



Australian Mariners' Welfare Society

ABN 86 000 008 122

Founded as Sydney Sailors Home – 1863

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR OF AUSTRALIAN MARINERS WELFARE SOCIETY

Last Thursday 3rd September was Merchant Navy Day. This is the day when all Australian's are asked to remember the contribution made by our merchant seafarers in wartime and especially all those who lost their lives in the service of the nation. A number of industry bodies marked the occasion with statements and tributes. Set out below is an extract from the Media Release by Maritime Industry Australia Limited that acknowledges not only the service of seafarers in the past, but the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on seafarers today:

“As we pause to reflect on the sacrifice of Australian merchant seafarers who have lost their lives in the service of our country, we extend our gratitude to all seafarers working today and acknowledge the vital contribution they are making during this pandemic to keep trade moving and the economy ticking.

Unfortunately, today's seafarers also face incredibly challenging circumstances, not due to war but due to Governments around the world locking their borders in the fight against COVID-19.

Right now, State Governments across the nation (except Queensland) have turned their back on basic seafarers needs, and not only tolerate but contribute to their mistreatment. They are currently denying shore leave and have made it incredibly difficult to relieve the workers. These circumstances make it extremely difficult for seafarers to access necessary and urgent medical and dental care on Australian shores – as is their unquestionable right to receive, and our responsibility to provide.

Shipping is critical to Australia and ships rely on their crews to operate. More must be done by State Governments to facilitate movement of all crew directly to vessels, to allow Australian seafarers to return to their homes at the end of their work-swing and to accommodate international maritime crew entry to Australia in excess of the general aviation passenger cap so that those who have been on board ships for more than 12 months can be relieved in Australia.

There is an unquestionable link between seafarer's welfare issues and the safety of the shipping that forms a critical part of our supply chain which is currently helping to keep our economy ticking.”

Merchant mariners and their families are suffering right now due to the restrictions on the movement of seafarers. We are seeing this both domestically and internationally; with ship's crews unable to return home and take leave; and with those seafarers stuck at home enduring great economic hardship because they are unable to join their vessel. AMWS calls on Governments at all levels to take all necessary steps to resolve this crisis.

David Parmeter
Chair, Australian Mariners Welfare Society
www.marinerswelfare.com
