

Refit for a 'Queen'

Queenscliff, a ro-pax ferry owned and operated by Searoad Ferries of Victoria, Australia, has just emerged from a major refit.

Australia-based Lightning Naval Architecture (LNA) was last year tasked with enlarging the passenger accommodation space on the cross-Tasman ferry, *Queenscliff*. One of the aims of the project was to provide enhanced viewing opportunities, creating a more light-filled interior to entice new passengers to travel on the *Queenscliff*-Sorrento route. The brief was based on creating a series of zones throughout the interior to provide for the needs of a variety of travellers, including both commuters and holiday makers.

Several structural elements were relocated to open up the interior space. A new 10m skylight now floods the interior with natural light and, when combined with a new forward full-width glass wall is designed to create the feeling of a far larger accommodation space.

LNA managing director, Jennifer Knox says: "Seating is now arranged in informal groupings using banquette and lounge tub chairs with tables to create a more relaxed and open atmosphere. Fresh carpet and new colours brighten up the journey and passengers can enjoy the views through the newly enlarged windows, while Wi-Fi is fitted throughout the ship, so that commuters can catch up with their emails as they travel to and from work as well."

The foredeck access area has been completely opened up with large viewing windows and bar style ledges and seating, while a more accessible doorway was installed to a new outdoor viewing area. A new double entry breeze-way ensures that travellers sitting inside remain in comfort at all times and in all weathers.

Another change includes the addition of a new cafe with double the capacity and an open-plan dining area. Knox adds: "The partial side decks were removed and the side windows increased in size to create a feeling of space and light. New and more brightly coloured furniture adds to the appeal and ambience." Searoad Ferries is now also targeting the charter



Queenscliff interior before its facelift and, below, afterwards.



and functions market to extend use of the ship out of hours, to take advantage of the more extensive catering and entertainment facilities available onboard.

The tourist market is becoming more critical to the ferry service and so LNA felt that it was important to improve the ambience and facilities in the children's play area, which now has climbing frames, play/chalk boards and child-sized tables and chairs. Information about the history of the local area adorns the walls and visitors can browse through specially designed floor-to-ceiling information stands.

Knox concludes: "This refit is a great example of how an existing ship can be transformed by thoughtful and careful marine interior design and some well placed internal structural redesign. The difference in ambience and functionality is stunning and the 'Old Queen' now feels like a 'New Princess!'" *SRCT*