

Letters to the editor are encouraged from readers who wish to say nice things, raise an industry concern or even get something off their chest. Letters are published in good faith and may be abridged if too verbose or on the edge of being libellous. In fact, in 15 years we have only refused to publish two letters. For this reason, while we will protect an author's identity if requested by "name withheld on request", letters must be clearly marked by name and address, signed or emailed as verification of authenticity. Letters not clearly signed may not see the light of day.

POSTAGE COSTS

Dear Sir

I am about to send my first return to FINNZ. I have asked FINNZ and the Ministry of Fisheries on their 0800 phone lines if they have a Freepost number to send the return to.

They do not and now, besides MFish charging us \$27 to register, they want us to put a 60c stamp on the envelope as well. I do not have franking privileges like you paid by the taxpayer.

Also, the instruction information in the fishing returns book looks as if a schoolteacher wrote it and charter boat operators are being treated like schoolchildren. I recall the minister was a schoolteacher before entering politics.

Although the above amounts appear small, it is significant to a struggling charter boat operator such as us and is another cost to our business and a matter of principle.

For instance, I do the rainfall readings for the Northland Regional Council, and they provide a Freepost and addressed envelope for the rainfall returns. I suggest and request that FINNZ supply a Freepost number please.

Mike Austin, Oakura Bay

CATCH REPORTS

Dear Sir

Regarding the letters from charter operators in issue 79 of *Professional Skipper* concerning MFish's reporting requirements, I sympathise with Grant Sneddon's comments concerning the safety issues small boat operators will have when doing short trips with a sole charge skipper.

If I were him, the paperwork would certainly be secondary to the boat's operation and safety. He will find most MFish officers will also sympathise and hopefully have the common sense to ignore delayed reports from sole charge skippers.

MFish obviously needs to work with operators to address safety concerns and eliminate any pointless paperwork quickly, then spend the next 10 years sorting out the waste of paper created by the quota management system.

However, the rest of the letters were simply hypercritical

whingeing about the need to do something that should have been enforced years ago.

The amount of catch from charter boats is huge and most of the resistance to reporting is because charter operators would prefer the true catch tonnages not to be public knowledge.

A number of letter writers complained about being referred to as amateurs. I agree that charter operators are not amateurs, they are commercial fishermen who have been happy until now to be deemed amateurs so they can dodge all the costs commercial fishermen have been bearing for them.

All the letters complained of having to record GPS positions. Why? Because, as Murray Chisholm pointed out, these positions are "commercially sensitive."

Charter operators are being asked to do and pay for very little. Get over it.

Stu Morrison, Nelson

Dear Sir

After reading the letters regarding charter boat reporting I can sympathise with most comments and yes, there is a bit of whingeing, although most of it is justified. To be fair, it's the MFish officials who have been in charge of this fiasco who need hauling over the coals. Heads should roll.

The Minister of Fisheries must be very pissed off with them. Not only have they not listened to the industry's concerns, but also they have not listened to the minister and they have now placed him in a very embarrassing situation.

Phil Heatley is a fair and honest man and your editorial probably has best summed things up. The buggers in the "Ministry of Commercial Fisheries" have let him down.

Yes, we do need better information and to get it, MFish should not be biting the hand that will ultimately feed it.

Maurice Foster, Bay of Plenty

INCIDENT REPORT

Dear Sir

I am the skipper of the *Tierra del Fuego*. I am writing ►

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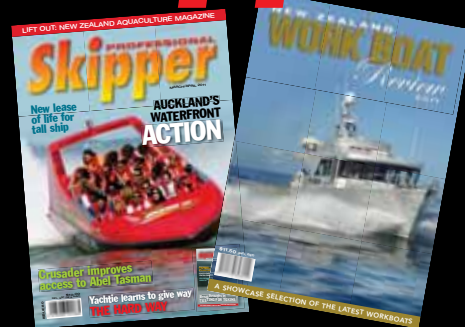
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regarding an entry in the Maritime New Zealand incident reports in issue 75 of *Professional Skipper* magazine titled *Foveaux Express*, passenger ferry, 23m.

The events of that day differ from what was reported in the article and actually were as follows:

Position: 46° 49.0' S, 168° 13.6' E. I noted this position at the time and it was 3.1 miles from the position reported in the article

We were dredging for oysters with five people on board the *Tierra del Fuego*, and close by were oyster boats operated by Peter Leask and Willie Calder.

We were picking up the dredge at the time when the *Foveaux Express* appeared out of the fog. I had been following the *Foveaux Express* on the radar, as visibility was limited by fog to about 70-80m and she was approaching rapidly. On realising that we were on a collision course, I put the *Tierra del Fuego* full ahead from two knots to 10 knots.

The *Foveaux Express* did not stop or slow down.

As you can see, there are some inconsistencies from what was reported. I chose not to proceed further with the incident as I had taken prompt evasive action by steaming ahead, thereby avoiding a collision, allowing room for the *Foveaux Express* to travel astern of the *Tierra del Fuego*.

I was very upset at seeing the listing in the incident reports considering the inconsistencies with the actual events on that day. Please see the enclosed photograph taken during the incident, which shows the *Foveaux Express* still under power passing astern of the *Tierra del Fuego*. This clearly shows she did not stop, as stated in the listing.

I have followed your magazine for years and have always enjoyed its professional standard. I have found it to be both an informative and reliable source of information. I realise you publish information as it is provided to you (as stated in your disclaimer) but appeal for you to publish this correct series of events, as I would like to maintain the previously untarnished good reputation of the *Tierra del Fuego*.

Gordon Pope, Makarewa, Invercargill

INDUSTRY ISSUES

Dear Sir

In recent times there has been quite a lot of debate from your correspondents with regard to the performance of Maritime New Zealand. This is appropriate, as Maritime NZ provides a critical service to our industry and it's vital that we have an active interest in how Maritime NZ serves our needs.

Indeed, its mission statement is, "to lead maritime safety, security and marine environmental protection". To achieve this goal it must have a solid knowledge and appreciation of the challenges we face on a daily basis, seeking compliance with both the Maritime Transport Act 1994 and the Maritime Rules. This is apart from the commercial and operational challenges we face as a daily routine.

What has been missing from this debate is Maritime NZ's future direction and leadership. It's understood that the current director will retire from her post in September. Clearly, we wish her well in her retirement and that she will be successful in whichever boards she will join in the future. I would suggest that the issue for the maritime industry is who will replace her in the very near future.

This is no small matter. We have an opportunity now to voice our request to the authority of Maritime NZ to put in place a candidate that has some appreciation of the needs of the industry the organisation serves.

We have made some small progress of late in this regard with the appointment of the chairman, who at least is a mariner, albeit that his background is military.

However, at the moment there is no current maritime commercial knowledge or experience within the authority, executive or senior management team within Maritime NZ.

Whilst it can be argued, perhaps from a purely academic perspective, that such knowledge is not necessary for governance and strategic policy making, I would suggest for the last four years we have been experiencing the results of such a vacuum of knowledge and experience within the senior management team of Maritime NZ.

It should also be clearly understood that this situation is not accidental. There has been a deliberate strategy to distance mariners from senior positions within Maritime NZ.

The end result is reflected in the decision-making we see on a daily basis, such as:

- ships with holes in the bow
- protracted, public and expensive litigation that the industry will fund
- accident investigation teams populated with policemen rather than mariners, and
- a staff survey which would indicate that technical staff are disengaged from the task they have before them, as they are fearful for their positions.

The current administration of Maritime NZ came to power with a number of critical projects in their sights and with the support of the industry. Clearly, the review of safe ship management and maritime qualifications are no easy tasks, and there has been ample debate within the technical press regarding the merits and otherwise of MOSS, the maritime operator safety system.

However the sands are rapidly running out of the hour glass. September is now before us and what do we have regarding the actual implementation of these projects?

No doubt more will be revealed in the near future with these reviews, but will they really advance the safety of our industry? Will they promote sustainability and efficiency? What will they do for those among us who work at sea daily in these difficult days?

We will live with these decisions for a very long time. It can only be hoped that due and appropriate consideration has been made of the submissions tendered during the consultation process, rather than following due process alone. Let us be clear. The previous administration of Maritime NZ had its fair share of problems and issues. Nevertheless, we did see deliverables.

The Maritime Rule suit, SSM (for all its good and bad points) maritime radio, search and rescue, oil spill responses, navigational aids, Maritime NZ's election to the IMO council, accident investigation, the Health and Safety Executive, safety initiatives with stevedores, the Cook Strait ferry review, the recreational safety review, waka guidelines and the maritime adventure review are examples where we saw Maritime NZ acting on our behalf and promoting our industry.

Have such initiatives marked the current administration, albeit

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in a more modest form considering for its shorter duration?

Let's not have any illusions here. The role of the director of Maritime NZ is no easy job. It takes courage, resolve, determination and leadership. But it also takes understanding, awareness and appreciation of the industry it serves and represents.

We have an opportunity now to influence this process and have a person take the reigns of the organisation who appreciates what we are and what we do, who has some commercial experience and knowledge, who at least understands what a bow and stern are and has taken some green seas over the bow. Let's not waste it.

Alan Moore, Auckland

IMPRESSIVE PUBLICATION

Dear Sir

I was fortunate to be away on a charter boat over Christmas and noted our skipper had a wide range of back issues of *Professional Skipper* magazine, of which he was quite protective.

As often happens, we had to hole up for a bit of shelter and to while away the time I started reading the latest issue, which drew me into reading a number of back issues. The end result was I was impressed with the depth and diversity of your stories, the passion from your readers in letters to the many columns and the professional command and knowledge of the editor, which is reflected throughout the magazine, in particular in his stories on boats.

I found this to be not just another boating magazine, but one that even a relative novice to boating and fishing can understand and enjoy and one that I wish to subscribe to.

Gary "Gazza" MacDonald, Hibiscus Coast

REAL WORLD

Dear Sir

Oh, the poor charter boat operators. My heart bleeds for you all. So you have finally been told you have to join "the system" and report your catches. You never realised how good you had it, until now.

Let it be known from commercial fishermen who have been in the system for longer than we care to remember that the Ministry of Fisheries is not on anyone's side. They seem to enjoy asserting their power by boarding boats and treating you like criminals (until proven innocent.)

Yes, doing paperwork is a pain in the arse. Yes, you will have your fishing returns sent back, with errors to correct. Yes, you will get fined for late or no returns. That is just how it is for you now.

You are now a part of the commercial fishing industry in the eyes of MFish. No amount of complaining or blaming others or pleading poverty or illiteracy will change that fact.

Welcome to our world. It's not as easy as you thought.

H Nelson

I note a number of letters from commercial fishers with sentiments of welcome to the real commercial world, which I have published in good faith. Sadly, most writers have missed the point that charter boats do not hold quota and as such cannot be classed as commercial fishers. They are passenger vessels and at best could be classed as fishing guides, which unfortunately the act does not provide for.

From my position, I have to say MFish has carried out the introduction of charter boat reporting in a most unprofessional and bombastic manner. Then I guess most commercial fishers would be familiar with this approach. But that does not make it right.

Ed...



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