

The Mariners' Lifeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MARINERS' WELFARE SOCIETY (ABN 86 000 008 122)
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REFLECTIONS OF A RETIRING CHAIRMAN

Captain Alan Tait, OAM.

Since informing the Council at our February meeting that I would not be standing for re-election as Chairman at our next meeting, I have had time to reflect on my fifteen years in that role. This decision was also taken in the knowledge that I would shortly be turning 80.

My link with the Society began 28 years ago when Captain Paddy Rahilly, then Marine Superintendent of Howard Smith Industries, persuaded me to join what was then the Sydney Sailors Home. I was already an active Rotarian and much involved with my work in the shipping industry, which had kept me occupied serving at sea and ashore for 40 years.

Thus, I needed at that stage to reflect on what might lie ahead in my working life having up to then given little thought as to where my future might lie. It was not long before I realised just how little I knew about the industry and more particularly about those in senior positions who made it all work.

The Sydney Sailors Home history records the service of these men, many of whom sat on the Council of the Home and became friends and mentors from whom I learned much.

When asked to take over as Chairman in 2005 I did so believing that my tenure should be a maximum of five years. At that time the Society had only recently changed its name to the Australian Mariners Welfare Society; this had occurred under the chairmanship of John Hunter and Jim Israel and with the valuable advice and guidance of John Bowen, for many years our Honorary Solicitor.

On assuming office, it was clear that my first priority would be to build the Society's profile under its new name. Significant work in this regard had already been done by John and Jim, my two immediate predecessors.

For example we widened the scope of scholarships awarded to seagoing personnel undertaking tertiary maritime studies, expanded our youth sail training program and introduced a newsletter which was distributed not only to members of the Society but also widely within the



*Captain Alan Tait,
OAM*

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shipping industry itself.

Accommodation was also being provided for retired seafarers of limited means in home unit accommodation we had acquired in Horizon Towers, an apartment complex at Hornsby NSW. A history of the Sydney Sailors Home had also been commissioned by the Council so that its role in serving seafarers could be recorded.

At the same time there were also some disappointments. Our move towards legally expanding the scope of our scholarship program was unsuccessful as also were my efforts to introduce female membership of our Council.

On the other hand, the finances of the Society were in good order and this enabled an expansion of arrangements under which grants for specific purposes could be given to seafarers' welfare providers located at 30 ports around the Australian coast.

These organisations include the Mission to Seafarers and The Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) who offer hospitality and support to visiting crew members of all faiths and nationalities and provide free access to Internet facilities enabling them to contact relatives and friends overseas. The operating and replacement costs of these facilities are largely met by the Society.

Since the Society's inception, over \$1.7 million has been distributed under this grants program. Other payments we make in relation to the upkeep of our home units for retired seafarers, scholarships, sail training program and the significant ongoing support for an international fund which assists families of crew members taken hostage by piracy on the high seas, increase our total disbursements to \$2.3 million.

Recognising the number of awards given to the Society and to individual members over the years indicates to me that we have remained contemporary and relevant in the industry. Importantly, we now have representation on various forums within Australia concerned with issues of seafarers' welfare. Wider public knowledge of our work has been greatly facilitated by a first class website.

A milestone in worldwide shipping occurred in 2013 with the implementation of the Maritime Labour Convention 2006 internationally, which stipulates minimum standards for pay and conditions for crew members of ships and the monitoring of the seaworthiness of vessels themselves. Australia quickly became a signatory to the Convention. In turn the Commonwealth Government nominated the Australian Maritime Safety Authority as the agency responsible for Australia-wide compliance with the Convention, a role which it has performed with vigour and success.

In that context, I also highly commend the International Transport Federation formed 124 years ago to help seafarers worldwide.

Finally, I pay tribute to our serving and former Councillors who brought their knowledge and professional skills to bear on the work of the Society. Much

It was clear that my first priority would be to build the Society's profile.

of the success which has been achieved can be attributed to the camaraderie and cohesion of the Board and I am ever grateful for this unwavering support throughout my Chairmanship.

I shall be relinquishing this role at the end of our Meeting of Councillors on 19 May following the AGM. Our Councillor Mr David Parmeter will be standing for election as Chairman. He has recently retired from the shipping industry and brings with him experience that will be of benefit to the Society and has my full support and encouragement.

It is perhaps not mentioned as often as it should be, but many of us rely heavily on the support of family and friends in performing their role. I have been most fortunate that my wife, Lorraine, and family have always been totally supportive of my work in whatever opportunity I was given to serve.

I wish the society well in the future and will always follow its fortunes with great interest.

Might I conclude by expressing my personnel gratitude to all those health workers that are showing us such deep and meaningful acts of courage in the fight against the Corona virus pandemic.

Captain Alan Tait, OAM



PROFILE: DAVID PARMETER – INCOMING AMWS CHAIRMAN

Let me say at the outset what a great honour it is to be elected as Chairman of the Australian Mariners Welfare Society. We are an important organisation with a proud history, fulfilling a vital role in supporting seafarer welfare and training.

The retiring Chairman Alan Tait is someone I have known for over thirty years as a colleague and friend. His leadership and commitment to the Society has been outstanding and I have very large shoes to fill. Thank you for your service, Alan, and I greatly appreciate your ongoing support and involvement on the Council.

In that regard I wish to thank all the Councillors for their dedication and work with AMWS. Everyone on the Council freely gives up their time, not just in attending meetings but in carrying out critical roles to ensure the smooth running of the Society. It is a great example of the old saying about “one volunteer is better than ten pressed men!”

It is also important to acknowledge the efficient service and hard work of our Company Secretary Stan Moriarty.

I was born in 1958 and grew up in suburban Sydney. I attended St Patrick’s College Strathfield and completed a Commerce Degree majoring



*David Parmeter,
Chairman of the
Australian Mariners
Welfare Society*

in Industrial Relations at the University of New South Wales. After finishing my degree I was recruited by BHP as part of their graduate recruitment program, and sent to the Port Kembla Steelworks. This was something of a baptism of fire for a young Industrial Relations Officer, as the steelworks at that time had a very large workforce and a volatile industrial culture – which is a polite way of saying there were a lot of strikes! It was a great learning experience and I very much enjoyed my time in Wollongong. However I did want to expand my horizons and in 1984 joined the IR department of the Australian National Line. This started my involvement in shipping and maritime and for the rest of my working life I stayed in this industry.

ANL was then still Government owned. The formidable Bill Bolitho was Chairman and Max Moore-Wilton CEO. ANL was going through a significant restructuring at this time and reducing the size of its fleet. With five unions on Australian crewed vessels at that time, there was no shortage of IR issues to deal with. I was originally based in Sydney and then transferred to head office in Melbourne. While living in Melbourne I left ANL and joined a venerable organisation by the name of the Commonwealth Steamship Owners Association (CSOA), which was a maritime employers' organisation, representing member companies in negotiations with the maritime unions.

I broadened
my professional
knowledge
working in the
global shipping
business

Due to changes occurring at that time I was given the opportunity to head up CSOA and move back to Sydney. At CSOA I reported to the Chairman, who for several years was Alan Tait, which was the start of our working relationship. As part of a process of consolidation in the local industry, CSOA merged with the Australian Shipowners Association, which is now called Maritime Industry Australia Limited.

While pursuing my career I undertook part time study, first gaining a Diploma of Commercial Shipping Practice, then a Bachelor of Laws and Diploma of Legal Practice from University of Technology Sydney. I have been admitted as a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of NSW.

In 2002 the opportunity arose for me to join Teekay Australia (TKA) as the head of HR. This was a major career opportunity as I joined a highly respected shipping company with a true global footprint. In addition to a significant domestic business, TKA managed third-party vessels with international crews and offshore units outside of Australia. Personally this meant that I broadened my professional knowledge and gained firsthand experience working in the global shipping business. This involved working with international seafarers from a variety of different countries, in particular the Philippines and India. In late 2006 I was appointed Managing Director of TKA, a position I held until I retired in May 2018.

While MD of Teekay Australia, I was invited by Alan to join the Council of Australian Mariners Welfare Society, and was appointed a Director of the Sydney Bethel Union in November 2019.

In October 2018 I was elected Chair of Maritime Industry Australia Ltd, a peak body representing maritime operators in the shipping, towage, port and related industries. In that capacity, I have also had a term as Chairman of the Asian Shipowners Association, a leading international shipping body, made up of the national associations of all countries in the region.

On a personal note I have been married to Helen for 34 years, and we have two adult children, Rachel a physiotherapist and Simon a lawyer. I have a lively interest in most sports, enjoy theatre and movies, and try to stay fit and healthy by being one of the dreaded “mammals” (middle aged men in lycra).



THE CORONAVIRUS AND THE MARITIME INDUSTRY

Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor.

The spread of the hidden and insidious tentacles of the Coronavirus has shocked the world by its swiftness and virility. It has stopped countries in their tracks from living their normal lives, and has forced much of the world’s community into a lifestyle that hasn’t been seen since World War II. In addition, the world’s finance and commodity markets have been detrimentally affected to such an extent that the phrase ‘global recession’ is being regularly expressed. Even the word ‘depression’ is being uttered by some commentators. As a result of this scenario, world trade has seen significant volume withdrawals as the supply and demand chains have suddenly been turned on their heads.

The World Trade Organisation (WTO) predicts global trade will decrease by between 13 to 32% this year, and any recovery in 2021 is uncertain, depending on the duration of the pandemic and policy responses from affected nations.

Australia has managed the Coronavirus with success so far, but when it comes to trade, and dealing with trading partners, it is not immune to the global effects of this pandemic. Over 90% of Australia’s trade, (by volume), is handled by sea, and the current situation has highlighted the fragility of our supply chains, and the extent to which Australia depends on overseas tonnage to handle Australia’s exports and imports.



*Photo credit:
Nicole Bunnell*

A major concern resulting from this pandemic is focused on the welfare of ships’ crews. Globally, on any one day, there are 1.2 million seafarers onboard 65,000 vessels at sea. Each month, 100,000 seafarers need to be relieved of their time onboard a vessel to comply with international maritime regulations protecting

safety, health and welfare of the crew member. Difficulties have arisen at ports where a crew change has been programmed in a country where quarantine restrictions and travel bans have been imposed, and concern is growing over the mental and physical health of crews, some of whom have been at sea for twelve months or more.

To assist governments to put in place coordinated procedures to facilitate the safe movement of seafarers, the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) issued a 12-step plan to 174 member states in early May 2020, providing them with a roadmap to free seafarers from their Coronavirus lockdown, and allow appropriate exemptions for them to join or leave ships.

In Australia, the various State governments have issued their individual entry arrangements and rules for the entry of vessels and their crews at their ports, and separate rules and arrangements to apply to cruise vessels. These arrangements can be viewed on the Maritime Industry Australia Ltd's (MIAL) website – mial.com.au

With regard to the major global container trades, in the March to May quarter in 2020, compared to the same period in 2019, it is estimated cargo volumes will reduce by 18% in the Asia to Europe trade, 15% in the trade between Asia to West Coast USA and 13% between Asia to East Coast USA, resulting in Lines withdrawing surplus tonnage.

The plight of the global cruise industry continues to be well documented by the media.

The current glut of oil on the world market forced the price down to levels not seen for many years, resulting in redundant oil tankers being used as floating storage tanks for excess volumes of oil that continues to be produced, which the oil companies will sell at a later date at, they hope, a higher price.

The dry bulk carrier market is being savaged by reduction in the demand for bulk commodities caused by the downturn in major economies around the world.

What the Maritime Industry will look like when we reach 'the other side' remains to be seen, and is subject to speculation. In the meantime, commercial vessels will still need to be manned by seafarers to ensure that trade routes remain open and goods, essential to the welfare of nations, continue to move.

We live in unprecedented times!



Australia has managed the Coronavirus with success so far

Medical staff and workers from Riley Street Depot, Surry Hills, April 1919, during the Spanish Flu pandemic.



MARITIME SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED TO THREE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME COLLEGE (AMC) STUDENTS FOR SEMESTER 1, 2020

Llew Russell, AMWS Councillor & Chairman of the Scholarship Committee

As regular readers of this newsletter will be aware, since 1999 the Society has been providing scholarships, each semester, to promote the maritime training and professional development of children of seafarers or ex-seafarers (including merchant marine, navy and deep sea fishermen) of low or moderate financial means. Assistance has been provided in the intervening years to the Australian Maritime College (AMC) in Launceston, the Hunter TAFE in Newcastle and the South Metropolitan TAFE in Fremantle.



*Toby
(Bachelor of
Applied (nautical)
Science)*

In March, the Society was very pleased to receive a good field of candidates from the AMC for semester one. Whilst two scholarships of \$3000 each are normally provided per semester to the AMC, this year the quality of the applicants was so good that three scholarships were awarded, to Luke (Bachelor of Engineering), Toby (Bachelor of Applied (nautical) Science) and Martin (Bachelor of Applied (engineering) Science).

Each of the successful applicants also received complimentary membership of the Society and a copy of a book by Jan Bowen "The Sydney Sailors' Home 1859 - 2000 "which was commissioned by the AMWS.

Letters of appreciation by the scholarship recipients are received from time to time and typical was the letter received from Toby which read, in part:

"I am writing this letter to thank you for the generous AMWS Scholarship for semester one of 2020. I am very appreciative to be the recipient of this scholarship. I am currently studying the 'Pre-Sea' phase of the Bachelor of Applied Science (Nautical Science) with the aspirations of obtaining a Master Certificate of Competency throughout my career. Thanks to the assistance from the AMWS, I am one step closer to achieving my career goals. By awarding me this scholarship I was able to purchase navigation apparatus and a laptop to assist with my studies. The generosity of the AMWS has inspired me to assist new seafarers to enter the industry and also to support the AMWS whilst I venture through my career."



*Martin
(Bachelor of Applied
(engineering) Science)*

A similar letter was received from Martin who added "Not being sponsored or assisted by a company definitely paints me in stark contrast to many of the other students in my class, and this assistance you are affording me is not taken for granted I can assure you. I am studying hard and trying to achieve the best results I can in all my subjects, even though these are turbulent times we are now living in. I have lost the ability to

have face to face discussions with my lecturers, which can make subjects about complex concepts more difficult to relay”

Applications for scholarships are normally received from Training Institutions but individual eligible students can also apply directly. The Council is keen to promote the availability of these scholarships and further details can be obtained by visiting the Website “marinerswelfare.com.au”.



THE SYDNEY SEAFARER WELFARE COMMITTEE

Shane Hobday, Chairman of the Sydney Port Welfare Committee

The shipping industry depends on the seafarers that crew the ships of the world’s commercial fleets. The welfare of those seafarers is a major factor in the safe working and operation of the industry. However, until early last decade, there had been little in the way of a coordinated international and national approach to this vital human aspect.



*Shane Hobday,
Chairman of the Sydney
Port Welfare Committee*

As an island nation Australia is totally dependent on the shipping industry for the export and import of many of its day to day products with over 98% of our trade with the rest of the world being delivered by ship.

The Maritime Labour Convention (MLC) 2006 requires the establishment of seafarer welfare committees at the port, regional and national level.

At the national level Australia has established the Australian Seafarers’ Welfare Council (ASWC) to ensure the adequacy of existing seafarer welfare facilities and to assist in coordination of port/regional welfare committees.

By way of example, at a port level Sydney has a seafarer welfare committee which covers Port Botany and Sydney Harbour and meets on a quarterly basis to consider seafarer issues and opportunities to improve their time in port. The meetings are attended by representatives from the welfare organisations (Mission to Seafarers, Stella Maris, Seamans Christian Friend Society), Australian Maritime Safety Authority AMSA, Australian Mariners Welfare Society, Shipping Australia, Port Authority of NSW, NSW Ports, stevedores and Tas Bull Seafarers Foundation.

In addition, the Committee has actively pursued a number of initiatives to improve the experience of seafarers when visiting the Sydney’s ports including:

- 1) Working with the Port Authority of NSW to ensure before entering the Sydney’s ports all ships are aware of the seafarer welfare services available;
- 2) Since February 2020 the Tas Bull Seafarer Foundation has been providing a free portable wifi system onboard ships whilst at Port Botany;
- 3) With the support of the Port Authority of NSW free wifi is provided on the Mission to Seafarers bus during the trip from and to Port Botany

Based on feedback from seafarers visiting Sydney's ports access to the internet to contact family and friends is viewed as the most important port based welfare service, hence it has been a key focus area of the committee.

Through the relationships developed in these meetings the welfare organisations have been able to provide prompt assistance and care packs to seafarers confined onboard ships at Port Botany and Sydney Harbour during the Covid19 crisis.

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The Sydney Seafarers Welfare Committee appreciates the participation of AMWS in the meetings as well as its support in the provision of replacement tyres for the buses transporting seafarers, contribution to the cost of internet at the Mission to Seafarers facility in Sydney and ad hoc donations for initiative such as the recent care packs for seafarers.

The Committee provides a quarterly report to the Australian Seafarers Welfare Council. The report outlines progress on key initiatives and identifies where assistance is required.

These Port committees are the "eyes and ears" of seafarer welfare in Australia and therefore key to improving the life of seafarers visiting Australian ports. To be effective the committees need representation from all welfare organisations, port operators, AMSA, shipping industry, stevedores and other relevant stakeholders.



AMWS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS' WELFARE

Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor

*'I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky,
And all I ask is a tall ship and a star to steer her by;
And the wheel's kick and the wind's song and the white sail's shaking,
And a grey mist on the sea's face, and a grey dawn breaking.'*

Extract from John Masefield's poem 'Sea Fever'

In 1865 the Sydney Sailor's Home was opened in the historic rocks area of that Port, and operated until 1979 when, due to improved welfare and accommodation onboard visiting vessels, it closed its doors after 114 years of providing a safe haven for seafarers.

Since then, AMWS has changed its welfare focus for seafarers, from providing them with safe accommodation ashore in Sydney, to providing financial support and assistance to various seafarers' welfare organisations dotted around the Australian coast, as well as to education centres in Australia that provide facilities for students to study maritime disciplines, and enable them to gain the appropriate qualifications.

Today the Society's principal activities include:

- 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 in ports around Australia.
- Project grants to assist with the upkeep of the above centres, including IT and transport
- Offering maritime scholarships and tall ship training experiences.
- Representation on the Australian Seafarers' 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.
- Financial support for the Maritime Piracy Humanitarian Response Programme that assists victims and their families.

For the year ending 31st December 2019, the AMWS's expenses for grants, donations, scholarships and sponsorships totalled over A\$192,000.

Since 1st January 2020, the AMWS has:

- increased the Society's contribution towards the Stations' cost of tyres for their buses employed for the transport of seafarers within their port/town area.
 - provided a grant to the Apostleship of the Sea in Melbourne to cover a major proportion of the costs for installing roof solar panels to reduce the Stations' electricity costs.
 - provided a grant to the Mission to Seafarers in Darwin to upgrade their facilities so that it provides a necessary degree of comfort for visiting seafarers, and a basic working office for the Chaplain and volunteers.
 - provided a grant to the Mission to Seafarers in Port Giles, South Australia, to increase the security of the building and comfort of seafarers when visiting the Mission.
 - provided a grant to the Mission to Seafarers in Geraldton, West Australia, towards the building of extensions to the Mission's building that will provide increased recreational facilities to visiting seafarers.
- provided their annual grant to the Apostleship of the Sea in Sydney.
- donated to the International Seafarers' Welfare and Assistance Network's (ISWAN) Covid Fundraising appeal. ISWAN is located in London and is a UK registered charity.
- provided Maritime Scholarships to three students studying at the Australian Maritime College (AMC) in Launceston to assist in their studies during Semester 1 of 2020 – a separate article on this subject appears in this edition of 'The

The AMWS
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of providing
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Australian
maritime industry
for over a
century

Mariners' Lifeline'.

- contributed to Mission to Seafarers in Sydney to enable the purchase of necessities for stranded seafarers on cruise ships and container vessels in recent months during the pandemic.

The AMWS Council is proud of the Society's past achievements in providing welfare to the Australian maritime industry for over a century, and will continue to give appropriate consideration and compassion to all requests that concern mariners' welfare in the years ahead.



PIRACY AT SEA

When the subject of 'piracy at sea' is raised today, many people have visions of the 17th or 18th century one-eyed or one-legged marine villain hauling the 'Skull and Cross-bone' up the mast as they plunder booty from the holds of their victims' ships on the high seas.

But the scourge of piracy remains as evident in the 21st century as it did all those many years ago, and is causing increasing concern to the global shipping industry.

The International Maritime Bureau (IMB) is a specialised department of the International Chamber of Commerce responsible for the fighting crimes related to maritime trades and transportation. The IMB has reported a spike in piracy around the world during the first quarter of 2020, with 47 attacks compared to 38 for the same period in 2019.

The Gulf of Guinea off the West African coast is viewed as a global hotspot for piracy, with 21 attacks between January and April 2020. This area is bounded by eight oil exporting countries.

The other area of concern is the waters in South East Asia where 12 incidents of piracy have been reported by ReCAAP in the Singapore Strait between January to April 2020.

ReCAAP is the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery against Ships in Asia. Based in Singapore, the ReCAAP Agreement was launched in November 2006, and today consists of 20 Contracting Parties, including Australia.

ReCAAP also issues recommendations for proactive measures to be adopted by ships' masters and crew in affected areas. Their current recommendations to vessels transiting the Singapore Strait are:

- Maximise alertness of lookouts for suspicious small boats and increase watch keeping; particularly daylight time for barges and during night time for bigger ships;
- Maintain communication with your company by providing periodic updates and establish daily communication checks;
- Report all incidents, suspicious activities and presence of suspicious small boats

Keep abreast
of the latest
situation
announced
by the
authorities

in the vicinity to the nearest coastal State and flag State

- Sound alarm when suspicious boats are sighted loitering in the vicinity of the ship or barge or suspicious individuals on board the ship or barge; and
- Keep abreast of the latest situation (www.recaap.org) and tune-in to advisories and navigational broadcast announced by the authorities.

Piracy on the high seas can take many forms, including armed robbery, detention and/or abduction, and can occur outside the jurisdiction of any state. It also poses a grave danger to ships' crews, and is an issue that the Australian Mariners' Welfare Society, and many other mariners' welfare organisations around the world, view with increasing disquiet.

