

**Government Response to
Report of Petitions Committee
on
The Petition of Erin Tiplady on behalf of Northcote Intermediate School Room
3**

**Presented to the House of Representatives In
accordance with Standing Order 256**

Government response to the Report of the Petitions Committee on surveying the RMS *Niagara* to find out exactly how much oil is still on board

Introduction

1. The Government has carefully considered the Petition Committee's (the Committee) report (the Report) on the petition of Erin Tiplady on behalf of Northcote Intermediate School Room 3 (the petition).
2. The Government welcomes the submission and the Committee's report on the issue of surveying the RMS *Niagara*.
3. The Government recognises the strong public interest in the RMS *Niagara* wreck and shares concerns about the potential environmental risks posed by any remaining oil onboard.
4. The Government responds to the Report in accordance with Standing Order 256.

Recommendation

5. The Petitions Committee recommends to the Government that Maritime New Zealand prioritise a survey and risk assessment of the RMS *Niagara*.

Government response

6. The Government takes the risk of a major oil spill from the RMS *Niagara* very seriously. Over a number of years, considerable work has been undertaken to assess the risk posed by the wreck. Maritime New Zealand, the lead government agency responsible for oil spill response, has conducted and commissioned multiple studies, reports, site visits and seabed surveys, and has maintained ongoing observation of the site.
7. Maritime New Zealand has, for some time, recommended conducting a more detailed visual survey of the wreck to enhance its risk assessment. It notes that such a survey would be a complex operation requiring specialised equipment and could cost around \$14 million. There are also risks that the survey may not be able to obtain the necessary information, due to the position the ship is lying, and that it could even trigger a leak.
8. At this stage, the Government has not approved funding for this proposal. That decision has been made in the context of:
 - no current evidence of risks requiring immediate intervention
 - the need to prioritise Crown investment across many important environmental and public initiatives, particularly in a tight fiscal environment.
9. The Government may reconsider its position should the condition of the wreck change and/or the fiscal environment allow.

10. Maritime New Zealand continues to observe the RMS *Niagara* and remains prepared for any potential leaks or incidents. The most up-to-date information on this work is available on its website (<https://www.maritimenz.govt.nz/public/in-focus/rms-niagara/>), and we encourage interested parties to follow the updates there.

Conclusion

11. The Government considers that the approach to the RMS *Niagara* must balance environmental impacts with economic considerations, safety and community views. Therefore, the Government is not proposing that Maritime New Zealand prioritise a survey and risk assessment of the RMS *Niagara* at this time but the Government will continue to monitor the situation should the condition of the wreck change and/or the fiscal environment allow.

Hon James Meager

Associate Minister for Transport