

# The Mariners' Lifeline

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

Founded 1863 as the Sydney Sailors' Home.

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Secretariat: Pringle Moriarty & Co, PO Box 3058, Rosemeadow, NSW 2560. Tel: 0418 488 163 (within Australia) or +61 4 18488 163 (outside Australia). Email: secretaryamws@gmail.com. Web: www.marinerswelfare.com  
Facebook: www.facebook.com/marinerswelfareaus or "Australian Mariners Welfare Society".



Captain Alan Tait,  
OAM - Chairman,  
The Australian  
Mariners' Welfare  
Society

## Chairman's report.

We conclude 2019 on what I would describe as a busy note for the Society.

We were sorry indeed when it recently became necessary for our long term Horizon Towers resident John Cleaver to move to nursing care; we wish him well in his new surroundings in the Hunter Region north of Sydney.

His departure means we have available for occupation by a retired seafarer of moderate or less than moderate means and where applicable a dependent, accommodation in a newly-renovated unfurnished one-bedroom unit at a nominal rental. Located on an upper floor, this North-facing unit is within easy walking distance of the Hornsby shopping centre and rail station and is a hidden gem. Should a reader believe they or someone known to them might be eligible, could they please contact our Secretariat on mobile 0418 488 163?

Attending to the formalities associated with John's sadly leaving us, along with Council's subsequent decision to renovate the apartment, has been time-consuming for me personally, but also a very rewarding experience.

We have once again provided financial support to the operations of both the Mission to Seafarers (MtS) and The Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris.)

For example, it was only recently that Gladstone (Qld) MtS had to close its doors pending financial aid being received State Government. There are others that are now facing similar challenges. For our part we will continue to assist stations in areas such as bus re-placement and maintenance also the refurbishing and upgrading of stations, costs of in-stallation of solar power and computer services. May I specially thank Councillor Graham Lightfoot for his timely responses to these matters.

Pleasingly we will complete the year financially stronger and credit must go to our Hon. Treasurer Rodney Birdsall and the finance committee for their stewardship of our affairs.

Councillor Llew Russell has ensured we continue to encourage young people to consider a career in shipping through our sail training support in WA, SA, Tasmania and NSW.

He has also worked closely with the Australian Maritime College in Tasmania this year when two study scholarships each valued at \$3000 were awarded. Recipients were a marine engineer and a deck officer. They were also provided with a free 12-month membership of the Society and a copy of the history of the Sydney Sailors' Home.

As reported elsewhere, I was proud in October to represent the Society in Canberra and lay a wreath at the Annual Commemoration Service held at the National Merchant Navy War Memorial in Kings Park organised by the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund where works to enhance the Memorial

were officially unveiled.

In the communications area, I also record appreciation of the ongoing work of our Councillors Chris Green as manager of the Society's website and Facebook page and Martin Orchard as editor of our Newsletter. Their work has enabled wider knowledge of our activities among our members as well as the public at large.

My other Council colleagues, Malcolm Longstaff, Simon Liddy, Tony Cousins, Howard Clark and Conrad Saldhana continue to contribute in so many ways. I must also report that David Parmeter; our recently elected Deputy Chairman has contributed significantly and his efforts are already indicating where the Society needs to position itself for the future in an ever-changing maritime environment.

As always can I say how much we respect the work of our Company Secretary Stan Moriarty, whose good counsel and his own commitment to the aims of the Society are highly appreciated.

May I conclude with best Christmas wishes to all our readers and a bright and prosperous 2020. Please stay safe at this time and also spare a thought for all those, particularly seafarers, unable to be with their families at this time.

Alan Tait OAM

Chairman

## 'Images from the Port'.

The following is an edited version of an article written by John Kewa, Chaplain/Centre Manager at the Mission to Seafarers in Port Kembla, summarising the photographic exhibition held in Wollongong's Art Gallery throughout July 2019 where photographs taken by a local professional photographer, Roman Balla, were exhibited under the heading of 'Images of the Port':

A Photographic Exhibition paying tribute to merchant mariners and the Work of the Mission to Seafarers.

By John Kewa

**"It potentially stands as an artistic and historical document"**

(Roman Balla, Photographer)

'Images from the Port' is an alternative, yet exciting medium intended to engage with the wider community in the Illawarra and beyond, exploring the 'hidden world' of merchant seafarers and the work of the Mission to Seafarers (The Mission) in Port Kembla over the last 77 years!

It is a photographic exhibition that presents a visual exploration of Port Kembla Harbour, its people and the working life as it stands in its current state. It is featured as a multi-layered project that strives to capture a glimpse of the often 'invisible' world of merchant sailors, while at the same time, depicting parts of the harbour's dynamic surroundings as well as the significant role that the Mission's chaplains

and volunteers play each day, especially in terms of offering practical, emotional and spiritual support to seafarers who visit Port Kembla.

For their safe and efficient operations, ships depend on seafarers working far from their home and family for months, sometimes years – often in harsh and dangerous conditions. And while shipping continues to remain essential for our livelihoods as well as playing a vital role in keeping afloat the global economy, it is amazing how so many people still find 'life-at-sea' intriguing! Tapping on peoples' curiosity about those who pursue a career on high seas (seafarers) presents a great opportunity for the Mission to (re)imagine different ways and means in sharing the story. If the community, through no fault of their own, is 'removed' from life-at-sea or the history and purpose of the Mission then it is worth bringing that story to where the community is at – even in the form of photographic documentation.



### Background to 'Images from the Port'

This project was initiated in 2017 as part of the 75th Anniversary of *The Mission to Seafarers Port Kembla* as well as The Mission's 160th Anniversary, globally. Its purpose then was to pay tribute both to merchant seafarers and The Mission's effort to care for them both locally and around the world. A small-scale exhibition was held in conjunction with the Sea Sunday celebrations in July 2018, which subsequently evolved into the recent exhibition at the Gallery.

It is our hope that the local community will find this project to be of some value as it attempts to connect visually some of the machinations of the work and people that visit the harbour. Part of that visual history can now be shared with the community and also be preserved for future generations in photographic documentation. The local maritime-related industry, especially the steel industry, has become synonymous with the people of Illawarra for decades. Therefore it is our genuine belief that the local population would appreciate such a visual representation of the port facilities as it is found at its current state.

Since the establishment of the port of Port Kembla in the late 1890s to facilitate the export of coal from the mines of the Illawarra region, it has become more diversified since the late 1980s which has seen the port venturing into general and breakbulk cargoes, containers and motor vehicle imports, and bulk grain exports. 'Images from the port' is partially an attempt to explore some of such changing features of the

harbour.

We hope this photographic documentation will leave a lasting legacy for the community, as some of the framed photos may be permanently displayed at the Gallery or obtained by other organisations and individuals in and around the local community. A proposed photography book would be another way of preserving these photos to hold as an historical account of the Harbour at this point. Once published, this photography book would be distributed throughout local libraries and various organisations as a reference to the port of Port Kembla, various port users and regulatory agencies.

### The Artist

Roman Balla is a professional photographer and graphic designer who has many years of experience working with different NGO and government organisations. Roman joined the volunteer team at Mission to Seafarers Port Kembla in August 2016. Realizing Roman's professional know-how in photography, the Mission chaplain immediately tasked him to what was obviously an appropriately skilled-volunteering position – *to be the Mission's official photographer!* The passion and dedication Roman has shown in his role over the past three years are immeasurable. His expertise in photography, combined with perseverance and commitment to this project, has certainly benefited the Mission, the wider community and himself, as an artist.



Congratulations to Roman! The Mission is really grateful to him for the many months of hard work and dedication which culminated in sharing the story (pictorially) about life-at-sea in a public space for general/public consumption.

### From the photographer's own words:

*"Images from the port is a photographic exploration of Port Kembla Harbour, its people and its working life as it stands in its current state. It strives to discover the intriguing world of merchant sailors, who visit Port Kembla from around the world. Their visits are generally brief with short turnarounds. Seafarers potentially spend up to 9 months on board these massive ships, carrying vital cargo to and from most sea ports in the world.*

*Whilst working at the Mission to Seafarers Port Kembla, I wanted to express the often-invisible lives of these crews. Due to my association with the Mission, I had the privilege to access many of these ships, to meet and photograph the officers and crew. I was also granted the opportunity to gain access throughout much of the Port facilities to explore parts of this unique and often enthralling industrial landscape, with the skyline filled with steam, smoke and metal towers. I thank the Mission to Seafarers and their ongoing caring work towards international crews."*

### The ongoing Role of the Mission to Seafarers

Apart from endorsing Roman Balla to proceed with the idea of having a photographic exhibition, the chaplains and volunteers of the Mission have been proactively supportive of the project. For the Mission in Port Kembla, it was somewhat an uncustomary undertaking. However, it did bring about a huge benefit especially in terms of good publicity in the community and subsequent level of awareness about life-at-sea.

Piracy, unforgiving waves, shipwreck, injury, exploitation, abandonment, separation from loved ones, constant fatigue, loneliness and mental strain are some of the main problems the world's 1.5 million merchant seafarers continue to face whilst pursuing a career at sea. Therefore, welcoming visiting

seafarers and offering them hospitality, support and friendship is an expression of gratitude and acknowledgment for all of the sacrifice and vital role they play in our personal lives and the life of the Illawarra Region let alone the nation.

To carry out its day-to-day operations, The Mission relies on dedicated volunteers and generous supporters. The Mission continually strives to recognise volunteers, employees, partners and supporters who are just as determined to contribute valuable time and resources to help with the relief of need, hardship or distress amongst seafarers of all ranks, nationalities and beliefs.

The Mission to Seafarers Port Kembla is financed by voluntary donations from a number of organisations and individuals each year. Volunteers are essential to the work of the Mission as it relies on them to deliver its work in the port community. Like Roman, you too could devote your time as a general volunteer, or contribute your professional know-how in a skilled volunteering position. For inquiries about 'Images from the Port' or for volunteer positions or simply to pay us a visit please contact the Mission on (02) 42746498 or visit our website [www.mts.org.au](http://www.mts.org.au).

*Editor's note: Since writing this article, John Kewa was awarded the Daily Cargo News 'Seafarers' Welfare Award' at the 2019 DCN Australian Maritime Shipping Industry Awards announced in Melbourne on 14th November.*

*The AMWS congratulate John on his well-deserved Award.*

## The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW Inaugural Information Evening.

On Tuesday 23rd July, The Mission to Seafarers, NSW held their first Drinks & Information Evening to raise awareness of our Mission and the need for the services that they provide, 363 days a year. This event was specifically aimed towards their local community in Millers Point.

A total of 40 people attend, including seafarers, neighbours, supporters, staff and members of our Board of Directors. The Mission was pleased to welcome Mr David Parmeter, Deputy Chairman of AMWS.

This information evening had aroused the interest of many and created opportunities for the Mission's friends and neighbours to interact with seafarers, learn about the life of a seafarer and gain an understanding of the work of The Mission to Seafarers, what they do and why.

### How The Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW helps....

The mission statement of the Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW (MTS) is "to fulfil the spiritual, moral and physical well-being of seafarers and all persons whose callings and occupations are in any way associated with the sea." Our key objective therefore is to fulfil the mission statement by providing quality services that meet the critical needs of seafarers. Some of these needs that the Mission to Seafarers staff and facilities help to address include:

- The need to rest and relax off their vessels.
- Vulnerability of seafarers to exploitation.
- Suicide – the rate among seafarers is four times that of the general population.
- The need and desire to contact friends and family through being at sea for months at a time.

### The services provided include....

- Free return transport between Port Botany and the MTS centre in Millers Point, Sydney, 4 times a day.
- Visitation on vessels, by our chaplains, of crew unable to enjoy shore leave. This can help to alleviate the monotony of their environment, routine and even their shipmates.

- Free communication facilities in our centre, including email, Internet and Skype, thanks to AMWS – and free wi-fi on our buses, thanks to the Port Authority of NSW, all vital links to home for isolated, lonely seafarers.
- SIM, recharge and phone cards.
- Help with emergencies including medical, personal or work related e.g. exploitation. This may take the form of counselling, spiritual and physical assistance and other ministries that repair some of the stress, fatigue and loneliness experienced by seafarers, thereby easing tendencies towards depression and suicide. The Mission is uniquely able to exercise an advocacy role for seafarers by approaching unions and visiting hospitals and jails whenever necessary.
- Currency exchange and money transfers.
- A shop stocked with relevant items, free tea and coffee.
- Free TV with news programs broadcast in their own language.
- Table games e.g. table tennis, snooker, table soccer.
- Discount tickets to tourist attractions e.g. Sydney Aquarium, Madame Tussaud's, Sydney Tower etc.

### What still needs to be done....

As part of their ongoing initiative and desire to expand their services, the Mission to Seafarers, Sydney NSW, recognises that there are some areas where seafarers are missing out on the provision of necessary welfare services. In order to address these shortfalls, the Mission has 3 major projects:

- The addition of a free morning return bus service to Port Botany.
- Provision of transport & welfare services to crews arriving at the White Bay terminal during the cruise ship season.
- Welfare services to crews arriving at the Caltex Terminal at Kurnell.

To achieve these additional objectives, extra funding is needed, and the Mission hopes to raise funds by applying for grants, voluntary donations and our own fundraising events. To kick start this, in November this year the Mission's Accountant Gary, Chaplain Troy and Supporter James taking on the Massive Murray Paddle. This involves kayaking 404km down the Murray River from Yarrowonga to Swan Hill over 5 days raising money for the Mission.

As the Mission relies on the support of generous benefactors to serve the Seafarers 363 days per year, it is hoped that individuals and companies will get behind this endeavour and sponsor Gary, Troy and James.

If you can support this initiative, please go to the Mission's website to find out more information.

**Website:** [www.missiontoseafarerssydney.org.au](http://www.missiontoseafarerssydney.org.au)

**Facebook:** [missiontoseafarers – Sydney](https://www.facebook.com/missiontoseafarers-sydney)

**Banking Details:** BSB: 062 074

**Account:** 1000 8062 (Tax-deductible)

**Postal Address:** The Mission to Seafarers,

Ground Floor, 24 Hickson Road, Millers Point, NSW 2000.

*Editor's note: At the time of going to press, the Mission advises that The Massive Murray Paddle was a great success, and at this stage they have raised in excess of \$15,000.*



## The Merchant Navy 30th Annual Commemoration 20th October, 2019.

On 20th October, political leaders and representatives from the Australian maritime industry, union and industry groups attended the 30th Annual Commemoration held at the re-vamped National Merchant Navy War Memorial on the shores of Lake Burley Griffin in Canberra.

The Defence Minister, Senator Linda Reynolds, unveiled the new and remedial works at the Memorial, and welcomed the descendants and elderly mariners, and their supporters, and said "Today we pay tribute to those men, and their families. We honour their courage, bravery, service and sacrifice. I congratulate the Board of the Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund and the National Capital Authority on your cooperation in completing this meaningful work."

The Australian Mariners' Welfare Society feels honoured to have contributed to the new and remedial works at the Memorial, and congratulate David Field, Chairman of The Merchant Navy War Memorial Fund (MNWMF) Pty Ltd, Stan Moriarty – Secretary, and the Board Members for their tireless efforts in bringing this project to fruition.

## The Mission to Seafarers National Conference Brisbane: 8th to 13th September, 2019.

Graham Miller, the Honorary Secretary of the Australian Council of the Mission to Seafarers Inc (MtS) has provided the following summary of the Conference:

*The biennial national conference in 2019 was hosted by MtS Brisbane centre, and attracted delegates from Australia, the worldwide Regional Directors, the administrative members of the International Headquarters in London (IHQ) and representatives from the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris).*

*Bishop John Stead from South Australia, Chairman of the Australian Council MtS, welcomed delegates and reminded them of the Conference's theme 'One Body with many Members', (a quote from 1st Corinthians 12:12 in the New Testament), and that 'every part is dependent on every other part'.*

*The Very Revd Andrew Tremlett, a Trustee of MtS and Dean of Durham Cathedral in England, was Guest Chaplain at the Seafarers Annual Memorial Service in St. John's Anglican Cathedral in Brisbane, and also spoke daily after Morning Prayer.*

*The MtS Secretary General in UK, The Revd Andrew Wright, spoke on the Mission's Unique Selling Points:*

- ship visiting • hospitality centres • emergency response
- post-trauma • transport • hospitals • prison.

*Delegates were presented with local, regional and international advocacy programmes to provide a 'continuity of care' to all seafarers on all ships through projects such as 'WeCare' project in the Philippines, the 'Seafarers' Happiness Index' and the Migrant Offshore Aid Station (MOAS) project.*

*Discussion on the role of the Australian Council was led by Captain Dave Ellis from the Australian Council and Brisbane MtS who drew attention to the issues currently being dealt with:*

- technology change • changing seafarers' demographics
- financial viability of Centres • changes in service delivery
- pastoral to focused counselling • ship to port-based ministry • the financing of welfare facilities.

*Captain Ellis pointed out that the mission needed to remain viable for the sake of the seafarers of the future, and mentioned that through 'Harbour Friendships', the MtS was finding opportunities as a 'port-based' ministry where*

*they might apply for funding from sources outside of the traditional sources, such as AMWS.*

*'Marketing the Mission' was the theme of a discussion led by the Revd Canon Garry Dodd, Regional Director of MtS Australia, who stated that The Mission to Seafarers was more than a taxi – it was a safe, trusted and proven 'home away from home', and a value-added education for the Mission's personnel and volunteers. The 'take-away message' to all Delegates was 'to market themselves to the shipping industry as a vital part of the entire supply chain.'*

*Captain Dave Ellis and Tom Toluhi, Director of Human Resources and Administration MtS at IHQ in London, presented Delegates with a discussion on 'systems and processes to endure direction effectiveness and accountability.'*

*Captain Dave Ellis went on to speak on faithfulness in service, and Tom Toluhi spoke on common standards surrounding diversity, uniqueness and commonality.*

*The Revd Canon Andrew Wright, Secretary General MtS in UK, then spoke on 'Strategy – Looking Forward' and led Delegates through the coming years 2020 – 2025, highlighting the key words of Reorganisation, Regionalisation and Review, and;*

- to share God's love and grace with all seafarers and their families, by caring for them inclusively and holistically in the often-challenging circumstances of their lives.
- to promote spiritual, moral and physical well-being of seafarers and their families.
- to be inclusive, united, collaborative and caring.
- to provide local and international advocacy.

*The Regional Directors addressed Delegates on their diversity of the nine regions they represent: Africa, Australia, Canada, East Asia/Philippine Family Network, Europe, Latin America, Middle East & South Asia, Oceania and America.*

*The Revd Ileoma Ajibade, Regional Director of the MtS for Europe, led Delegates through a discussion 'Empowering women in the maritime community', highlighting the new initiatives in gender distribution and work in the shipping industry, and pushing the maritime industry to deal with the imbalance of women in the industry. Delegates were informed that a small group within the MtS in UK was working on responding to the needs of female seafarers.*

*The Host and venue for the next biennial National Conference will be decided upon in the next few months.*

### Your attention please!

The AMWS Council has decided that to enable future editions of 'The Mariners' Lifeline' newsletter to have increased content, all future editions will be sent to our readers electronically to their email address where possible. If you receive this edition via the postal system, and have the ability to receive all future editions via email, please send details of your email address to:

**Stan Moriarty, AMWS Secretary at  
secretaryamws@gmail.com  
or telephone 0418 488 163.**

If you do not have an email address, then please telephone Stan Moriarty to confirm your postal address to ensure you continue to receive your copy of 'The Mariners' Lifeline'.

We thank you for your attention to these matters.