

PIVOTING FROM CREW CHANGES TO CREW VACCINATIONS ---

Report for the AMWS Meeting, MTS Sydney , 23/11/2021

The situation with crew changes has evolved a lot since last meeting and is much less challenging now but rather than dwell on this I thought I'd rather report on the evolving crew vaccination situation. Although crew changes are still subject to cancelled flights, ever changing lockdowns and border restrictions and various vaccination requirements, they are happening and crewing agencies are finding ways via international hubs that facilitate flights through.

MSQ and Queensland health have done an exemplary job of crew change protocols in Queensland and I've had discussions with their interim GM but they were a bit sensitive about their protocols being discussed in broader forums.

There are still different rules per state for entry of seafarers both domestic and foreign and now new rules for vaccination certification. MIAL and Shipping Australia are keeping their members advised of the changes that are happening constantly.

Port workers, seafarers and resource industry workers have to mandatorily vaccinate as declared by governments and port authorities in order to enter or work in the port/ship/terminal/offshore platforms.

Vaccination approvals are emerging as an issue

Recognised vaccines were Sinovac, AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Moderna and J&J. From 1st Nov, Covaxin (India), Sinopharm, Astrazeneca (India) recognised. Sputnik (Russia) and a couple of others are still undergoing review

Other issues with vaccinations are mix and match use, unvaccinated amongst vaccinated crew, mandatory vaccination and refusals, dealing with covid amongst fully vaccinated crew and bans on unvaccinated people.

Borders both interstate and international, are slowly opening and Australia is still divided where border policy is concerned. WA will not open till 90% are double dosed which will not be till February next year. NSW and VIC are

already open and QLD will follow in late December. Some states still consider NSW and VIC a risk and have quarantine or vaccination rules to enter.

For foreign crews, VIC was the first to allow fully vaccinated crew to join ships without quarantine, if they go straight from airport to ship. However, PCR testing and quarantine required if joining otherwise. NSW has followed suit with no quarantine double vaccinated crew joining. QLD has yet to allow fully vaccinated crew in without quarantine.

Vaccinations for International Crew

The numbers of International crew vaccinations are still low. They are difficult to count and at very best estimates only 40-45% of the world's seafarers have been fully vaccinated.

The Neptune Declaration, built on data from 10 major shipmanagement companies, show that 41% of seagoing crew have been vaccinated upto November and the rates are going up. Vaccinations for seafarers in India, China and Philippines are now more accessible and joining crews are increasingly fully vaccinated. Singapore has recently announced vaccinations of sea crew on board ocean-going vessels calling at Singapore and signing on to ships in Singapore from Nov 21 to May 22. The vaccination programme is undertaken by the Shipping Tripartite Alliance Resilience Taskforce, an international alliance led by the Singapore Shipping Association.

Although it was announced in August that Qld would vaccinate foreign crews at the airport or before and after quarantine, nothing has materialised. They also do not recognise crew joining a ship in another state fully vaccinated so a ship may still be held in Qld port to complete 14 days if arriving from another hotspot (like Vic).

Only NSW has conducted some vaccinations for foreign crews at the behest of NSW Ports and NSW Health and with the assistance of the Mission to Seafarers and some companies. See video on <https://youtu.be/-ADkR9L0DT0>

On Current Affair, Dr Jamal Rifi from Western Sydney showed how he went aboard a foreign ship, that arrived in Sydney with import cargo, and vaccinated 13 Myanmar crew. [Australia coronavirus vaccination update: Sydney GP doctor boards international ships with COVID-19 vaccines \(nine.com.au\)](https://www.nine.com.au/australia-coronavirus-vaccination-update-sydney-gp-doctor-boards-international-ships-with-covid-19-vaccines)

Origin, CSL and other domestic traders have been vaccinating their ship crew, whilst they do coastal voyages and also diverted their ship to Botany for

vaccinations. NSW Health (St George Hospital and Hombush vaccination hub) were very helpful in co-ordinating teams to administer the vaccines.

Since starting a few months ago, more than 30 ships have been vaccinated in Sydney, Botany, Port Kembla and Newcastle and roughly 360 vaccinations have been given so far. The seafarers have gratefully received, albeit via a little longer process, Australian COVID certificates that assist them in travel and repatriation. The seafarers bus which was not in use since the pandemic began as shoreleave was banned, was converted to a vaccination shelter by taking off some of the back seats.

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The model has been proven and it's hoped that other state governments or port authorities can emulate the example.

[MtS Newcastle models seafarer vaccination strategies - Daily Cargo News \(thedcn.com.au\)](https://www.thedcn.com.au/news/mtS-Newcastle-models-seafarer-vaccination-strategies)

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