

Freedom Camping Bylaw 2025



As at 16 September 2025

1 Title

- (1) This Bylaw is the "Freedom Camping Bylaw 2025".

2 Commencement

- (1) This Bylaw comes into force on 1 November 2025.

3 Application

- (1) This Bylaw applies to the Whanganui District.

4 Purpose

- (1) The purpose of this Bylaw is to regulate the practice of Freedom Camping in Defined Areas in order to:
- protect those areas;
 - protect the health and safety of visitors to those areas; and
 - protect access to those areas.

5 Interpretation

In this Bylaw unless the context otherwise requires or where otherwise expressly provided:

Act means the Freedom Camping Act 2011.

Approval means a licence, permit or other form of written approval granted to allow an activity normally

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restricted or prohibited under this Bylaw, and includes all conditions to which the Approval is subject.

Authorised Officer means any Person appointed by Council to act on its behalf and with its authority, and may include a police officer.

Bylaw means the Freedom Camping Bylaw 2021.

Camping Paraphernalia means any item or items associated with camping including, but not limited to, detached chairs, tables, umbrellas, barbecues, rubbish and recycling receptacles, tents and other semi-permanent structures, Washing Lines, showering and hygiene equipment or awnings, whether or not the item or items are attached to the Vehicle, but does not include cooking equipment while in active use.

Certified Self-Contained and **Self-Contained**, mean that a Vehicle has a valid certificate of self-containment issued in accordance with section 87U(3)(d) of the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Act 2006.

Note: self-containment certificates issued prior to the enactment of the Self-contained Motor Vehicles Legislation Act 2023 (6 June 2023) continue to be valid until they expire or until 6 December 2024, whichever is sooner.

Note: If a Vehicle is certified as self-contained for fewer occupants than it currently has, that Vehicle is considered not to be Certified Self-Contained. For example, a Vehicle certified to meet the needs of three occupants but which is housing four or more occupants is considered not to be Certified Self-Contained under this Bylaw.

Council means the Whanganui District Council or any Authorised Officer.

Defined Area means any area referred to in Schedule 1 Table 1 — Restricted Areas or Table 2 — Prohibited Areas.

District or **Whanganui District** means the area within the territorial boundary of the Whanganui District Council.

Freedom Camping and **Freedom Camp** mean to camp (other than at a camping ground) within 200 m of an area accessible by motor vehicle or within 200 m of the mean low-water springs line of any sea or harbour, or on or within 200 m of a formed road or a Great Walks Track, using 1 or more of the following:

- (a) a tent or other temporary structure;
- (b) a motor vehicle.

The meanings of **freedom camping** and **freedom camp** do not include the following activities:

- (a) temporary and short-term parking of a motor vehicle;
- (b) recreational activities commonly known as day-trip excursions;
- (c) resting or sleeping at the roadside in a motor vehicle to avoid driver fatigue.

A person is not **freedom camping** if the person -

- (a) is a person other than a person who is in New Zealand on the basis of a visitor visa (within the meaning of immigration instructions); and
- (b) is unable to live in appropriate residential accommodation; and
- (c) as a consequence of that inability, is living in either or both of the following:
 - (i) a tent or other temporary structure;
 - (ii) a motor vehicle.

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For the purposes of this definition:

camping ground means-

- (a) a camping ground that is the subject of a current certificate of registration under the Camping-Grounds Regulations 1985; or
- (b) any site at which a fee is payable for camping at the site.

Great Walks Track means-

- (a) a track specified in Schedule 1 of the Freedom Camping Act 2011; or
- (b) any other track specified by Order in Council made under section 44 as a Great Walks Track.

immigration instructions has the same meaning as in section 4 of the Immigration Act 2009.

residential accommodation includes accommodation in a dwelling house, flat, hotel, motel, boarding house, or camping ground.

Local Authority Area

- (a) means an area of land—
 - (i) that is within the district or region of a local authority; and
 - (ii) that is-
 - (A) controlled or managed by or on behalf of the local authority; or
 - (B) an area of NZTA land declared to be a local authority area in accordance with a bylaw made under section 10A of the Freedom Camping Act 2011; and
- (b) includes any part of an area of land referred to in paragraph (a); but
- (c) does not include an area of land referred to in paragraph (a) or (b) that is permanently covered by water.

Park/Reserve means the grassed area, in any land vested in or administered by the Council under the provisions of the Reserves Act 1977; or any park, domain or recreational area under the control or ownership of the Council.

Person includes a corporation sole, a body corporate, and an unincorporated body.

Vehicle has the meaning given to it by s2 of the Land Transport Act 1998.

“vehicle—

- (a) means a contrivance equipped with wheels, tracks, or revolving runners on which it moves or is moved; and*
- (b) includes a hovercraft, a skateboard, in-line skates, and roller skates; but*
- (c) does not include—*
 - (i) a perambulator or pushchair:*
 - (ii) a shopping or sporting trundler not propelled by mechanical power:*
 - (iii) a wheelbarrow or hand-trolley:*
 - (iv) [Repealed]*
 - (v) a pedestrian-controlled lawnmower:*
 - (vi) a pedestrian-controlled agricultural machine not propelled by mechanical power:*
 - (vii) an article of furniture:*
 - (viii) a wheelchair not propelled by mechanical power:*
 - (ix) any other contrivance specified by the rules not to be a vehicle for the purposes of this definition:*
 - (x) any rail vehicle“*

Note: Vehicle includes a campervan

Washing Lines means any strung line outside of a Vehicle used for hanging, airing or drying of clothes.

- (1) Any undefined words, phrases or expressions used in this Bylaw have the same meaning as in the Act unless the context plainly requires a different meaning.
- (2) Explanatory notes and additional information attached to this Bylaw are for information purposes only, do not form part of this Bylaw, and may be made, amended, revoked or replaced by Council at any time.
- (3) Parts 1 and 2 of the Legislation Act 2019 applies to this Bylaw as if it was legislation.

6 Freedom Camping Generally

- (1) Except with the approval of Council, no persons shall Freedom Camp:
 - a. in contravention of controls within any area identified in Schedule 1 Table 1 — Restricted Areas; or
 - b. within any area identified in Schedule 1 Table 2 — Prohibited Areas.

7 Temporary Controls

- (1) The Council may temporarily close or restrict Freedom Camping in any location where the closure or restriction is considered necessary to:
 - a. prevent damage to that location or facilities in that location; or
 - b. allow maintenance to that location or facilities in that location; or
 - c. protect the safety of persons or property; or
 - d. provide for better public access, including in circumstances where events are planned for that location.
- (2) Notice will be given of any temporary closure or restriction, and the removal of any closure or restriction, in any manner the Council considers is appropriate to the reason for the closure or restriction. Prior notice of any temporary closure or restriction will be given where reasonably practicable.

Note: Notice may include any of the following: a sign erected in the area; advertising on the Council's website, official social media pages, or on the radio; notifications via Council-approved apps; and/or a public notice in the paper.

8 Approval

- (1) The Council may grant (with or without conditions) or refuse any application for an Approval at its discretion.
- (2) Approvals under clause 8(1) only be granted in relation to events.
- (3) In deciding to grant or decline any application for an Approval the Council will consider the following general matters:
 - a. compliance with the standards in schedule 1 tables 1 and 2;
 - b. reasonableness or practicality of compliance with the general and specific conditions;
 - c. the location of the activity and whether it is likely to impact an area, the health and safety of visitors to that area, or access to that area;
 - d. the suitability of a Person to hold an Approval taking into account any known past operational issues and the applicant's experience and track record;

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- e. whether the activity is consistent with Council policies and plans;
- f. whether the activity is in conjunction with any event(s).

- (4) An Approval may be applied for in writing to the Council at least 48 hours in advance of the date planned for Freedom Camping in the Defined Area.
- (5) An Approval must be applied for at the same time as consent for the event it is in relation to.

9 Penalties and offences

- (1) It is an offence under the Act to breach any provisions of the Act or any of the restrictions provided in this Bylaw.
- (2) Every Person who commits an offence under the Act is liable for a penalty of any amount prescribed under section 20E of the Act, or in any regulations made under section 43 of the Act.

Any Person who commits an offence under the Act may also be liable for costs associated with repairing any damage caused to a Local Authority Area instead of, or in addition to, any other penalty.

Schedule 1 - Locations and Restrictions

- (1) Except as expressly provided for, Freedom Camping in any area identified under Schedule 1 Table 1 — Restricted Areas is subject to the following general restrictions:
 - a. All Vehicles must be parked within marked spaces where provided;
 - b. Where there are marked designated Freedom Camping spaces at a location, Freedom Camping is restricted to the designated Freedom Camping spaces;
 - c. Where Freedom Camping occurs in ordinary marked parking spaces, Freedom Camping Vehicles must be parked with at least one full marked space between them. Where there are specific spaces marked for Freedom Camping, Vehicles may be parked next to each other;
 - d. Vehicles must not be parked in such a way as to block access to or from any other Vehicle or the access of any Vehicle to or from any parking space that that vehicle does not directly occupy, or any public area or private property;
 - e. Where a **Max Time** is given, these are non-consecutive and apply within any four week period;
 - f. Where a **Max Vehicle** is given, that is the maximum number of Vehicles that can be Freedom Camping in the specified area at any one time;
 - g. Where a **Vehicle Type** is specified, only Vehicles of that type can be used for Freedom Camping in the specified area. Where Large Vehicles are referred to, these refer to any Vehicle of class 2 or higher;
 - h. Where an area is restricted to “**Contained camping only**”, Camping Paraphernalia must be contained within any Vehicle Freedom Camping in that area;
 - i. Vehicles that are Certified Self-Contained must display evidence of their certification at all times.

Note: A four night time limit means that a Freedom Camper can only stay in that Freedom Camping area for five days total within any four week period.

Note: A vehicle type of “Certified Self-Contained only” means that only Vehicles that are Certified Self-Contained can Freedom Camp in the specified area. A Vehicle type of “any” means that any Vehicle can Freedom Camp in the specified area.

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- (2) Freedom Camping is Prohibited:
- within any area identified in Schedule 1: Table 2 — Prohibited Areas;
 - within 500m of the boundary of any Defined Area (the Buffer Zone), unless otherwise specified in Table 1 — Restricted Areas or Table 2 — Prohibited Areas; and
 - within a tent or other structure on any Park/Reserve except where expressly provided for under Schedule 1: Table 1 — Restricted Areas.
- (3) Washing Lines are prohibited within Schedule 1 Table 1 — Restricted Areas and Schedule 1: Table 2 — Prohibited Areas.

Table 1

Table 1 - Freedom Camping Restricted Areas		
Location	Restrictions	Buffer Zone
Babbage Place — the lower car park directly adjacent to Great North Road.	Max Time — 4 nights Max Vehicles — 4 Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Freedom Camping may only be undertaken between the hours of 5pm and 10am 	200m
Castlecliff Beach — the upper carparks adjacent to the Duncan Pavilion	Max Time — 4 nights Max Vehicles — Any, but campers must park in demarcated freedom camping parks Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions — None	500m
Jubilee Stadium Carpark — the carpark directly between Jubilee Stadium and London Street.	Max Time — 4 nights Max Vehicles — Any, but campers must park in demarcated freedom camping parks Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions — None	100m
Moutoa Quay — the designated freedom campsite behind 13 Taupo Quay.	Max Time — 4 nights Max Vehicles — 10 Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Freedom Camping is permitted on Friday nights to allow the Saturday market to be set up Freedom camping may only be undertaken between the hours of 	50m

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	5pm and 8am	
Mowhanau Lookout Carpark	Max Time — 2 nights Max Vehicles — 3 Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions — None	700m
Westmere Lake — the carpark on Rapanui Road.	Max Time — 4 nights Max Vehicles — 5 Vehicle Type — Certified Self-Contained only Other Restrictions — None	600m

Table 2 - Prohibited Areas

Location	Buffer Zone
The Bason Reserve — the entire area of the reserve.	500m
Blyth Street — the carparks around Durie Hill Tower.	500m
The Central Business District — the area bordered by St Hill Street, Dublin Street, Wicksteed Street, Cameron Terrace, Bell Street, Market Place, and Taupo Quay.	200m
Springvale Stadium — any area outside of the carpark between Jubilee Stadium and London Street.	100m
Whanganui River Road – entire length	500m
Taupo Quay – The section at 83 Taupo Quay.	500m

