

## Helicopters to the rescue again

With a reported 120 Trampers being evacuated from Milford Track by helicopter the aviation industry is again at the forefront of saving peoples lives.

“I am sure that those trampers were extremely pleased to see that we could quickly come to their rescue.” says Irene King, CEO of the Aviation Industry Association, “Unfortunately, limitations placed on the sector are compromising the ability of operators to operate profitable business taking tourists and visitors into the park lands.”

Proposals are to place limitations upon them as to when, where and how many times they can access our conservation estate, however, when it comes to saving those tramping and recreational groups from becoming cabin bound due to washouts and inclement weather there’s no hesitation to call on the helicopter.

“In our books that’s a double standard,” explains Irene, “on one hand trampers and DoC do not want helicopters in the area because of perceived noise issues but in the case of an emergency expect them to be immediately available. This is not realistic.”

Irene goes on to say, “The current situation means that, due to limited access, many helicopter companies are suffering financially. They are running a commercial business and if their income is being restricted through these concessions and limitations a number could go out of business. It is a double edged sword as it also means that those that survive are limited in their ability to invest in quieter, more eco friendly aircraft.”

Helicopters provide a valuable service to tourists visiting New Zealand and who wish to see the beautiful scenery but due to physical limitations, such as disability, are not able to make take advantage of this. The service provided by the helicopter companies to individuals like these ensure that they have an experience of New Zealand that they will never forget and would not otherwise achieve.

“It is time for people to wake up,” concludes Irene. “we have to be sensitive to the requirements of all users of the conservation estate and not just simply the needs and desire of one group over another. Its about equitability and balance. Presently this is just not there in some regions of New Zealand..”

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