

Coastal Shipping pivotal in relief effort

Coastal shipping role pivotal in relief effort

Iain Macintyre - New Zealand Shipping Gazette

New Zealand's coastal shipping infrastructure has played a vital role in the prompt delivery of emergency equipment, personnel and relief supplies to Canterbury following the February 22 earthquake.

Speaking on behalf of the New Zealand Shipping Federation's seven member companies, head Sheryl Ellison said the existing domestic supply chain was fully utilised within hours of the disaster.

'Our members made shipping earthquake-related emergency services and relief-related equipment an absolute priority immediately following the event', Ms Ellison told the *Shipping Gazette*.

This relief effort has included:

- Pacifica Shipping becoming the first container ship operator to berth at Lyttelton following the earthquake, delivering 100,000 litres of bottled water and vital medical supplies;
- Silver Fern Shipping making two fuel deliveries to the port of Timaru to cater for shortages after high demand in the Christchurch area - aviation fuel was also delivered as soon as access had been gained to the port of Lyttelton;
- both the Interislander and Strait Shipping prioritising the movement of emergency services such as ambulance, army, fire service, police and search and rescue, to enable them to get across Cook Strait and onto the ground in Christchurch by daylight the morning after the disaster;
- the Interislander and Strait Shipping continuing to give precedence to earthquake-related equipment, with dozens of trucks containing machinery, generators, portaloos, food, water tanks and building supplies being carried on each of their southbound sailings.

Holcim New Zealand and Golden Bay cement are now expected to play an important role in the rebuilding process.

Ms Ellison said it was "extremely reassuring" to know the existing domestic coastal shipping route worked quickly and efficiently to provide essential links in a crisis.

She expressed hope that the Government would give appropriate consideration to the needs of the industry in its current review of the National Infrastructure Plan.

"New Zealand as a nation is reliant on shipping for both the domestic and international supply chains to function efficiently."