

26 July 2023

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Hon David Parker
Minister of Transport
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

Hon Damien O'Connor
Associate Minister of Transport
Parliament Buildings
Wellington

BY EMAIL

Tēna korua Ministers

Support for “out of port” vessels in Cook Strait

Earlier this year we wrote to the Minister of Transport expressing our concerns regarding the lack of “out of port” support capability for Cook Strait shipping. The serious failure of the Kaitaki in January, followed by two more ferry breakdowns in February and the long history of ‘near misses’ underpinned our concerns at the time. In May the issue was starkly drawn once again when the MV Shiling issued a Mayday distress call due to a loss of power off Farewell Spit (her second engine failure) and was towed back to Wellington Harbour. This is the second cargo ship requiring a tow into Wellington in the last year.

The Associate Transport Minister Kiri Allan responded to our letter, inviting us to meet with her at the end of May. The Minister gave undertakings that the issue was being treated seriously and that Maritime NZ was preparing a report for the Minister around options and next steps.

Two months on from our meeting we understand the Maritime NZ report on ‘Emergency Ocean Response Capabilities’ has been completed and is ready for presentation to you. We do not want to see this stall and get lost pre-election; we urge you to share this report with us so that we can engage on its contents with you.

As outlined in our letter, and clearly illustrated by the events above, there are known risks to safety of shipping in Cook Strait, and very little mitigation in place. The consequences of a ship grounding

in Cook Strait have been seen before and the risk to life when considering the numbers on cruise ships, or even the new ferries, needs to be treated seriously.

Greater Wellington and Marlborough District Council believe that the government should consider Cook Strait as the vital link in State Highway One that it is, as well as a major trade route for New Zealand and elsewhere. The vessels, their crew, and passengers, need to have suitable safety support in place to travel through this sometime turbulent and rock-bound piece of water. Cook Strait has a concentration of various types of vessel not found elsewhere in New Zealand and certainly not the number of people afloat on ships in such a confined area.

Ministers, we believe luck has been on our side to date, and at some point, it is going to run out. We ask that government urgently commit to working with us, and ship and port operators towards an enduring solution for New Zealand's busiest and most challenging shipping corridor.

Ngā mihi



Daran Ponter
Chair
Greater Wellington



Nadine Taylor
Mayor
Marlborough District Council

CC: Mayors of Wellington region

Attachments:

“Support for vessels out of port areas” Letter to Minister of Transport from Cr Daran Ponter (GW) and Mayor Nadine Taylor (MDC) 9 March 2023

Letter to Chair Ponter and Mayor Taylor from Hon Kiri Allan, Associate Minister of Transport 19 April 2023