

## South Island High Country Access Report Released

### The draft South Island High Country Access Report was released by The New Zealand Walking Access Commission Ara Hikoī Aotearoa on 27 March 2018.

The Report addresses issues arising with public access to tracks and trails across private and multiple tenure land, in relation to walking, tramping, cycling, mountain biking, horse riding, hunting and angling.

The Report was commissioned in response to the concerns of landholders in the central and lower South Island, many of whom have expressed intentions to withdraw public access across their land, or refuse to open up new access points in future. Their concerns are rooted in the impact on their land of increased use due to a rise in tourist numbers and growth of the residential population, and the general unpredictability and lack of control landholders have over how their land is used by the public.

The Walking Access Commission outlined in their draft Report the key issues identified to them by landholders, local governments, the Department of Conservation and outdoor advocacy groups, including:

- The lack of sufficient infrastructure to accommodate the numbers using the trails, such as rubbish bins, toilets, carparks and shelters, and the uncertainty regarding who is responsible for funding such infrastructure.
- The lack of coordination between agencies and the lack of reliable information for trail users. Currently each agency provides information on the areas and trails under their jurisdiction, leading to complicated and piecemeal information for users.
- The poor behaviour of some trail users and a general lack of education on how to behave in the outdoors.

In light of these issues, the Walking Access Commission set out key actions to be taken moving forward, including:

- The creation of new access trails, especially to take pressure off trails currently over capacity. It is intended for the Overseas Investment Act and Tenure Review processes to be key mechanisms for creating new land access, particularly for hunting and angling.
- A 'dual focus' approach on facilities and education to address systemic behaviour issues. This will include new funding streams to provide for infrastructure, multi-lingual signage outlining acceptable behaviour, education in secondary schools and universities, and may extend to resources in conjunction with airlines or rental car services aimed at international tourists.
- The creation of a single online resource for users that provides information on where to go, what to do and safety considerations.
- Coordination between the Department of Conservation, Central and Local government, iwi, and community groups to create a network of trails connecting both natural landmarks and population centres.
- The creation of an agency to oversee the creation of trails, regardless of land ownership, which will work in conjunction with the Department of Conservation, local governments, iwi and private landholders.

### Want to know more?

Public submissions on the Report can be made via the New Zealand Walking Access Commission [website](#). Submissions are due by 5pm 10 April 2018.

If you are interested in discussing how the proposals in the Report will affect you and how to make a submission, please contact our Specialist Local team, [Maree Baker-Galloway](#) and [Robert Huse](#).