

**MRI**  
**WEST COAST OF THE SOUTHERN ALPS**  
**MRI PROJECT – TOURISM**  
**HEAPHY TRACK SURVEY**

The response from the MRI Project Management Team is shown on the following tables.

Suggested agencies to implement the actions arising from the report will be subject to consultation with the following;

- Oparara Valley Project Trust and local businesses,
- Department of Conservation,
- Buller District Promotions Association,
- Buller District Council and
- Tourism West Coast.

The Oparara Valley Project Trust is the principal vehicle driving product development in Karamea. Some discussion may need to take place around a wider agenda of moving to an industry-driven local promotions group which incorporates more focus on business development and collaborative marketing, based on the destination's new and existing attractions.

**Summary of Findings from the Report by Tai Poutini Polytechnic**

- The recommendations from Tai Poutini Polytechnic are in the left hand column.
- The PMT comments and suggestions for discussion are in the three columns to the right.
- The full MRI – Heaphy report, which may contain specific data of use to businesses and regional organisations is available from DWC (Peter Walls).

The Department of Conservation has data on the Heaphy Track available on request.

**Implementation**

Priorities and resources needed for each of the actions arising from the recommendations are allocated. The local promotion group will need to discuss these ratings and revise them. The idea is to start on all of the AA rated actions i.e. the high priority – easy to resource actions.

**Priority**        A = high; B = medium; C = low

**Resources**    A = can be done by operators themselves without spending money

B = operators plus leveraging regional organisations such as DoC and TWC

C = needs some funding plus operators' time and in-kind plus leveraging major partners

## 1. From Track Users:

Tai Poutini Polytech Recommendation	PMT Response	Potential Action	Priority A=high h	Resources A=low	By Whom?
two thirds walk from the Golden Bay to the Karamea end	These walkers are probably being captured by Karamea hospitality businesses already.	Marketing to be directed at the Tasman end should cover accommodation and transport options in Karamea and Northern Buller.	A	B	Local promotions group and RTO, also DoC
two thirds were full-track walkers, almost all leaving from Golden Bay	If they are going to be influenced, it has to happen earlier.	Same as above			Local promotions group and RTO, also DoC
one third were day walkers, more of whom started from the Karamea end	Day walking is the principal activity in Karamea	Needs a major thrust into provision of information about day walks in the Karamea and Northern Buller region; -commission/subsidise a book - free map - add info to websites – DoC, RTO, - stories	A	B	Local promotion group to coordinate, and then engage with the RTO
most users were New Zealanders and most were from the 3 biggest cities		Media stories in major dailies, website	B	A	RTO
most overseas users were from EEC countries and few were from Australia or Asia		Website –	A	A	RTO and DoC

most did not stay in Golden Bay or Karamea prior to using the track	Do we assume they stayed in Nelson?	Local businesses should survey guests and customers, and collate information	B	A	Local promotions group
of those that did, more stayed in Karamea and most were day walkers		Day walkers as above.			
of those already stayed in Karamea, over one third intended to stay again after their walk	Can Karamea improve on this %?	Web site Surveys	B	A	Local promotions group
few reported issues with transport	This may be true of walkers on the Track, but what about those who were deterred?	Need to find a practical method of surveying "non consumers"	C	C	Local promotions group
the most important sources of information were: just knew; family and friends, internet		Internet is king, and can target 'non-consumers'	A	A	Local promotions group
main motivator for doing the track were good reports of it		Maintain good media stories	B	A	Local promotions group
most thought information about the track and area easy to find	Check survey detailed results to see where people obtain this information		B	A	Local promotions group
almost all found all aspects of the track better than they anticipated, unreservedly enjoyed	Images need to reflect this	Media stories, blogs	A	B	Local promotions group

the track, and enjoyed the natural environment most					
worst aspect of the track was sandflies	Probably first time trampers or international visitors	Need for the region to confront this issue – as with the weather. Better information re how to deal with sandflies in publications, website	B	A	DoC, RTO, i-Sites, websites, brochures,

## 2. From Information Centre (VIC) Operators:

Tai Poutini Polytech Recommendation	PMT Response	Potential Action	By Whom?
the closer a VIC to the track and Karamea, the more information they have, the more they volunteer information, the more they recommend	To be expected	Invest in website collateral	Local promotion group
visitors ask about transport, then track conditions, lastly, other aspects at the end of the track	Transport MUST be the major issue for the operators to sort out and package		Local promotion group
accommodation inquiries are mostly about backpackers then campgrounds		Since walkers travel in groups, perhaps motels could promote group tariffs that compete. One does already.	Local promotion group
VIC operators state the following are impediments to developing track/Karamea tourism: transport to and from, lack of other attractions in Karamea, lack of promotion of the area	Why is transport not a problem to users, and yet it is reported by VICs as a problem?	Promote packaging of track, transport and accommodation. Promote day walks in Karamea.	Local promotion group
there are problems with the availability and response of the Karamea tourism product	We are aware of these issues	Workshop on service delivery issues?	Local promotion group

### 3. Conclusions of the report:

Tai Poutini Polytech Recommendation	PMT Response	Potential Action	By Whom?
day walkers are major contributors to Karamea	Attract more	Promote day walks	Local promotion group
increasing full-track use of the track will lead only to an increase in certain types of accommodation but not necessarily so			Local promotion group
there exists plenty of accessible information about the Heaphy Track but little in the way of coordinated information about tourism possibilities in northern Buller		Northern Buller marketing collaborative actions	Local promotion group
not all relevant stakeholders have been asked for input			Local promotion group

## 4. Recommendations for action:

### a. Improving tourism in the Karamea/northern Buller region

Tai Poutini Polytech Recommendation	PMT Response	Potential Action	By Whom?
encourage day walkers on the Heaphy Track	Good idea	See above	Local promotion group
Karamea tourism products, and the IC centre and website should be upgraded and professionalised; possibly, IC to join i-SITE network	Perhaps.	See Visitor Centre Review report	Local promotion group
diversify the tourism product in Karamea	Support existing businesses to grow and then to diversify.	Business workshop?	Local promotion group
develop events around Karamea strengths (for example, an herb festival)	yes	As above	Local promotion group
create a coordinated regional marketing approach of the northern Buller along the lines of an "epic journey", branded "circuit"		Northern Buller loop	Buller Promotions Association
target the New Zealand and short haul markets	Beyond the resources of Karamea to attempt this on their own		RTO
fund and hold familiarizations between VICs	VIC Review report is relevant		Not until other actions are complete (availability etc)
cross HWY 6 over the lower Buller River	Signage at major	Part of Regional Signage	DWC

and extend it into Westport along the north bank before the turnoff (crossroad) south	SH intersections would be more cost effective.	Strategy	
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**b. Improving use of the Heaphy Track (which will not necessarily improve visitor numbers to Karamea and northern Buller).**

Tai Poutini Polytech Recommendation	PMT Response	Potential Action	By Whom?
Inform track users of the sandfly problem	Need information on dealing with sandflies	Info developed and disseminated widely via internet, brochures	DoC, RTO, Local promotion group
Rectify aspects of crowding on the track, possibly by a better booking system	Is this true?	Discuss with DoC	DoC

**c. Further essential research**

Tai Poutini Polytechnic Recommendation	Comment
gather input from area tourism operators and other stakeholders (of first prime importance;	A role for the local promotion group to initiate
investigate why West Coast visitors do not visit Karamea (of prime importance) and what they know about Karamea	Part of a region-wide survey perhaps?
assess the local impact of tourism	Possibly the destination is too small at present. If growth occurs, it will be readily apparent.
investigate how much Karamea accommodation there is and the occupancy rate (supply and demand study)	Not a big job. Local promotion group could facilitate action.
survey non-track visitors in Karamea (double the annual number of track	VIC staff could start an informal survey to assess high level trends.

visitors use the IC) to ascertain reasons for visiting the area, demographics, logistics, and other factors