

Ōmihi/Goose Bay campgrounds hui, via Zoom

15 December 2020

Present: TRONT- [REDACTED] DOC – Phil Bradfield, Jo Gould

S. 9(2)(a)

Context for hui:

DOC is keen to understand TRONT's perspective on the closure of the Ōmihi/Goose Bay campgrounds, as the Minister of Conservation has received a complaint about this and she has asked us to get a better understanding of the situation.

Items for discussions:

1. Minister of Conservation's role/interest under the Reserves Act
2. Ngāi Tahu's future management aspirations for the Ōmihi/Goose Bay Recreation Reserve?
3. Basis/reasons for closing the campgrounds
4. How day visitor access is provided for in the reserve

More specific queries

- Whether a campground lease was put in place after the expiry of the lease that was in place for Kaikōura Coastal Campgrounds when the reserve was vested in Ngāi Tahu (this expired in 2011)?
- Whether Ngāi Tahu exercised its powers under s53(1)(h),(i) of the Reserves Act to set apart part of the area for the purposes of a campground, and whether the Minister of Conservation's consent was ever sought for the use of the reserve for permanent or temporary accommodation (under s44(2) of the Reserves Act)
- Whether there is a current management plan in place for the reserve and, more broadly, whether TRONT is required to have a management plan in place for vested reserves?

DISCUSSION NOTES

[REDACTED] Secti on outlined the background to the reserve. Ōmihi/Goose Bay was vested fee simple in Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu (TRONT) under the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998 (NTCSA) as a Recreation Reserve. A commercial campground was operating at the time of vesting. The vesting was conditional on the lease continuing (for a defined period through until 2011).

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The campground lease continued until after the Kaikōura earthquake in 2016. The earthquake had a detrimental impact on the campgrounds, particularly the constant road closures. The lessee fell on hard times (prior to the earthquake, the lessee had requested a lease extension to 2024). The lease was terminated in 2017 at the lessee's request.

Since then TRONT has put in two managers to run the campground under a management contract on behalf of Ngāi Tahu. Since running the camp in this way, Ngāi Tahu has got a better understanding of the camp infrastructure and maintenance requirements/costs.

[REDACTED] outlined infrastructure issues:

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The infrastructure is ageing and issues include: failing wastewater system; water quality issues (incidence of fecal coliform detection – boil water notices periodically issued); electricity supply not meeting required standards; buildings dilapidated. Ngāi Tahu have spent over \$300K on capital works (new water supply plant and equipment, new wastewater system at Boat Harbour, electrical upgrades, buildings repairs, general maintenance, and new plant and equipment) over the last few

years. A significant amount was also spent on management contracts to keep the campgrounds operating.

The Goose Bay campground is not all in one location. It comprises 3-4 separate camping areas and spreads out over a few kilometres. Waste-water infrastructure was upgraded at Boat Harbour. The waste-water at the main camp needs upgrading (big job with considerable associated cost).

The time-line of events that have impacted the campgrounds viability include Covid-19 in March 2020.

Ngāi Tahu carried out a financial evaluation of income/expenditure and found the camps were running at a loss and the business model was unviable. The decision to close the camps was made in April 2020. It was based on the following factors:

- Failing infrastructure
- Unviable business model
- Impact of Covid-19 on visitors/tourism
- Ngāi Tahu were not receiving cultural benefits from the campgrounds

██████████ noted the reserve was vested in Ngāi Tahu as part of the cultural redress settlement package. 59(2)(a)

Since the camps closed in April, a caretaker has been appointed to mow the sites and carry out basic maintenance. The caretaker opens and closes the gates to allow campers to get their personal possessions.

Communications have been sent to campers and feedback sought on the decision to close the camps.

The Boat Harbour campers have been particularly vocal. Ngāi Tahu received a letter from them in July.

Day access is provided at Boat Harbour. Vehicle access to the boat ramp is not restricted by Ngāi Tahu.

Foot access is allowed to all parts of the reserve.

Ngāi Tahu's legal team have provided advice that Te Rūnanga has no obligation to provide for camping under the NTCSA or Reserves Act.

Future aspirations

Ngāi Tahu are in a planning phase for the reserve. Discussions are planned at a governance level next year.

There is currently no management plan in place for the Ōmihi/Goose Bay recreation reserve or the other two Ngāi Tahu administered reserves in Kaikōura where campgrounds have been operating (Kahurangi (Peketa), and Waipapa). The future management direction depends on decisions made at a governance level.

Ngāi Tahu is aware it hasn't met the requirements of the Reserves Act to put in place management plans for the vested reserves within four years of the vesting. They have a programme of work in place to develop the required management plans (two have recently been approved by the Minister). The plan for the Ōmihi/Goose Bay reserve will reflect Ngāi Tahu's aspirations for future management. The timing for initiating work on this plan is likely to be the first half of 2021.

We discussed developing one single plan for all three of the Kaikōura Reserves which include campgrounds (Ōmihi/Goose Bay, Kahutara (Peketa), and Waipapa). Jo will send [redacted] a copy of the Management Plan for Kaiteriteri Recreation Reserve and Kaka Point Historic Reserve.

s9(2)(a)

Day visitor access

The current closure (to vehicle access) is temporary. [redacted] acknowledged it isn't working well. Freedom camping is a particular issue of concern, as well as the associated human waste and rubbish. Vandalism of the chains across the reserve entrances is occurring. Security of the caravans still on site is also an issue. Campers have been given until 20 December to remove their property.

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Ngāi Tahu are looking for a better solution to the closure of vehicle access. They are considering placing concrete blocks across the entrances, rather than relying on chains. They want to stop people accessing the reserves for freedom camping.

We discussed whether visitors can safely drive off the State Highway and park to access the reserve. Boat Harbour has vehicle parking available. To access Paia Point, people park at Ōmihi/Goose Bay and then walk (although there is room for 2-3 vehicles at Paia Point). The current concrete blocks have been placed in a way that enable people to pull off the SH safely.

[redacted] noted the Paia Point and Ōmihi toilet blocks have been broken into (and used) and are blocked as the water is not turned on.

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TRONT staff are carrying out a site visit on 21 Dec. One of the matters to be considered is how to secure the sites in a better way. The reserves have significant cultural values and the faeces being left are particularly offensive and culturally inappropriate. The Rūnanga o Kaikōura are particularly concerned about the disrespect people are showing for the reserve. They want better security measures in place and caravans removed.

We discussed the questions above regarding the exercise of powers under s44 and s53 of the Reserves Act. [redacted] considered that as camping was effectively an 'existing use' when the reserves were vested in Ngāi Tahu (and continuation of the camping lease was a condition of the vesting); it was unlikely that part of the reserve had been set apart for camping, or consent sought for permanent/temporary accommodation.

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We agreed to have a follow up hui in February.

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OUT OF SCOPE

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