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of the maritime transport industry
Incorporating *New Zealand Workboats*,
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Letters to the Editor should be signed and carry the writer's full name and address.

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EDITORIAL

SKIPPER EARNS MEDIA RECOGNITION

Congratulations are in order! During May we were advised that *Professional Skipper* magazine was a finalist in the trade/professional category in the prestigious Qantas Media Awards.

The judges said, "*Professional Skipper*, all about workboats, shows more scope than its title might suggest. The breezy bimonthly's salty stories about seagoing and waterfront characters penetrate even to letters to the editor and obituaries. Landlubbers, too, should enjoy its commendable coverage and sassy style".

Something we all knew, but it's nice to receive this recognition from our peers. The honour reflects the respect, knowledge and integrity of our contributors and on-board staff, without whom this magazine would not be possible.

When will people get it into their heads that poaching is theft and can no longer be regarded as being a harmless pastime for "Bob" to earn a few bucks down at the pub. The Ministry of Fisheries' recent Operation Paid highlighted that the thieves are New Zealanders, with Maori being at the forefront.

If this is the case, surely it would not be too hard for our local iwi and kaumatua to show leadership in educating their tribal members on just what damage fish thieving is doing to the sustainability of our local fish stocks. This leadership could include extending Maori warden patrols in areas of high theft, such as Wellington's southern coast and the coastal waters from Napier north to East Cape.

But let's not stop there. In exercising their customary rights over their rohe moana, Maori should also have the responsibility to stop poaching activities, when it is known that most illegal catch in our near-shore coastal waters for paua and rock lobster is being taken under the guise of customary rights, or by those claiming Maori affiliations.

As the industry slips deeper into survival mode, the question in the forefront of everyone's mind is just where is our industry heading. The rising cost of fuel is not only crippling the fishing industry, it is also having a huge impact on the maritime transport industry, in particular our ferries.

Commuters using ferry services will face a double whammy. They are seeing a significant rise in their own cost of living and fuel costs, but using ferry services, particularly those that carry no local body subsidies, will mean that the price of just

getting to and from work will swallow any last remaining disposable dollars in their wallet. As we approach election time, this issue will become one of the most significant for any government to address.

Fuel taxes, including GST, must be reviewed if we are going to have any opportunity of preventing more small businesses from going to the wall with the associated layoffs and benefit increases. It must be better to protect the economy rather than just pay out the dole.

As we go to press, we see this government heading into further dangerous territory as the Minister of Fisheries, in what is regarded as a trade-off to the government's environmental supporters, has effectively turned most of the South Island into a marine protected area with the new set net closed areas.

At the stroke of a pen he has taken food from the mouths of many coastal communities who must use set nets to fish for local greenbone (butterfish), blue moki, trumpeter, yelloweyed mullet and flat fish.

The South Island inshore fishing industry is equally affected, but is currently in limbo, as the information advising the minister in the Fisheries Advisory Plan and the decision rules contained in the minister's announcement have not been made available. This situation is totally unacceptable.

In closing, it's worthwhile remembering that we have two conferences on the horizon. The New Zealand Recreational Fishing Council's conference is on in Gisborne from July 18 to 20.

See www.recfish.co.nz for details.

Also, the New Zealand Marine Transport Association is holding its conference on September 16 and 17 in Auckland.

Key issues facing the industry include the rise in fuel costs, maritime safety, maritime training, and discussions on expanding the association's membership to include skippers and engineers.

Maritime New Zealand will run some key workshops and the conference will be open to all industry participants. See the MTA page in this issue.

Once again, we are proud to bring our readers the latest in news and views of our maritime industry.

Keith Ingram, Editor