MARITIME UNION OF NEW ZEALAND · ELECTION 2026

WHERE THE PARTIES STAND

Our five asks for the maritime sector, and how the parties responded

MUNZ ASKED EACH POLITICAL PARTY FOR THEIR POSITIONS ON

FIVE POLICIES TO SUPERCHARGE OUR SECTOR

01

Rebuild coastal shipping

Underwrite NZ-flagged, NZ-crewed ships as a step towards ending cabotage by international vessels.

02

National Ports Strategy

Public ownership, a hub-and-spoke model, and ports built into national transport planning.

03

Fund what works best

Back projects with the most benefit for the money, not favoured modes. Coastal shipping has been chronically underfunded.

04

NZ law for all seafarers

International seafarers working in NZ waters protected by NZ labour laws.

05

Open books on crew pay

International shipping lines transparent about their crews' pay and conditions.

Three parties responded: Labour, the Greens and the Alliance.

WHAT THE PARTIES SAID AT A GLANCE

	LABOUR	GREENS	ALLIANCE
1 Coastal shipping	Keen to work with MUNZ on underwriting NZ-crewed ships	Supports public investment and moving off foreign vessels	A 100% publicly owned State Shipping Line
2 National Strategy ports	Ports stay public; will look at a National Ports Strategy	Supports a National Ports Strategy and public ownership	KiwiPort: a public hub-and-spoke port network
3 Mode-neutral funding	Put coastal shipping & rail into 2021 transport fund. Will continue this	Strongly supports valuing rail and coastal shipping	National Transport Strategy; more revenue to sea and rail
4 NZ wage law for foreign seafarers	Backs it in principle, will explore in government	Supports strong NZ labour protections for seafarers here	Close the s198(1)(c) exception and the 28-day loophole
5 Pay transparency for foreign vessels	Supports it; keen to work it through with union and industry	Supports greater transparency, with effective enforcement	Mandatory pay transparency and audits of shipping lines

LABOUR

Response in full, as received by MUNZ

1. DOMESTIC SHIPPING CAPACITY

A strong domestic fleet crewed by Kiwi seafarers is vital to New Zealand's resilience, and we're proud of our track record of standing up the coastal shipping fund when last in government. We are keen to work with the Maritime Union on how to build upon that progress, including the case for underwriting New Zealand-crewed ships and re-establishing domestic coastal shipping capacity.

2. NATIONAL PORTS STRATEGY

Our ports are strategic national assets that belong in public hands, which is why we oppose selling them. We share the union's view that ports work best as part of a planned national freight system, and we'll absolutely get to work looking at how a National Ports Strategy could deliver that in government.

3. MODE-NEUTRAL TRANSPORT FUNDING

We need an integrated approach to transport systems in New Zealand, and agree that coastal shipping has been underfunded for too long. That's why we built coastal shipping and rail into the Government Policy Statement on transport funding in 2021, so investment would go to what delivers the most benefit rather than favouring one mode, and that's the approach that we continue to support.

4. CLOSING THE WAGE LOOPHOLES

Everyone working in New Zealand waters deserves fair pay and safe conditions, and no one should be able to undercut Kiwi seafarers by exploiting overseas crews. Extending New Zealand labour law protections to international seafarers is something we're open to exploring in government.

Transparency is the right thing to do as it helps make sure seafarers are treated fairly and that responsible operators aren't undercut. We'd be keen to sit down with the union and industry to consider how this would work.

GREENS

Response in full, as received by MUNZ

1. DOMESTIC SHIPPING CAPACITY

The Green Party strongly supports rebuilding Aotearoa's domestic coastal shipping capacity to shift more freight off trucks, and on to coastal shipping and rail. New Zealand-flagged and crewed ships would strengthen supply-chain resilience, create secure, well-paid maritime jobs, and build domestic skills. We support government investment to develop this capacity, alongside strong labour and environmental standards, and to transition away from relying on international vessels for domestic coastal freight.

2. NATIONAL PORTS STRATEGY

The Green Party supports a coordinated National Ports Strategy and sees ports as strategic infrastructure that should serve the public interest. We support public ownership and stronger national planning across ports, rail, coastal shipping and road freight. A national strategy should improve resilience, reduce unnecessary duplication and emissions, support good union jobs, and be developed with workers, unions, iwi, port communities and the freight sector.

3. MODE-NEUTRAL TRANSPORT FUNDING

The Green Party strongly supports transport investment decisions that properly recognise the benefits of rail and coastal shipping, rather than structurally favouring roads. Funding decisions should account for emissions, resilience, safety, congestion and wider economic and social benefits. We would invest in shifting towards an integrated freight system that makes much greater use of rail and coastal shipping, while ensuring public investment delivers good value and supports a just transition.

4. CLOSING THE WAGE LOOPHOLES

Everyone working in New Zealand waters should have decent pay and conditions, regardless of the flag their vessel flies. The Green Party supports closing loopholes that allow international shipping operators to undermine local employment standards. We support applying strong New Zealand labour protections to seafarers working here, alongside greater transparency over crew pay and conditions, effective enforcement, and measures that prevent exploitation and protect decent maritime jobs.

ALLIANCE

Response in full, as received by MUNZ

1. DOMESTIC SHIPPING CAPACITY

The Alliance will go beyond simply underwriting capacity; we will establish a 100% publicly owned State Shipping Line to rebuild domestic maritime capability, secure our supply chains, and guarantee sovereign freight resilience.

- We commit to a dedicated fleet of NZ-flagged, NZ-crewed vessels operating on regular coastal, trans-Tasman, and Pacific routes under national collective agreements.
- We will restore domestic coastal fuel tankers to guarantee national fuel security, fund an ocean-going emergency salvage tug, and mandate funded training berths for cadets to train the next generation of Kiwi seafarers.
- We will invest in domestic maintenance infrastructure, including drydock capability (such as at Marsden Point), ensuring that Kiwi-flagged vessels no longer have to sail overseas for essential servicing.

2. NATIONAL PORTS STRATEGY

The Alliance will establish KiwiPort, a nationally coordinated, publicly owned hub-and-spoke port network.

- We will prohibit the privatisation and contracting out of port infrastructure, retaining port assets under shared municipal, regional, and national public control.
- KiwiPort will end the destructive capital duplication and parochial ‘race to the bottom’ where international shipping conglomerates play local ports off against one another.
- Under a coordinated hub-and-spoke model, primary deep-water international hubs will connect seamlessly to regional spoke ports via regular domestic coastal services and rail corridors.
- We will establish a Sea Freight Group, a ministerial body bringing together government, cargo owners, KiwiPort, and maritime unions, to drive long-term modal shift and integrate port operations directly into our national transport planning.

3. MODE-NEUTRAL TRANSPORT FUNDING

The current funding model through the National Land Transport Fund is structurally broken, heavily subsidising heavy road freight while coastal shipping receives crumbs despite delivering massive public safety, carbon reduction, and infrastructure savings.

- The Alliance will replace short-sighted highway allocations with an integrated National Transport Strategy where investment decisions are evaluated across whole-of-life public cost, decarbonisation, and regional resilience.
- We treat each mode as part of a single unified network rather than competing commercial entities. A substantial share of transport revenue will be redirected into maritime and rail infrastructure.
- All State-Owned Enterprises, Crown entities, and government agencies will be required to prioritise coastal shipping and rail for long-distance domestic cargo.

4. CLOSING THE WAGE LOOPHOLES & FAIR LABOUR STANDARDS

The Alliance believes no worker should be exploited within New Zealand sovereign territory. The status quo is an affront to basic human dignity and an attack on domestic seafaring jobs.

- We will close the incidental-carriage exception under section 198(1)(c) of the Maritime Transport Act 1994, ending the open-coast policy that has allowed foreign shipping lines to dominate our coastal freight on flag-of-convenience terms.
- We will eliminate the 28-day loophole and require that all seafarers performing coastal and trans-Tasman carriage are covered by New Zealand employment standards, collective bargaining, and prevailing wage rates.
- We will mandate strict pay transparency and audit requirements on international shipping lines calling at our ports, backing this up with increased resources for Maritime NZ and strict enforcement of the Approved Code of Practice for port and stevedoring safety.

YOUR VOTE.
YOUR INDUSTRY.

MUNZ encourages members to take these answers into account when deciding who to vote for.

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