

## Queenstown and Film Friendliness: Tourism, Film, Local Government and the Community.

Reid Walker – *Graduated 2001*

### Abstract

The American film industry has recently become concerned at the increase in 'runaway production' as many overseas locations seek to attract film production because of the perceived direct and indirect economic benefits including film-induced tourism. New Zealand has witnessed substantial interest in attracting such production particularly after hosting production of Lord of the Rings and Vertical Limit. Queenstown was one community that benefited and at the start of 2000 the Queenstown-Lakes District Council adopted a 'film friendly' policy to attract further film production.

The introduction of this policy raises two questions: First, what are the benefits that councils are seeking from production? Second, what is the validity of the 'film friendly' policy? This thesis attempts to answer these questions through a literature review and methodology that includes three surveys. The first survey was sent to all Regional Tourism Organisations, District Councils and City Councils in New Zealand to identify the benefits they are seeking and the policies in place to maximise these benefits. A second survey was sent to business people in the Queenstown area to identify the impacts of the industry and establish whether they were 'film friendly'. The third survey was sent to residents of the Queenstown area to establish their 'film friendliness'.

At the national level it was found that organisations were not fully aware of the postproduction impacts on image and tourism and were predominantly motivated by the economic benefits of film production. At the level of the Queenstown case study it was found that business respondents believed that much employment was created and were 'film friendly', although they detail some concerns. The resident survey addressed a number of issues, with positive perceived impacts including employment, revenue injection, increased exposure, excitement and glamour. Perceived negative impacts were focussed upon the rental accommodation sector and control of the environmental impacts. Nevertheless, residents perceived the community and themselves to be 'film friendly' although several issues for future film production were also identified.

As a result of this research it is recommended that local government organisations seeking to attract film production need to develop a much greater understanding of the postproduction affects so that opportunities of film production can be maximised. In addition, such organisations need to analyse legislation in order to identify their rights and responsibilities pertaining to the film industry. At the Queenstown level it is recommended that the QLDC maintain and strengthen environmental controls on film production, that greater consultation with the community occurs, and that the rental accommodation sector is be closely monitored in order to manage issues of rental availability.