

BEFORE THE SOUTHLAND REGIONAL
COUNCIL HEARING COMMITTEE

IN THE MATTER OF THE
RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT
1991

AND

IN THE MATTER OF ISLAND ESCAPE CRUISES LTD
("THE APPLICANT") COASTAL PERMIT APPLICATION

**Evidence Of Peter Norman Bissett On Behalf Of Island
Escape Cruises Ltd**

Dated this 10th day of October 2016

1. Introduction:

1.1 My name is Peter Norman Bissett. I am the owner and manager of Island Escape Cruises Ltd (IECL).

1.2 I have previously owned and operated shipping businesses in Japan and elsewhere. This included Kiwi Car Carriers Ltd, which initially commenced its trading operations in Japan in 1992. The operations of Kiwi Car Carriers revolved around the transportation of motor vehicles from Japan to New Zealand and other international destinations. Over a period of twelve years this company transported over seventy thousand vehicles annually

1.3 As part of the transportation process, I developed the vehicle and vessel decontamination process, prior to the importation of vehicles into New Zealand. This vessel/cargo biosecurity process is now widely used by vessels entering New Zealand, and is part of IECL's core operations.

1.4 In 2002 I sold Kiwi Car Carriers and have since that time worked on the construction and operation of the vessel MV "Island Passage" in New Zealand, Vanuatu and Tahiti. I also work on the promotion of IECL tourism, targeting the upper end of the tourism market.

1.5 In my evidence I provide a brief description of Island Escape Cruises Ltd, the operation of our vessel the MV Island Passage, and our current operations in the northern sounds of Fiordland. In addition I provide comments on the S 42A officer's recommending report (the Report).

2. IECL and the MV "Island Passage"

2.1 IECL was developed to allow travellers from all corners of the world to experience the fantastic paradise of the pacific islands and New Zealand. We currently operate charter cruises in Tahiti, the Bay of Islands, Hauraki Gulf and the northern sounds of Fiordland. IECL has a staff of 20 persons (full & part-time), and has links to a wide range of national and international tourism organisations.

2.2 In January 2007 the 497-ton vessel MV Island Passage was commissioned, and registered in the Cook Islands. The vessel is purpose-built for the high-end tourist market, accommodating up to 24 passengers in a comfortable but fully functional manner. It carries a professional crew of up to ten. Our crew are trained in environmental compliance, conservation and wildlife interpretation by a Certified Environmental Practitioner. The MV Island Passage has an onboard helicopter pad, two tender vessels, two paddleboards, a rescue tender and three kayaks.

2.3 Vessel specifications for the the MV Island Passage are:

- Registered length 42.0 metres 138 feet
- Beam 12.8 metres 39 feet
- LWL 39.6 metres 130 feet

- Draft 2.0 metres 7 feet
- Displacement 336 tonnes
- Gross Tonnage 497 tonnes
- Construction – Steel

2.4 The vessel range is 5500 nautical miles at 10 knots. It has a Safe Ship Management Certificate with Survey Limits for operating in New Zealand Coastal Limit waters. The power plant and fuel storage is:

- Engines 2 x Kelvin Marine TASC8
- Gear Boxes 2 x Reintjes WAF 440
- Propellers 2 x Four-blade bronze
- Speed 8-10 knots passage making
- 10-12 knots cruising speed
- Diesel Tanks 38,000 litres 10,058 US gallons

The vessel holds 40,000 litres (10,560 US gallons) of fresh water, and has its own Desalinator, which can process 10,000 litres/day (2,640 US gallons).

2.5 IECL is considering the purchase of a new vessel that would be 49 metres registered length and carry a maximum 34 passengers. Other specifications would remain similar to those of the MV Island Passage.. Contrary to the Report, which stipulates a maximum of 12 crew, a new vessel of this capacity will need a maximum of 15 crew. I am also reluctant to have the tender vessels restricted to 8 metres length, as specified by the Report's draft consent conditions and the intention would be for two tenders of approximately 9 metres.

2.6 Normally, a charter vessel would take as many passengers as the vessel's registered length in metres, i.e. the MV Island Passage is 42 metres registered length, so should be able to take up to 42 passengers. However, fewer passengers are taken, in keeping with the desire to provide a high-quality experience and comfortable accommodation on board.

2.7 The vessel travels to Fiordland from its berth, usually in the Waitemata Harbour. It fully refuels and reprovisions in Nelson or Whangerei en route. Refuelling is not necessary when operating in Fiordland. A hull-fouling inspection is undertaken while berthed in Nelson or Whangerei. Hull decontamination is carried out in Nelson or Whangerei if necessary, prior to travelling to Fiordland. IECL is fully aware of, and supports, the current "Fiordland Pathways" proposal for biosecurity clean-gear certification. The MV Island Passage is a didymo cleaning station. All passengers and their equipment are vetted for potential didymo contamination prior to leaving the vessel to go ashore.

2.8 The MV Island Passage has a fully equipped on-deck helicopter pad. IECL has engaged Southern Lakes Helicopters Ltd of Te Anau as its preferred supplier of passenger transfer services to/from the vessel. Our own operations do not include helicopter landings within the National Park.

3. Charter operations

3.1 IECL has operated sixteen 5-night cruises in the Northern Fiordland sounds under consent 302129, since December 2013. During this time our crew have developed experience in operating in the Fiordland environment and managing the logistic difficulties which can be experienced with cruising in a remote area.

3.2 Charter cruises in the Southern Sounds will typically be of 5-7 nights duration. Day trips are not proposed. Passengers and goods will transfer to/from the vessel by helicopter while the vessel is within the application area. Rubbish will be flown out on the helicopter backload, and disposed of by Southern Lakes Helicopters Ltd.

3.3 The MV Island Passage will travel by day and anchor overnight in the sounds. Mr Henderson will give more detail of the vessels anchoring capabilities in his evidence. Guests may go ashore at various points of interest, using one of the onboard tender boats.

3.4 Typically, guests prefer to go ashore for short walks to “stretch their legs”. Nature photography, birdwatching and botanising are popular activities while ashore. Occasionally we host a keen trout angler who might like to try fishing in an estuary. The history of Fiordland is of particular interest to passengers, and the Southern Sounds have a wealth of interest in this respect.

3.5 Kayaking is offered to passengers. The vessel has three sea-kayaks. A tender boat is always launched to accompany sea kayaking, for safety purposes.

3.6 Sea fishing by passengers, either from the main vessel or a tender boat, occurs from time to time. Passengers sometimes fish for various species common in the Sounds, including blue cod, terakihi, and kahawai. Outside the Sounds when weather permits, groper and bass may be available. Albacore tuna are available in the summer months while the vessel is in transit outside the sounds. Passengers only catch fish to supplement their diet on board with fresh fish. No fish may be taken off the vessel at the end of the charter cruise. Bag limits and no-fishing Marine Reserve areas are strictly adhered to. Native freshwater fish (e.g. longfin eels) may not be taken, and protected species (e.g. great white shark) may not be disturbed.

4. Safety

4.1 The objectives of IECL are to ensure safety at sea, prevention of human injury or loss of life, and avoidance of damage to the environment and to property. Our policies are:

1. to provide for safe practices in ship operation and a safe working environment;
2. to establish safeguards against all identified risks;
3. to continuously improve safety management skills of personnel ashore and aboard the ship, including preparing for emergencies related to both safety and environmental protection;

4. to comply with mandatory rules and regulations; and
5. to ensure that applicable codes and standards prescribed or recommended by MNZ are taken into account.

4.2 In meeting these policies the company ensures that its vessel is "Fit For Purpose" and is mindful of all applicable Maritime & Marine Protection rules. This includes applicable sections of the Maritime Transport Act 1994, the Ship Registration Act 1992, and Health & Safety in Employment Act 2015 (and amendments). We operate under our recently updated Safety Policy, which is appended to my submission, and our Safe Ship Management Manual.

4.3 Passengers going ashore are fully briefed by crew on natural hazards. Shore visits are not permitted during adverse weather or sea conditions, or at night. Passengers going ashore are equipped with a radio for immediate communication with the vessel and/or tender boat if necessary. All rubbish must be taken back to the vessel and the lighting of fires (except in emergencies) is not permitted.

5. Comments on S 42A Report (the Report)

5.1 The Report accurately outlines our application and the nature of our proposed activities. Mr Chisholm will provide details of the consultation that has been undertaken since the application was notified, and discuss the noise data recently obtained for the MV Island Passage while in Tahiti. Mr Henderson will enlarge on the issues relating to anchoring in the application area.

5.2 I agree with the Report's statement on page 24 that:

" ... the MV Island Passage, has a low silhouette in the water, which mitigates the vessel's visual effect. The colour of the MV Island Passage is relatively neutral, and similar to other vessels which operate in the FMA."

I can also confirm that any new vessel will be of a similar colour to the MV Island Passage.

5.3 On Page 29, the Report suggests a consent condition that would require us to hold oleophilic booms, pads or pillows on-board the vessel at all times, for use in the event that oil-spills reach coastal water. I can confirm that IECL has no problem with this consent condition being included, if deemed necessary.

5.4 With regard to the Report's proposed conditions, I would like to request the following changes:

(a) To adequately cater for up to 34 passengers, IECL will need up to 15 crew. Therefore, condition 1 (a) should be changed from 12 crew to 15 crew.

(b) Condition 1 (b) should not specify the length of tender vessels at 8 metres. This is the length of the present tender vessels on the MV Island Passage, but we are looking to upgrade our tenders and they may be longer (or shorter). In my opinion there is no need to specify the length of tender vessels in consent conditions, as this is already restricted by storage space on the upper deck of the main vessel. If it were considered necessary to specify a maximum length of tender vessels, IECL would prefer this to be 9 metres.

(c) Condition 7 should be deleted. Mr Henderson will advise on this in more detail in his evidence.

5.5 All other proposed conditions are satisfactory to IECL.

6. Summary and conclusion

6.1 This application for consent has been devised to ensure that the market for high quality, low impact tourism is developed in such a way that the special, fragile values of Fiordland are not unduly compromised, while ensuring a high-quality experience for passengers. This is consistent with the Southland Regional Coastal Plan objectives to enable a range of appropriate, high-quality commercial visitor services to be provided through the granting of consents, while avoiding, remedying or mitigating any actual or potential adverse effects to the extent that they are no more than minor.

6.2 The S 42A Report provides an accurate assessment of our application.
The proposed conditions are satisfactory, although we request three changes.

Peter Norman Bissett

10 October 2016

ISLAND ESCAPE

PRIVATE YACHT STYLE CRUISING

ISLAND ESCAPE CRUISES SAFETY AND ENVIRONMENT PROTECTION POLICY

THE CAPTAINS ARE TO REMEMBER THAT, WHILST THEY ARE EXPECTED TO USE DILIGENCE TO MAINTAIN THE CRUISE ITINERARY, THEY MUST RUN NO RISK THAT MIGHT RESULT IN ANY ACCIDENT TO THE SHIP. THE LIVES AND PROPERTY ENTRUSTED TO THEIR CARE IS THE RULING PRINCIPLE THAT WILL GOVERN THEM IN THE OPERATION OF THE SHIP AND THAT NO SUPPOSED GAIN IN CRUISE EXPERIENCES OR SAVINGS OF TIME IS TO BE USED AT THE RISK OF AN ACCIDENT.

Safety and environmental protection are of critical importance to Island Escape Cruises. The Company is committed to conducting its operations to ensure safety at sea, prevention of human injury or loss of life, and avoidance of damage to property and the environment, in particular the marine environment. The Company seeks to develop, implement, and maintain standards of safety and environmental protection in line with what is considered reasonable and practical.

Policy Objectives

The specific objectives of the Company's safety and environmental protection policy are to:

- provide for safe practices in ship operation;
- list safeguards against all identified risks;
- provide a safe working environment;
- prevent human injury or loss of life;
- avoid damage to property and the environment, in particular, the marine environment; and
- continue to improve the safety management skills of shipboard and shore-based personnel including preparing for emergencies related both to safety and environmental protection.

Implementation

In order to achieve the above objectives the Company has adopted a safety and environmental protection policy that seeks to ensure:

- compliance with relevant mandatory rules and regulations; and

- recognition of applicable codes, guidelines, and standards recommended by the International Maritime Organization (IMO), relevant flag States, classification societies, and maritime industry organizations.

Functional Elements

The Company has included the following functional elements in the development, implementation, and maintenance of the safety and environmental protection policy:

- oil pollution prevention equipment and procedures;
- instructions and procedures to ensure safe operation of ships and protection of the environment in compliance with relevant international and flag state legislation;
- defined levels of authority and lines of communication between and amongst shore and shipboard personnel;
- procedures for reporting accidents and non-conformities within the provisions of the ISM Code;
- procedures to prepare for and respond to emergency situations; and
- procedures for internal audits and management reviews.

Company Commitment

Island Escape Cruises has developed and implemented a written safety management system that applies to all levels of the Organization, including:

- all shore-based locations;
- all vessels; and
- all those personnel who are directly involved or employed at these locations and on all vessels.

In order to meet our objectives in safety and environmental protection, the Company requires total commitment from all personnel who are directly involved in Company operations. This includes shore-based managers and staff, vessel masters, officers, and crews where applicable.

Organizational Responsibility

The Owner/Operator accepts overall responsibility for all matters related to safety and environmental protection.

Peter Bissett
Owner/Operator

1st September 2016
Date Signed