



OCEAN CRUISING CLUB®

For Immediate Release

Contact:
Simon Currin
Commodore

+44 7775 778041
commodore@oceancruisingclub.org

NEW ZEALAND REFUSES CYCLONE SEASON REFUGE FOR YACHTS

Yesterday, the Ocean Cruising Club received a formal rejection by New Zealand for yachts in the South Pacific cyclone zone seeking refuge.

Two weeks ago, when asked about providing cyclone season refuge for cruising yachts in COVID limbo in the South Pacific, the Prime Minister said on live television that she would speak with the Health Minister about taking into account the seasonal conditions (TV3 AM).

The OCC understood that Kiwi's would "Be Kind", however despite the Prime Minister's remarks, the Director General for Health wrote yesterday:

"The legal basis for the current restrictions at the Maritime Border is the COVID-19 Public Health Response (Maritime Border) Order (No 2) (the Order). The foundational rule of the Order is a ban on all foreign ships from arriving in New Zealand, unless explicitly exempt or granted permission by the Director-General of Health. There are a number of limited exemptions in place, such as for cargo vessels to unload and load cargo, fishing vessels to unload catch and resupply, Defence and State vessels to enter and depart New Zealand.

As the Director-General of Health, I can also grant permission for ships to enter if there is a compelling need for the ship to arrive in New Zealand for reprovisioning or refuelling, carrying out a refit, refurbishment or repair to a ship or for humanitarian reasons. Having received advice from Ministry of Health officials, I have determined that a potential future cyclone does not provide sufficient basis to warrant an exemption from the Order. While I will determine whether permission is granted for a ship to arrive in New Zealand for humanitarian reasons on a case-by-case basis, my assessment is that the vessels in question are not facing a cyclone at present, but rather the prospect of a potential cyclone or cyclones in future. Therefore, there is no compelling need for the ships in question to arrive in New Zealand for humanitarian reasons."

"I will still determine whether there is a compelling reason for a ship to arrive in New Zealand for humanitarian reasons on a case-by-case basis, should a cyclone arise in anyone location."

“I appreciate that my decision will come as a disappointment to you and your members. However, I hope that clarity on my decision will allow your members to make immediate alternative arrangements, enabling them all to secure safe harbour (e.g. in their home countries) in a timely fashion.”

Unfortunately, despite many explanatory letters and emails, health officials do not appreciate most yachts cannot sail to safe harbour in their own country, nor understand yachts need to be safely out of the cyclone zone, not at sea and seeking shelter in New Zealand when one occurs!

The Ocean Cruising Club is concerned that yachts in Fiji and French Polynesia and other Pacific islands must now risk tropical cyclones in locations which do not have the capacity for safe mooring or dry storage. Prudent and safe navigation is to move small yachts out of the cyclone zone before the cyclone season occurs, this takes many weeks of sailing. These yachts are the home of families and couples.

The OCC has been working with Sail South Pacific and the Marina Operators Association and has been liaising with immigration and maritime agencies. COVID safe protocols were developed and have been put into place to minimise the risk to New Zealand.

The OCC asks the New Zealand government to reconsider its decision and “Be Kind”.

ENDS

Background documents and correspondence available

Initial Contact Guy Chester +61 407 391211 (Cellphone/WhatsApp) GuyChester(Skype)

OCC Coordinator, Fiona Jones (network_indopacific@oceancruisingclub.org)

OCC Roving Rear Commodore, Guy Chester (guychester@ecosustainability.com)

Director, Sail South Pacific, John Martin (john@sailsouthpacific.com)

BACKGROUND

Urgency

- **Only 40 days remain until the Cyclone season arrives** and all of these 300 plus yachts find themselves uninsured and outside of a safe haven.
- **Twenty plus days to await an answer to an application** leaves a maximum of 40 days. Most yachts average 120 miles sailing in a 24-hour period.
- Once and if exemption is agreed crews have to apply for a visa, again they cannot set to sea prior to gaining the visa. **Visa applications also take at least 10 days to be processed** so now we are down to a maximum of 30 days sailing time.

BACKGROUND

Quarantine on Passage- Self isolation on Arrival

Many yachts will seek Opuia as the first port of arrival and we understand Bay of Islands Marina can accommodate quarantine on arrival on the “Attenuation Barrier dock” for initial clearance formalities and that vessels can then move to the Waikare River/Estuary to serve their quarantine at anchor.

Sail South Pacific (Destination NZ Rally) have advised that a business “Total Yacht Care” can provide provisions, fuel, waste disposal etc. using a contactless process for yachts whilst in Quarantine at anchor.

We understand that Marsden Cove at Whangarei has specific quarantine berths which can be isolated with the yachts having access to power, water and sewage pump out. Contactless delivery of provisions for the time in quarantine is understood to be available.

BACKGROUND

Compelling Reason

The Ocean Cruising Club wishes to restate the emerging crisis among sailors facing risk to lives and property that is rendered uninsurable and needing refuge for the forthcoming cyclone season. We implore the New Zealand government to accept this as a compelling reason.

We consider that leaving the yachts without refuge could further endanger not only their crews but also emergency response crews should a cyclone event(s) occur.

BACKGROUND

About the Ocean Cruising Club



The Worldwide Community for Adventure Sailing Since 1954

The OCC is the “home port” for those who have sailed long distances across big oceans. With 45 nationalities represented among more than 3100 members, and Port Officers around the world, we have a more diverse membership and a more international reach than any other blue water sailing organisation.

The Ocean Cruising Club exists to encourage long-distance sailing in small boats. A Full Member of the OCC must have completed a qualifying voyage of a non-stop port-to-port ocean passage, where the distance between the two ports is not less than 1,000 nautical miles, in a vessel of not more than 70ft (21.36m) LOA; associate members are committed to achieving that goal. This standard distinguishes the OCC from all other sailing clubs.

Our membership as a whole has more experience offshore than any other sailing organisation – in the number of circumnavigators, in the range of extraordinary voyages members have completed, and in the number of solo sailors and female sailors among our ranks. This is what sets us apart from other organisations, even as it draws us together as a group.

Web: www.oceancruisingclub.org

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/OceanCruisingClubMembers/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/explore/tags/oceancruisingclub/>

Twitter: @OCC_org

