



Are ITOs benefitting from the World Cup?

20 Jul 2023 By Sara Barker | sara.barker@tourismticker.com | [@tourismticker](#)

New Zealand's inbounders are seeing little pickup from the FIFA Women's World Cup, despite forecasts of tens of thousands of visitors, says Tourism Export Council of New Zealand.



ITOs have seen little uplift from the FIFA Women's World Cup tournament.

Image: AIAL

Initial FIFA estimates put international visitor numbers for the month-long event at around 30,000 but if that holds up, little of it was being seen by inbound tour operators. The New Zealand and Australia co-hosted tournament kicks off in Auckland and Sydney tonight.

“Inbounds are doing very little in bringing any supporter groups,” TECNZ chief executive Lynda Keene told the *Ticker*.

“There’s been a much lower level of enquiry expected with the FIFA events when compared to the Rugby or Cricket World Cups. It’s going to be a huge success, it just may not reflect an increase in visitor numbers as per the original forecast.

“We have heard anecdotally though that there’s a number of bookings that have gone direct through Airbnb, but very few bookings have come through the inbounds with this particular event.”



Lynda Keene

Other factors such as the lack of a dual visitor visa between Australia and New Zealand, visa processing times, and Covid-19 isolation requirements could have impacted travel numbers.

“We don’t know if that has been a barrier but in the past with large events there has been a dual visitor visa,” Keene said.

“So those visitors and supporters going into Australia outside of game day for the teams, some of them may think that ‘oh let’s go over to New Zealand’, but they can’t do it without a visitor visa. You still need at least a month in advance to get a visitor visa to come to New Zealand.”

Keene added that New Zealand was one of the only developed countries in the world that still had a Covid-19 self-isolation requirement of seven days if visitors tested positive.

“We know many offshore travel partners have found this very frustrating and it could have a small (or large) influence on visitors making a decision to come to New Zealand for the FIFA Women’s World Cup or not.

“From an ITO perspective, we need the seven-day self-isolation requirement dropped immediately as June and July each year are the booking months for the upcoming 2023-24 visitor season. If it’s not dropped soon, we run the risk of this further putting prospective visitors off from ticking the box to ‘buy New Zealand’ this summer.”

Despite the lack of ITO involvement, Keene said the tournament would be a success and New Zealand would “knock it out of the stadium”.

“We’ve still got to remember that New Zealand is not a cheap destination to visit and we know the greatest benefit out of the FIFA event will be global media coverage.”