

# Wild weather causes ferry disruption and delays

Heavy rain, high winds and severe flooding have been wreaking havoc across the Auckland region, leading Mayor Wayne Brown to declare a local state of emergency on Friday.

While Waiheke has so far not been as badly hit as the city, residents are experiencing disruption to ferry services.

In a statement on their website, Fullers says five of its ferries were damaged over the weekend, adding to delays caused by the weather. "Our maintenance teams are working tirelessly to get them back in service as quickly as possible. However, this means there may be less capacity than usual on some services." With more severe weather expected this week, ferries may be cancelled at short notice. The most up-to-date information on the ferry schedule will be on the Fullers website travel alerts page, or on the MyFerry App.

One of the biggest delays came on Friday, when a cruise ship broke loose from its dock at Princess Wharf. The *Noordam* arrived in Auckland that morning and a Ports of Auckland spokesperson confirmed to the media that the ship lost its spring,



Fullers' Quick Cat is active in Auckland harbour for the first time in years, but Fullers say it's just helping out during the current weather disruptions and isn't coming back permanently.

the rope attaching it to the wharf, in the rough weather. The *Noordam* had to use its engines, and was assisted by a tug boat, to hold position as it was securely reattached to the wharf.

Strongly gusting winds and the turbulence from the *Noordam*'s engines meant passenger ferries from Waiheke, Half-Moon Bay, Davenport, Bayswater and Birkenhead were held in Waitemata Harbour.

A *Gulf News* staffer, who was on the Waiheke ferry at the time, says the ferry was already delayed due to the weather disruptions - and the 10am ferry had left nearly an hour behind schedule. While waiting to get cleared into Auckland, the ferry had to be diverted to Devonport for an ambulance to collect a passenger in need of medical attention. Our staffer says most of the other passengers also got off there, but the rest stayed aboard to disembark at the Auckland terminal around 12.30pm.

Fullers' *Quickcat*, which has been out of full-time service for years, was also spotted in Auckland harbour this weekend.

Critics, including Auckland councillor Mike Lee, have been clamouring for the vessel's return to help Fullers cope with high demand and ongoing delays because it can carry more passengers than the current smaller ferries. But this isn't a true comeback for the *Quickcat*.

Fullers spokeswoman Alex Dudley says the *Quickcat* is used as a back-up vessel from time to time, when appropriate. Fullers confirms it is being used to fill in during the disruptions caused by the severe weather. But it will not return permanently because its higher fuel usage and crew require-



Ferry services were disrupted on Friday 8.15am morning, after the cruise ship *Noordam* broke loose of its mooring at Princess Wharf in the rough weather.

ments, particularly with the ongoing staff shortages, make it less efficient to run than the regular ferries, Alex says.

With the record-breaking rainfall in Auckland, and the MetService issuing warnings of further heavy rain and high winds this week, Fullers is moving to a reduced timetable.

This allows for ferries travelling at reduced speed to safely navigate rough seas and debris in the water on Tuesday and Wednesday. Fuller's website notes the timetable changes may be extended further if needed.

*Waiheke Island timetable changes:*

*From Auckland: 6am, 7.15am, 8.15, 9am then hourly until 7.15pm then usual timetable applies*

*From Waiheke: hourly until 7pm then usual timetable applies • Paul Mitchell*



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