

## Melbourne Branch

The Log  
The Monthly Newsletter of the Melbourne Branch of  
The Company of Master Mariners of Australia Limited



**NEXT MEETING**  
**CANCELLED Due to COVID-19**  
**DETAILS OF ZOOM**  
**MEETING TO BE ADVISED**

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## From the Branch Master

I have just re read my column in the August 2020 edition of the LOG. Unfortunately nothing has changed. A year ago because of the COVID-19 lockdown, branch meetings were being cancelled, the Commemoration of Operation Pedestal was cancelled and there were doubts over the Merchant Navy Day and Seafarers Church Services. The ITF were calling for more action to get seafarers home at the end of their contracts. As I said nothing has changed.

The main article in the LOG was about the Spanish Flu. The 1918-19 Influenza Pandemic infected an estimated 500 million people, about 1/3 of the world's population and killed about 50 million. At that time Australia had a population of 5 million of whom 20% became infected and 15,000 died. To deal with the pandemic the population was vaccinated, state borders were closed, people wore masks and large gatherings were banned. Nothing has changed.

Subject to COVID restrictions this year on Merchant Navy Day, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, a memorial service will be held in the Mission to Seafarers Chapel. This will be followed by a BBQ and for catering purposes you are asked to RSVP.

A wreath laying service will be held in the sanctuary of the Shrine of Remembrance at 1400 hrs.

The main article in this edition of the LOG is the Neptune Declaration. The Sydney and WA branches of COMMA have signed up to the Declaration but the Melbourne Court believes any acceptance of the Declaration should be made at the Federal level and not by individual branches signing up. The matter is on the agenda for the next Federal Court meeting.

COVID restrictions have caused us to cancel the August meeting at the Mail Exchange Hotel. A Zoom meeting will be held and details will be advised latter.

Keep Safe Keep Well



**AUSTRALIAN  
MERCHANT  
NAVY DAY  
MEMORIAL  
SERVICE**

**3 SEPTEMBER 2021  
11:30 AM**

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- MEMORIAL CHAPEL OF SAINT PETER
- MISSION TO SEAFARERS
- 717 FLINDERS ST., DOCKLANDS, VIC., 3008

This Remembrance Service is dedicated to the service and sacrifice of Australian merchant seamen who manned ships in all parts of the world during all conflicts and all theaters of war.

The symbolism of "The Vacant Chair" represents all those who cannot be with us.

RSVP to:  
[admin@missiontoseafarers.com.au](mailto:admin@missiontoseafarers.com.au)

**AUSTRALIAN MERCHANT NAVY DAY  
MEMORIAL SERVICE  
3 SEPTEMBER 2021 at 11:30 AM**

We will be holding a BBQ post service - Please RSVP for catering purposes.

Buses to the Shrine will be available for the 2pm service.

\*Note all activities are subject to COVID restrictions and may be cancelled at short notice.

# The Neptune Declaration

The maritime industry carries 90% of global trade but its front line workers, the seafarers, have suffered significantly because of Covid-19.

Because of a lack of internationally adopted health protocols authorities have perceived seafarers as a Covid-19 risk and this has resulted in limited opportunities for seafarers to have shore leave and for ship owners to arrange crew changes. Hundreds of thousands of seafarers have been impacted and left stranded on ships after the expiry of their contracts.

Fatigue after extended periods at sea can effect seafarer's physical and mental health and this has been describe by UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres as a humanitarian and safety crisis.

Bodies such as the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO) have lobbied governments for safe crew changes and on 1st December 2020 the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution on "International Cooperation to address challenges faced by seafarers as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic to support global supply chains"

In January this year in a further attempt to resolve the crew change problem the Global Maritime Forum drew up the "Neptune Declaration on Seafarers well-being and crew change". So far it has been signed by over 800 companies and organisations worldwide. The Neptune Declaration recognises the industry's responsibility and sets out a plan to resolve it by urging the implementation of the following four main actions to address the crisis:

## **Recognise seafarers as key workers and give them priority to Covid-19 vaccines.**

As key workers seafarers would have priority access to Covid-19 vaccines irrespective of their nationality. Protocols should be developed to correctly administer and certify vaccinations as well as establishing a standardised format for health passes that contain tamper-proof information about vaccination and testing status to facilitate crew changes.

**Establish and implement gold standard health protocols based on existing best practice.**

The maritime industry and governments should implement the “Industry recommended framework of protocols for ensuring safe ship crew changes and travel during the coronavirus ( Covid-19)” The framework issued in May 2020 and recognised by the IMO sets out industry best practices including Covid-19 testing and quarantine requirements as well as operations to safeguard seafarers.

**Increase collaboration between ship operators and charterers to facilitate crew changes.**

Ship operators and charterers should collaborate to facilitate crew changes by sharing information that allows crew changes to be carried out smoothly and avoids legal impediments. No Charter contracts should contain clauses preventing necessary crew changes from being carried out.

**Ensure air connectivity between key maritime hubs for seafarers**

The aviation and maritime industries should work together to ensure airlift capacity between major crew changing hubs and seafaring nations. Universally accepted standards should be established for the validation of trusted health data for seafarers to facilitate border crossing and ensure the long-term resilience of air connectivity.

The Neptune Declaration has received wide support from the industry as can be seen from the list of signatories but as the IMO legal affairs director Frederick J. Kenney pointed out only a handful of countries have actively designated seafarers as key workers. It is one of the cornerstones that can assist in facilitating crew changes and move them up the priority list to get vaccinated through their domestic programmes.

Lars Robert Pedersen the deputy secretary general of BIMCO said “Nation states around the world take sovereign decisions in their best interest – we suppose- to protect their populations from the Covid-19 disease. All too often these actions affect the ability of people movement across borders and within countries- movements which are necessary for seafarers to get to and from ships”. This was supported by the General Secretary of the International Workers Federation (ITF), Stephen Cotton who

said "With the rise of new variants of COVID we are sadly seeing governments backsliding and bringing in new restrictions.

In a press release issued following their signing of the Neptune Declaration, Ports Australia, said that while the Federal Government had enacted its class exemption process for maritime crew the States enforce their own restrictions and protocols causing complex and often near unsolvable challenges for cross border travel and crew changeovers. Both Ports Australia and MIAL regard Maritime Safety Queensland (MSQ) as the leader in facilitating crew changeovers. Queensland is the easiest jurisdiction to conduct crew changes because of MSQ's stringent safe corridor transport of crew and COVID-19 testing regime. Queensland has a dedicated hotel quarantine system for seafarers. Mariners flying into Queensland are not affected by passenger caps as the authorities have set up a separate system to manage seafarers. This does not apply in other jurisdictions. MSQ General Manager Angus Mitchel said Queensland on average conducts 250 changeovers per week and since May 2020 has facilitated 9646 crew changeovers spanning 823 vessels.

In an article in MAX Magazine Teresa Lloyd the CEO of MIAL wrote "A move to COVID Normal cannot happen in the Maritime industry until the states and territories have a singular set of rules to manage risk.....the maritime industry needs a national standard".

Despite having to deal with chaotic and bureaucratic systems and at times unhelpful Officials crew changes are regularly conducted in our ports. The Procedure in Melbourne is:

**Crew Change (Sign On)** Once the mandatory 14 day hotel quarantine period has been served on signers proceed direct to the ship if it is within 48 hours of departure otherwise they must remain in quarantine until within that time frame.

**Crew Change (Sign Off)** crew go directly to the airport for flight home provided the flight leaves within 24 hours otherwise they go into quarantine.

Priority COVID testing is done and they get their results within a few hours.

Testing includes nasal/throat swab as well as blood samples.

All travel to and from ship is done in an eight seater van, with authorised officer accompanying them in the car or in a separate vehicle. ABF and Police are also present at times.

## Death during crew change



A crew member from the Liberian bulk carrier “Formosabulk Cement” has died during a crew change transfer operation off Point Cartwright.

It has been reported that he fell from a pilot ladder and was caught between the hulls of the bulk carrier and the boat which was to take the men ashore.

The ITF say the ship was bound for a NSW port but because of that states restrictive health orders the crew change was conducted off the Queensland coast.

AMSA have detained the ship while the incident is investigated.

## Focused Inspection Campaign

From time to time AMSA conducts Focused Inspection Campaigns (FIC) on aspects of maritime safety. The subjects of recent campaigns were livestock ships in January this year and the proper stowage of cargo containers in May 2020.

The latest campaign which will run from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2021 will focus on Safety of Navigation, specifically the level of compliance with the safety of navigation requirements of international conventions and the familiarity of the masters and officers with their processes for ensuring safety of navigation.

The FIC will apply to foreign and Australian flagged ships and will be undertaken as part of normal Port or Flag State Control inspections. Inspectors will complete a check

list (see next page) when conducting focused inspections so that AMSA can collate and report on the outcomes.

## Checklist for safety of navigation focused inspection campaign

AMSA surveyor's will be using the checklist below when inspecting ships as part of our safety of navigation focused inspection campaign.

Use this checklist to prepare for the inspection. Below is a sample of the focused inspection campaign checklist.

No.	Question	Yes	No	NA
1	Has the passage plan been appraised to cover the whole voyage / berth to berth and readily available on primary and back-up navigation systems?			
2	Does the SMS contain guidance on best practice watchkeeping, including appropriate Under Keel Clearance (UKC) and safety contour settings?			
3	Are official up to date navigational charts (ENCs) being used onboard for navigation?			
4	Has the previous voyage been executed and monitored in accordance with the plan?			
5	Can watchkeeping officers demonstrate familiarization with ECDIS?			
6	On ships with ECDIS installed, can the alarm sound be demonstrated?			
7	Is the bridge visibility obstructed by cargo, cargo gear or other obstructions forward of the beam?			
8	Is there evidence of an effective lookout being maintained at all times in accordance with COLREGs?			
9	Is a pilot transfer arrangement provided onboard in accordance with SOLAS Chapter V, Reg 23?			
10	Are required inputs to ECDIS connected and configured correctly Gyro, Continuous position fixing system (CPS) and speed and distance measuring device)?			
11	Is there evidence of periodic testing of navigation equipment during the watch?			
<b>Post inspection</b>		<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>NA</b>
12	<i>Have deficiencies been issued as part of the FIC? (Form B)</i>			
13	<i>Has the ship been detained as part of this FIC?</i>			
Comments:				