



Australian Mariners' Welfare Society

ABN 86 000 008 122

Founded as Sydney Sailors Home – 1863

STATEMENT FROM THE CHAIR OF AUSTRALIAN MARINERS WELFARE SOCIETY

Today, Friday 3rd September is Merchant Navy Day. This is the day when all Australian's are asked to remember the contribution made by our merchant seafarers in wartime and especially all those who lost their lives in the service of the nation.

As we pause to reflect on the sacrifice of Australian merchant seafarers, as a community we should extend our gratitude to all seafarers working today and acknowledge the vital contribution they make to keep trade moving and the economy functioning.

Unfortunately, today's seafarers also face challenging circumstances, not due to war but due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

A critical issue at present is the need to ensure all seafarers are given the opportunity to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

It is widely acknowledged that In the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, vaccination of populations is a key step. Seafarers can be considered a unique population with their own needs, constraints and requirements for international travel.

To protect the health of seafarers and the general public, and to minimise disruptions to trade and global supply chains, vaccination of seafarers is considered essential. This is particularly important for Australia as we are so dependent on international shipping not only for imports and exports but domestic shipping services as well.

Vaccination of seafarers in their home countries is the preferred option but it is critical steps now be taken to permit access to vaccination for seafarers from all countries while they are in Australia. In this regard AMWS acknowledges and applauds the recent announcement from Maritime Safety Queensland that it is working with Queensland Health to progress vaccination options for international seafarers visiting Queensland ports

Merchant mariners and their families have suffered through the pandemic due to the restrictions on the movement of seafarers. We have seen this both domestically and internationally; with ship's crews unable to return home and take leave; and with those seafarers stuck at home enduring great economic hardship because they are unable to join their vessel. Ensuring the crews of ships in Australia have access to COVID vaccination is a critical step in improving the welfare of seafarers. AMWS calls on Governments at all levels to follow the lead of Queensland and take all necessary steps to resolve this issue.

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