

New Zealand News

22/05/2026

February saw the appointment of Captain John Silberberg as Chief Technical Advisor for Maritime New Zealand. As a master mariner and safety specialist his role will be providing technical advice to the maritime sector regarding expert technical advice in regard to supporting consistent safety standards, particularly working with maritime surveyors in the commercial sector.

February also saw the announcement of new online seafarer licensing services through Maritime New Zealand to enable easier communication, notifications, certifications and licensing processes. This is a part of an improving broader digital platform that Maritime New Zealand is building and improving over time.

The bi-annually Wooden Boat Festival took place on the weekend of March 13-15. Once again, a well put together show which highlighted New Zealand wooden boat design and boat building for over more than 150 years. Indoor and dock displays showcased many vessels that have been restored to an immaculate condition by proud owners. If ever travelling too New Zealand, try fitting this festival in your itinerary.

04 May saw the significant sentencing of New Zealand main transportation cross-strait company KiwiRail to the sum of NZ\$400,000 in the Wellington District Court. The ferry “Aratere” ran aground on the evening of 21 June 2024, in the pristine Marlborough Sounds, due to failure and lack of training for a newly installed steerage system. There were 39 crew members on board and eight passengers. Luckily no one was injured, no oil spills, or breaching of the hull occurred. KiwiRail were sentenced under sections 48 and 36 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 2015.

May also saw Maritime New Zealand responding in regard to the complete power failure on board the Cook Strait ferry in January 2023. This left the vessel, with passengers, drifting dangerously in Cook Strait waters until power was restored. Maritime New Zealand investigated and prosecuted KiwiRail for this incident stating that, “a potential situation was luckily resolved promptly with no injury incurred”.

In November, Maritime New Zealand released advisory regarding pleasure yachts heading offshore. Historically Yachting New Zealand has inspected departing yachts and issued Category 1 certificates if all standards were met. Since July 2024, Maritime New Zealand has taken over this role, and has its own inspectors checking the vessel, safety equipment and crew experience. Despite initial concerns, this process has appeared to have transitioned well with minimal complaint.

On a positive note, New Zealand boat building has seen a resurgence of new builds throughout the country, particular with high end pleasure craft, commercial ferries and fishing vessels. Yards such as Weber Marine, Lloyd Stevenson Boat Builders, Scott Lane Boat Builders, Nic de Mey Boat Builders, McMullen and Wing, and Dickey Boats, have seen a large resurgence and full order books. McMullen and Wing in particular with the commissioning of several new electric Auckland Harbour ferries being put into commission.

In regard to New Zealand surveyors in the commercial sector, a slight attrition has been noted in numbers due to age and/or illness, although several private surveyors are currently undertaking training and study to join the commercial sector. A quick look on the Maritime New Zealand website surveyor page shows a good number of available surveyors based both in New Zealand and Australia.

As of writing, the private sector for pre-purchase and insurance surveys has shown a drastic decline in the region of 30-40% less work for some surveyors. This is definitely a result of the current American war against Iran, and the Russian and Ukrainian hostilities, all of which are affecting fuel and commodity prices. Reluctance in purchasing and even maintaining private vessels has been noticed throughout the country. The private sector has also seen the emergence of more surveying businesses although, several with unqualified surveyors “hanging out their shingle”. A lot more of undercutting in survey quotes has been noted, with the greedy rush for cash. The older, and more importantly, qualified surveyors are staying at their rates, providing a professional service, working on their businesses, and waiting for the economy to turn around.