

Groundbreaking tourism project to kick off in Queenstown Lakes

Queenstown, New Zealand (4 July 2024) A groundbreaking tourism project to understand optimal visitation in the Queenstown Lakes region has launched with the appointment of an expert research team to lead the project.

The Destination Southern Lakes (DSL) Board, responsible for governance of the region's destination management plan, has announced that Griffith University has been appointed to lead this project.

A team of researchers, led by globally recognised experts Professor Susanne Becken, Professor James Higham and Professor Oz Sahin, supported by FreshInfo's Shane Vuletich, will lead the world first project- one of the key outputs of the Queenstown Lakes' destination management plan.

The project will seek to create an optimal visitation model that will enable effective scenario planning and informed decision-making within the district.

DSL Chair, Murray Strong, said that understanding optimal visitation is ground-breaking work.

“At present, there are no comprehensive models that can guide and establish variables in relation to the social, cultural, environmental and economic limits of visitation levels. Queenstown Lakes is a high growth district with an economy that is dominated by tourism. With a small resident population and high visitor numbers, understanding the implications of visitation is essential for making good decisions and achieving positive outcomes to meet the needs of the community,” said Mr Strong.

Tourism remains the backbone of the Queenstown Lakes economy and contributes significantly to regional GDP as well as recreational infrastructure, experiences and diversity. The project aims to ensure tourism is planned for in the future, in a resilient and robust manner, to ensure a thriving community, environment and industry.

Visitors have an economic, social, cultural and environmental impact on the district and Destination Southern Lakes Inc. (DSL), the board responsible for governance of the destination management plan, believes this project will build a model that helps to predict those impacts and understand the intersection between different elements.

Mr Strong said DSL is seeking to understand the interrelationship between the different variables, the parameters that need to be operated within and how we plan for a bright future.

“Visitation in the district needs to be analysed in conjunction with residential growth, community sentiment, worker experience, visitor experience, seasonal changes, environmental degradation/regeneration and cultural context. This project is integral to taking a ‘systems approach’ towards destination management and supporting sustainable economic growth,” said Mr Strong.

Queenstown Lakes District Council has managed the procurement process on behalf of DSL, and alongside the district's regional tourism organisations Destination Queenstown and Lake Wānaka Tourism, will be part of the steering group overseeing the project.

Press Release from Destination Southern Lakes

The steering group has coordinated a project team to lead this with work commencing in July.

Whilst the model is being developed specifically for the Queenstown Lakes district, the ambition of DSL is to produce a prototype that can ultimately be shared with other destinations across New Zealand, and around the world, to support regenerative tourism ambition.

ENDS

Image of The Remarkables Queenstown available [here](#).

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