

Hon Kiri Allan

MP for East Coast
Minister of Justice
Minister for Regional Development
Associate Minister of Transport



19 April 2023

Daran Ponter
Chair
Greater Wellington

REF: KA14684

Nadine Taylor
Mayor
Marlborough District Council

Dear Mr Ponter and Mayor Taylor

I refer to your letter of 9 March 2023 to the Minister of Transport regarding support for vessels out of port areas, and your request to meet to discuss this issue.

Your correspondence was forwarded to me as the Associate Minister of Transport with responsibility for Maritime New Zealand.

A number of jurisdictions, not just New Zealand, are exploring the challenges associated with emergency ocean-towage capability. In the past, many jurisdictions had more access to these specialist vessels for emergency use. However, vessel numbers have declined sharply in recent years, including as a result of increased focus on having specialist port and harbour vessels.

Further considerations include that emergency ocean towage is a highly specialised activity, suitable vessels are expensive and the level of crewing and support required make the on-going operating costs significant.

I am also advised studies have shown that of the wide variety of types of maritime incidents, only a small sub-set would have improved outcomes if an out-of-port capable tug was available. If a vessel faces a threat, such as loss of power or loss of steering, then the tow capable vessel must be sufficiently ready and closely located to the scene of the incident if any effective preventative action is to be feasible.

Within a New Zealand context, a challenge therefore is to provide an effective capability at a reasonable cost given our 15,000 km long coastline.

The Cook Strait is key passageway for New Zealand, and if there are concerns about safety from key stakeholders such as yourself, I see value in understanding those issues.

I would therefore welcome an opportunity to meet with you to hear your concerns.

My Office will be in contact with you both in due course to arrange a convenient time for us to meet.

Thank you again for taking the time to write with your concerns.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Kiri Allan', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon Kiri Allan
Associate Minister of Transport