

21 May 2025

TEL +64 4 473 0111
Level 11, 1 Grey Street, Wellington 6011
PO Box 25620, Wellington 6140
New Zealand

s 9(2)(a)

F36702
By email

Dear s
9(2)

Official Information Act request – information re emergency towing

I refer to your request of 20 March 2025 which we clarified with you as being:

- *“All correspondence between Maritime NZ and government minister including texts and emails regarding the emergency towing capacity project which cabinet funded a business case for in budget 2024 between 30 May 2024 and 21 March 2025*
- *All Maritime NZ briefings, documents and aide memoire relating to the same project dated between 30 May 2024 and 21 March 2025*
- *All correspondence between Maritime NZ, Marlborough District Council, GWRC, CentrePort and Port Marlborough regarding emergency towing capacity between 30 May 2024 and 21 March 2025.”*

We have considered your request under the Act.

There are 17 documents in scope of your request. Some information has been withheld or refused under the following grounds

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 9(2)(a) | to protect the privacy of natural persons |
| 9(2)(b)(ii) | to protect information where the making available of the information would be likely unreasonably to prejudice the commercial position of the person who supplied or who is the subject of the information |
| 9(2)(g)(i) | to maintain the effective conduct of public affairs through the free and frank expression of opinions by or between or to Ministers of the Crown or members of an organisation or officers and employees of any public service agency or organisation in the course of their duty |
| 9(2)(j) | to enable a Minister of the Crown or any public service agency or organisation holding the information to carry on, without prejudice or disadvantage, negotiations (including commercial and industrial negotiations) |
| 18(d) | the information requested is or will soon be publicly available |

For ease of response, I have grouped your first two bullet points together, as we also categorise documents such as briefings/Weekly Reports to the Minister as correspondence with the Minister. Please note however that there were no text messages or emails between Maritime NZ and the Minister regarding emergency towing. Documents 1 - 9 form our response to the first two bullet points. Documents 11 -17 form our response to the third bullet point.

As you are aware, on 17 April, Hon Chris Bishop made an announcement regarding the next steps on emergency ocean response capability. Material in scope of this announcement is currently being prepared for proactive release on the websites of both Maritime NZ and the Ministry of Transport. I have indicated in the table below which documents will be proactively released by Maritime NZ, but please note that the Ministry of Transport will also be publishing their documents relating to the announcement on their website.

With regard to the information that has been withheld under section 9 of the Act, I am satisfied that the reasons for withholding the information at this time are not outweighed by public interest considerations that would make it desirable to make the information available.

You have the right to seek an investigation and review by the Ombudsman of this decision. Information about how to make a complaint is available at www.ombudsman.parliament.nz or freephone 0800 802 602

If you wish to discuss this decision, please feel free to email us at ministerial.services@maritimenz.govt.nz.

Yours sincerely



Christine Ross
Manager, Communications and Ministerial Services

Appendix One: Document Schedule

	Document	To	From	Date	Decision
1	EXCERPT – Maritime NZ's Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport week beginning 3 June 2024	Hon Simeon Brown	Maritime NZ	3 June 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(ba)(i)
2	EXCERPT – Maritime NZ's Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport week beginning 15 July 2024	Hon Simeon Brown	Maritime NZ	15 July 2024	Released in full
3	AGENDA – Meeting with Minister Brown and Maritime NZ Director, 20 August 2024			20 August 2024	Some information withheld as it is out of scope
4	EXCERPT – Briefing, Meeting re Cook Strait Resilience, 14 October 2024	Hon Simeon Brown	Maritime NZ	14 October 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(g)(i)
5	Maritime NZ – New Zealand's Emergency Ocean Response Capability – Indicative Business Case			8 November 2024	Refused in full under s18(d). This will be published shortly on Maritime NZ's website.
6	New Zealand's Emergency Ocean Response Capability – Indicative Business Case Executive Summary			8 November 2024	Refused in full under s18(d) This will be published shortly on Maritime NZ's website.

7	Final Report – Technical Support Report for the Detailed Business Case: Emergency Ocean Response Capability (EORC)			16 December 2024	Refused in full under s18(d) This will be published shortly on Maritime NZ's website.
8	EXCERPT – Maritime NZ's Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport week beginning 3 February 2025	Hon Chris Bishop	Maritime NZ	3 February 2025	Released in full
9	New Zealand's Emergency Ocean Response Capability – Detailed Business Case Executive Summary			11 February 2025	Refused in full under s18(d) This will be published shortly on Maritime NZ's website.
10	Maritime NZ – New Zealand's Emergency Ocean Response Capability – Detailed Business Case			3 March 2025	Refused in full under s18(d) This will be published shortly on Maritime NZ's website.
11	EMAIL - EXTERNAL: Minister Brown: Meeting with Centreport and GWRC (officials invite), 12 November 2024	Kirstie Hewlett; Ruth Fairhall	Abby McRoberts	8 November 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(a), Out of scope
12	EMAIL - EXTERNAL: Minister Brown: Meeting with Centreport and GWRC (officials invite), 12 November 2024 – Attachment – Letter to	Hon Nicola Willis; Hon Simeon Brown	Anthony Delaney; Nigel Corry		Refused under s18(d). This letter is available at the following link

	Hon Simeon Brown and Hon Nicola Willis				Greater Wellington — Letter to Min Willis and Min Brown - Emergency Response Provision
13	EMAIL - EXTERNAL: Minister Brown: Meeting with Centreport and GWRC (officials invite), 12 November 2024 – Attachment – Minister Brown letter to CentrePort and GWRC	Anthony Delaney; Nigel Corry	Hon Simeon Brown		Released in full
14	BRIEFING – Meeting with CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council, 12 November 2024	Hon Simeon Brown	Maritime NZ; Ministry of Transport	12 November 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(b)(ii), s9(2)(g)(i)
15	EMAIL - Re: EXTERNAL: FW: Heads up: Media release - Budget funding for tugboat study welcomed by councils, 31 May 2024	Kirstie Hewlett	Nigel Corry	31 May 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(a)
16	EXCERPT – Letter from Maritime NZ Director to Jake Oliver, Harbourmaster, Marlborough District Council, 7 June 2024	Jake Oliver	Kirstie Hewlett	7 June 2024	Released in full
17	EMAIL - Re: EXTERNAL: Emergency response, 25 June 2024	Rhys Welbourn	Kirstie Hewlett	25 June 2024	Some information withheld under s9(2)(a), s9(2)(g)(i) and as it is out of scope



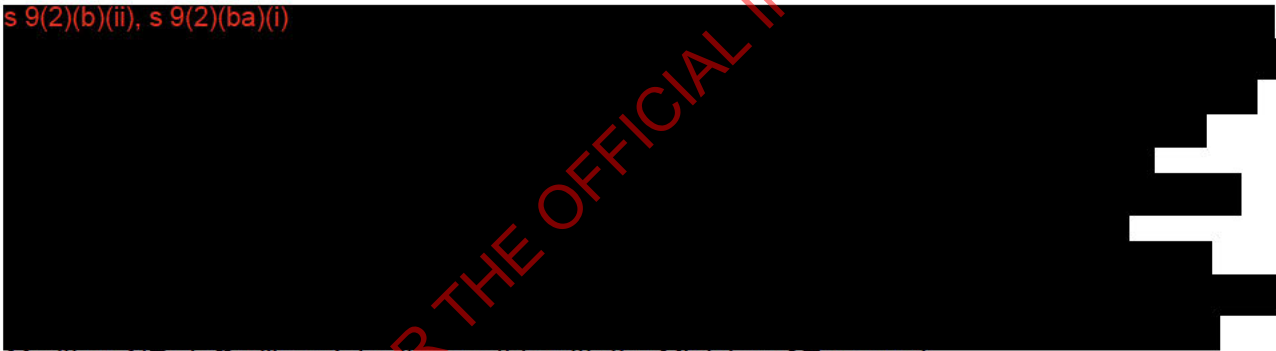
**Maritime NZ's contribution to the
Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport
For week beginning 3 June 2024**

Key priorities and highlights

Emerging issue for offshore towing capability

Maritime NZ has received \$600,000 for the business case development and subsequent procurement plan for an emergency ocean response capability for Cook Strait. This would be designed to improve the resilience of our national surface transport network. Maritime NZ is working with the Ministry of Transport and technical experts to refresh and refine business case undertaken in 2023.

s 9(2)(b)(ii), s 9(2)(ba)(i)



Maritime NZ staff will seek to discuss this with the Minister of Transport.

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**Maritime NZ's contribution to the
Weekly Report to the Minister of Transport
For week beginning 15 July 2024**

Key priorities and highlights

Emergency offshore response capability business case

Maritime NZ, in conjunction with the Ministry of Transport, is developing a business case for the Emergency Offshore Response Capability using funding allocated in Budget 24. Currently the Risk Profile Assessment and Strategic Assessment are with Treasury for moderation by the end of July 2024, which will determine whether the work can proceed as a single-stage business case. While Treasury are reviewing, work is also continuing on the strategic case and option development and Maritime NZ now has a draft shortlist of options. Future work will include seeking independent technical advice from a company we have previously worked with on this issue to further refine the detailed technical requirements for an offshore towage capability.

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Agenda

Minister Brown with Maritime NZ Director
Tuesday 20 August 2024 at 2:00pm-2:20pm

MNZ Attendees: Kirstie Hewlett, Director/Chief Executive

Agenda items

1 **Out of Scope** Cook Strait Issues

a) **Out of Scope**

[REDACTED]

d) Emergency Towage- Business Case process and sounding on interim option

Out of Scope

[REDACTED]

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14/10/2024

Briefing No. MNZ 24-045

**Hon Simeon
Brown Minister
of Transport**

cc Hon Matt Dooney
Associate Minister of Transport

Meeting re Cook Strait Resilience

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Kirstie Hewlett, Director and CE, Maritime NZ	s 9(2)(a)	Yes

Purpose

1. We are meeting with you on 16 October to discuss Cook Strait resilience. In advance of this meeting, we are providing an update on our current work on Cook Strait matters. You may wish to forward this briefing to the Minister of Finance for her information.
2. The Cook Strait is one of the most dangerous and complex stretches of water in the world to navigate, particularly in poor weather. Because of this, we see the following as being critical for a truly resilient Cook Strait connection.
 - Modern, good quality vessels with sufficient engine capacity / redundancy, and manoeuvrability, able to cope with the conditions and less likely to break down or get into trouble.
 - Operators running effective maintenance practices and safety systems, and embrace a safety culture, that further reduces the risks of incidents and/or mitigate impacts where they do occur.
 - Capability that enables us to respond to incidents where they do occur, despite the above; particularly emergency towage capability (EORC).

Emergency Towing and Response Capability

27. Our capability to respond to incidents in the Cook Strait will be significantly bolstered by the provision of effective emergency towing capability.
28. Following advice to you and Minister Willis and Budget 24 decisions, we are working together with the Ministry on a business case for the provision of this capability.
29. We have had positive news that we do not have to go through the Gateway process. This will enable us to get an indicative business case to Cabinet before the end of the year and a fuller business case to Cabinet early in the New Year.
30. Beyond, emergency towing Maritime NZ has been drawing on the lessons learned from responses to recent incidents in the Cook Strait and is looking to continuously improve its response planning along with CentrePort, Port Marlborough, the regional councils and harbourmasters and operators. To this end we have developed a Cook Strait response group which is working on exercises and a playbook on responsibilities and processes for any incidents.

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Weekly Report w/c 3 February 2025

1 Key updates

Emergency Ocean Response Capability – Interim Solution

Contract negotiations between Maritime NZ, OMV and MMA to secure an interim capability to provide emergency towage if required are continuing. The trilateral nature of the agreement has added unexpected complexities but all three parties are confident that an agreement can be reached by Friday 28 February 2025. The contract would not be finalised until 4 March 2025 at the earliest, when the Maritime NZ Board can meet to approve the signing of the contract. Maritime NZ is currently working with its legal team to provide feedback on the proposed commercial register for the agreement, which includes the details around how and when the vessel can be used by whom, who incurs costs, and related matters.

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From: [Abby McRoberts](#)
To: [Kirstie Hewlett](#); [Ruth Fairhall](#)
Cc: [Dominic Cowell-Smith](#); [Helen FionaWhite](#)
Subject: EXTERNAL: Minister Brown: Meeting with Centreport and GWRC (officials invite)
Attachments: [2024.10.15 Letter to Anthony Delaney and Nigel Corry.pdf](#)
[Letter - CPL - GWRC - MNZ Emergency Response - 01 October 2024.pdf](#)

CAUTION: This email originated from outside of the organization. Do not click links or open attachments unless you recognize the sender and know the content is safe.

Afternoon Kirstie and Ruth,

This is the invite for the Minister's meeting with Centreport and GWRC to discuss Cook Strait matters. See attached letter from Centreport and GWRC and the Minister's response.

Out of Scope

Kind regards,

Abby McRoberts

s 9(2)(a)

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Minister for Energy
Minister of Local Government
Minister of Transport
Minister for Auckland
Deputy Leader of the House

Anthony Delaney
Chief Executive Officer
CentrePort Limited

Nigel Corry
Chief Executive Officer
Greater Wellington Regional Council

c/- Lisa.Guy@centreport.co.nz

Dear Mr Delaney and Mr Corry,

Thank you for your letter of 1 October 2024 to myself and the Hon Nicola Willis, regarding the impact of recent incidents in the Cook Strait on CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council. As the Cook Strait sits within my Ministerial delegations, I am responding on behalf of both of us.

I recognise the impact recent incidents have had on your operations and would like to offer thanks to your staff who have been involved in ensuring that these incidents did not escalate.

As you note in your letter, in Budget 2024 the Government announced \$600,000 for Maritime New Zealand to develop a business case to consider options for an Emergency Offshore Response Capability. This work is now underway and will consider the options for a capability to respond to incidents involving large vessels in the Cook Strait. This is obviously a challenging and complex issue to address.

I also note that you requested a meeting to discuss the ongoing work to develop a business case for an Emergency Offshore Response Capability. Noting your concerns around the ongoing risks while the business case is developed and the desire for certainty about future outcomes, I agree that we should meet to discuss this further. I have tentatively scheduled time in the afternoon of Thursday 14 November for us to meet. My Office will be in touch closer to this date to confirm a time.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely,

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Transport

Copy to: Hon Nicola Willis, Minister of Finance

12 November 2024

OC241332

Hon Simeon Brown
Minister of Transport

Meeting with CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council

Snapshot

You have a meeting to discuss Emergency Ocean Response Capability and to understand the risks to CentrePort's business from responding to these incidents. CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council have expressed concerns about the risks they are facing given the current lack of a dedicated EORC to respond to large vessels in distress in Cook Strait.

Time and date	Thursday 14 November, 1600-1620, 2024
Venue	Parliament EW5.1
Attendees	Anthony Delany (CE CentrePort), Nigel Corry (CE Greater Wellington Regional Council)
Officials attending	Kirstie Hewlett, (Director Maritime NZ), Ruth Fairhall (DCE, Policy, Ministry of Transport)
Agenda	To discuss EORC business case work and to understand risks to CentrePort's business from responding to these incidents. CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council have expressed concerns about the risks they are facing given the current lack of a dedicated EORC to respond to large vessels in distress in Cook Strait.
Talking points	Please refer page 4

Contacts

Name	Telephone	First contact
Kirstie Hewlett, Director, Maritime NZ	s 9(2)(a)	✓
Dylan Page, Chief Advisor, Response, Security and Safety Services, Maritime NZ	s 9(2)(a)	

Meeting with CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council

Purpose

1. The meeting has been called to discuss where the Government is at on Emergency Ocean Response Capability (EORC) business case work and to outline risks to CentrePort's business from responding to these incidents and concerns the two entities have. CentrePort and Greater Wellington Regional Council (GWRC) have expressed concerns in a recent letter to you (attached) about the risks they are facing given the current lack of a dedicated EORC to respond to large vessels in distress in Cook Strait.

Background and issues

2. In recent years a number of high-profile incidents have highlighted the lack of a dedicated vessels or vessels capable of towing large vessels in distress in New Zealand waters. s 9(2)(b)(ii)
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Because of a number of factors including passenger volumes and sea conditions, the Cook Strait is an area where this presents a particularly heightened risk. In Budget 24 you provided funding to Maritime New Zealand (Maritime NZ) to develop a business case to consider solutions for an EORC.
3. [Cabinet in confidence] The Indicative Business Case and accompanying Cabinet paper will be lodged at on Thursday, 14 November for EXP on Tuesday 19 November. They seek Cabinet approval to:
 - a. Progress to a Detailed Business Case for an enduring EORC
 - b. Procure an interim solution to provide risk mitigation before an enduring solution is found. This interim solution would be provided by contracting the operators of the *MMA Vision* to base the ship in the Cook Strait area for approximately 20 days per month until long-term contract(s) are in place for an EORC solution (the vessel has other duties it is contracted to perform for approximately 10 days per month off the Taranaki coast).
4. [Cabinet in confidence] These specific details about an interim solution are not public yet and the *MMA Vision* option remains commercially sensitive.
5. [In confidence] When Maritime NZ undertook engagement in 2023 on emergency towage, both GWRC and Centreport were included in the group of key stakeholders for the market-sounding exercise around the issues and options. s 9(2)(g)(i)
[REDACTED]

CentrePort's concerns

6. On 1 October 2024 the Chief Executive Officers of CentrePort and GWRC wrote a letter to you expressing their concerns with the risks they were facing due to the EORC issue. This letter and your response to it are both attached.
7. As the CentrePort operator of the commercial port in Wellington, CentrePort has a strong interest in the EORC issue. When vessels have previously found themselves in distress in the Cook Strait CentrePort's harbour tugs have provided assistance. These vessels are not designed for this type of operation and have operated outside of their agreed limits for insurance purposes, and in the process have potentially put their crews at risk and causing stress for crew members. Furthermore, the usage of the harbour tugs to render assistance outside harbour limits puts constraints on CentrePort's commercial operations.
8. In their letter, CentrePort and GWRC requested a meeting to clarify the status of the EORC Business Case work and understand mechanisms to mitigate the risks to CentrePort's business from responding to these incidents and were happy to do this in conjunction with Maritime New Zealand.
9. We consider the key intent of the letter is to ensure an emergency towage solution is still being progressed in a timely way, to reinforce the importance they see of having this capability, and to draw your attention to the impacts of not having such a vessel for them.
10. Both CentrePort and GWRC have been advocates for government investment in EORC.

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Talking points

- Thanks to CentrePort for the work their tug crews have done in challenging circumstances to help prevent maritime incidents escalating. Acknowledging also the impact this has had and the concerns raised in their letter.
- Cabinet will be considering this matter in coming weeks and we hope to be able to make an announcement shortly after about next steps. There is considerable work going into finding solutions for this issue.
- We recognise that we need to consider both the short- and long-term provision of EORC services and how we can mitigate risk now and in the future, given the pressing nature of these issues. However we are also aware that the right solution has to be found.
- Thank them for their input into the scoping and discovery work last year which has formed the basis for the business case work.
- Does CentrePort have any suggestions about how this risk can be managed now? Or how it can be managed in the future?

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Appendix: Brief biographies

	<p>Anthony Delaney <i>CEO CentrePort</i></p> <p>Appointed CentrePort CEO in May 2022, having previously held the roles of General Manager Regeneration, and General Manager Infrastructure and Environment since joining CentrePort in 2016.</p> <p>Anthony has acted as a Project Director on major infrastructure projects in both Australia and New Zealand.</p> <p>Anthony is experienced in the planning and delivery of projects, and the asset management of large scale infrastructure businesses.</p> <p>He has a civil engineering degree, and a Bachelor of Commerce, from the University of Wollongong.</p>
	<p>Nigel Corry <i>CEO Greater Wellington Regional Council</i></p> <p>Prior to become CEO in March 2022, was deputy Chief Executive of Greater Wellington since September 2018, as well as serving as General Manager Environment, General Manager of People & Customer and a number of other environmental roles at Greater Wellington in a career with the Council dating back to 1998.</p>

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From: [Kirstie Hewlett](#)
To: [Nigel Corry](#)
Subject: Re: EXTERNAL: FW: Heads up: Media release - Budget funding for tugboat study welcomed by councils
Date: Friday, 31 May 2024 1:13:01 pm
Attachments: [image005.png](#)
[image006.png](#)
[image007.png](#)

Thank you. Have a good long weekend.

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From: Nigel Corry
Sent: Friday, May 31, 2024 1:02 PM
To: Kirstie Hewlett
Subject: EXTERNAL: FW: Heads up: Media release - Budget funding for tugboat study welcomed by councils

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Kia ora Kirstie
As promised; our vote of support
Ngā mihi
Nigel



Nigel Corry (he/him)
Tumu Whakarae | Chief Executive
Greater Wellington Te Pane Matua Taiao
s.9(2)(a)
100 Cuba St, Te Aro, Wellington 6011
Follow us online: [Facebook](#) | [Twitter](#) | [gw.govt.nz](#)

From: s.9(2)(a)
Sent: Friday, May 31, 2024 12:31 PM
To: COUNCILLORS ; Executive Leadership Team
Cc: s.9(2)(a)
Subject: Heads up: Media release - Budget funding for tugboat study welcomed by councils
Kia ora Councillors and ELT,
The following joint media release will be issued at approximately 2pm
Ngā mihi,
Ben.



He Pānui Pāpāho | Media Release

31 May 2024

Budget funding for tugboat study welcomed by councils

Funding for a feasibility study into acquiring an ocean-going tugboat has been welcomed by Greater Wellington and Marlborough District Council.

Budget 2024 allocates \$600,000 for the study, following the recent breakdowns of a Cook Strait ferry and a container ship in central New Zealand waters.

Greater Wellington chair Daran Ponter and Marlborough Mayor Nadine Taylor say they are pleased the government will assess the potential of an ocean-going tugboat to prevent disaster.

“Loss of life or an oil spill could be avoided. Major maritime rescue missions could be mounted with a tug designed to salvage large vessels adrift on the open sea,” Cr Ponter says.

“With replacements for the Cook Strait ferries not on the horizon, and more service being pressed from the aged ferry fleet – we can no longer rely on luck to stave off disaster.”

Mayor Taylor says an ocean-going tugboat could be used for more than emergencies.

“A vessel with the power and range to mount rescue missions in New Zealand waters could be put to good use when not needed in a crisis,” Mayor Taylor says.

“The study needs to scope the wider utility of ocean-going tugs as well as their ability to save stricken ferries.

“It’s heartening when maritime safety advice from the two councils who oversee one of the world’s most beautiful, yet treacherous shipping channels is heard.”

ENDS



s 9(2)(a)

Senior Media Advisor

s 9(2)(a)

Greater Wellington Te Pane Matua Taiao

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Excerpt - letter from Maritime New Zealand Director, Kirstie Hewlett to Jake Oliver, Harbourmaster, Marlborough District Council, 7 June 2024

Excerpt

We remain concerned, as the Council is, around emergency ocean-going vessel towage. You will have seen Maritime NZ received money in 2024 Budget for a business case around solutions to this issue. Given the work we have already done over 2023 and put to Ministers, we are moving now at pace to turn this into a business case to get up to Ministers for decision.

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From: [Kirstie Hewlett](#)
To: [Rhys Welbourn](#)
Subject: Re: EXTERNAL: Emergency response
Date: Tuesday, 25 June 2024 6:59:25 pm

Out of Scope

(and if we had an ETV

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From: Rhys Welbourn
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 6:54 PM
To: Kirstie Hewlett
Subject: RE: EXTERNAL: Emergency response

WARNING!!!

[Attachment detected]
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Nothing specific, just wanting to make sure it is on the agenda when considering the wider picture. Out of Scope

Nāku, nā
Rhys Welbourn Tumu Whakarae - Chief Executive
s 9(2)(a) 14 Auckland Street,
PO Box 111, Picton 7250
New Zealand



portmarlborough.co.nz



From: Kirstie Hewlett
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 6:44 PM
To: Rhys Welbourn
Subject: Re: EXTERNAL: Emergency response

Out of Scope

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From: Rhys Welbourn s 9(2)(a) >
Sent: Tuesday, June 25, 2024 6:38 PM
To: Kirstie Hewlett <Kirstie.Hewlett@maritimenz.govt.nz>

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Subject: EXTERNAL: Emergency response

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Kia ora Kirstie

Hope you're feeling ok. I didn't get time to raise **Out of Scope** as an issue to consider alongside rescue capability with regard to towage. **Out of Scope** but wanted to make sure it was on your radar.

Nāku, nā

Rhys Welbourn

Tumu Whakarae - Chief Executive

s 9(2)(a)

14 Auckland Street,
PO Box 111, Picton 7250
New Zealand



portmarlborough.co.nz



Port Marlborough

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