



Will be considered for release with redactions

## MIN-4215 Marine transport as a resilient State Highway alternative for Coromandel

1 June 2023

Provide advice on the viability of coastal shipping as a contingency access opportunity for passengers and goods in the Coromandel.

### Waka Kotahi NZ Transport Agency's response:

#### Introduction

Waka Kotahi is working with Thames-Coromandel District Council (TCDC) to investigate resilience options for transporting freight and passengers to and from Coromandel in the event of further critical state highway network disruption. Marine transport has been identified as a possible alternative due to Coromandel's coastal proximity to Auckland and Tauranga, and its existing basic commercial marine facilities.

#### Executive summary

There is currently suitable wharf infrastructure available in Coromandel to provide short-term contingency access for essential supplies and key commercial goods such as supermarket goods and removal of waste, should parts of Coromandel become inaccessible by road. There are also a number of suitable vessels privately available in and around Coromandel that could be used in a response situation to move these goods.

Longer term we consider an open procurement process could illicit a range of innovative, cost effective and flexible opportunities to provide national or regional access to marine shipping solutions for emergency events.

#### Existing and Planned Wharf infrastructure on the Coromandel Peninsula

There are commercial marine activities currently operating out of multiple sites on both coasts of the Coromandel Peninsula. These include, but are not limited to:

##### ***Te Arika Tahi Sugarloaf Wharf***

This is near Coromandel township, in the northwest of the Coromandel Peninsula.

- A commercial facility for servicing the local aquaculture industry.
- A national Provincial Growth Fund (PGF) sponsored upgrade is planned, to expand capacity and allow for modern vessels, with the intention it is opened by 2025. The upgraded facility, s 9(2)(b)(ii), s 9(2)(i), will be owned by a Special Purpose Vehicle comprising the Crown, TCDC and the Mussel Farmers Association.
- Currently subject to an appeal against the approval granted under the COVID-19 Recovery (Fast-track Consenting) Act 2020, which will be heard by the High Court in July 2023.

- Access will be limited to consented aquaculture users.
- s 9(2)(b)(ii), s 9(2)(i)

### ***Hannaford's Wharf***

This is in Te Kouma, near Coromandel township, again on the north-western part of the Peninsula.

- Previously used by Fullers (until 2022) for an Auckland to Coromandel passenger ferry service.
- Owned and operated by TCDC. Facility is suitable and ready for a regular passenger service, but there are currently critical resource limitations in the passenger ferry operator sector.
- s 9(2)(b)(ii), s 9(2)(i)

### ***Kōpū***

This is near Thames, on the south-western part of the Peninsula.

- A commercial facility for servicing the local aquaculture industry.
- Undergoing a \$17m marine precinct upgrade co-funded by Crown Infrastructure Partners (\$8.2m), the Department of Internal Affairs (\$4m), TCDC (\$1.4m) and Waikato Regional Council (\$0.6m). A new commercial wharf and slipway will be completed by 2024, creating all tide loading facilities.
- TCDC will own the facility.
- s 9(2)(b)(ii), s 9(2)(i)

### ***Whitianga***

- Small multi-purpose wharf used by the fishing industry, the local passenger ferry, and recreational users. This facility is considered to be over-subscribed, with complex competing uses.
- It has an 8 tonne axle weight limit, which is suitable for refrigerator trucks and forklifts. There are complexities on the wharf due to limited size, usage and the proximity of the adjacent recreational boat ramp.
- Owned and operated by TCDC.
- s 9(2)(g)(i)

### **Feasibility of operations in a short-term response situation**

There is currently suitable wharf infrastructure available in Coromandel to provide short-term contingency access for commercial goods such as supermarket goods, should parts of Coromandel become inaccessible by road. There are also a number of suitable vessels privately available in and around Coromandel that could be used in a response situation to move these goods.

The ability for wharf or ramp facilities to transfer freight and passengers in commercial volumes suitable to provide contingency resilience access is determined by constraints on the sea side (water depth, tidal conditions, vessel type) and on the land side (wharf strength, ramp size, vehicle type, road access). This summary excludes smaller wharf and ramp facilities which may be suitable for supplying emergency supplies only, but not suitable for providing commercial goods such as supermarket supplies.

The existing (non-upgraded) Sugarloaf Wharf is technically suitable. This would be an important loading point in the event the Coromandel township area or other Northern Coromandel areas became isolated from the state highway network for an extended period. There would be capacity issues should the aquaculture industry continue to operate in the event of a loss of road access. There are resilience risks for the local road network in this area.

Whitianga has viable wharf and ramp facilities that would provide contingency maritime access to the eastern side of Coromandel, with good onward road and sea connections. Due to competing uses and proximity to recreational and residential areas, the Whitianga Wharf on The Esplanade would be limited to short-term use (such as in the event of a state highway outage) and would require the implementation of site operational and traffic management plans to ensure the safety of all users.

## Proposed Interventions

### Short-term operations

Waka Kotahi and TCDC have identified opportunities to utilise existing TCDC assets for marine freight operations in the event of a significant disruption to the state highway network in the immediate future. The scope of this is focused on providing key goods into affected areas, such as supermarket goods and medications, and ensuring key services can continue such as removal of waste from the Peninsula.

There is a required investment to cover the operational cost of bringing online marine freight services that currently do not exist, and the temporary management of these new activities at the constrained wharf sites. These are summarised in the table below.

Intervention	Indicative Scope	Cost
Utilise existing assets for commercial freight	<b>Operational expenditure – land side</b> Prepare and implement site access and traffic management plans at one site.	s 9(2)(j)
	<b>Operational expenditure - sea side</b> Barging/ landing craft freight operations during incident between one of the above sites.	
	<b>Capital expenditure</b> Risk amount for unforeseen minor repair works to roads and wharf infrastructure, and additional dredging.	
	Contingency	
	<b>TOTAL</b>	

The operational expenditure costs have been estimated for a one-year period. Assuming a total of four weeks of “outage” time, during which contingency operations would be in place, with the freight service operating for 28 days total. An example of an outage would be that State Highway 25 (SH25) becomes unusable while access on State Highway 25A (SH25A) is still being reinstated.

### Next steps on short-term operations

We recommend s 9(2)(j) (for approximately 12 months primarily while SH25A is closed) is made available by the Crown as part of the contingency and recovery funding for the short-term response.

The actual cost may be less than what is stated, depending on how often the service is called upon in the next 12 months.

If funding is to be provided, setting up a marine transport contingency plan with suitable providers and operational plans should be led and maintained by TCDC. Central government agencies would support TCDC in this. This would allow for contingency marine transport to be ready so it can be stood up very quickly in the event of access being cut off to any part of the Peninsula.

The opportunity for ongoing funding for this local contingency service beyond the next 12 months can be explored and discussed over the next year, in line with the other recovery and resilience work that is underway.

#### ***Longer-term provision of marine transport contingency opportunities***

We do not believe significant investment in further wharf infrastructure in Coromandel is needed in the short-term to provide contingency access for goods to and from Coromandel.

We are aware that there are a number of suppliers in the New Zealand market with the skills, expertise and technology to provide innovative and value-for-money opportunities to use marine transport to provide contingency access where road transport is not viable. s 9(2)(g)(i)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Subject to the Government's stated priorities in the 2024 Government Policy Statement on Land Transport, there may be the opportunity to explore this opportunity through the Coastal Shipping activity class.

#### **Strategic case for investment in marine transport as contingency access for Coromandel**

Natural hazards and weather events throughout 2023 and prior have caused significant damage to the Coromandel roading network with numerous emergency works underway. In particular, SH25A and Tapu-Coroglen Road provide the shortest routes across the Peninsula and have significant underslips requiring major works to reinstate. Consequently, access within the Peninsula is very reliant on SH25 which can be a lengthy and long detour, and there are very few viable alternative routes particularly for heavy vehicles. SH25 is also a highly vulnerable road given factors such as its proximity to the coast and the high cliffs adjacent at various locations. This is particularly so given the high ground saturation after prolonged periods of rain.

At present the detours for freight are particularly long as there are heavy vehicle restrictions on SH25 between Pauanui and Whangamatā.

If access via SH25 at critical points is curtailed beyond two to three days, getting basic household supplies into the Coromandel via normal routes and transport modes will be problematic. Alternative transportation methods would be required until such time that access via SH25 or other local roads are open and able to support heavy vehicles may be required.

Waka Kotahi, alongside TCDC, are currently preparing a Resilience Strategic Response for Coromandel which will set out the short, medium and long term resilience strategy for Coromandel. The assessment work already completed evidences the vulnerability of the Coromandel road network. This supports the need to ensure ongoing contingency access for essential goods is secured through non-road transport means. Marine transport using existing infrastructure provides a credible contingency pathway that can be called on and stood up at short notice.

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