

“Now’s the right time to explore” – TECNZ’s Keene as inbounders head south to conference

7th August 2024 By Natasha Jojoa Burling | natasha@tourismticker.com | [@tourismticker](https://www.instagram.com/tourismticker)

It is hoped this year’s Tourism Export Council of New Zealand conference will inspire delegates to explore new possibilities, says Lynda Keene.



Invercargill is hosting this year’s TECNZ Conference 2024

The conference, which has the theme *Navigating the New Frontier*, kicks off this afternoon at Invercargill’s Ascot Park Hotel following yesterday’s TECNZ Tourism Trade Day, with TECNZ chair Scott Mehrtens and Tourism and Hospitality Minister Matt Doocey among today’s opening speakers.

TECNZ chief executive Keene said the association held conferences in regions like Southland to showcase areas often left off New Zealand itineraries and she was pleased around 300 people signed up for this year’s event following two years of inbounders being focused on recovery.

“We’re absolutely thrilled and everyone’s in a good frame of mind,” Keene told the Ticker.

“It’s now the right time to explore things. It’s now the right time for us to poke our heads up a little bit further and start to look to the future.”



Lynda Keene

She said it was important to look at the partnership between the inbound and travel trade sector, and whether that would change, and if improvements could be made.

“Where will technology and AI come into play in the future?” said Keene.

“The theme of navigating the new frontier is also to make us look not just now, 2 to 5 years out, but [at] changing visitor expectations and trends in the future.”

SpaceOpsNZ engineer Chris Bull will speak last thing on Wednesday afternoon on the theme *Navigating the Final Frontier*.

Keene said it will be great to hear him talk about where space tourism was going and what types of businesses might be involved.

“When we link it to the whole dark skies proposition that New Zealand’s well placed for, to keep growing – that’s exciting.”

Futurist Dave Wild will be the final speaker of the conference on the topic of navigating the new frontier.

Keene was looking forward to hearing what he would say about changes in aviation, accommodation and tourism, as well as future societal trends.

“What a business needs to do to be prepared strategically, to maybe have a paradigm shift to be ahead of the curve of changes.”

Keene said all those sorts of discussions will be happening over the next couple of days.

“And will we come out with answers?”

“Too early to say, but we think it’s the right time now that we’re in our third season back in our recovery that we start looking forward to new frontiers and boundaries.”

Keene said TECNZ’s latest forecast is an 88% recovery by the year ending March 2025. By the year ending March 2026, New Zealand would be back to pre-Covid levels of 3.9m visitors.

The association had picked up softening in some markets, such as China and other Asian markets. Elections in half of the world's democracies were also affecting tourism to this country.

“And so whenever there's elections, there's also a little bit of a handbrake on people's commitment to travel.”

The sector needed to work hard to attract holidaymakers during the 2025/26 season, said Keene, because visiting friends and family had been the fastest segment to return.

The conference concludes on Thursday.