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Priorities 2025: TECNZ's Lynda Keene on minister change and hopes for new ideas, focus

31st January 2025 By Contributor

**Tourism Export Council of New Zealand chief executive Lynda Keene says New Zealand has to work on the stalled tourism recovery and new ministerial leadership could provide some impetus.**



Tourism Export Council of New Zealand CEO Lynda Keene

There is still a lot work to do to ensure New Zealand's international recovery moves out of the stalled mode it has been in since April 2024, and starts to produce growth in visitation.

Insights from operators suggest from November 2024, the season has been busy and has maintained the trend through December and January which we hope will help the industry reach an 85% – 90% recovery rate by the end of the season in March 2025.

The Tourism Export Council of New Zealand welcomes the opportunity to meet Tourism and Hospitality Minister Louise Upston in the upcoming months. We're delighted with her appointment.

Coming from a destination that enjoys many benefits of international and domestic visitation (the Taupō region) will be helpful as the minister embarks on her new role for the tourism and hospitality industry.

We look forward to sharing TECNZ's insights on the role inbound tour operators play with bringing in over half of all international visitors to this country and sharing our thoughts on barriers, concerns, growth, and opportunities for the industry in the future.

Minister Upston will be the fifth tourism minister in five years. It is a little unsettling with tourism being the former No. 1 export earner for the New Zealand economy and currently the No.2 contributor of export earners (after a global pandemic) to have constant change of leadership for the tourism portfolio.

However, with change comes new ideas and focus. TECNZ is keen to work closely and collaboratively with Minister Upston, the Ministry for Business, Innovation and Employment and Tourism New Zealand teams.

We supported the work Minister Doocey was doing with the new iteration of a Tourism Growth Roadmap and hope Minister Upston will retain all the positive work that has been done by industry in the past and build/consolidate on a new roadmap with clear values, guidelines, and performance indicators.

Any new plan or roadmap needs to be aspirational, realistic, practical and achievable.

Prior to 2020, the tourism industry worked with former Labour Party ministers Kelvin Davis, Stuart Nash, and Peeni Henare and recently with National Party minister Matt Doocey.

TECNZ enjoyed working with Minister Doocey during his tenure. We always found the minister interested, enthusiastic and receptive to ideas and concerns we put forward from the international tourism sector's perspective.

He was particularly keen on our views about the Milford Opportunities Project and International Visitor Conservation and Tourism Levy and in being updated with our International Arrival Forecasts 2025-2027.

We shared concerns on barriers to growth (increases in visitor visa, Customs and IVL fees) and how critical decisions by government to increase international visitor fees

could, and would likely, affect New Zealand's reputation globally, and negatively impact tourism's international recovery.

We wish Minister Doocey all the best with his future plans and work.