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The Northern Advocate

Ferry fleet drops anchor in city to undergo servicing

By Christine Allen



Martin Gleeson, Oceania Marine managing director, beside the shipping giant Starflyte, one of the Fullers' Auckland commercial fleet vessels being serviced in Whangarei. Photo / Michael Cunningham

A fleet of ferries that have cruised Northland and Auckland waters all summer are about to sail into Whangarei as the commercial ship repair season kicks off.

The fleets of large commercial vessels, owned by Fullers and a number of other operators, are starting to sail into the north yard at Oceania Marine on Fraser St, which this week has the Fullers' high-speed catamaran and ferry Starflyte being serviced after a busy summer of carrying passengers around Auckland harbour.

Oceania Marine has also taken over the lease at the old Tenex building at Port Whangarei and is gearing up for a major development at the south shipyard.

The Whangarei commercial ship and superyacht refit and repair company, which had to turn away three ships in the past six weeks, said its \$25 million expansion was timely as the demand for services was steadily growing.

The company has ordered the first of two travelift machines as part of a six-month travel haulout project at the Port Whangarei Marine Centre.

The 100-tonne Cimolai mobile boat hauler is believed to be the largest machine in New Zealand, and would be based at the south shipyard from October.

A 450-tonne Cimolai mobile hauler was part of the next stage of development and would be ready for the 2016 summer season.

Initial design of a unique 4000-tonne syncrolift for installation at the site was also being completed.

"This first stage not only targets a market that Oceania Marine currently does not cater for but in addition will ease pressure on the slipping schedule of the 800-tonne railway slipway at north shipyard ... located close by for more large vessel haul outs," said managing director Martin Gleeson. Construction and installation of the first phase was set to finish in October in time for the new season.

Jim Loynes, client liaison and marketing manager for Oceania Marine, said the new haul-out facilities would provide the company with round-the-clock ability to get ships into the yard, solving the scheduling challenges that the company has struggled with.

The firm was looking at a \$5 million investment for the initial stages, with the syncrolift operation coming closer to an estimated \$20 million.

Oceania took over the lease of the Fraser St yard in 2009 and bought it in 2013 and provides refit, repair and construction services for ships with a focus on superyachts over 25m and commercial ships.

The larger commercial vessels were sent to the Whangarei company due to its ability to cater for the larger ships and the lower cost of services.

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