

The Mariners' Lifeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MARINERS' WELFARE SOCIETY (ABN 86 000 008 122)
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CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Hello everyone, and it is my great pleasure to welcome you all to the June 2023 edition of 'The Mariners Lifeline'

The Editor and AMWS Council Member, Martin Orchard, has once again done an outstanding job of compiling a series of articles that are relevant and informative.

In that regard there are two themes running through this edition.

The first is the welfare of seafarers. It may be an obvious thing to say as the Australian Mariners Welfare Society, but the wellbeing of those who work at sea is the driving focus of this organisation. It is recognised in Our Vision: *To ensure all seafarers and their dependants, irrespective of nationality, gender and beliefs are treated with dignity, respect and compassion.* Martin has written an article that describes in some detail the activities undertaken by AMWS to turn this aspiration into reality.

I also bring to your attention the article on the latest report from the Neptune Declaration and the Seafarers' Happiness Index. These are important measures of how seafarers are being treated and consequently their morale and mental health. As we all know, COVID-19 was a huge challenge that adversely and disproportionately impacted seafarers. In that

regard the report by Catherine Hindley, Operations Support Coordinator, Wave Shipping, on her personal experience working with seafarers during the pandemic, captures important learnings from this period. Catherine was awarded the Seafarers' Welfare Award at the Daily Cargo News' (DCN) Shipping and Maritime Industry Awards for 2022, which is appropriate recognition of her contribution to seafarers' welfare.

As many of you will be aware, on 18th May the industry celebrated the International Day for Women in Maritime. Any discussion of seafarer welfare must include the challenges faced by women at sea. Martin's article on this subject is timely and pertinent.

The second theme is the work we do at AMWS



David Parmeter,
Chairman of the
Australian Mariners
Welfare Society

SEAFARERS HEALTH AND SAFETY	PAGE 2
SEAFARER'S WELFARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC	PAGE 4
THE AMWS TREVOR HOWARTH & JIM ISRAEL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS	PAGE 8
INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)	PAGE 9
CLARIFICATION OF CRITERIA FOR AMWS SCHOLARSHIPS	PAGE 11
WOMEN AT SEA	PAGE 12
58TH ANNUAL COMMEMORATION AT SYDNEY'S MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL	PAGE 13
AMWS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS' WELFARE	PAGE 14
PIRACY AT SEA	PAGE 15
AMWS MEMBERSHIP – JUNE 2023	PAGE 17

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in conjunction with like-minded and fraternal organisations. This approach is captured in Our Goals which state: *For AMWS to be recognised as a leading supporter of seafarer welfare in Australia. We will do this by speaking up on issues that adversely impact seafarers both in Australia and overseas. We will achieve practical outcomes by working with all organisations and individuals that support the welfare of seafarers – retired, current and emerging.*

Two areas where we work closely with other organisations is our scholarship program at the Australian Maritime College (AMC), and the tall ship training offered through the Trevor Howarth Memorial Scholarship and Jim Israel Memorial Scholarship schemes. Our ability to offer scholarships is defined by the AMWS Constitution and the article by Llew Russell providing clarification on who is eligible for a scholarship is important to note. The success of the tall ship training program is a great source of satisfaction to all involved and one of the most impactful things we do. The comment from Thomas, one of the beneficiaries of the program, that 'It was the greatest experience of my life' is a terrific endorsement of the value of the program.

Another fraternal organisation is the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund (MNWMF). On 16th April I attended the 58th Annual Commemoration at the Merchant Navy Memorial and Columbarium in Rockwood Cemetery. The article in the newsletter, reproduced from the DCN, describes the dignified service expertly planned and managed by MNWMF. A wreath was laid on behalf of AMWS by our long serving Councillor Graham Lightfoot.

There is a lot of great reading in this edition of 'The Mariners Lifeline'. I want to thank all the contributors and especially Martin. Your efforts are very much appreciated.

On behalf of everyone involved with AMWS, I hope you enjoy this publication.

David Parmeter
Chairman



SEAFARERS' HEALTH & SAFETY: THE NEPTUNE DECLARATION/HAPPINESS INDEX REPORT

Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor

As reported in previous editions of 'The Mariners' Lifeline', AMWS is one of the 850 maritime organisations which have signed The Neptune Declaration on seafarers' well-being and crew change.

The latest indicator for the period January to March 2023 indicates that the number of seafarers from the sample who are onboard vessels beyond the expiry of their contract decreased from 2.7% to 2.2% since January 2023. When these set of statistics were first promulgated in May 2021, this figure was 5.8%.

The number of seafarers onboard for over 11 months remained unchanged at 0.2% since January 2023. In May 2021, when this statistic was first promulgated, the figure was 0.4%.

The contributing ship managers have highlighted the key developments that have impacted crew changes during the past quarter:

- Domestic lockdowns and flight cancellations have reduced.
- Crew change operations of foreign crews at Chinese ports are relatively back to normal.
- Brazil has resumed their immigration protocol for crew changes within Brazilian territories.
- Ship owners are now reviewing their Covid protocols. Some are not testing crews prior departure from their home country, or prior to boarding a ship at the port of destination.
- Overall, there is a positive trend towards normalisation to pre-Covid conditions.
- Air flights to other parts of the globe remain a significant cost factor.

With regards to seafarer vaccinations, samples taken during the first quarter 2023 indicate that 96.3% of seafarers have been vaccinated, compared to 95.6% in the previous quarter. In August 2021, when these statistics were first promulgated, the figure was only 15.3%.

The contributing ship managers highlighted the following factors in relation to vaccinating seafarers:

- Opportunities for carrying out vaccinations during port calls have decreased drastically.
- Some ship managers are increasingly opting to replace unvaccinated crew members onboard with vaccinated seafarers through normal crew changes. This enables seafarers to get vaccinated while onshore.
- Some companies are no longer requesting their seafarers to renew or boost their vaccinations, seemingly because of lack of effectiveness in existing vaccines. Instead, they are recommending their seafarers seek updated vaccines in case new and more dangerous variants of the virus emerge.

AMWS will continue to monitor these Neptune Declaration statistics, and report of the outcomes as and when it is felt that our readers should be made aware of any significant change in the trend of these statistics in the future.

Turning to the welfare of seafarers whilst at sea, the Seafarers' Happiness Index (SHI) is a quarterly survey conducted by the Mission to Seafarers to gauge the sentiment of seafarers at sea. The survey asks seafarers of different ranks around the world, and serving on various types of vessels, ten key questions about various

The Seafarers' Happiness Index (SHI) is a quarterly survey conducted by the Mission to Seafarers to gauge the sentiment of seafarers at sea.

aspects of their life and work. Their anonymous answers provide valuable insights into the challenges and opportunities facing seafarers.

Of the ten questions only one question, covering seafarers' ability to maintain contact with their family whilst at sea, received an increase in satisfaction in the Q1 2023 quarter from the previous SHI covering Q4 2022. This result was based on crews remarking on the cheaper costs and the continuing improvement with the communication systems aboard, although there were complaints that some companies were providing their crews with out-of-date communication technology.

The other nine questions of the survey covered:

- The general happiness of crews whilst at sea.
- Access to shore leave.
- Wages and salary.
- Food on board.
- Ability to keep fit and healthy whilst on board.
- The level of training the crew receive.
- The interaction with the crew on board.
- The workload on board.
- Welfare facilities available whilst ashore.

All the above nine areas received a decrease in satisfaction in Q1 2023 compared to Q4 2022.

At the Singapore Maritime Week held in late April 2023, the SHI stakeholders, supported by ship owners, managers and charterers, held a round table meeting to 'deep dive' into the SHI results. The objective of the meeting was to move beyond hearing the messages from seafarers, and convert words into actions, with a focus on improving the well-being of seafarers, both whilst at sea and ashore, and generating lessons that can be applied across the global fleet.

AMWS will continue to monitor future quarterly SHIs, and report on the progress being made to improve the welfare of seafarers whilst at sea and ashore.



SEAFARERS' WELFARE DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC – A PERSONAL STORY

by Catherine Hindley, Operations Support Coordinator, Wave Shipping.

Since 2003, I have been involved in the shipping industry as a whole and have been a part of Wave Shipping since 2017. Throughout my career, crew welfare has remained a top priority for me and my colleagues, as we understand that they are the backbone of an industry that keeps the world turning.

As an organisation and as individuals, we were fortunate to have been able to continue with our roles and daily lives with minimal disruption during the Covid-19

pandemic. Despite the imposed restrictions across the country or states, we were able to adapt and maintain our freedom without significant loss.

However, during this time, restrictions placed on international arrivals, especially maritime seafarers/vessels across Australia and the world, were of an extreme nature. They resulted in crews not even being able to step onto a berth without strict restrictions/quarantine requirements put in place. Maritime seafarers were mostly restricted onboard at all times, with limited personal interaction with any other individuals for months on end. The requirements for the crews' medical needs were of such a strict nature that rarely would a captain or crew make a request for such assistance due to the high costs and/or the cumbersome requirements involved.



*Catherine Hindley,
Operations Support Coordinator,
Wave Shipping.*

Crew movements were very highly restricted – often under police guard during their transits, as if they were criminals. Then staying in quarantine hotels in 1 x Single occupancy rooms for extended quarantine periods, some quarantining in multiple jurisdictions for a single trip from A to B. This affects a person's mental health greatly, especially when in a foreign country, away from loved ones.

We recognised they required assistance early on and researched the best ways that we could assist.

My colleagues and I identified early on that there was a need to have a dedicated resource allocated to crew changes, I put my hand up to take on the challenge. I believe that by having dedicated crew support resources, we were able to provide a high level of attention and support, as it was my full time job, not something I did part time whilst also trying to bring vessels in and out of ports.

The strict Quarantine and Health requirements of each Australian State, as well as other countries, needed to be understood and worked through to ensure the continuation of supply chains. However, there was a human element that we could not overlook – crew wellbeing needed to be prioritised.

Prior to the pandemic, our Vessel Operators could easily engage transport and accommodation services to assist with crew changes, medical requirements and shore leave. With the Pandemic came challenges never presented before, including understanding each and every State Government's Health requirements, which differed in structure and level of restriction. We were required to work with various levels of authorities to understand the approvals required for crew movements, (crew movements for Crew Change ONLY, as all shore leave was completely removed as an option). We worked closely with various terminals and obtained their support by respecting their changes and requirements for port access. Additionally, we maintained ongoing communication with the local

There are multiple stories of crew members who had been on board for more than eleven months straight.

Mission to Seafarers centres in all the ports where we were operating. We also engaged closely with our clients to gather their support.

As we managed crew welfare throughout the pandemic, all of the movements we assisted with were memorable. There are multiple stories of crew members who had been on board for more than eleven months straight, not setting their



feet on land during that entire time due to the unavailability of crew changes/shore leave in most countries. Many jurisdictions banned crew changes/shore leave altogether. We assisted numerous crew members who were required to undertake extended quarantine periods, alone, in quarantine hotels for many weeks. Additionally, they had to undergo several PCR tests before they were even permitted to board their flights to their home countries. Many crew members also had to wait in Quarantine due to the limited flights available.

Due to the reluctance of some Australian jurisdictions to facilitate crew changes, Queensland's more favourable rules for crew changes made it a favourite location for ship owners and managers to carry out this operation. We assisted in numerous crew changes, conducted at the Brisbane Outer Anchorage via launch, where ships would deviate on their way up and down the Australian East Coast. We assisted with Chartered flights of over 60 personnel who arrived in this country and were subject to the

full 14 days quarantine time prior to them being dispersed all over Australia to allow their colleagues to repatriate.

We also assisted in obtaining medical treatment during these challenging times. We were fortunate enough to work with the Mission to Seafarers in Newcastle to assist one crew member with urgent medical assistance. He remained in Newcastle Hospital Hotel for a combined period for about six weeks obtaining the care required before he was given clearance to proceed home to his family.

Unfortunately there is still the misconception amongst many that shore leave is not available to seafarers. We are doing all we can to regularly communicate to our crew members and their owners that this is NOT the case and, when possible, we provide them with the options available at each Port to enjoy in their limited time available ashore.

We continue to be advocates of crew vaccinations and, again, provide as much information and opportunities for the crew to seek these services. They are not always readily available in their home countries. We feel privileged to be able to

assist the seafarers where possible.

Lastly, the Covid-19 pandemic highlighted the challenges faced by seafarers, who have been adversely affected by the restrictions on crew changes and travel arrangements imposed by various countries around the world. It is pleasing to see that several measures have now been put in place to safeguard the welfare of seafarers and facilitate crew changes during future crises:

- Key organisations such as the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have issued guidelines to ensure that seafarers are treated as key workers and that their rights are protected during the pandemic;
- Many countries have recognised the importance of seafarers and have designated them as essential workers, allowing them to travel and enter ports despite travel restrictions;
- The industry continues to work to improve crew change protocols to minimise the risk of infection and to facilitate safe crew changes. This includes pre-boarding health screenings, quarantine measures, and the provision of personal protective equipment;
- Technology has been used to facilitate remote inspections, virtual crew change handover, and training, reducing the need for seafarers to travel and interact in person;
- The industry has also worked to address the mental health challenges faced by seafarers during the pandemic by providing access to mental health support services, counselling, and engaging with local Mission to Seafarers, and other charities, across the globe to assist in providing support.

One silver lining for me, personally, from the pandemic has been the trajectory of my career. I now lead a small team at Wave Shipping that primarily deals with vessel auxiliary requirements, including crewing. Last year, I was recognised for my efforts during the pandemic with the Daily Cargo News' (DCN) award for crew welfare. Recently, I have joined the committee for the Mission to Seafarers in Brisbane, where I hope to continue positively impacting the welfare of crew members calling at the Port of Brisbane and beyond.

Footnote: *As mentioned in Catherine's article, she was awarded the DCN's Seafarers Welfare Award at the DCN's Shipping and Maritime Industry Awards for 2022. AMWS take this opportunity to congratulate Catherine, and applaud her ongoing efforts with seafarers' welfare.*



THE AMWS TREVOR HOWARTH & JIM ISRAEL MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIPS



'Young Endeavour' approaching HMAS Waterhen in Sydney Harbour
Photograph: Graham Lightfoot

Since the last edition of the 'The Mariners' Lifeline' in December 2022, two candidates have successfully completed voyages on the 'Young Endeavour' as part of the AMWS' Trevor Howarth Memorial Scholarship and Jim Israel Memorial Scholarship schemes.

Last December, Jaydon completed the voyage from Geelong to Sydney, and was sponsored by the Salvation Army as a candidate for the Jim Israel Scholarship.

Upon completing his voyage on 'Young Endeavour', Jaydon made the following comments: *'It is difficult for me to express my gratitude to Graham Lightfoot and the rest of the team at the SALVOS who were behind this Young Endeavour scholarship. The voyage on the Young Endeavour was truly extraordinary; I relished every glowing second of it, met a tonne of fascinating individuals, and made a few lifelong friends. This wonderful experience has transformed many lives, including mine, so I strongly encourage anyone who is considering applying to do so!'*

His sponsor, the Salvation Army, further commented that Jaydon is now studying to graduate from Year 12 this year, and is aiming to attend university.

Thomas successfully completed a round voyage, Sydney/Sydney, in April 2023. Thomas was sponsored by Stepping Stone House as a candidate for the Trevor Howarth Scholarship, in conjunction with AMWS and Sydney Cove Rotary Club.

At the conclusion of his voyage in Sydney, Thomas simply said *'It was the greatest experience of my life'*.

AMWS congratulate Jaydon and Thomas, and thank the Salvation Army, Stepping Stone House and Sydney Cove Rotary Club for their continuing support of the AMWS' Trevor Howarth Memorial and Jim Israel Memorial Scholarships



L to R – Jaydon's Father, Jaydon, Graham Lightfoot (AMWS), Christopher Healey (Salvation Army)



L to R – Captain Chris Green (AMWS), Thomas, Stepping Stone Representative, Bill Little (Sydney Cove Rotary Club)

INDIAN OCEAN RIM ASSOCIATION (IORA)

Sheridan Jones is an Aviation Search & Rescue Mission Coordinator (SMC) with the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA) based in Canberra, Australia. Sheridan has been with AMSA for over 6 years and in the aviation industry for nearly 20 years.



Sheridan was involved in the IORA workshop in the Seychelles and Bangladesh, where she instructed representatives from numerous Indian Ocean neighbouring countries on aviation search and rescue.

Previously, Sheridan was an Aircraft Mission Coordinator (AMC) for over 10 years on AMSA's dedicated fixed-wing aircraft based in Melbourne, Victoria. Sheridan was also an AMC onboard the Australian Border Force surveillance aircraft patrolling Australia's coastline and oceans, and she has conducted multiple seasons of airborne fire-scanning throughout Australia. Her airborne career saw her gain nearly 5,500 flying hours.

Sheridan is currently completing a University Degree in Aviation Management and holds a student Pilot licence.

The significance of protecting the Indian Ocean

The Indian Ocean is a major transit area for international trade: half of the world's container ships, one-third of the world's bulk cargo traffic, and two-thirds of the world's oil shipments cross its waters annually.

The Indian Ocean is also home to some 2.7 billion people, or one third of the world's population, many of whom are employed in the fishing industry, which holds a major presence. Safe operations are sometimes challenged by a range of issues, including piracy, unseaworthy vessels and the unavailability of life-saving appliances.

To ensure the ongoing safety and economic prosperity for all industries dependant on the Indian Ocean, it is important that maritime safety and maritime security are prioritised. As it stands, the region is disproportionately overrepresented in maritime safety disaster events. Furthermore, while economic activities at sea must be protected against threats such as piracy and terrorism, they should also be conducted safely, with cooperation between port states, governments, and non-governmental organisations.

Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA)

IORA is an inter-governmental organisation, established in 1997, with 23 current members: Australia, Bangladesh, Comoros, France, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kenya, Madagascar, Malaysia, Maldives, Mauritius, Mozambique, Oman, Seychelles, Singapore, Somalia, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Thailand, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

IORA is the only ministerial-level forum concerned with the Indian Ocean region and its partners, and Australia is proud to be a founding partner of this organisation. Australia's unique geographical position – with immense coastlines located in both the Indian Ocean and the Pacific Oceans – makes IORA an invaluable forum for us to promote our economic and security interests in the region.

Member States are obliged, under the International Maritime Organization,

The Indian Ocean is also home to some 2.7 billion people, or one third of the world's population.

and International Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue Manual, to undertake search and rescue (SAR) exercises with countries adjacent to their SAR region, every two years. The last exercises were held in 2022 in Bangladesh and the Seychelles, and were attended by representatives from the Australian Maritime Safety Authority (AMSA). These exercises provide an opportunity to showcase Australia's SAR capability, training and expertise, as well as engage on an international level with our Indian Ocean stakeholders and partners.

IORA Search and Rescue Exercises

Australia, as a world leader in aviation and maritime SAR, maritime assistance services, and pollution response, agreed to lead the exercise workshops in Seychelles and Bangladesh in August and September 2022. The workshops supported regional efforts to improve maritime safety across the Indian Ocean, while also reinforcing our multilateral partnerships, which are critical for economic activity in IORA Member States that rely heavily on the maritime domain.

The workshops invited delegates to present their governmental structure, specifically how they respond to, and resource, emergency and pollution incidents. While all attendees of the workshops demonstrated a deeply-held commitment to a safe and secure Indian Ocean, Australia recognises that many Member States seek support for SAR assistance. Australia, through AMSA, assists many of our neighbours, including in the north-west Indian Ocean region and we have extensive experience tailoring assistance to the individual needs of counterpart SAR agencies.

The workshops included desktop SAR exercises, based on realistic scenarios, and led to some dynamic participation amongst Member States. Through these exercises, countries identified their strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement and networked to establish connections and optimise resources. To complement this training, Australia provided our IORA partners with a water drift-modelling app, which will greatly assist the region with maritime emergencies in addition to Australia's National Search & Rescue (NATSAR) Manual which provides guidance to authorities on SAR operations.

As world leaders in maritime safety and SAR, Australia, through AMSA, is deeply committed to enhancing the objectives of IORA. In addition to the exciting work outlined here, IORA supports other priorities, such as the Blue Economy initiative (which promotes sustainable and inclusive industrial growth in the Indian Ocean), promotes tourism and cultural exchanges across the region, and runs a working group of Women's Economic Empowerment. These initiatives are making real strides in improving maritime safety and security in the Indian Ocean – a region critical to Australia's ongoing interests.

As
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CLARIFICATION OF CRITERIA FOR AMWS SCHOLARSHIPS

Llew Russell AM, AMWS Councillor & Chairman of the Scholarship Committee

Readers will recall that the criteria for the offering of scholarships in the AMWS Constitution is restrictive in terms of requiring applicants to be the children of seafarers or ex-seafarers, and of low to moderate financial means. This latter requirement has not been a deterrent.

The Society has endeavoured to have this requirement broadened in scope to attract more applicants, but regrettably there are legal obstacles to going down that road. The Council has decided to ensure that those maritime training institutions that provide courses, meeting AMSA certification standards, recognise that the term “seafarers” is considered to be anyone that earns their living from the sea. It is acknowledged that in the past there has been a propensity to focus on blue water courses, but near-coastal courses are also applicable.

In other words, the children of currently serving or retired seafarers could not only involve those serving or having served in the Navy, merchant marine or deep sea fishing, but also those on dredges, cruise vessels, ferries, tugs, pilot boats, vessels carrying coastal cargoes or off-shore supply vessels etc. Maritime courses would include maritime operations and coastal seafaring such as maritime engineering, for near-coastal water, coxswain certificates, integrated ratings doing Certificate 111 courses in maritime operations, and so on.

The AMWS congratulates Matthew undertaking a Bachelor of Applied Science (Marine Engineering) at the Australian Maritime College for being awarded the \$3000 Malcolm Longstaff Memorial Scholarship for semester 1. Malcolm Longstaff was a long-standing and very valued member of the Council who left a bequest to the AMWS in his Will.

Matthew included in his letter of appreciation *“Your scholarship has not only provided me with the necessary financial support, but it has also given me the motivation and encouragement to keep on striving towards my goals. This scholarship will not only help me in the pursuit of my education, but it will also enable me to participate in extracurricular activities and take advantage of various learning opportunities that would have otherwise been beyond my reach.”*

We wish Matthew all the best in his future studies. He will be offered honorary membership of the AMWS while he continues his studies at the College and will also be offered mentoring opportunities.

“Your scholarship has not only provided me with the necessary financial support, but it has also given me the motivation and encouragement to keep on striving towards my goals.”



WOMEN AT SEA

Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor.

A new study recently carried out by the All Aboard Alliance and the Global Maritime Forum interviewed 115 anonymous women seafarers, from captains to deck hands, which addresses the challenges they experience at sea, from ill-fitting safety gear to slower career progression, and harassment.

The All Aboard Alliance currently has 36 member companies and represents leaders from across the maritime industry who are focused on increasing diversity, equity and inclusion in all organisations, at sea and ashore.

The Global Maritime Forum is a Copenhagen-based not-for-profit organisation, committed to shaping the future of global seaborne trade to increase sustainable long-term economic development and human wellbeing.

Most of the women interviewed were Asian (63%) and European (25%).

The study identified 15 key areas of concern, termed in the report as 'pain points', which can be categorised under four broad headings:

1. **Difficult for women to succeed professionally at sea:** being perceived as less competent than male co-workers, not having equal access to training or tasks onboard, and having to outperform male co-workers to get respected or promoted.

2. **Challenging social relations onboard:** feeling isolated or unsupported because of their gender, the concern of gossip or rumours, or power abuse or sexual harassment and sexual misconduct onboard.

3. **Systemic employment challenges at sea:** service contracts at sea being too long, lack of family planning options, such as maternity leave or sea-shore rotation programmes, resulting in many women having to choose between a career at sea or starting a family. There

are many companies which remain reluctant, or are not willing, to recruit women seafarers.

4. **Physical condition onboard:** lack of access to female sanitary products onboard or lack of access to adequately fitting Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), such as boiler suits, fire gloves etc., or lack of access to designated women's changing rooms, bathrooms, etc. onboard.

The goal of this report is to create better transparency and help spread awareness of the major challenges experienced by women at sea.

The next phase of the project will be launched later in 2023. The focus will be on selected vessels owned/managed by the All Aboard Alliance's members' vessels, crewed by a higher-than-average number of women officers and crew members who will test the co-designed measures and solutions in order to identify which

A new study carried out by the All Aboard Alliance and the Global Maritime Forum interviewed 115 anonymous women seafarers, addressing the challenges they experienced at sea, from ill-fitting safety gear to slower career progression, and harassment.

of the proposed solutions are most impactful in addressing the 15 key pain points for female seafarers.

This project will assist the All Aboard Alliance members in making a career at sea not just inclusive, but also attractive to more women seafarers in the future.

The AMWS has a keen interest in the recruitment, retainment and promotion of women at sea, and congratulates the All Aboard Alliance and the Global Maritime Forum for their initiative in bringing the various outcomes of their survey to the attention of the global maritime community. AMWS will be monitoring the progress of this Project, and will report on further outcomes in future editions of 'The Mariners' Lifeline'.



58TH ANNUAL COMMEMORATION AT SYDNEY'S MERCHANT NAVY MEMORIAL

Abby Williams | 17th April, 2023

THE 58th annual commemoration at the Merchant Navy Memorial and Columbarium on the weekend was a time of gratitude for Australia's seafarers and reflection on their sacrifices in times of war.



Rear Admiral Christopher Smith AM, CSM, RAN addresses guests during the 58th annual commemoration at the Merchant Navy Memorial and Columbarium.

Image: Abby Williams/DCN

More than 100 merchant mariners, their families and supporters gathered at the Rookwood Necropolis on Sunday (16 April) for the ceremony, many bearing wreaths.

Welcoming the guests, Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund Chairman, David Field, said it was the largest turnout at the Rookwood commemoration in 20 years.

Sister Mary Leahy of Stella Maris invited guests to listen to and experience the stories and memories shared that morning.

"Today reminds us of relationships, the many merchant seafarers we remember today who we know and [who] sat here with us year after year, and others who were cut short during war, along with the merchant seafarers we know today from all over the world," she said.

"Today we honour them all as a people of the sea."

John Kewa, general manager and chaplain at Mission to Seafarers Port Kembla, led guests in a prayer for those people of the sea: the seafarers, the men and women of the royal and merchant navies, lighthouse keepers, pilots and fishermen.

Mr Field then invited Rear Admiral Christopher Smith AM, CSM, RAN to deliver an address as the guest of honour.

“The reliance on each other in WWI and WWII of our navy and merchant navy is a bond that will never be forgotten,” Mr Field said.

Rear Admiral Smith observed the 58th annual commemoration coincided with the 80th anniversary of the sinking of the 2/3 Australian hospital ship Centaur during World War II.

The ship was torpedoed on 14 May 1943. Of the 332 people on board, only 64 survived the attack.

Rear Admiral Smith said many merchant seamen joined the navy during the war, wearing naval uniforms and serving on naval ships under the white ensign while the royal navy experienced a shortage of experienced seamen.

“Merchantmen suffered the greatest percentage of deaths of any service during the second world war, but the number of the Australian merchant mariners killed during conflict is difficult to estimate,” he said.

“Over 70 years of peace, liberty and our material wealth are owed to those gallant merchant navy sailors.

“It is our duty to ensure that their great sacrifice continues to be remembered and honoured. And we will remember them. Lest we forget.”

The Last Post, a minute of silence, the ringing of eight bells and the laying of wreaths concluded the commemoration.

This article appeared in the Daily Cargo News (DCN) on 18th April, 2023, and AMWS wish to thank Abby Williams and the DCN for their permission to publish this article in this edition of ‘The Mariners’ Lifeline’.



AMWS’ CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS’ WELFARE

Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor.

The AMWS focus remains on the welfare of seafarers, whilst at sea or ashore, to ensure they can go about their task of ensuring the world trade is moved in a safe and efficient manner.

In addition, AMWS provides assistance and relief towards the welfare of past, present and future seafarers in Australia in the following ways:

- Provision of subsidised home-unit accommodation for ex-seafarers of modest means.
- Annual grants to the Mission to Seafarers and the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella

Maris) in recognition of their offering a 'home away from home' for visiting mariners at 39 centres around the Australian coast.

- Project grants to assist with the upkeep and improvements to these centres including, but not limited to, IT facilities, storm damage, maintenance of the stations' buses to transport visiting seafarers between their vessel and the local station.
- Offering maritime scholarships to those studying to become qualified seafarers. Plus tall-ship training experience to young people aged 15-19 years who meet AMWS' eligibility criteria.
- Representation on the Australian Welfare Council whose role is to ensure the provision of appropriate welfare services for all seafarers visiting Australian ports.
- Membership of the Sydney Port Welfare Committee.

During the twelve months ending 31st December, 2022, AMWS distributed grants to various seafarers' welfare organisations, the Mission to Seafarers and the Apostleship of the Sea, and to some of their various stations around the Australian coast, and scholarships totalling over \$221,000.

For the three months ended 31st March, 2023, AMWS paid grants totalling \$37,000, and in addition made welfare payments to various Mission to Seafarers and Apostleship of the Sea stations around the coast totalling over \$16,000 to cover the costs associated with the maintenance of stations' internet systems and the upkeep of their ports' buses that transport visiting crews around their port areas.



PIRACY AT SEA

Martin Orchard - AMWS Councillor & Editor

The International Maritime Bureau (IMB), (the specialised department of the International Chamber of Commerce with global responsibility for the fighting of crimes related to maritime trades and transportation), report that during the first quarter of 2023, 27 incidents were reported, globally, compared to 37 during the same period in 2022. This is the lowest level of global piracy and armed robbery incidents reported since 1993.

Of the 27 incidents, perpetrators boarded the victims' vessels in 24 cases, with two vessels reporting attempted incidents and another vessel was hijacked.

The Gulf of Guinea, off the West African coast, has been the centre of maritime crime in recent years. But only 5 incidents were reported in Q1 2023, compared to 8 in 2022 and 16 in 2021.

However, in March 2023 a product tanker was hijacked 140 nautical miles off the Congo Coast, and in April another tanker was hijacked 570km off the Ivory Coast.

Security experts have noted that these two attacks occurred several hundred kilometres away from 'high-risk' area in the Gulf of Guinea where anti-piracy efforts have been concentrated. The security experts fear that pirates are adapting to 'anti-piracy' operations by operating at a greater distance from the West African coast.

Despite the reduction in incidents, the IMB is calling for coastal response agencies and international navies to maintain their efforts.

Despite this reduction in incidents, the IMB is calling for coastal response agencies and international navies to maintain their efforts in this region.

In Asian waters, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery [ReCAAP], (Australia is a signatory to this Agreement), reported 84 incidents of piracy and robbery against ships in Asian waters during 2022, compared to 82 incidents in 2021.

The area of concern remains the Singapore Strait where 55 incidents occurred in 2022, compared to 49 incidents in 2021. Most incidents were petty theft, with the unarmed perpetrators escaping immediately after being sighted by the crew who were left uninjured.

During Q1 2023, 25 incidents of armed robbery were reported in Asian waters, compared to 23 incidents during the same period in 2022.

Again, the Singapore Strait continues to be an area of concern with 19 incidents reported during Q1 2023, compared to 18 incidents during the same period in 2022.

Incidents occurring in South American waters represent around a third of the global incidents, with the Callao anchorage off Peru of particular concern. Five incidents were reported in that area in Q1 2023, and this figure is consistent with the reported incidents during the same period in recent years.

The AMWS will continue to monitor these areas of the globe which continue to witness incidents of piracy and armed robbery on innocent seafarers who continue to go about their duties in these dangerous environments.



AMWS' WEBSITE

Stay in touch with the AMWS' many ongoing activities by visiting the website: www.marinerswelfare.com or Facebook: www.facebook.com/marinerswelfareaus or 'Australian Mariners Welfare Society'.



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