

Whangarei eyes super-yacht work

Jo Bailey

Martin Gleeson of Oceania Marine says Whangarei shipyards have started to work together to establish the region as a destination for the highly-specialised field of super-yacht refit, repair and construction.

"We are in the early stages of getting together with local authorities to discuss how we can raise the profile of Whangarei with super-yacht owners and agents. Between us we have the facilities and skilled labour force to handle small yachts right up to 2000 tonne vessels."

Oceania Marine's shipyard in Port Whangarei has been operating for more than 50 years under various owners and guises.

Gleeson has run it for the last 10 years, and took over as operator of the yard two years ago with his wife Shannon – under Oceania Marine.

"Over the last two years we've worked hard to put our own business on the map as far as the super-yacht market is concerned – particularly when it comes to the quality of our marine paint systems."

The Gleesons have started a subsidiary company called Oceania Marine Coatings that has the latest technology and systems allowing it to provide the "amazingly high quality finish" demanded by super-yacht owners.

"One of the biggest problems for the industry is achieving this level of finish on a large vessel. It is a technical process that requires an investment in highly-skilled staff and the right equipment and product knowledge."

The company has moved into exotic finishes such as pearlescent and metallic special effects paints that are "very demanding" to use he says.

"We have mobile climate control equipment that can be used either inside the paint shed or outside under a shrink-wrapped tent to allow us to meet the environmental specifications required for the application of some of these specialised paints."

One of the new paint systems called Awlcraft 2000 SE has been put to the test by super-yacht Black Pearl that has just had its first annual maintenance stop back with the company.

The yacht – built by Auckland-based Diverse Projects and painted by Oceania Marine has been "very busy" – completing over 12,000 nautical miles since it was launched just over a year ago.

"Black Pearl was one of the first vessels we coated with this product and we are very pleased with how it has held up. We've recently brought the vessel back to top notch condition in our yard, and she is now on Dockwise being transported to Europe where she will begin a three-year cruise back to the South Pacific."

Gleeson says Oceania Marine has a strong commercial side to its business in addition to the super-yacht market. It has also teamed with Diverse Projects in a new venture called Energy Vessels Offshore Limited – that provides service vessels for the offshore energy industry.

"This is an important new diversification for us – and part of our strategy to operate in a variety of sectors so we are not dependent on one market."

Oceania Marine will continue to focus on the international market for its super-yacht business and recently has engaged the services of an Auckland-based yacht liaison, Jim Loynes.

"Jim comes to us from the South of France where he has captained super-yachts for many years. His main role will be to meet and liaise with our clients when they arrive in Auckland and to promote our services to other visiting super-yachts."

