=45) said that they would definitely stay in DOC accommodation and/or at a DOC campsite within the next three years. (Note that this question was multi-response.)

13% (n=65) have stayed in DOC accommodation and/or at a DOC campsite previously – although longer than five years ago. The main reasons given for not staying in DOC accommodation and/or at a DOC campsite in the last five years were:

- A change in life stage – primarily related to having young family
- Having less time available
- Wanting to stay in more comfortable accommodation
- An increase in the availability of private holiday accommodation and also accommodation deals making other accommodation options more accessible (through websites) and affordable.

No one in the survey or in the focus groups mentioned (unprompted) bookability or non-bookability of facilities as a barrier to visiting.

With regards to awareness about whether DOC facilities are bookable:

- 20% (n=174) thought that some facilities/sites would be bookable all year round
- 51% (n=205) thought that some facilities/sites would be bookable but only in peak season
- 9% thought that no DOC sites would be bookable
- 16% (n=30) thought that only Great Walk facilities/sites would be bookable
- 4% thought that all facilities/sites would be bookable all year round.

When asked what type of sites would be bookable the most frequent answer was Great Walk (not everyone used this term but it was what they were referring to) facilities and sites. The second most frequent answer was facilities/sites that have high demand in peak periods and which have limited space.

When asked whether a DOC facility/site being bookable would impact on their likelihood to consider staying there:

- 51% (n=256) said that they would not consider staying there unless it was bookable
- 4% (n=8) said that they would definitely not consider staying there if it was bookable
- 45% (n=225) said that whether the facility/site was bookable would have no impact on their likelihood to consider staying there.

People most likely to say that they would not consider a facility/site unless it was bookable were more likely to have children under the age of 13 and/or not have previously stayed at a DOC site. They were also the people who were more likely to say that they would possibly stay at a DOC facility within the next three years rather than those who said that they would definitely do so.

The survey findings reinforced the findings from the focus group (with possible future users of DOC facilities) that many of the facilities and especially those closer to main centres and which are more accessible would have high occupancy rates. People stated that they therefore felt that there would be a high risk of their not being able to 'find a space' or enough beds – especially if they are in a group (family and/or with friends).

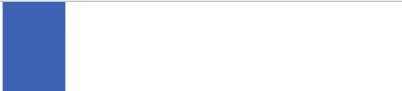
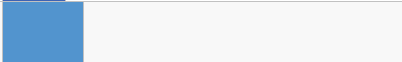

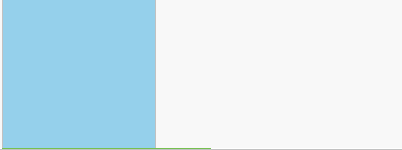



While the perception that DOC facilities are not bookable is a barrier for some people it is not the main barrier to visiting. Other stronger barriers are a lack of knowledge about what/where is available, how they can find out about facilities and also a perception that the facilities will be of a lower standard than the type of place that they wish to stay in. For a few people the thought that they would have to be staying in close proximity to other people that they have not previously met is also a barrier. However for other possible future visitors meeting new people is a positive (in most cases) – this was a benefit that many people who do currently use DOC accommodation also mentioned.

Motor Caravan Association of NZ – survey results

This section presents the results of the survey with members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand.

Table 1: Types of DOC accommodation used in the last 2 years

Most (three quarters) of the members of the Motor Caravan Association of New Zealand had used a standard, basic or backcountry campsite in the last two years. Half had used a \$10 a night scenic campsite and just over one-third had used a serviced campsite.

	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	%	N
A serviced or Great Walk hut i.e. has gas, water facilities etc.						11.7%	239
A standard or basic hut or bivvy						16.7%	339
A lodge, cabin or cottage						2.8%	57
A serviced campsite such as Lake Waikaremoana or Whakapapa Holiday Parks, Momoramgi, Peel Forest or Totaranui						35.5%	722
A \$10 a night scenic campsite						50.3%	1024
Another DOC campsite e.g. standard, basic or back country						75.1%	1529
Another type						3.6%	73

This was a multi-response question

Table 2: Overall standard of DOC accommodation

The overall standard of DOC accommodation is considered to be of a high quality:

- 4.7% gave a negative score (1-4)
- 16% gave a neutral score (5-6)
- 79.2% have a positive score (7-10)

	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	%	N
1 Poor						0.5%	10
2						0.4%	9
3						1.4%	29
4						2.4%	49
5						7.6%	155
6						8.4%	170
7						20.2%	410
8						30.5%	619
9						9.9%	200
10 Excellent						18.6%	377

Table 3: Main others travelling with

	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	%	N
Adult family members						70.1%	1418
Family (including children under 18 years of age)						23.5%	475
Friends						39.9%	806
Work colleagues						1.7%	34
Other members of a club that I belong to						15.0%	304
School groups						0.7%	14
Other						7.5%	151

Table 4: Extent of booking vs. non-booking

Most members of the MCA are **not making bookings** for the accommodation that they use (note that most are using campsite accommodation). This is consistent with the findings from the focus groups in that most people were not making bookings for campsite accommodation (a) because they prefer not to and (b) because they don't think they need to i.e. there is space available.

	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	%	N
Make a booking for the DOC accommodation you use						6.4%	130
Just turn up - not making a booking first						68.0%	1379
A mix of both						25.6%	519

Key reasons for **usually booking** DOC accommodation were:

1. Because the track/hut/campsite is usually full or very busy at **peak times** – want to be assured that they will have accommodation/a bed (**#1 reason**)
2. Because they prefer not to risk not having accommodation/a bed – including at non-peak times/because of distance travelled
3. Because of travelling in larger groups – need to be sure that all members of the party will have accommodation
4. Because it's compulsory to book certain sites
5. Other reasons: because they want to ensure a good/particular site for their caravan/campervan, because DOC recommends it, because it alerts camp wardens to expect them or because they staying for long time.

Examples of comments:

Peak times and some tracks/sites are busy:

- *Because it has become a popular place to go and is busy most of the time it is open*
- *Because this particular camp fills up quick and we wanted to be near our friends*
- *Especially around the busy Christmas period or when we went to Abel Tasman because we definitely want to stay. If it is out of season or the Great Barrier we just turn up*
- *It is very popular from December 26 to Feb, so it is essential to book if you want to stay during this period*
- *Often visit in peak holiday season, and essential that we can rely on having accommodation for the trip we have planned*

Don't want to risk no accommodation at any time:

- *As it's usually out of the way and we don't want to arrive and not have a bed*
- *Don't want to be stranded*

- *I do not want to carry a tent or sleep on the floor*
- *I don't want to have to sleep outside!! Also I am happy to pay for the facility, and this way I am sure the facility is supported*
- *Long way to drive on the off chance that there will be an empty site*
- *Need to know for sure we have a bed and shelter*
- *Reasonable distance to travel, and I like to be sure there is accommodation available before embarking*
- *There is less anxiety during the tramp in knowing that there will be a bed for you. The huts are often nearly full even in the shoulder seasons*
- *Would not be interested in just taking the chance and am not interested in having to hurry and rush just to get a space*

Travelling in larger groups:

- *Because there is usually 15 to 20 of us*
- *Large school group*
- *The Rotary caravanning group I belong to (ICFR) nearly always decides where to go a year ahead of the rally and we need to confirm arrangements for our 30-40 caravans*
- *We are usually travelling with a group, just to make sure we all fit in*

Compulsory:

- *Compulsory on the Great Walks. But for campsites just turn up. Usually go to campsites out of peak season, so no problem there*
- *Great Walks need prior booking*
- *It is now essential under the requirements now established by DOC at Port Jackson according to the caretakers*
- *Totaranui is popular over Xmas period and that is what you must do*
- *You have to for the ones that need booking, because otherwise if the warden catches you without one, you could be fined. For all other huts, I don't book first, just turn up and hope. I don't book because in those huts you can't*

Other:

- *I prefer to know where we can park in advance rather than just chance it*
- *It's a good service and allows the Camp Mothers to expect us.... plus allows us to book where we want in the camp (usually)*
- *So we know we get the campsite we want*
- *We book our time at the DOC camp so we can be sure of getting a site suitable for our caravan and awning I am sure it is easier for all concerned to be able to book in advance*
- *We make our booking (or should I say my daughter does, for her and her husband as well as for us)) as we require 2 individual caravan sites with one needing access to power as my husband has to sleep with a machine for Sleep Apnea*
- *We want the same site or as close to each time as it is on the waterfront and the outlook is stunning*

Key reasons for **usually not** making bookings were as follows (note that many people gave a combination of reasons here):

1. Prefer some spontaneity/don't always know the route and destination (planning less important when travelling in a motorhome) (**#1 reason**)
2. The accommodation is not able to be booked
3. Usually travel during non-peak times, so accommodation is available

4. Have never had an issue with just turning up
5. Travel in a motor home so self-contained/only very basic sites are required

Prefer some spontaneity:

- *When you are on the road, planning is sometimes quite difficult, and sometimes you don't want to be locked in*
- *When we get the time. We just go. See where we end up and what we feel like. The weather has a bearing on the direction. Why head where the weather is bad. If one has made a booking, one is committed and leaves little room to change one's mind. We don't like mucking people around. We do like DOC and their facilities*
- *When travelling we sometimes do not know where we are going to stopover until we get close to evening. If a DOC site is close we will "try in" to see if there is space. Most of our stopovers are in rural areas and we have never found any site full*
- *When I'm travelling in my campervan I don't arrange to book ahead, just arrive - might plan on being in a certain place at a certain time, but plans change and I could be somewhere else overnight*
- *We usually travel freely and do not want to be constricted by bookings*
- *We usually do not plan our holidays, we go where the road takes us, and stop where we feel like it. If we stop somewhere and don't like the look of it, we move on. We like the gypsy holiday*
- *We prefer to take our chances rather than book specific times and dates. We are 'on the road' permanently and prefer to be flexible and not plan too far apart. Traditionally DOC camps, like those we use, have always been on a first served basis and we prefer this to a booking system*

Accommodation is not able to be booked:

- *Sometimes the site can't be booked, and sometimes we are in areas that has no internet coverage, i.e. the Catlins*
- *Some sites can't be booked, usually don't keep to any time plan during a holiday*
- *Some sites cannot be booked*
- *Site can't be booked if full find somewhere else to stay*
- *Sites can't be booked, nor should they be in the Mavora area*
- *Site can't be booked (we prefer less-used sites that don't need bookings); when we decide to go there we may be out of phone/internet coverage*
- *Because the sites I generally use cannot be booked*
- *Because it can't be booked - and I wouldn't want it to be able to be. I often like to visit remote areas - if you meet other groups in those places they are generally pretty good about squeezing in to whatever hut/bivvy you're at*

Travel during non-peak times:

- *We usually visit outside of the busy holiday times also can't be booked*
- *We usually visit out of peak times and mid week*
- *We usually travel out side of peak times and have few fixed plans*
- *We usually travel out of peak times and we don't have any schedules to adhere to as we are retired*
- *We travel outside the main summer season so it is not busy anyway. We don't use camps that cost over and above our DOC pass. Other camps don't require bookings and have never found them busy*

Have never needed to book/never had an issue:

- *We haven't found it necessary to book so far and enjoy the freedom of not booking, e.g. there is no rush to get there*
- *We have never needed to, sites are generally always available and where we want to be. However having said that. We have noticed the Xmas New Year period getting busier and busier at Uretiti so last Xmas we did actually book for the first time in around 25 years of going to the same site*
- *Never needed to, never been to one that required booking*
- *Never needed to book, plenty of sites to use*

- *I usually stay at out of the way campsites, outside of peak periods, so bookings are not required*
- Self-contained:**
- *We only use very basic sites with a fully self contained caravan in the off season so booking is not relevant*
 - *We have our own accommodation in our motor home, and just hope there will be parking when we arrive*
 - *We usually use out-of-the-way camps where bookings are not required because there is no pressure on space*

Table 5: Change in booking behaviour

11.6% are making bookings more often than they used to.

	20%	40%	60%	80%	100%	%	N
More often than you used to (i.e. you used to book less often)						11.6%	235
Less often than you used to (i.e. you used to book more often)						14.1%	286
About the same amount						74.3%	1507

Table 6: Attitudes towards the potential for different types of accommodation to become bookable

Among members of the MCA there was more support for increasing the bookability of vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages and serviced huts, than there was for vehicle accessible conservation campsites and a number of \$10 a night or scenic campsites. Note that more of these people were users of campsites rather than hut or lodge accommodation.

DOC accommodation that should become bookable	Disagree 1-4	Neutral 6-7	Agree 7-10
Vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages	15.1%	26.6%	58.3%
Vehicle accessible conservation campsites - including all remaining serviced campsites and a number of \$10/night standard or 'scenic' campsites	38.0%	26.2%	35.8%
Serviced huts e.g. huts serviced with gas, water etc.	20.4%	25.5%	54.1%

Excludes not applicable responses

Key reasons for not supporting increasing bookability of vehicle accessible conservation campsites and a number of \$10 a night scenic campsites:

The reasons here were generally consistent with the reasons provided above for booking or not booking campsite accommodation:

1. Strong preference for spontaneity
2. No perceived need – with self-contained accommodation
3. Concern that groups of people/families will pre-book every year, excluding others from using sites
4. Other - concern that access will not be permitted even if the campsite is not busy (unless you book), concern that this will result in increased charges

Reasons for supporting increasing bookability of vehicle accessible conservation campsites and a number of \$10 a night scenic campsites:

The reasons here were generally consistent with the reasons provided above for booking or not booking campsite accommodation:

1. Usually travelling at peak time so campsites are busy
2. Want to stay at a particular campsite
3. Travelling with larger groups
4. Intending to stay at one campsite for a greater length of time.

Examples of differences in attitudes towards huts/lodge accommodation and campsite accommodation:

- I do not consider it necessary to book a site to basically park somewhere. In the case of cabins / serviced accommodation I believe booking is necessary to avoid being left with no where to stop
- Cabins usually have very limited numbers, so booking seems sensible to ensure your journey isn't wasted. Campsites are rarely full to capacity and we prefer to stay at the more remote, less busy ones and keep a fluid itinerary, moving depending on the attractions, activities and weather. Some high-demand serviced huts should be booked, otherwise not if only infrequently at capacity
- Can understand the necessity to book cabins etc. and also DOC campgrounds over the busy Xmas period but the Northland camps and all others we have to are never full. Of course you need to book accommodation in huts etc. but motor homes are not reliant on anything but a site. Please compare apples with apples!
- Where a limited number of beds are available booking is needed. Where you are supplying the bed you need the freedom to stop or not as the weather changes
- If you have to rely on a cabin etc. as your shelter then yes pre booking would be good. If you have a campervan or tent then you're covered so why pre book. Get back to the good old days, first in first served but have also found that if you turn up at a hut, room is made to fit you in by those already there...its an unspoken law of the bush
- Cabins, lodges and cottages should be like motels so bookings would be best and serviced huts need numbers to accommodate people tramping so I wouldn't want to walk all day to find the hut was full.

However campsites accessible by road have a large load of their visitors from passing traffic and to have to always book could become a huge deterrent

- Booking is necessary if you require accommodation, whereas when you bring your own accommodation such as a campervan, caravan or tent, there should be as much flexibility as possible

Attitudes towards bookability of specific types of accommodation compared to where people have stayed in the last two years:

The following three tables show the support (or otherwise for increasing the bookability of the three broad types of DOC accommodation based on the type of accommodation people have used in the last two years.

Table 7: Vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages

People who have stayed in a serviced or Great Walk hut or a lodge, cabin or cottage are more likely to support increasing the bookability of vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages.

More bookability of vehicle accessible cabins, lodges and cottages vs. stayed in ...	Agree 7-10
A serviced or Great Walk hut i.e. has gas, water facilities etc.	67.1%
A standard or basic hut or bivvy	59.3%
A lodge, cabin or cottage	69.8%
A serviced campsite such as Lake Waikaremoana or Whakapapa Holiday Parks, Momoramgi, Peel Forest or Totaranui	60.6%
A \$10 a night scenic campsite	59.8%
Another DOC campsite e.g. standard, basic or back country	55.8%

Excludes not applicable responses

Table 8: Vehicle accessible conservation campsites, including all remaining serviced campsites and some scenic/\$10 per night campsites

Support for increasing the bookability of vehicle accessible conservation campsites and some scenic/\$10 a night campsites is lower than for huts and lodges above. Note that 35.5% of MCA members had used a serviced campsite in the last two years, 50.3% had used a scenic campsite and 75.1% had used a standard, basic or backcountry campsite.

More bookability of vehicle accessible conservation campsites vs. stayed in ...	Agree 7-10
A serviced or Great Walk hut i.e. has gas, water facilities etc.	38.5%
A standard or basic hut or bivvy	29.4%
A lodge, cabin or cottage	32.1%
A serviced campsite such as Lake Waikaremoana or Whakapapa Holiday Parks, Momoramgi, Peel Forest or Totaranui	37.6%
A \$10 a night scenic campsite	35.0%
Another DOC campsite e.g. standard, basic or back country	32.7%

Excludes not applicable responses

Table 9: Serviced huts

Support for increasing the bookability of serviced huts among MCA members is higher than for serviced (and other) campsites. Note that only 11.7% of MCA members had used a serviced hut in the last two years.

More bookability of serviced huts vs. stayed in ...	Agree 7-10
A serviced or Great Walk hut i.e. has gas, water facilities etc.	57.3%
A standard or basic hut or bivvy	51.2%
A lodge, cabin or cottage	49.1%
A serviced campsite such as Lake Waikaremoana or Whakapapa Holiday Parks, Momoramgi, Peel Forest or Totaranui	56.1%
A \$10 a night scenic campsite	60.8%
Another DOC campsite e.g. standard, basic or back country	52.2%

Excludes not applicable responses

Table 10: Agree/disagree statements

- Not being able to book DOC accommodation (NB: mainly campsite users) is not a barrier to people using them (73.9% say it is not a barrier)
- Having to book DOC accommodation (NB: mainly campsite users) is more of a barrier to people using them (33.7% say it is a barrier)
- Increased bookability may increase the use of different sites for some people (25.7%)
- Increased bookability may discourage some users from visiting those sites again (45.5%)

Agree/disagree statements	Disagree 1-4	Neutral 6-7	Agree 7-10
I don't go to some DOC sites because I cannot book them	73.9%	14.0%	12.1%
I don't go to some DOC sites because I have to book them	49.5%	16.8%	33.7%
More bookable accommodation might encourage me to visit different sites	52.4%	21.8%	25.7%
I prefer not to book, so if more became bookable I would visit them less often	37.9%	17.0%	45.5%
I would prefer if some DOC accommodation has a proportion of beds/sites that were bookable, and a proportion that were not able to be booked (rather than all bookable in that location)	22.8%	25.5%	51.6%

Excludes not applicable responses

Examples of types of DOC accommodation that should become bookable

Members of the MCA were more likely to think that huts and lodges should be bookable, rather than campsites. The types non-campsite accommodation they thought should be bookable generally fitted the following key criteria:

- Should be based on supply and demand – more popular sites should be bookable
- Sites that are accessible by road or close to a road
- Serviced huts and lodges
- More isolated sites, with no alternatives near-by

- Any accommodation that is high demand should be bookable to ensure a bed, and to see how full the accommodation will be
- Any doc sites that have experienced over crowding. We appreciated having an alternative offered to us at Nelson Lakes
- Any sites that are likely to become very busy at certain times - particularly if they are remote, like Great Barrier Island sites in summer
- Atiwhakatu hut near Mount Holdsworth for example. We would love to use this type of hut to introduce the kids to tramping but are not going to get them to walk for 3/4 hours and to then sleep on

the floor

- Busy tourist places e.g. Able Tasman. Can be crowded at certain times of the year
- Greenstone track huts and other very popular tracks should be bookable, would also give trampers an idea so they could bring a tent. Maybe people who have booked get the bed first and others who haven't bothered sleep on the floor if no room
- Highly used accommodation where there is limited accommodation and areas that have big scenic value. Such as the Glaciers and Lake Paringa. On one occasion we camped at Lake Paringa and there were so many people there not booked and the Toilets and washing facilities were blocked and very smelly. Not a good look for any one but particularly tourists
- I think all accommodation that has the potential to be full at any time should be able to be booked over the period this could occur
- I think all DOC accommodation should be bookable. This allows DOC to manage the sites and accommodation in terms of usage, maintenance, upkeep, tracking damage against visitors (where applicable), etc. Also provides valid and valuable data for future-proofing our DOC assets