

Police join industry push against unlicensed tour operators serving Asian market

24th July 2026 By Paul Yandall | paul@tourismticker.com | @tourismticker

Police and the tourism and transport industries are stepping up efforts to tackle unlicensed tour operators servicing the Asian visitor market.



Unlicensed tour drivers should not be on NZ's roads, says BCA. Image: 123rf

Industry representatives including the Bus & Coach Association, Tourism Export Council New Zealand, Tourism Industry Aotearoa, Tourism New Zealand and the Rental Vehicle Association met with the Police and the New Zealand Transport Agency Waka Kotahi on Wednesday to discuss the problem.

A number of inbound tour operators and transport operators also attended the meeting.

Bus & Coach Association chief executive Delaney Myers said that while the commercial impact on legitimate operators was acknowledged, the more significant concern was ensuring passenger safety.



BCA CEO Delaney Myers

“Our transport licensing regime, certificate of fitness, passenger endorsement and worktime rules are not perfect, nor a guarantee of safe operation, but they do provide a solid foundation for regulatory oversight and minimum standards,” Myers said in an industry update.

“Commercial operation of passenger vehicles outside of those parameters is unacceptable.”

Passenger endorsement is designed to ensure commercial passenger drivers meet minimum safety standards.

To obtain the endorsement, drivers must pass a medical assessment, satisfy NZTA’s “fit and proper person” vetting process and meet licensing requirements before they can legally carry passengers for hire or reward

Myers said the meeting also identified shortcomings in the current reporting processes for suspected illegal operators.

“Current reporting/complaint regimes via NZTA and Police don’t work for this scenario,” she said.

However, she welcomed commitments from the Police Commercial Vehicle Safety Team (CVST) to work with the industry to simplify reporting processes and accept partial information where complete details were unavailable.

Myers said the association would continue working with Police and industry partners and would provide further updates as progress was made to tackle the problem.