

## RUGBY WORLD CUP

# Business savvy vital for cup legacy

Kiwi tourism experts say how the country should gear up for RWC 2011.

**A**S YOU head back to work reflect on the summer break. The personal value is obvious – relaxing with loved ones. But what about the value to the communities we visit? Our most popular spots host thousands of visitors, towns welcome travellers and beaches fill with holidaymakers. No matter where we go, we all spend money. We visit the shop, buy petrol, coffee and the *Sunday Star-Times*. Others shop for clothes, visit the attractions, see in the year at bars and watch movies or rent DVDs. One study of holiday parks showed the average camper spent about \$100 a day.

Tourism pumps more than \$22 billion into the economy annually – the equivalent of \$61 million a day. It's a major employer, directly and indirectly employing about one in 10 of us – the equivalent of full-time jobs for 182,400 Kiwis.

It stands alongside the dairy industry as one of our largest foreign exchange earners, and thriving tourism businesses need builders, accountants, lawyers and other goods and services spreading the dollar far and wide.

This year, we are looking forward

to hosting the Rugby World Cup, which is forecast to inject more than \$500 million into the economy.

Giving fans a wonderful holiday is vital to the cup's success. Every New Zealander will be an ambassador, from the icecream vendor to the roadside stallholder, to the passer-by providing directions.

Fans will be looking for things to do as they travel, and the tourism industry is working hard to encourage visitors to "take the long way round".

We can all help by giving visitors reasons to stay in our regions

for longer. Be ready to suggest sights they can see, things to do or specialities to buy, so that even areas that aren't hosting matches will benefit.

Ultimately, we want visitors to spread the word at home about what a great destination New Zealand is.

No matter how the All Blacks fare, we each have the opportunity to help improve New Zealand's economy in 2011. Let's make the most of it.

■ **Tim Cossar is the Tourism Industry Association's chief executive.**



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- Tim Cossar

**R**UGBY NEW ZEALAND 2011 boss Martin Snedden says we are on track for 85,000 visitors for this year's Rugby World Cup, putting a smile on the faces of those in tourism and hospitality.

It's been a tough couple of years for the service sector and small businesses will be pegging their hopes on a bumper 2011/12 tourist season.

As well as providing an influx of visitors, the cup is helping keep New Zealand's profile sky high, with CNN and *Lonely Planet* naming us a must-visit destination.

Businesses will be considering their product, pricing and staffing needs for the year, and thinking about how they can cash in on the extra traffic and claim their slice of the cup pie. But as anyone who has been involved in the preparation for this event will tell you, the cup isn't about quick wins or easy revenue. The icing on the cake will come from building a legacy of great service and happy customers that will benefit tourism and the service sector long beyond the final.

The people our visitors will have the most contact with are those in frontline service jobs, who will make a big impression – good or bad.

Training staff in customer service should be a high priority for any business looking to leverage more

than a quick win. Good customer service training programmes like KiaOraMai help staff know the standard their business is aiming for, and the little things they can do to deliver an excellent experience.

Investment in service training is money well spent. Smart businesses know employees value training and that it helps retain good people, keeping recruitment costs down and contributing to bottom-line profits. And trained staff deliver a better customer experience, ensuring happy customers come back – and tell others.

A poor service experience can be broadcast around the world within seconds, via blogs or social media. All eyes will be on us this year so it's vital the stories shared on and offline are positive. In December, CNN rated us No. 2 in its list of top destinations. *Lonely Planet* put New

Zealand's "Capital of Cool" – Wellington – in its top 10 cities for 2011. We're going to need to work hard to maintain that.

Hosting the RWC will keep us in the spotlight, but the true test will be whether we can perform under pressure, and make visitors want to come back.

■ **Elizabeth Valentine is chief executive of the Aviation Tourism and Travel Training Organisation**



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- Elizabeth Valentine, above