

BEFORE ENVIRONMENT SOUTHLAND

AT INVERCARGILL

IN THE MATTER OF THE RESOURCE MANAGEMENT ACT 1991

BETWEEN FIORDLAND CRUISES LIMITED
Applicant

AND DEPARTMENT OF CONSERVATION
Submitter

EVIDENCE OF CLINT TAURI FOR FIORDLAND CRUISES LTD
3 March 2021

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SCOPE OF EVIDENCE

1. My evidence will provide information on the following:
 - a. Fiordland Cruises Ltd as a tourist operation in Fiordland; and
 - b. matters that are relevant from a business perspective that relate to this application.

DESCRIPTION OF FIORDLAND CRUISES LTD

2. We are the Tauri Whanau from Lake Te Anau where we have resided since 1961. We consider ourselves as the people of the land or Tangata Whenua.
3. Fiordland Cruises Ltd is owned by myself and my wife under the Te Tauri Trust. It is one of a number of tourist related businesses we operate from Te Anau and one of two that we operate in Doubtful Sound, the other being Offspring Travel Ltd. Other businesses provide mainly accommodation and transport in Te Anau and the surrounding district.
4. We have infrastructure and consent in place to carry out over night cruises, alongside activities such as kayaking and hiking, utilising our Waka the "Southern Secret" and other vessels in Doubtful Sound.
5. We wish to provide a more personalised day trip through the Doubtful Sound environs as we believe our guests are looking for a unique, personalised experience.
6. We wish to share our Southern hospitality and stories with our future guests staying with us at our Lake Te Anau Village.
7. As part of the Fiordland community, our family is also involved with the Department of Conservation with a bird release program operating on Bauza Island and are awaiting the necessary paperwork from the Department to finalise our on-going commitment to this exciting project.

MATTERS TO HAVE REGARD TO

8. I wish to make a number of points that are relevant for Fiordland Cruises Ltd as a business and this application. Some relate to the business environment that we currently operate in and others to activity generally in Doubtful Sound. The points I wish to make are as follows:
 - a. with the current restrictions on global travel, it is now a matter of survival for many tourism operators and that includes Fiordland Cruises. While there was some hope that international tourist would be back in 1-2 years after the initial

lockdown period, that clearly isn't going to happen. Just when some sense of normality may return is anyone's guess but 3-5 years is looking like a minimum;

- b. one of the keys to being able to keep operating in the pandemic environment is having a variety of tourism experiences that can be offered and by being flexible as it will mainly be New Zealanders who will be the tourist;
- c. the Regional Coastal Plan allows for up to 5 day trips per day in Doubtful Sound, a total of 1,825 day trips annually. According to Table 2 in the section 42A report, Real Journeys Ltd and Go Orange Ltd, both owned by Wayfare Group Ltd, hold four consents that allow it to carry out 1,825 day trips per year. A further 35 day trips per year are allocated to Deep Cove Charters Ltd for the months of April to October each year. I am not aware which of those trips were granted as discretionary or non-complying (note - I haven't included non-complying allocation for Offspring Travel Ltd, which is for a support vessel for kayaking activity, in these numbers because they are not providing day trips as defined in the RCP).

It is a significant concern for me as an operator in Doubtful Sound that one operator effectively has rights to the full discretionary allocation for day trips. There is very little scope for any other operator to compete in this environment by offering a different service and/or experience. Because one vessel can do 2-3 trips in one day, it also means 5 trips per day would not occur contemporaneously;

- d. in regard to the last point, I note that, upon checking the Go Orange website it appears that it is not scheduling day trips this season and that it encourages viewers to visit "Our Friends at Real Journeys". The Go Orange website provides a direct link to the Real Journeys page and there will be an all year round 10:00 am departure from Manapouri with an extra 7:00am departure during January. As an operator who would like to provide day trips, it is disappointing to see some "parked" by a consent holder and not available for use;
- e. information on the utilisation of the day trips allocated (pre COVID) is not available but, from our own observations in Doubtful Sound, it is believed to be significantly less than what is possible. Seasonal variation is one factor but a lack of more attractive (for some visitors) options is another. Getting that detailed information and carrying out some sort of assessment as to the appropriate level of activity to avoid significant adverse effects, is beyond the resources of a single operator. The lack of any meaningful information is hindering the ability of operators to grow, in terms of the experiences they can offer, their business to meet client demand and expectations;

- f. in regard to surface water activity in this Sound, the change from minor effects to significant effects is not a fine line, e.g. 5 day trips is minor but 6 is significant. It is very unlikely, though not impossible, that all operators would use all of their allocation at once on the same day. In practice, it doesn't happen because the Real Journey's vessel does two trips per day, so at most there would only be four trips occurring at one time. The RCP approach when it was drafted in the mid 90's was very much a first attempt and hopefully the next evolution of the Plan will improve on the system to enable allocation to be used rather than locked up. Regardless, exceeding the discretionary allocation does not automatically mean the effects will be more than minor;
 - g. I recently spent 10 days on the water in Doubtful Sound in what would normally be the busiest time of the year, and in that time, I only saw the two Real Journeys vessels, *Patea Explorer* and *Fiordland Navigator*. The low use of this area is likely to be the norm until international travellers return; and
 - h. Fiordland Cruises is an existing operator in Doubtful Sound, just not as a provider of day trips.
9. In order to provide a different experience, it is proposed that our day trips would be scheduled to avoid departure times that coincide with other operators, and to plan the routes to avoid areas where the other vessels will be. This action is necessary from both a business and environmental perspective to provide the best possible experience to our customers while minimising the potential impact on the environment.

CONCLUSION

10. I therefore request that you have regard to this information when considering where this application sits within the current operating conditions in Doubtful Sound.

Clint Tauri

for Fiordland Cruises Ltd.

Date: 3 March 2021