

# Harbourmaster Board Update

March 2023

Andrew Hayton - Harbourmaster

# Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code

The objective of the Port and Harbour Marine Safety Code (The Code) is to ensure the safe management of ships navigating in New Zealand ports and harbours, including the prevention of injury to people, loss of life and damage to the marine environment (including property). The Code is a voluntary national standard. It supports national and local legislation.

During December, the Harbormaster's Office and Ports of Auckland Ltd underwent a 4 yearly Code review. The review was conducted by representatives of Maritime New Zealand, Port of Napier and Environment Canterbury as well as the Code representative. The review lasted for two days and focused on the Harbour Safety Management System, Safe Operating Procedures and the region's compliance with the Code.

The review panel interviewed various employees of each organization including Senior Management as well as a representative of the Royal New Zealand Navy to ascertain how their respected organizations integrated their operations into the Harbour Safety Management System (SMS)

The review panel determined that Auckland's Safety Management Systems were consistent with The Code, and they found that:

***The major strengths of the Auckland SMS are the levels of resourcing applied and the integration of the SMS into the organisations' corporate structures, information and risk management systems. Both are well resourced and have applied appropriate resources to all components of a Code consistent SMS.***

***They employ well qualified, experienced and engaged personnel who have a good understanding of the Code, the Auckland harbour risks and SMS. Both PoAL and AT personnel demonstrated an active safety and continuous improvement culture and have an established open working relationship. Executive managers were engaged and expressed commitment to a safety culture and having Code consistent SMS. Both AT and PoAL have a comprehensive and current set of SMS documentation.***



# Ferry Basin

With Auckland not having had any cruise ship calls for a couple of years, this is the first season that the updated Harbourmasters Direction concerning shipping movements in the ferry basin has effectively been in force.

Extensive stakeholder engagement was undertaken towards the end of the 2019 cruise season regarding the arrival and departure times of vessels berthing at Princes Wharf and their potential to disrupt ferry timetables.

As a result of the engagement, the exclusion times when ships could not manoeuvre in the ferry basin were extended. Prior to the new Direction the exclusion time for shipping movements in the ferry basin was 0730-0900 and 1630-1800 on weekdays only.

The present Direction stipulates manoeuvring exclusion times between 0630-0905 and 1630-1805 on weekdays. There are now also weekend exclusion times of 0830-1200 and 1630-1805.

Bunker vessels are now also required to liaise directly with AT's Day of Operations team prior to entering the ferry basin so as to be able to enter and leave between ferry movements.

I am aware of three breeches of the Direction this cruise season which have impacted ferry schedules, two of which involved the bunker tanker ***Awanuia***. The other incident involved the cruise vessel ***Noordam*** which parted a mooring line and who's master started the bow thruster whilst another spring line was run.

Cruise ships berthing at Princes Wharf embark their pilots at 0430 so as to allow sufficient time to safely berth prior to the exclusion time taking effect.



# Abandoned vessels

The number of vessels become either derelict or abandoned continues to increase. This is a worldwide issue and is exasperated in Auckland due to the large number of recreational boats in the region. These vessels are almost exclusively moored vessels.

A large number of boats are effectively at the end of their life. Many were built in the 1960s and 1970 or earlier. Maintaining a vessel in a seaworthy condition is an expensive undertaking. If owners skimp on maintenance vessels quickly become unseaworthy. Once in poor condition, these vessels start to change hands for no more than a couple of hundred dollars and fall into the hands of new owners who have big aspirations for their purchase but are often equally unable to finance the vessels maintenance.

Eventually, some owners abandon their vessel as the operating costs exceed its value.

There is no boat registration system in New Zealand and tracking down owners often proves futile. At this stage the Harbourmasters Office has to step in and commence the process for disposing of the abandoned vessel as per the requirements of the Maritime Transport Act.

About 4 years ago, the Harbourmaster added \$50 to the cost of an annual mooring licence. This generated approximately \$165,000 which was to be spent directly on disposing of abandoned and derelict vessels. Last year, the Harbourmasters Office spent almost that exact amount dealing with these vessels.

Over the last couple of months, the Harbourmaster Office has managed the disposal of an old Melbourne Harbour Tug, **York Syme**, which had been abandoned by her owner. The vessel contained asbestos within the engine room which needed to be removed prior to scrapping. This disposal cost the Harbourmasters Office approximately \$60,000. There is currently another large vessel in the region that is bordering on becoming derelict. The **Southern Progress** is currently anchored in Islington Bay and the Harbourmaster remains in communication with the owner who is based overseas. There is a high probability that the owner may abandon this vessel as the cost to properly dispose of her will likely be cost prohibitive for him. It is likely that disposal of this vessel may cost approximately \$150,000.

The Harbourmaster is currently considering how best to proactively deal with vessels before they are abandoned or sink. This is likely to involve some sort of boat amnesty where owners can hand over their boats to the Harbourmaster for disposal. Whilst far from being ideal, it is likely the most cost effective way of dealing with such vessels. It is anticipated that this may require a budget of \$150,000 per annum.

At any one time, the Harbourmaster estimates that there may be approximately 200 vessels that could be deemed either abandoned or derelict around the region with may hundreds more heading that way.



# Flood and Storm Events

The heavy rain event which was the cause of major flooding in Auckland also caused a large number of land slips around the regions coastline. This resulted in a large number of trees entering the regions waters. Some of these trees posed a significant navigation hazard. The Harbourmaster engaged a marine contractor to remove floating debris from the worst affected area of the Upper Waitemata Harbour. Three barge loads of debris were removed. Floating debris will continue to pose a hazard for the next few months as it is mobilised by rising tides. As such, the Harbourmasters Office has issued a Local Notice to Mariners and has used social media to notify the public of the danger. The Harbourmaster also featured in a story on TVNZ's Seven Sharp highlighting the issue.

As Cyclone Gabrielle approached New Zealand, the Harbourmaster closely monitored its path.

The Harbourmaster maintains an excellent working relationship with Ports of Auckland. After discussing the impending weather with the GM Marine, a joint decision was made to stop arriving vessels from entering the Waitemata Harbour from midday on Saturday and to send most of the ships presently alongside berths to sea. The exception was the cruise vessel **Arcadia** which was permitted to berth alongside Queens Wharf on Sunday morning and to remain there until the winds eased. All vessels complied voluntarily with the request to sail and it was not necessary for the Harbourmaster to issue a Direction.

The Harbourmaster engaged with the Naval Base port operators and they developed a robust plan for their warships. One large warship was immobilised alongside the berth and could not proceed to sea.

Most of the ships which left port sought shelter in the Hauraki Gulf. Four were at anchor in designated anchorages and the other remained underway, slow steaming. In total 14 ships sought shelter in the Gulf. Once the winds started to subside on Tuesday evening, the first ships re-entered the port. A decision was made to delay the departure of **Arcadia** until 0100 on Wednesday as neither POAL and Harbourmaster were comfortable sailing her in the prevailing conditions. Normal cargo operations at the port resumed at 0700 on Wednesday.

The weather associated with the cyclone exasperated the issue with land slips and debris entering the water. The weather also caused a number of recreational boats to sink on their moorings, and several to break their moorings and come ashore.

Seven Category C navigation aids were either destroyed or came ashore. These do not affect commercial shipping and their status will be promulgated on the weekly navigation warning to mariners. The wrecks have been salvaged and contractors will replace the destroyed navigational aids.

It is estimated that the clean up operation will cost the Harbourmasters Office approximately \$100,000.





*Let's go there*

