

# The Mariners' Lifeline

NEWSLETTER OF THE AUSTRALIAN MARINERS' WELFARE SOCIETY (ABN 86 000 008 122)  
Founded 1863 as the Sydney Sailors' Home. Volume 22. No 2. December 2023.



## THE CHAIR'S REPORT

Hello and welcome to the December 2023 edition of 'The Mariners Lifeline'. During 2023 AMWS has been extremely busy. There are several articles in this newsletter that describe the activities of AMWS. In this Welcome I wish to comment on a couple of specific aspects of our operations.



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

Firstly, it is gratifying to see how the Society continues to increase membership and we will shortly have five Corporate Members. This is important if we are to grow our profile outside of our traditional base in Sydney. In that regard it is a very welcome development that AMWS is now represented on the Newcastle Port Welfare Committee, through a member who lives in the area. The ability to have AMWS represented in local maritime welfare activities is something we want to focus on in the future.

Secondly, it is useful to reflect on the size and nature of the financial grants AMWS makes to those organisations directly providing welfare for seafarers, such as Mission to Seafarers (MtS) and the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris). In my discussions with many individuals who are part of these organisations, either on a voluntary or full time basis, they are at pains to say how much they appreciate the financial support provided by AMWS. It is not uncommon to be told that AMWS plays an essential role in a particular seafarers' centre being able to operate.

Council Member Graham Lightfoot has done a sterling job in managing the applications for grants over many years. AMWS has finite financial resources and must live within its means, but the approach is very much one of wanting to say 'Yes', as opposed to finding a way to say 'No'. Graham has calculated that since 2006 AMWS has made over \$2,500,000 of financial grants. This is a significant amount. The majority of the grants are to individual seafarer centres. In particular those smaller centres

AMWS CHAIR'S INDUCTION INTO THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME HALL OF FAME	PAGE 2
SEAFARERS' HAPPINESS INDEX – QUARTER 3, 2023	PAGE 3
THE SEAFARING WORKFORCE – CHALLENGES IN AUSTRALIA AND ABROAD	PAGE 5
THE AMWS TREVOR HOWARTH & JIM ISRAEL MEMORIAL AWARDS	PAGE 8
QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS CAN APPLY FOR AN AMWS SCHOLARSHIP	PAGE 9
A SESQUICENTENARY CELEBRATION OF MISSION TO SEAFARERS IN THE PORT OF NEWCASTLE	PAGE 10
AMWS' CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS' WELFARE	PAGE 13
PIRACY AT SEA	PAGE 14

It is gratifying to see how the Society continues to increase membership.

in regional or remote ports need support, and we are always encouraging them to apply for grants. Grants can range from the purchase of a replacement bus through to the cost of a new coffee machine. Whether it is small or large, the critical consideration when the AMWS Council considers the request is that the grant will contribute to the welfare of seafarers.

In addition, we also make grants to assist with the running of the national offices of MtS and Stella Maris. This also applies to their annual conferences. AMWS has also made significant donations to international charities supporting the families of Ukrainian seafarers and for COVID relief.

AMWS cannot solve all the problems of the industry, and the welfare of seafarers will continue to be a critical concern for everyone involved in shipping. But it is important for AMWS members and supporters to know that their Society is making an important contribution to this vital work.

I want to thank Martin Orchard the editor of 'The Mariners' Lifeline', and all the contributors, for their efforts in producing this newsletter.

Finally, I wish all our readers and their families a very happy and safe Christmas.

David Parmeter

*Chair*



## **AMWS CHAIR'S INDUCTION INTO THE AUSTRALIAN MARITIME HALL OF FAME**

*Martin Orchard – AMWS Councillor & Editor*

**A**t a glittering ceremony on the 15th November at the Daily Cargo News' (DCN) Australian Shipping and Maritime Industry Awards, the AMWS Chair, David Parmeter, was inducted into the Australian Maritime Hall of Fame.

David commenced his career in the Maritime Industry in 1984 and has been involved in many senior roles, including the Chair of Maritime Industry Australia Ltd (MIAL), the Chair of the Asian Shipowners' Association and the Managing Director of Teekay Shipping (Australia) Pty Ltd. David is a Director of the Sydney Bethel Union (SBU).

AMWS Members will join the Councillors in congratulating David on this achievement, so richly deserved.

The following is the text of David's acceptance speech:

*'Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, and thank you for the kind words and generous introduction.*

*Let me say at the outset I am greatly honoured and deeply humbled to receive this award. I was more than a little surprised to get the phone call from Lindsay,*

*(Lindsay Reed, DCN's publisher – Ed.) and I am very grateful to everyone responsible for this recognition.*



*David Parmeter, AMWS Chair, being presented with his DCN Achievement by Marika Calfas, CEO, NSW Ports, Major Host Sponsor of the DCN's Shipping & Maritime Awards.*

Photograph: The Pixel Collective

*I have had a very fortunate life and enjoyed a wonderful career in the maritime industry over thirty-nine years. It has been a great experience.*

*Throughout my career I had the opportunity to work with some outstanding individuals who were tremendous role models, people like Alan Tait – who is a previous Inductee into the Maritime Hall of Fame – who made me realise that success in business is more than a matter of dollars and cents. Rather it goes to how you choose to conduct yourself and, above all, when you have the opportunity, to give something back to the industry.*

*In that regard, it is what I am doing now for seafarer welfare, that is the most personally satisfying part of my career. I am able to do this through my involvement with the Sydney Bethel Union and particularly as Chair of the Australian Mariners' Welfare Society. At this point I wish to acknowledge a number of my fellow AMWS Councillors who are here tonight.*

*They are all volunteers and gladly give of their time to support this important work.*

*At AMWS we work closely with the direct providers of welfare services to seafarers. The role they play in seafarer welfare is critical and our industry would be a poorer place without them. We owe those individuals and organisations a great debt of gratitude and need to give them all the support we can.*

*At AMWS we also provide educational scholarships and training opportunities for young people, as well as subsidised accommodation for retired seafarers of moderate means. For us to continue our work we need good people to join our organisation. So please consider joining AMWS either in a personal capacity or as a corporate member. You will find it a richly rewarding experience.*

*Once again, many thanks for this great honour. It is appreciated.'*



## **SEAFARERS' WELFARE SEAFARERS' HAPPINESS INDEX – QUARTER 3, 2023**

*Martin Orchard - AMWS Councillor & Editor*

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

The latest SHI indicates a continuing drop in overall happiness which was evident in the previous report covering Quarter 2 2023.

An increase in Happiness was noted in the areas of shore leave, training and food.

Overall satisfaction with shore leave increased in the latest quarter mainly due to Covid-19 restrictions being eased in many ports around the world reflecting the reduced threat of the virus. However, some comments indicate that some ports appear adept at imposing restrictions and treat seafarers as a sort of threat. Other

comments indicate that some ports regard seafarers as 'freaks' as they try to access port facilities. There appears to be a wide gap between ports with regards to the welfare of seafarers whilst alongside.

Most seafarers acknowledged the importance of training for enhancing their future promotion and career opportunities. However, comments were made about some programmes being excessive and others redundant or not focused enough on their responsibilities whilst at sea. Complaints were made about the high costs of training programmes which the seafarer was expected to pay out of their own pocket, and the time taken up by training during their limited shore leave which placed pressure on them and their families.

Food quality is vital for crew morale, and this subject received some positive comments regarding quality and the skills of the catering staff. However, there were some incidents cited where budget restraints seemed to act negatively on food quality i.e. lack of fresh vegetables and fruit. Some shipping companies have banned providing the crew water in plastic bottles for environmental reasons but have not provided the crew with alternative access and means to drink clean water. There were reports of badly-tasting water and some vessels having contaminated water tanks.

Areas where there was a decline in the latest SHI were salary inadequacy, especially for senior ranks; inadequate exercising facilities onboard; gender disparities and barriers to diversity and inclusion; overwhelming workloads caused to some degree by expanding regulations and increasing administrative tasks.

The SHI has recorded a continuing downward trend in Seafarers' Happiness throughout 2023, the longest downward trend since the start of the SHI in 2015.

This trend is a concern to AMWS and the overall shipping industry, and has to be reversed if the industry is going to have any success in encouraging and attracting young men and women to join the ranks of seafarers in the future.

As well as the Mission to Seafarers' SHI, The International Seafarers Welfare and

An increase  
in Happiness  
was noted  
in the areas of  
shore leave,  
training  
and food.

Assistance Network's (ISWAN) Social Interaction Matters (SIM) Project has focused on several ship design aspects that does not assist seafarers' welfare whilst at sea, particularly impinging on their mental health and sleep.

Feedback obtained from seafarers raised the positioning of beds within cabins, with a preference for beds being set across the ship rather than along the length of the ship. Other feedback indicated that when designing a ship, some owners seemed to have forgotten about the lack of balance between a vessel fit for service and providing sufficient space for the crew to live and work comfortably.

The subject of seafarers welfare is receiving an increasing amount of attention, and it is hoped that some of the outcomes from this research will soon be implemented and provide increasing degrees of comfort and safety to seafarers whilst at sea as they work to keep the global trade routes operating.



## THE SEAFARING WORKFORCE – CHALLENGES IN AUSTRALIA AND ABROAD

Globally, our industry faces a skills shortage, and in the face of projected industry expansion and diversification, industry leaders even in strong labour supply nations are wondering how to attract and retain the next generation of seafarers. Part of the conundrum, or perhaps part of the solution, is increasing gender diversity in the industry and successfully tapping into the other, significantly under-represented, 50% of the population. Gender diversity issues, along with ways to promote seafaring careers more generally and the challenges of training the workforce for a net zero future were key areas of concern at the recent *Shaping the Future of Shipping – Seafarer 2050 Conference* held in Manila in June 2023 which I attended.



Angela Gillham, Chief Executive Officer, Maritime Industry Australia Ltd (MIAL).

The COVID pandemic underlined the critical importance of the seafaring workforce to global supply chain security – while also exposing that same workforce to intolerable conditions, including no shore leave and service lengths well in excess of the maximum period of continuous shipboard service permissible under the Maritime Labor Convention. It is not surprising that the treatment of international seafarers during this time has led to increased attrition levels in the industry. The BIMCO/International Chamber of Shipping (ICS) Crew Management Report has predicted a shortfall in the availability of Standards of Training Certification and Watchkeeping (STCW) qualified seafarers globally by 2026, casting doubts on the ability of the industry to meet the demands of industry expansion, diversification and transformation out to 2050.

The impact on international shipping of a net zero world and increased digitalisation, cannot be overestimated. The energy transition will drive changes in the seafaring skills requirements, as new fuels and cargo handling requirements emerge as nascent zero emission energy technologies produce fuel products that are required to be transported around the world and utilised to power shipping. *The Shaping the Future of Shipping – Seafarer 2050 Conference* considered the challenges in transforming seafarers' roles to meet the needs of shipping in the



future, including education and training, capacity building and resilience and ensuring that the energy transition is safe, equitable and human-centric.

It was clear during the Conference that some 'out of the box' thinking is required and changes to traditional models and expectations of seafarer training and employment would need to be considered to ensure enough skilled seafarers are available to fulfil the requirements of shipping in 2050. The International Maritime Organisation (IMO) has already embarked upon a comprehensive review and revision of the STCW Convention and Code, a necessary and urgent step, however in addressing the question relating to attracting and retaining the future seafarer, the *Seafarer 2050 Conference* raised some other, less conventional ideas. While a seafaring career can be incredibly rewarding and challenging, the required time away from home and family can be a major barrier to recruitment and it could be that increasing the flexibility of international



seafarer contracts, including contract length, is part of the solution. Furthermore, to support improved recruitment and retention it was acknowledged that the industry needs to get much better at articulating and promoting the impressive potential career options on offer following life at sea.

If there is a skills shortage globally, closer to home, we are on the verge of a maritime skills crisis. The 2018 MIAL Seafaring Skills Census predicted a shortfall of more than 560 seafarers by 2023. The Census did not predict industry attrition resulting from COVID-19 and the upswing in maritime skills demand resulting

from increased activity in the existing offshore resources industry, nor did it consider future demand driven by the burgeoning offshore wind industry and the Government's commitment to building a maritime strategic fleet. As such, it could be assumed that the situation is now much worse.

So, what has led to the current seafaring skills crisis in Australia? Put simply, the decline in Australian ships has seen a corresponding decline in training opportunities, and the supply of highly skilled Australian seafarers has all but dried up. Impacting the supply side is the cost associated with traditional cadet training pathways and the lack of alternative options. The situation is particularly severe with respect to higher qualified deck officers and marine engineers.

Compounding the issue is the fact that many end users of maritime skills, with few exceptions, cannot and do not train or contribute to training and skills development for current and future needs. These end users include resource companies, ports, and regulators that employ personnel whose skills and experience obtained at sea is critically important to the safe and environmentally responsible functioning of Australia's maritime transport sector.

A causal link can be made between the reduction in Australian merchant maritime capability, in terms of assets and human capital, and the reduction in Australia's sovereign manufacturing, particularly the significant contraction of the petroleum refining industry, to its bare minimum. During the 1990's financial incentives for Australian shipping were withdrawn. This coincided with a period of expansion of open ship registries offering very attractive tax concessions and incentives, leading to significant competitive disadvantages for Australian operators. The cost differential between foreign operators and Australian operators widened and measures to reserve domestic cargo for Australian ships (cabotage) were eroded with dedicated vessels on routes servicing the Australian aluminium and steel industries being displaced by foreign ships. This pattern of decline continues today, even after the 2012 attempt at reform of the fiscal and regulatory settings failed to go far enough to level the playing field.

In contrast, the COVID-19 pandemic, and related supply chain disruptions, highlighted that the just-in-time system of trade we have come to rely on, and its associated economic efficiencies, is fallible. This singular focus on supply chain cost minimisation denies the nation the broader benefits, including increased national resilience, which are derived from a strong sovereign merchant maritime capability – at the centre of which is the Australian seafaring workforce.

As a nation we must re-establish a homegrown seafaring skills development pipeline. But given the diminished state of the industry and the cost of traditional training pathways, we don't have the luxury of relying on past patterns of behaviour to set the future direction. With the assistance of a government who recognises the national interest in sovereign maritime capability, Australian shipowners and operators, unions, training institutions and the broader group of end users of

It was clear during the Conference that some 'out of the box' thinking is required.

seafaring skills must work together to spread the cost burden, improve training efficiency, promote the industry as a career of choice and rapidly increase the number of Australian STCW trained seafarers to meet the growing needs of the Australian economy.



## THE AMWS TREVOR HOWARTH & JIM ISRAEL MEMORIAL AWARDS

*Graham Lightfoot AM, AMWS Councillor & Captain Alan Tait OAM, Immediate Past AMWS Chair & Councillor*

The AMWS continues to support the 'Young Endeavour' Youth Programme under the auspices of the Australian Navy.

In 2014 the AMWS Council took the decision to support youthful candidates for the ten-day sailing experience aboard the tall ship *Young Endeavour*. It was seen as a unique opportunity for chosen candidates to develop leadership, teamwork, and new skills in an exciting environment.

Apart from the Covid lockdown, since 2016 the Trevor Howarth and Jim Israel Memorial Award scheme have supported almost twelve candidates. All were keen hands-on participants and were grateful for the experience provided.

The *Young Endeavour* set sails again in December, and onboard will be our latest Jim Israel Award candidate, Yasmin. We wish Yasmin every success for the voyage.

In 2018, Patrick, a long term Stepping Stone House resident, was jointly sponsored by the Australian Mariners' Welfare Society and Sydney Cove Rotary to undertake a voyage on the *STS Young Endeavour*. Following the voyage and as direct result of his experiences on board, he volunteered at the Sydney Maritime Museum and

completed a Deck Hand Course at TAFE NSW. This led to full time employment with Captain Cook Cruises, the Company that the late Trevor Howarth founded in 1970.

Both AMWS and Sydney Cove Rotary are now delighted to report that Patrick has just received his Gold Duke of Edinburgh Award, presented by HRH Duke of Edinburgh, Prince Edward, during his recent visit to Sydney.

The Award was introduced in 1956 by the Duke's late Father. Today, the Award's programme encourages youth from the ages of 14 to 24 years to develop skills, participate in community services and to undertake and meet outdoor physical



*Patrick receiving his Award from HRH Duke of Edinburgh.*

Photograph: NCA Newswire/Gaye Gerard.



challenges and adventures which help develop self-confidence, endurance and employability.

In reporting on this significant event in Patrick's life, the Sydney Morning Herald noted that;

*"Patrick was the first person living in out-of-home care to complete a Gold Duke of Ed. Award. The 25-year-old left home at 12, and was shaking with excitement and nerves when the prince handed him his certificate of completion".*

Patrick achieved this goal with the support and assistance of Stepping Stone House.

The Australian Mariners' Welfare Society and Sydney Cove Rotary congratulate Patrick on achieving this significant milestone in his life.



## **QUALIFIED INDIVIDUALS CAN APPLY FOR AN AMWS SCHOLARSHIP**

*Llew Russell AM, AMWS Councillor & Chair of the Scholarship Committee*

Whilst the majority of scholarship applications are sent from maritime training institutions or Tall Ship training companies, there is the capability for individuals who meet the AMWS Constitutional criteria to apply directly to the Society.

This was the case with Todd who approached a Councillor last June seeking financial help with the undertaking of a Marine Deck revaluation course for a Master 500 GT unlimited (Parts A and B). He met the Constitutional criteria of being the child of an ex-seafarer, was an Australian citizen and was of low to moderate financial means.

He had applied to undertake the course at TAFEs in WA and NSW but the courses were cancelled. He eventually enrolled in a course offered by the Australian Maritime College Search Organisation which is the training and consultancy Division of the AMC.

Todd was awarded a scholarship to the value of \$3000 to undertake this course. It should be noted the scholarship funds are sent directly to the Training Institution for on-passing to the student.

Individuals who qualify are encouraged to apply directly to the AMWS. The Constitutional criteria to qualify for a scholarship and the application form are available on the AMWS website, [www.marinerswelfare.com](http://www.marinerswelfare.com) and click on "what we do".



## A SESQUICENTENARY CELEBRATION OF MISSION TO SEAFARERS IN THE PORT OF NEWCASTLE

by Captain Iain Steverson, Fellow of the Nautical Institute, London, and Marine Superintendent, BHPT Fleet (Newcastle) 1983-91

This article was first written by Iain for The Company of Master Mariners and appears in this newsletter with kind permission from the Author.



Captain Iain Steverson,

Many of our readers have over the years, while serving at sea, visited Seafarers' Missions in overseas and local ports enjoying the hospitality and services provided. However, in this current age of minimal crewing numbers, and with many different ship types and trades now associated with quick turn rounds in port in the last few decades, has seen the Maritime Industry changing dramatically.

In Newcastle this year the local Mission to Seafarers, Newcastle, and associated Catholic Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris), are celebrating 150 years since the establishment of a small Seamens' Mission in 1873 at the nearby settlements of Carrington/Bullock Island (Onebygamba) and two years later on the western shore of the Hunter River at Stockton.

This remarkable achievement has been celebrated during 2023 with a series of functions in recognition of this quite remarkable event and its ongoing service to many seafarers who visit this port city.

The small missions were opened in the heyday of large numbers of sailing ships which would lay-by on either side of the Hunter River often for long periods, first discharging material ballast then eventually loading coal for the West Coast ports of North and South America, New Zealand, and interstate and intrastate ports. For the next three to four decades, sailing ships predominated and many of the great sailing ships visited the port, for example the famous *Thermopylae* on her maiden voyage (1869) making two more visits in the next decade. The famous *Cutty Sark*, (1883) loaded wool, and what was the world's largest sailing ship at the time, *La France* (1891), which loaded a world record 4,500 tons of coal.

A reminder of that long-forgotten era is still with us today, that of the French flag *Adolphe*, wrecked at the harbour entrance on 30 September 1904, the remains of her iron hull still visible on the Stockton breakwater to this day.

Many sailing ships were involved in a three-stage voyage which encompassed general cargo from Europe, coal to the Pacific west coast ports, lumber from north American ports or nitrate and guano from Peru and Chile returning via Cape Horn to Europe.

Sadly, following an inquiry by the Newcastle Chamber of Commerce in 1894, it was revealed that 161 ships departing from the port were lost or in 'dire peril', or

Between 1889 and 1901 2.5% of coal laden ships that left for overseas ports were lost at sea or caught fire.

were casualties in some form (fire/strandings) between 1886 and 1894. Between 1889 and 1901 2.5% of coal laden ships that left for overseas ports were lost at sea or caught fire. In 1895 alone six large coal laden ships were never heard of again.

By the 1900's,  
with the arrival  
of steamers,  
Newcastle  
became a  
favourite coal  
bunkering port

By the 1900's, with the arrival of steamers, Newcastle became a favourite coal bunkering port which extended post WW2 until the local BHP shipping fleet finally converted their Yampi Class steamers in the late 1960's to burn oil.

These days, export coal continues to be the major cargo passing through the port, and currently the Port of Newcastle is the world's largest coal export port with around 160 million tonnes a year (164.9mt/2019 record) through nine coal loading berths, with cargo destined predominately for north Asian ports for mainly electricity purposes. As a comparison, the Chinese port of Qinhuangdao (previously known as Chinwangtao) ships a larger coal tonnage of 223.5 million tonnes (2022 figures) through twenty one coal berths, much of which is shipped coastwise.

The History of the Port of Newcastle was chronicled in two extensive volumes by the late local historian, Terry Callen, published by the then, but now defunct, Newcastle Region Maritime Museum titled '**Bar Dangerous**' (1986) and '**Bar Safe**' (1994).

The first Mission to Seamen in 1837 resulted from an initiative of an Anglican Minister from Bristol, England, who observed the plight of seafarers visiting that busy port and set up the Bristol Channel Seamens' Mission. Another noteworthy Bristolian, Samuel Plimsoll, was also born in Bristol (1824) which through his valiant efforts resulted in the Plimsoll Line becoming compulsory in the 1876 Merchant Shipping Act. Subsequently in 1856 The Mission to Seamen at Home and Abroad was established in London and was soon followed with the amalgamation of the two groups in 1858, being retitled simply as 'The Missions to Seamen'.

### **Mission to Seafarers in NSW**

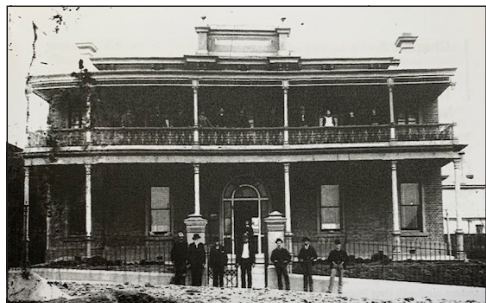
Locally, following the initial Carrington then Stockton Mission, a full time Chaplain was appointed in 1900 with the two missions amalgamating in 1903 under the title The Missions to Seamen, Newcastle. Meanwhile the Church of England Mission to Seamen was formed in Sydney, NSW, reverting in 1895 as simply 'The Missions to Seamen', Sydney. In 1941 the Missions to Seamen, Port Kembla, was established and in 1966 The Mission to Seamen, NSW, was incorporated. Locally the Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) was established in the Newcastle suburb of Wickham in 1936, and in 1978 saw the formation of The Missions to Seamen, Newcastle, with the two groups in Association to this day.



*Replacing the Chelmsford Institute for Seamen at North Stockton, the Wakehurst Institute was officially opened by the Governor, Lord Wakehurst.*

## The Newcastle Mission to Seafarers 1873–2023

The story of the Mission and the Ministry that it has offered which has been received by grateful seafarers from all corners of the globe over the 150 year is encapsulated in the recently updated History of the Mission with its title **“Bid the Stranger Welcome”** compiled by former Chaplain, Reverend Stanley Willey which covered the years 1873-1990 and Iain Steverson, from 1991-2023. This was a major project for the celebratory year. It covers the early days, from the



*Coutts' Memorial Sailors' Home  
– the main facade as viewed from  
the river, circa 1910.*

last century through the many highs and lows of wartime, the 1930 depression, coal and waterfront strike, harbour politics etc., and the ever-changing direction of shipping and seafaring that has taken place over that time. This extended from sailing ships, the simple coal burning steam ships, the arrival of the modern diesel-powered motor ships each of up to 10,000 ton capacity. Then the port saw in the 1960's the arrival of engine

aft bulk carriers lifting ever larger bulk cargoes and now to the current large bulk carriers, some specially designed (Newcastlemax) to lift maximum cargoes from the port's efficient bulk loading facilities.

Some of these ships can be loaded and sailed all in 24 hours. This has resulted in an ever-changing scenario placing considerable stress on the Mission's dedicated staff to visit the many ships that call. Unfortunately, the Covid pandemic of 2020 dislocated this and all other Missions' work with crews being unable to come ashore. Various problems associated with the wash up were maintaining continuity of volunteers, increased budget concerns, public appreciation of seafarer's plight of their loneliness, isolation, and an inability to proceed home following their contract completion. Efforts within the Mission's ability to maintain contact and assist seafarers in their plight were continuous. Another problem that has resulted from an ever-changing modern port which has moved most of the modern berths further afield from the inner city CBD close to the Mission, in Hannell Street, Wickham to across to the north side of the Hunter River at Kooragang Island bulk facilities.

Now known as the 'Mission to Seafarers, Newcastle' it has been over the last decade guided by the steady hand of dedicated Reverend Canon Garry Dodd, Chaplain to the Port through the Mission's Board. This has been a difficult few years especially due to the debilitating Covid pandemic that has thrown the Maritime industry worldwide, seafarers especially, into almost complete dislocation. The Mission has battled through this difficult period continuing to work and supporting the overseas seafarers in various ways. Pleasingly, there is a resumption of seafarer visitors returning to the Mission as the restrictions placed on the industry by both shipping companies and local bodies ease, with a return slowly getting back to pre-Covid days.



*Sue Dight, MtS Australia Regional Director, Robyn Laurenson, Board Member MtS Newcastle, Toni Toluh, Chief Operations Officer, MtS International Headquarters, London, Gary Smith.*

Photograph: Abby Williams/DCN



*Clive Goodwin, Immediate Past Chairman of The Bethel Union, Sydney, Fr. Stephen Williams, Chairman MtS Newy, Hennie du Ploy, CEO Port Waratah Coal Services.*

Photograph: Abby Williams/DCN

## **Sesquicentenary Celebrations 2023.**

While the compilation of the Mission’s history was underway, the celebrations commenced in January with a rousing musical of traditional ‘Music of the Sea’, a Sea Shanty evening especially appropriate to the Port’s great sailing ship legacy. This was followed in March with an impressive and well attended week long Art Exhibition, with Port of Newcastle the proud sponsors. A visit in June from the Sydney Bethel Union, the Mission’s major financial sponsor with a luncheon at the Mission followed by a Harbour cruise. The Annual Newcastle Merchant Navy War Memorial Service was hosted in early June, followed by the celebration of the International Day of the Seafarer where citizens were encouraged to give ships entering the port a welcoming ‘Newy Wave’. This was followed in July by Sea Sunday and the Blessing of the Port held at Christ Church Cathedral which stands out proudly on the hill overlooking the City and harbour.

For many sailing ship crews this would have been their last sight of land as they headed east bound across the Pacific to, in many cases, an unknown fate. Again, in July was a pleasant in-house ‘thank you’, referred to as ‘Hero’s Day’, a special function to acknowledge many of the people who had supported and volunteered at the Mission over many years. The celebrations concluded with a Gala Dinner held appropriately at the Newcastle City Hall in September.

A remarkable story of 150 years of dedicated service to Seafarers visiting the Port of Newcastle.



## **AMWS’ CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS SEAFARERS’ WELFARE**

*Martin Orchard - AMWS Councillor & Editor*

**T**he 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 Apostleship of the Sea (Stella

Maris) in recognition of their offering a 'home way from home' for visiting mariners at around 40 centres around the Australian coast.

- Project grants to assist with the the upkeep and improvement to these centres including, but not limited to, IT facilities, storm damage, maintenance of the centres' buses to transport visiting seafarers between their vessel and the local centre.
- Offering maritime scholarships to those studying to become qualifies seafarers. Plus tall-ship training experience to young people aged 15-19 years who meet AMWS eligibility criteria.
- 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 and Newcastle Port Welfare Committees.

During the nine months ending 30th September, 2023, AMWS distributed grants to the Mission to Seafarers and Apostleship of the Sea (Stella Maris) totalling over \$177,000. In addition, the AMWS made welfare payments to numerous centres around the Australian coast totalling nearly \$37,000 for internet and communication systems and the maintenance costs of buses.



## 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 period January to September 2023 ninety-nine incidents of piracy and armed robbery were reported, globally, compared to ninety incidents during the same period in 2022.

So far in 2023, eighty-five vessels were boarded, nine had attempted attacks, three were hi-jacked and two were fired upon.

Violence towards crew members is amongst the lowest in three decades. Nevertheless, the risk remains with sixty-nine crew members taken hostage, fourteen kidnapped, eight threatened, three injured and one assaulted.

The Gulf of Guinea remains an area of concern with twenty-one reported incidents reported during this period in 2023, compared to fourteen during the same period in 2022.

In Asian waters, the Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery (ReCAAP), of which Australia is a signatory, reported eighty-four incidents of armed robbery against ships in Asia (no incident of piracy was reported),

Violence towards crew members is amongst the lowest in three decades.

compared to sixty-three incidents during the same period in 2022.

These incidents occurred in waters off the coasts of India, Indonesia, Philippines, Straits of Malacca and Singapore (SOMS), Thailand and Vietnam.

The SOMS is of particular concern where fifty-six incidents were reported during the January to September period in 2023, compared to forty-one incidents during the same period in 2022. In most cases ship stores and properties were reported stolen.

The IMB report that increased incidents occurred in the Callao Anchorage in Peru with thirteen incidents during the first nine months of 2023, compared to eight in the same period in 2022, with nine crew taken hostage, one threatened and another assaulted.

The AMWS will continue to monitor and report on the continuing incidents of piracy armed robbery in various parts of the world which impinges on the welfare of seafarers going about their daily duties.



---

## **AMWS' WEBSITE**

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



## AMWS MEMBERSHIP – JUNE 2023

The Hon James Allsop AC  
Captain Ian Anderson  
Mr Karl Andersson  
Mr Stuart Ballantyne  
Mr Rodney Birdsall  
Rev Philip Bradford  
Mr John Brecht  
Mr Ross Brewer  
Captain Robert Buchanan  
Mr Ian Bulmer  
Mr Alex Chisholm  
Mr Howard Clark OAM  
Mr Dean Cook  
Captain Tony Cousins  
Dr Diana Day  
Captain Kate Delisky  
Captain Murray Doyle  
Ms Jeanine Drummond  
Captain Jonathan Drummond  
Captain Frank D'Souza  
Mr Bruce Dunbar  
Mr Neil Edwards  
Mr Toby Felmingham  
Mr D.L. Field  
Mr Matthias Freeman-Lamb  
Ms Jing Gandy  
Ms R Getgood  
Captain Edgar Gold AM  
Mr Ian Gray  
Captain Chris Green  
Mr Jeffrey Hawkins  
Mr Anthony Highfield  
Mr Shane Hobday  
Mr Shaun Holzheimer  
Mr Timothy Hooper  
Mr Robert Iversen

Mr David James OAM  
Miss Vanessa Kachigunda  
Captain Thomas Kelly  
Mrs Wendy King  
Captain Mick Lehmann  
Mr Graham Lightfoot AM  
Mr Paul McGrath  
Mr Geoff McIntyre  
Captain Mario Murzello  
Captain George Nahapiet  
Mr Ross Nicholls  
Mr Joshua O'Brien  
Mr Martin Orchard  
Mr David Parmeter  
Captain Timmy Pavri  
Mr Reg Pieper  
Captain Richard Pocock  
Captain Adam Roberts  
Mr Llew Russell AM  
Mr Conrad Saldanha  
Mr Peter Scott  
Mrs Margaret Smith  
Mr John Spurrett  
Mr Donald Steel  
Captain Alan Tait OAM  
Mr Michael Taman  
Mr Jordan Tofler  
Mr Geoff Walls  
Dr Jacqueline Watts  
Captain Aaron Wild

League of Ancient Mariners (LoAM)  
Maritime Industry Australia Ltd  
Offshore Shipping Specialists Australia Ltd  
Shipping Australia Ltd