

Fullers staff 'working incredibly hard'

Residents are speaking out over Fullers' management of peak-season ferries but the company says it is doing the best it can.

With the annual rush of tourists over the Christmas period, angry residents are calling out the company over what they say are late and overstuffed ferries, poor staff management and apparent problems with the new 'locals lane'.

Resident Gail Trapp spoke of "chaos at the wharf" after she was late to a business meeting in Auckland. Arriving to catch the 3.30pm to Auckland, she would not reach the city until some hours later after a breakdown meant the 3.30pm was cancelled.

"We didn't hear an announcement. There was so much noise going on - people shoving and pushing each other that had obviously come from lunchtime," she says.

"The problem for me though was a lack of communication. Fair enough, ferries back down - that's fine in my opinion - but you need to be told clearly, everybody needs to know what's going on if the ferry is delayed or broken down. We need to be told 'the next ferry will be at X time, via Devonport; Pier 1 we will have the 4.30 ferry'.

"People need to be informed. It's quite simple to have an overhead board with a notice, or even a blackboard would do. Then you get the other things thrown in - there's no way the Waiheke [locals] lane can work because people are getting off the ferry in the lane that is supposedly for locals. It looks to me like a bit of a fob off; they're saying they're doing it when they're really not. They've got a flag sitting there but it doesn't mean anything."

Elsewhere, long-term residents Pam Oliver, John Stansfield, Paulette Crowley and Marta Fisch are canvassing

authorities to have Fullers brought under government control. In a 6 December letter sent to Auckland Mayor Phil Goff and Te Atatu MP Phil Twyford, they cite "the continuing inadequacies of the current Fullers service to Waiheke Island, which will only be exacerbated over the approaching summer months."

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- Gail Trapp

"We are again bringing to your attention the urgent need for Fullers Group and their Waiheke Island operation to be brought back under the requirements of the Public Transport Operating Model (PTOM). While Fullers has finally introduced a trial for priority queuing for island residents, in fact that amounts only to a separate (versus priority) queue for locals," they argue.

But Fullers CEO Mike Horne disagrees, and is confident the locals lane is proving its worth.

"The locals lane is performing well for the majority of locals and visitors to the island," he says.

"We have received mostly positive feedback. We have been activating the locals lane on an as-needed basis outside of scheduled hours. In response to passenger suggestions, this has included a trial of Thursday and Friday evenings, to accommodate a significant increase in visitors travelling for holiday parties. The locals lane, running alongside the continuation of the improved vessel


movement sequence, is successfully decreasing wait times and queues."

As far as wait times and communications go, he says the company is doing its best to deal with demand.

"With the massive influx of travel during this time of year, we do our best to manage the needs of island residents and visitors equally. Please be aware our staff are working incredibly hard across this period and are focused on providing the best service we can."


Auckland Transport is responsible for providing wharf infrastructure, facilities and gangways, he adds, and Fullers have no control over these matters.

"Our commitment remains to changing operational requirements and taking constructive customer feedback on a regular basis, as we continue to improve our offering." • Richard Jones



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