

Clarity about Marine Pilot Licenses



According to a recent High Court Declaratory Judgment, those wanting to train as pilots in New Zealand must hold a master certificate or the equivalent. However, navy officers and pilots trained overseas have a pathway to become pilots in New Zealand. This includes mariners who don't hold master tickets but have undertaken Ab Initio (from the beginning) training.

The New Zealand Maritime Pilots Association and the New Zealand Merchant Service Guild sought the declaratory judgment after Maritime NZ indicated an experienced mariner who did not hold a master certificate could enter a training programme to become a marine pilot.

Open to interpretation

Pilot training programmes are designed to ensure trainees reach a level of competency that ensures they can operate safely as a marine pilot. The Maritime Rules were open to interpretation regarding whether a master ticket is a necessary pre-requisite, regardless of experience and competency.

Training and competency

Maritime NZ's chief executive and director Keith Manch said "This decision clarifies the requirements of the current Maritime Rules regarding education, skills and experience for pilots in New Zealand. To some extent, it broadens the pool of people available to become pilots – subject to appropriate training and competency checks."

Responsibility

"Pilots must have appropriate experience, qualifications and competencies for safe pilotage as they play a crucial role in guiding ships into our ports and harbours. This a big responsibility to place on anyone's shoulders. Maritime NZ's view is that ultimately what really matters is that the pilot is competent to undertake this responsibility, regardless of the path they have taken to get to this position."

Safe operation

Manch continued saying Maritime NZ is looking forward to continuing to engage with the industry to continually develop and improve the regulatory system for pilotage so that it operates effectively to support the safe, efficient and effective operation of the maritime sector.

Master certificates are issued in New Zealand and overseas in accordance with the International Convention on Standards of Training, Certification, and Watchkeeping for Seafarers.