

## **New Zealand to the fore**

*When Looking to pointers as to what the economic and tourism impacts will be for New Zealand, experts in the field suggest that parallels can most easily be drawn with the 2003 Rugby World Cup, staged in Australia.*

The projected level of international visitors to New Zealand for RWC 2011, according to the Sports Business Group at Deloitte LLP, is 60,000 to 70,000, comparable to the reported 65,000 people that travelled to Australia for the 2003 tournament. Around 30,000 are expected to travel to New Zealand from Europe which is again similar to the 2003 tournament.

For Austin Houlihan, Senior Consultant, Sports Business Group, Deloitte LLP, this makes Australia 2003 a good model for predicting the benefits New Zealand could accrue.

"The capacity of stadia that will host matches in New Zealand in 2011 is on average lower than those that were used in Australia, with around 400,000 less attendees expected at the 48 tournament matches. This will obviously have an impact on direct expenditure" says Houlihan. Ticketing is the key revenue source for the organising committee, with the RWC 2011 hosts projecting sales totalling around the £100 million mark.

However, given that New Zealand will likely see a similar number of overall visitors, and assuming these visitors will, on average, spend a similar amount of time in New Zealand to that spent by European visitors in Australia in 2003, Houlihan predicts that the economic impact on New Zealand could actually be greater.

"The characteristics of the host economy are a key driver of the overall economic impact, and in this respect New Zealand is a smaller economy than Australia. In this sense, hosting the Rugby World Cup could have a relatively greater impact on New Zealand, as this impact will be more concentrated".

"The influx of visitors to New Zealand will obviously have a substantial impact on the host economy over the seven week duration of the tournament. The fact that additional temporary accommodation will be provided through cruise ships during the tournament emphasises the extraordinary level of tourism that will benefit New Zealand".

"The direct economic impact of the tournament could exceed £200 million whilst the combined direct and indirect impacts might rise above £500 million".

This is far from being the only benefit, as Houlihan points out. "Hosting a major sporting event such as the Rugby World Cup provides a substantial level of media exposure for the host country. This can have significant benefits on both tourism, and specifically sports tourism in the longer term. To put this in perspective, a cumulative broadcast audience of over 4 billion watched the 48 matches in France in 2007. The host country is therefore in the media spotlight for the duration of the tournament, which raises the profile of that country and advertises it as a tourist destination".

"Projecting the country as a favourable host through the international media is therefore very important in boosting tourism after the tournament has finished".

"Also important is providing a memorable experience for the 60,000 and 70,000 international visitors during the tournament, so that they may return in future or relay a positive experience to family, friends and colleagues".

For Houlihan, New Zealand's ability to attract further major events, even after a triumphant RWC, may though be limited.

"Being able to deliver a successful Rugby World Cup is important in being able to attract other major sporting events, as it instils confidence in that country or city in hosting such events".

"But given the size of New Zealand there is a limit to the scale of international sporting event that it could feasibly be able to host. For example in bidding for RWC 2011, New Zealand highlighted that this may perhaps be their last opportunity to solely host the tournament given the continuing growth of the Rugby World Cup since the inaugural event in 1987".

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