

# \$10 million for wharf extension approved despite opposition

**Despite strong opposition, Panuku Development Auckland has been given the green light to construct two sizeable concrete mooring dolphins at Queens Wharf to enable cruise ships up to 362m to berth.**

Queens Wharf is set to get a \$10 million makeover to enable larger cruise ships to berth near the city centre. A resource consent application to construct two mooring dolphins and to undertake alterations to the existing wharf structure was lodged by Panuku Development Auckland last year.

A hearing over seven days at the Auckland Town Hall from 18 to 27 February 2019 saw 329 submissions received, with 44 in support of the development, 284 in opposition and one neutral. The hearing panel consisted of independent commissioners Kitt Littlejohn (chairperson) Trevor Mackie and Juliane Chetham. On 23 April the consent application was granted subject to conditions.

"We have found that although the proposal would have a range of adverse effects on the environment, both during construction and operation, those effects are able to be avoided, remedied or mitigated to an acceptable level by way of good construction management, engagement with mana whenua and consultation with other stakeholders," the hearing panel wrote in the decision document.

**"The application will generate positive economic and health and safety effects and its adverse effects will be time-limited and then remediated (by removal of the structures)."** - Independent hearing commissioners

Adverse effects caused by the physical location and presence of the two concrete 15m by 15m mooring dolphins include inconveniencing recreational boaties, impacting ferry users and affecting heritage, natural character, landscape and amenity values in the area. Of great concern for many was adverse effects on visual amenity values, which according to the commissioners, will range from less than minor to moderate-high impacts, depending on proximity and the nature of the viewing audience.

Viv Beck, chief executive of Heart of



The proposed works include the construction of two new ship mooring dolphins each supported by six 1.8m-diameter concrete piles to enable large cruise ships to berth. Photo Sophie Boladeras

the City, a business association which includes more than 4000 commercially rated properties and 12,000-plus businesses, thought the proposal was "merely an expedient option that reflected short-term thinking and that if consent were granted, it would act as a disincentive to progress the Captain Cook Wharf option or any alternative solution".

The proposal by Panuku that consent for the dolphins expire once Captain Cook Wharf is operational, or in 15 years, and that the structures are then removed, was a key feature of the application that weighed in its favour according to the commissioners.

"The application will generate positive economic and health and safety effects and its adverse effects will be time-limited and then remediated (by removal of the structures)," they said.

Despite this, Panuku will be able to apply to vary the consent (as to decommissioning) and could renew it for a further period.

Economic and social benefits and improvements to the current process of receiving large cruise ships were also factors in the decision to grant consent.

A report on the application prepared by Richard Blakey, an independent resource management planner, canvassed all of the application material submitted by Panuku, as well as information from council officers, specialist reviewers and submitters. In his report, Mr Blakey included a recommendation that the hearing panel exercise their discretion to refuse consent

to the application.

"In summary, although Mr Blakey accepted that the proposal would yield economic and social benefits, he considered it would have more than minor adverse effects on the environment, including in terms of visual and landscape effects, adverse amenity and recreational effects, as well as adverse effects on cultural values and the heritage qualities of Queens Wharf."

Currently, Queens Wharf West can berth cruise ships up to 200m and Queens Wharf East ships of 295m. The extension will allow for vessels of up to 362m to moor alongside the wharf. These massive ships can house over 5000 people, burn at least 150 tonnes of fuel a day and emit more sulphur than several million cars. Because New Zealand hasn't yet signed up to MARPOL an international environmental agreement to prevent pollution from ships, rules on cruise ship emissions