

BEFORE THE SOUTHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

APP-20201876

IN THE MATTER of the Resource Management Act 1991

AND

IN THE MATTER of application for resource consents to undertake commercial surface water activities, in the coastal marine area adjacent to the Fiordland National Park from Yates Point to Puysegur Point.

BY REAL JOURNEYS LIMITED  
Applicant

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EVIDENCE OF KATHERINE FIONA BLACK FOR  
REAL JOURNEYS LIMITED  
23 December 2020

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Real Journeys Limited  
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## QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPREIENCE

1. My full name is Katherine FIONA Black. I hold the qualification of Bachelor of Home Science Degree and Postgraduate Diploma in Business and Administration.
2. I work for Real Journeys Limited managing, Real Journeys, and its allied companies Department of Conservation Concessions; Resource Consents and other regulatory authorisations, along with other operational related duties.
3. I have worked in the New Zealand Tourism industry for 33 years; the last 17 years, for Real Journeys; in the first instance as the Milford Sound Branch Manager and for the last 14 years in my current role.
4. I qualified as a commercial Launch Master in 1988 and worked as a skipper on a tourism vessel on Otago Harbour until 2002 and I am a 'named person' in Real Journeys Maritime Transport Operator Plan.
5. Consequently, I have considerable knowledge of the tourism industry, especially maritime based tourism activities and the industries regulatory framework. Also, since 2011, I have been a member of the Southland Conservation Board.

## APPLICANTS BACKGROUND

6. Real Journeys Limited has been operating in the Fiordland National Park for 65 years. It is the largest tourism operator in the region and has a well-earned reputation for providing high quality excursions.
7. In the 1954 Les and Olive Hutchins began operating the Manapouri-Doubtful Sound Tourist Company, running four-day excursions which included a Lake Manapouri cruise, a trek over the Wilmot Pass to accommodation at Deep Cove, and a cruise on Doubtful Sound. Hence cruises on Doubtful Sound are part of the company's 'DNA'. In 1966 Les and Olive acquired Fiordland Travel Ltd., with its Te Anau Glow-worm Caves and Milford Track Lake Transport operation and began trading as Fiordland Travel Limited. Ongoing expansion followed with the acquisition of the vintage steamship "TSS Earnslaw" in Queenstown in 1969 and with the establishment of cruises in Milford Sound in 1970.
8. Since 2002 Fiordland Travel Ltd has operated all of its tourism excursions under the 'Real Journeys' brand; in 2004 Stewart Island Experience was established; and in 2006 the company changed its name to Real Journeys Limited. Real Journeys Limited now has operational bases in Milford Sound, Te Anau, Manapouri, Queenstown, Bluff and Stewart Island. The company offers a range of quality tourism excursions including: multiday Discovery Expeditions around the southern fiords and Stewart Island; day time and overnight cruises on Milford Sound and Doubtful Sound (with daily coach connections from Te Anau and Queenstown); Te Anau Glow-worm Caves excursions; guided Milford Track day walks; Stewart Island ferries, tours, and accommodation on Stewart Island; in Queenstown, cruises on Lake Wakatipu aboard the "TSS Earnslaw"

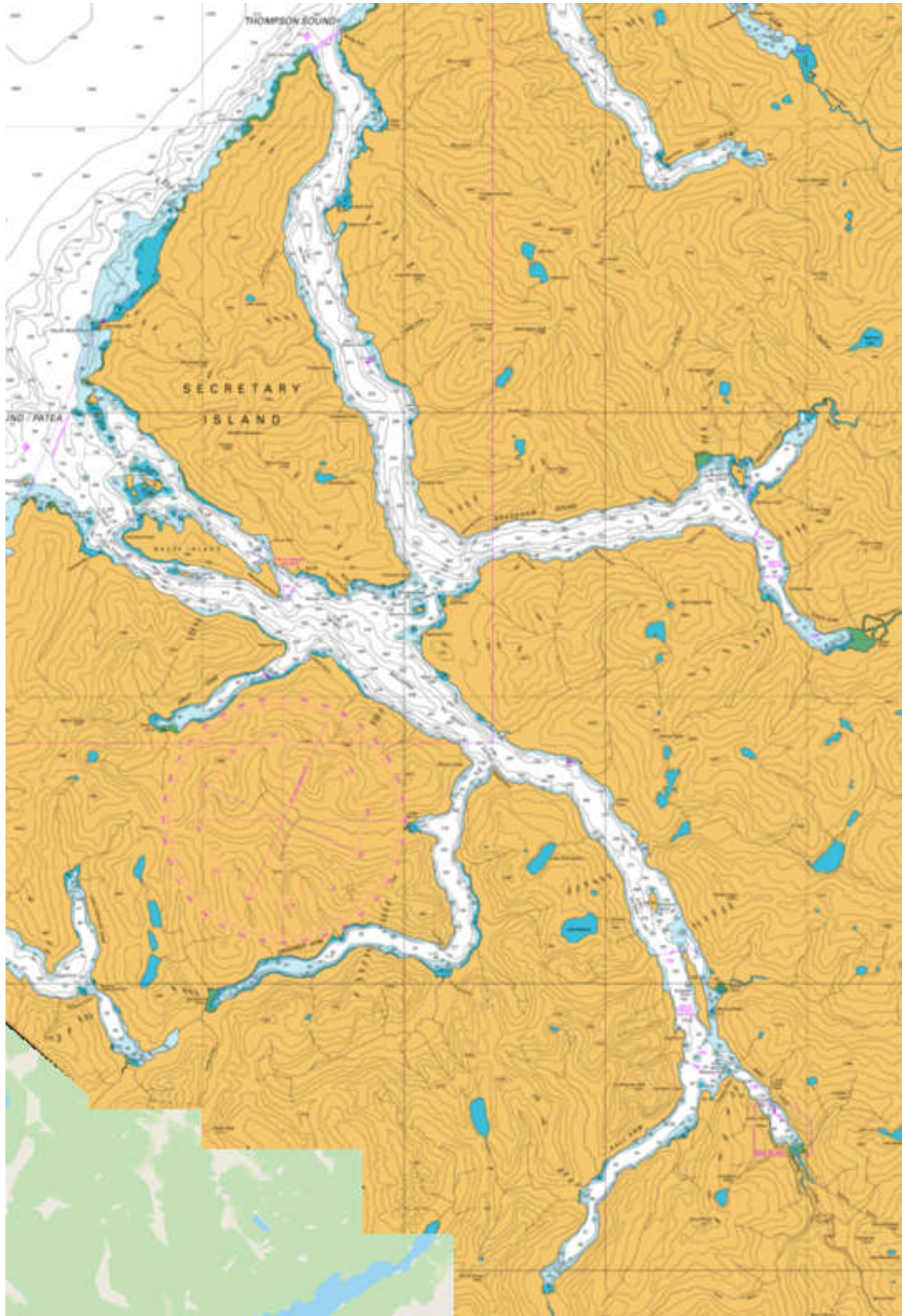
combined with Walter Peak High Country Farm excursions and dining options at the Colonel's Homestead.

## BACKGROUND TO THE APPLICATION

Site Map



<https://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap?v=2&ll=-45.321979,167.113724&z=11>



<https://data.linz.govt.nz/search/?q=7624>

9. In November 2000, the then Fiordland Travel was granted a 20-year coastal permit number 97049 to carry out commercial surface water activities in the coastal marine area adjacent to Fiordland National Park from Yates Point to Puysegur Point, for one vessel of approximately 44 metres (including up to 30 kayaks and two tender craft) with:
- (i) Up to 72 passengers plus crew for backcountry trips and
  - (ii) Up to 90 passengers plus crew for day trips.

That is, to provide for the operation of the “Fiordland Navigator” in Doubtful Sound.

10. The Coastal Permit Backcountry trips conditions are as follows:

- Doubtful Sound incl Hall Arm - 31 times per month
- Bradshaw Sound - 31 times per month
- Crooked Arm east of Turn Point - 31 times per month
- Crooked Arm west of Turn Point - 31 times per month
- Thompson Sound - 12 times per month.
- First Arm - 12 times per month

11. The Coastal Permit Day Trip conditions are as follows:

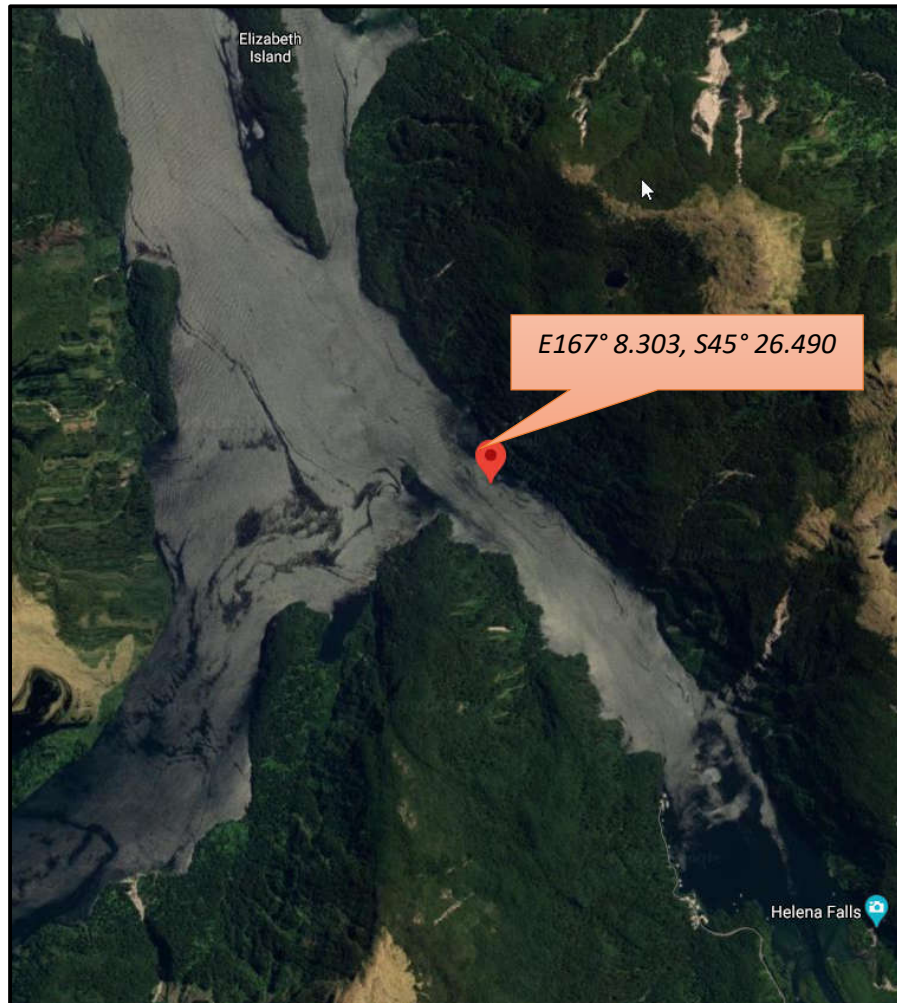
- Deep Cove to embark or disembark passengers – no restrictions
- Doubtful Sound – one trip per day
- Hall Arm – one trip per day
- Crooked Arm east of Turn Point – one trip per day

#### REAL JOURNEYS 2020 APPLICATION

12. In January 2020 Real Journeys lodged a new coastal permit application to provide for the continued operation of the “Fiordland Navigator” in Doubtful Sound. This application was publicly notified in February 2020 and one submission was received. In August 2020, the submitter withdrew their right to be heard.
13. Real Journeys proposed the following changes to the “Fiordland Navigator” backcountry trips:
- First Arm increase to 31 times per month
  - Thomson Sound reduce to 2 times per month
  - Gaer Arm in Bradshaw Sound 31 times per month
  - Allow for kayaking and tender craft activities in Bradshaw Sound and Gaer Arm
  - To allow for the vessel to travel between Yates Point and Puysegur Point for charter cruises.
  - Allow kayaking and tender craft activities to occur twice during backcountry trips
  - Allow for charter cruise between Yates Point and Puysegur Point.
14. Real Journeys did not propose any changes to the “Fiordland Navigator” day trips in the application.
15. As noted in the s42A Recommending Report any trips above the discretionary limits set in the Regional Coastal Plan for Southland (RCP) become non-complying activities. Consequently, because since the issue of the current “Fiordland Navigator” resource

consent, trips have been granted above the RCP discretionary limits some of the proposed “Fiordland Navigator” day trip and backcountry activities are now non-complying activities.

16. However, the s42A Recommending Report also observes that in October 2010, the then Fiordland Wilderness Experiences (now Go Orange Limited) was granted a coastal permit (# 207431) for the use of a kayak support vessel in Doubtful Sound which resulted in the number of discretionary day trips to be exceeded within Doubtful Sound, Thompson Sound, Crooked Arm (east of Turn Point) and Hall Arm.
17. To my knowledge this Resource Consent number 207431 has never given effect to, therefore this resource consent has lapsed and is not current. Moreover, this coastal permit only provided for the following:
  2. *This consent authorises the undertaking of commercial surface water activities, within the Doubtful/Thompson Sound complex area, namely the use of a motorised vessel to support guided sea kayaking tours, as authorised by consent no 203307.*
  3.
    - a) *The commercial surface water activity outlined in condition 2 may include one vessel of a maximum of 10 metres registered length, for the purposes of retrieving kayakers in emergencies or when group or individual safety is compromised, within the Doubtful Sound area, as described in the application. The vessel may also be used for weather monitoring and camp maintenance, and excludes carriage of passengers not associated with kayaking activities.*
    - b) *The vessel shall be used solely for the purposes of transporting kayak groups from Deep Cove to a point at approximate Map Reference NZMS 260 C43: 517-134 (NZDG49: E167° 8.303, S45° 26.490) where kayak activities can be safely commenced and shall be undertaken only during times when the discharge from the Manapouri Power Scheme tailrace exceeds 485 cubic metres per second.*
18. That is, this Coastal Permit effectively only allowed for the use of the Doubtful Sound thoroughfare from Deep Cove to near the entrance of Hall Arm, (refer image below) only when Manapouri Power Station was operating at its upper consented limits. Accordingly, notwithstanding the fact this consent was not given effect, this Resource Consent allocation should not have been considered as part of the allocation for Doubtful Sound, Thompson Sound and Crooked Arm (east of Turn Point) in the table at the bottom of page 5 of the s42A Recommending Report. Because there are no limits set in the RCP on the use of Doubtful Sound and Thompson Sound thoroughfare.



19. Nonetheless Real Journeys acknowledges that our proposal requires assessment as non-complying activity and that it is appropriate to examine the potential effects of our proposal especially the effects on the remoteness and wilderness values of First Arm.
20. Real journeys is proposing these changes to the “Fiordland Navigator” backcountry trips to provide greater flexibility with respect to:
  - Where “Fiordland Navigator” overnights in the Doubtful Sound complex;
  - Where and when kayaking and tender craft activities to occur; and
  - Additional opportunities to generate revenue through undertaking charter cruises in the Southern Fiords.Flexibility is sought to work around weather conditions, hours of daylight and other vessel movements.
21. Presently the “Fiordland Navigator” can only overnight 12 times a month in First Arm and because of this constraint it has not be viable to install a mooring in First Arm. That is, if Real Journeys were allocated more nights in First Arm, we would install a mooring in First Arm. This would provide a safe mooring for all but the worse weather conditions and reduce the anchoring undertaken in First Arm and its consequent effects on the sea bottom.

22. The overall effects of anchoring in the Doubtful Sound complex will be further reduced by the provision of another Real Journeys mooring in Doubtful Sound. Presently the “Milford Wanderer” is undertaking multiday cruises (Discovery Expeditions) year-round (post COVID-19) and while working in Fiordland she returns to Doubtful Sound once every two weeks to overnight and this requires the “Milford Wanderer” to anchor.
23. The greater availability of access to First Arm would have the advantage of enabling the “Fiordland Navigator” to reduce unnecessary steaming to overnight in Precipice Cove and overnight more frequently away from other vessels thereby reducing cumulative effects. Currently in any adverse weather and for the 16 - 19 other nights the “Fiordland Navigator” moors overnight in Precipice Cove.
24. At this time, in adverse weather all the vessels undertaking backcountry trips in Doubtful Sound head to Precipice Cove consequently the *Fiordland Navigator*, *Tutoko*, *Southern Secret*, *James McKerrow* and *Aries* (the latter being syndicate vessels) can all end up moored in Precipice Cove or Little Precipice Cove overnight. Hence, the availability of more nights in First Arm will enable overnight vessels using the Doubtful Sound Complex to spread out more and reduce cumulative effects of back country activities.
25. Regarding hours of daylight, a greater allocation of nights in First Arm will more readily provide for our operation in the shoulder season when the days are shorter. Namely, during the shorter days the “Fiordland Navigator” can undertake its water activities (kayaking and tender craft trips) in First Arm and overnight in First Arm rather than losing valuable day light hours steaming to Precipice Cove, Bradshaw Sound.
26. Real Journeys holds another Coastal Permit number 301635 which has been used intermittently by the “Milford Wanderer” and provides for the following backcountry trips:
  - a) From September to May
 

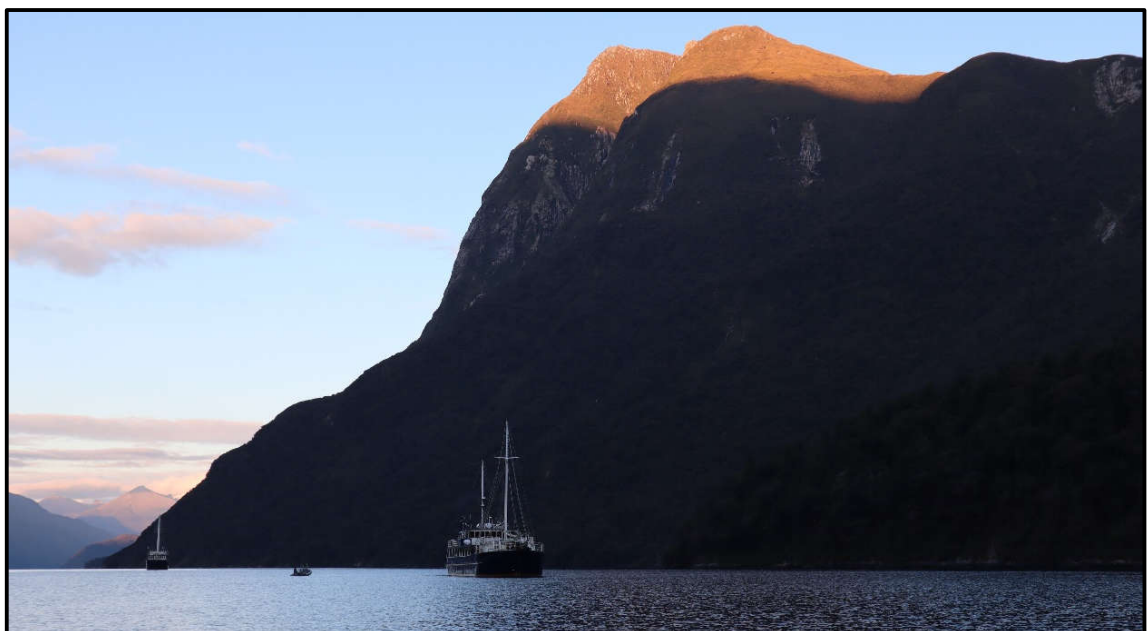
➤ Hall Arm	- 9 times per month and for April and October 10 times per month
➤ Bradshaw Sound	- 26 times per month
➤ Crooked Arm west of Turn Point	- 24 times per month
➤ Thompson Sound	- 14 times per month.
➤ First Arm	- 22 times per month
  - b) From June to August
 

➤ Hall Arm	- 16 times per month
➤ Bradshaw Sound	- 12 times per month
➤ Crooked Arm west of Turn Point	- 20 times per month
➤ Thompson Sound	- 12 times per month.
➤ First Arm	- 17 times per month
27. Real Journeys suggests as a way forward with respect to this APP-20201876 application, that it be treated as complementary to and be exercised in conjunction with coastal permit number 301635. For instance, under coastal permit number 97049 (*Fiordland Navigator’s* current coastal permit) the day trip allocation is exercised in conjunction



with consent number 200125 and 301896 so that the combined total of day trips for all vessels on any one day do not exceed four.

28. That is provide for the following level of backcountry activity across both consents:
- a) From September to May
    - Doubtful Sound incl Hall Arm - 41 times per month
    - Bradshaw Sound - 57 times per month
    - Crooked Arm east of Turn Point - 31 times per month
    - Crooked Arm west of Turn Point - 55 times per month
    - Thompson Sound - 16 times per month.
    - First Arm - 34 times per month
  - b) From June to August
    - Doubtful Sound incl Hall Arm - 47 times per month
    - Bradshaw Sound - 43 times per month
    - Crooked Arm east of Turn Point - 31 times per month
    - Crooked Arm west of Turn Point - 51 times per month
    - Thompson Sound - 14 times per month
    - First Arm - 29 times per month
29. Still having closer to 40 backcountry trips to First Arm across both consents would be preferable, yet a lower limit would be manageable for Real Journeys.
30. With this solution in mind, we would argue that the effects on the Doubtful Sound of the “Milford Wanderer” at 30 metres overall length, and the “Fiordland Navigator” at 40 metres overall length, on the remoteness and wilderness values are similar. Refer photos below: the first with the “Milford Wanderer” in the foreground and “Fiordland Navigator” in the background in First Arm and the second photo with “Fiordland Navigator” in the foreground and the “Milford Wanderer” in the background. Both vessels are dwarfed by the landscape of Doubtful Sound.





31. That is Real Journeys asserts that the effects on the environment of the “Fiordland Navigator” and the “Milford Wanderer” are comparable.
32. Moreover, when “Milford Wanderer” and “Fiordland Navigator” are both operating in Doubtful Sound, undertaking backcountry trips, the vessel skippers work together to ensure these vessels avoid each other as much as possible, to provide the best experience for their passengers.
33. With the aforementioned solution in mind Real Journeys contends a consent term of 20 years should be acceptable to the council, rather than the 12 years as recommended in the s42A report.
34. Having security of tenure is particularly important to Real Journeys given the value of the investment we have in our Manapouri – Wilmot Pass - Doubtful Sound operation. That is to say, the value of our investment in Doubtful Sound vessels cannot be considered in isolation, because to deliver our Doubtful Sound cruises we also have wharves, and vessels on Lake Manapouri and coaches plus infrastructure to support our Wilmot Pass coaches along with wharves and moorings in Doubtful Sound.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Fiona Black'.

Fiona Black