

The catamaran, *Luminosa*, on its final road journey to Te Anau



TE ANAU CAVES, NEW ZEALAND

– Neal Collinson

Real Journeys (the operator of the Te Anau Glowworm Caves – South Island, New Zealand) recently commissioned a new twenty-three metre catamaran vessel on Lake Te Anau.

Purpose built in Tasmania for Lake Te Anau, the vessel name *Luminosa* reflects the role of the vessel carrying passengers across the lake to the Te Anau Glowworm Caves.

The vessel was built in Hobart, and following its construction it voyaged across the Tasman to the port of Bluff (1800 nautical miles) before being transported 180kms overland to Lake Te Anau.

Along with the new vessel, new wharfs have been built to accommodate the vessel. (See the press cutting, below)

At the caves itself, the final part of the caves tour redevelopment has been implemented with the

removal of the lower dam and bottom punt ride. A new stainless steel and alloy walkway has been installed linking the two landings, formally accessed along the river by punt.

Following the removal of the dam which had been built in the mid 1950s, the caves' river has reverted to its natural flow along the stream bed. For the last fifty years the caves at this point have been approximately one third full of water which was pooled behind the dam.

With the river now flowing back in its original course the caves passage has now taken on a whole new dimension with a spectacular stream way cascading along.

Already stream life is flourishing, with trout and eels once again being regular visitors in the caves.

Tourism company launches new boat

By **BRUCE FRASER**

TE ANAU — Fiordland tourism operator Real Journeys launched its newest boat in Te Anau on Saturday.

The 23m catamaran Luminosa is purpose-built for the Lake Te Anau glow-worm caves excursion, which has itself undergone major changes.

Company, community and iwi leaders as well as Conservation Minister Chris Carter spoke at the ceremony aboard the new vessel.

Real Journeys chairman Bill Baylis said the Luminosa was bigger and faster yet would be quieter and produce less wake than previous vessels.

The vessel's capacity, speed and better viewing areas meant the cruise to the caves would become an attraction in itself, he said.

The excursion would now pass among the scenic Dome Islands at the entrance to South Arm.

The caves excursion had been substantially improved, with visitors now allocated one guide to accompany their small group through the whole experience.

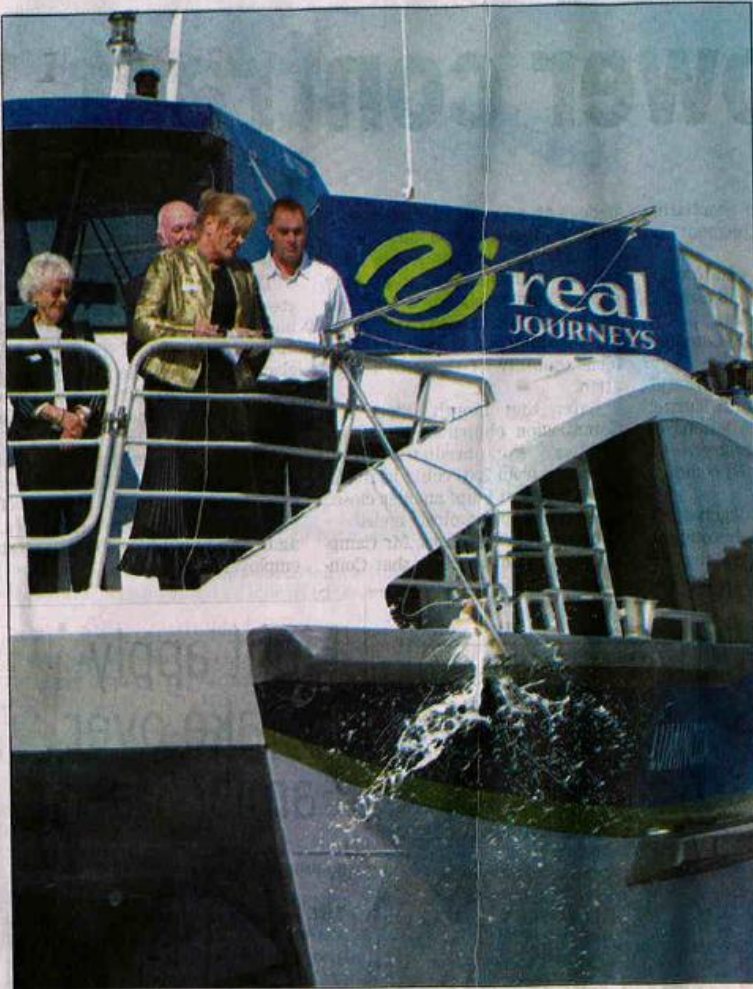
Inside the caves the company had built new walkways, removed visible wiring and one dam, and installed more subdued lighting. The result was easier passage through the cave system and a more natural environment.

The company also planned to seek DOC permission for a 2-3 hour nature walk option in conjunction with the caves trip, Mr Baylis said.

Mr Carter congratulated Real Journeys on the launch and upgrades.

The company was also giving back to conservation through a \$10,000 sponsorship of DOC's blue duck/whio recovery programme, \$40,000 for research into the harlequin gecko on Stewart Island and \$50,000 a year through the Leslie Hutchins Conservation Foundation.

"The Department of Conser-



There we go: Pictured (from left) Real Journeys co-founder Olive Hutchins, company engineer Jim Young, Marje Hutchins (Olive's daughter-in-law) and Te Anau manager Neil Collinson christening the Luminosa the traditional way at Te Anau at the weekend.

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vation, and I, as Minister of Conservation, appreciate this contribution," he said.

Mr Carter also announced the release of a DOC-funded study titled Regional Economic Impacts of Fiordland National Park.

The report by Christchurch econ-

omist Geoff Butcher showed that as a result of the national park, there an extra \$196 million was spent in Southland and Queenstown Lakes districts, and an extra 1600 jobs created.

Real Journeys CEO Dave Hawkey described the boat as "stunning"

and said it showed the company's commitment to developing tourism in Te Anau and Fiordland. He thanked company engineer Jim Young, who had overseen the project and Te Anau manager Neil Collinson, whose passion for caves and commitment had driven the project.

