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Application Lead
Fast Track
Environmental Protection Authority

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Kia ora

Bendigo Gold Mine – Fast Track Application - TIA Submission

Tourism Industry Aotearoa was identified as a party to submit to the Fast Track Application of Santana Minerals for a gold mine at Bendigo in Central Otago, specifically on the potential adverse or positive impacts of the proposed mine on tourism nationally and regionally.

TIA is the peak body for the tourism industry in Aotearoa New Zealand. With around 1,250 member businesses, TIA represents a range of tourism-related activities including accommodation, adventure activities, attractions, retail, airports and airlines, transport, as well as related-tourism services and hospitality.

Our expertise is on tourism, and not mining, meaning that we are not in a position to provide any evidence on potential impacts of the proposed mine. In this, we consider that the Fast Track process itself should undertake appropriate research on both community and related commercial sectors on the impacts of the application. International case studies that could provide definitive evidence-based input would also contribute to a thorough or balanced approach, but is not work TIA could undertake.

As such, we will limit our input to setting out the nature of the tourism industry and its national and regional contributions to our country:

- Tourism represents 17% of New Zealand’s export economy and supports one in every nine jobs in New Zealand.¹ The contribution of tourism will only increase given the industry’s goal is for tourism to reach \$55 billion in total annual expenditure by 2030.²

Indicator for YE March 2025	Value	% of NZ Total
Total expenditure	\$46.6b	
International expenditure	\$18.1b	
Domestic expenditure	\$28.5b	
Total GDP (direct and indirect)	\$30.6b	7.7%
Tourism exports	\$18.1b	17.0%
Total Employment (direct and indirect)	327,888	11.4%

- The Central Otago region is a critically important part of the New Zealand tourism system, with 40.7% of itinerary nights spent in the Queenstown-Lakes District in the year to December 2025, second only to Auckland.³ Note that this does not include visitation to the Central Otago District Council region.
- Domestic and international visitors spent \$5.5 billion in the three Regional Tourism areas that operate in the Central Otago and Queenstown Lakes districts (Destination

¹ <https://www.stats.govt.nz/information-releases/tourism-satellite-account-year-ended-march-2024/>

² <https://www.tia.org.nz/tourism-2050>

³ <https://teic.mbie.govt.nz/teiccategories/datareleases/ivs-annual/>

Queenstown, Lake Wanaka Tourism and Tourism Central Otago). Of this, \$3.8 billion is by international visitors and \$1.7 billion by domestic visitors.⁴

- International visitors cite 'Landscape and Scenery' as the leading factor for visiting New Zealand (45.8%), well ahead of 'Friends and Family' as the next highest (35.4%).

These figures highlight the importance of tourism nationally, and regionally for Central Otago. We note also the role of wine tourism and food and wine experiences in the tourism economy of the region, and links this has to the broader export economy of the region.

Tourism as an industry is hard won and cannot be taken for granted. The Central Otago region has earned a global reputation as an international-standard regional destination based upon attractive natural and built environments, multi-layered activity options and a sophisticated industry that makes it all happen.

TIA draws particular attention to the growing role of cycle tourism in Central Otago, of which Bendigo is a part. Central Otago is one of New Zealand's most mature cycle tourism clusters, anchored by the Ngā Haerenga Great Rides network, including the Otago Central Rail Trail, Lake Dunstan Trail and Roxburgh Gorge Trail, with many secondary rides and trails. For instance, the Otago Central Rail Trail, New Zealand's original Great Ride, attracts up to 14,000 through-riders annually, with tens of thousands more using sections of the trail, and is central to Central Otago's identity as a destination. It is emblematic of the kind of tourism the region has built its reputation on - landscape-led, experience-rich, and dependent on an environment visitors find worth travelling for.

Whether this mine should proceed is appropriately a matter for the panel, informed by evidence. What we ask is that the panel give proper weight to tourism's contribution to the national and regional economy; that independent evidence on tourism impacts is sought and tested as part of this process; and that any conditions attached to approval reflect the need to protect the landscapes and visitor experiences on which Central Otago's tourism economy depends.

Tourism is hard to build - the Central Otago region has taken decades to earn its global reputation. That reputation is a national asset worth protecting.

Ngā mihi,



Rebecca Ingram
Chief Executive

⁴ <https://teic.mbie.govt.nz/teiccategories/datareleases/mrte/>