10 April 2017
Media release

MOMENTUM BUILDING ON EASTER SUNDAY SHOPPING BUT BIG CITIES LEFT BEHIND

Retail NZ says it is heartened that more than a third of all local councils have now adopted policies that permit shops in their districts to open their doors on Easter Sunday and says that momentum is on the side of a more liberal approach towards shop trading hours.

“A new law late last year allowed local councils to permit shops within their districts to open on Easter Sunday, if they wished to do so, in order to serve customers. We are really pleased that 25 councils around the country have so far adopted such a policy, and we’re optimistic that others will be looking at the issue ahead of Easter 2018,” Retail NZ’s General Manager for Public Affairs, Greg Harford, said today. “It is mostly business-friendly councils in heartland New Zealand that have moved quickly, while the big cities such as Auckland, Wellington, Christchurch and Dunedin have yet to consider the issue formally. The Government didn’t give councils much time to consider the issue ahead of Easter this year, so we expect those who haven’t already done so will look at the issue over the next 8-10 months.

“The great thing about the new law is that councils are in a position where they can give choice to businesses, employees and shoppers, knowing that everyone’s right to a day off on Easter Sunday is secure. Under the legislation, it is illegal to force anyone to open their business, or to force anyone to work in a shop on Easter Sunday. However, adopting a local shop trading hours policy allows councils to support those shops that do want to open their doors to customers. It also levels the playing field by taking away loopholes that, for example, allow a garden centre to open, but not a hardware store that contains a garden centre. Cafés and other businesses are already allowed to open, even if they choose not to, and in an era where many customers will be shopping online from home, it does seem odd not to allow local shops the same choice as other businesses.

“Easter Sunday is not a public holiday so if a shop is closed most retail employees will be required to take a day’s annual leave, or a day without pay. Adopting a local shop trading hours policy means that councils are effectively allowing employees to choose when they want to take their holidays rather than being forced to take a day’s leave in April each year. Additionally, many people are travelling around New Zealand over Easter, and it seems unreasonable for shops to be banned from serving those customers.”

Mr Harford said that even if shops were allowed to open, he expected many would
choose not to do so. “Whether a shop opens on Easter Sunday will be an individual decision for shopkeepers, taking into account the availability of their employees and customer demand. Not all shops are open all the time now, including on public holidays and Easter Sunday this year will be no different.”

For further information, please contact:
Greg Harford
GM Public Affairs
Retail NZ
027 243 2842
greg.harford@retail.kiwi

NOTE TO EDITORS

The Councils that have so far adopted a local shop trading hours policy are:
Carterton
Central Otago
Clutha
Far North
Grey District
Hauraki
Kaikoura
Kaipara
Kawerau
Marlborough
Masterton
Napier
New Plymouth
Opotiki
Queenstown-Lakes
Rangitikei
Rotorua
Southland
South Taranaki
South Wairarapa
Stratford
Thames-Coromandel
Waikato
Wairoa
Waitomo