

Melbourne Branch

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



NEXT MEETING

1830 hrs 30th March 2022

Mail Exchange Hotel

Speakers

Capt. Sheldon Rodrigues & Stephen D'Souza

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From the Branch Master

Last month we held our first meeting for the year and while only 12 attended it did establish that we are back in business and intend to operate as normal as COVID will allow.

This month's meeting is the Branch AGM and will see the election of a new Branch Master and Branch Secretary. After 14 years as Branch Secretary Alex has found that the demands of her business makes it difficult for her to devote the time to the position that she feels it deserves. We are thankful for the great contribution Alex has made to the running of the branch.

The Federal AGM will be held at the beginning of April by telephone conference call. The administration of the Company at the Federal level has suffered over the last year due to the Federal Secretary not being able to devote time to the task because of the travel requirements of his employment. To improve the situation an assistant secretary has been appointed to take over many of the Federal Secretaries duties.

The speakers at this month's meeting will be Sheldon Rodrigues and Stephen D'Souza from Ports Victoria who will speak about the events that resulted in Melbourne VTS receiving the AMSA 2020-21 VTS Award.

When I obtained my Masters Certificate 50 years ago I was issued with a heavy duty folding certificate which was to last me all my life. 20 years latter to comply with STCW I was given a less impressive passport style certificate and the name of my qualification was to my mind also degraded. I went from "Master of a Foreign Going Steamship" to Master Class1. From 1st February AMSA will replace the current passport style certificates with plastic cards similar to a credit card. This they claim will be a more durable, secure and portable certificate of competency. It will provide consistency across the range of certificates issued by AMSA and reflects their commitment to modernising services for seafarers and delivering a faster certification process. After all the study and passing exams and you finish up with a plastic card. So much for the prestige of the Master Mariner.

The Red Ensign

The following was received from Peter Varani in response to some items in last month's LOG.

I am writing to tender my support for the proposal to fly the Red Ensign on all Public Buildings during Merchant Navy Day on Sept 3rd this and every year thereafter. At the same time there should also be a concerted media coverage to bring this day to the notice of the public at large, who in the main are totally ignorant of its significance.

The Red Ensign, (or the Red Duster, as it was affection ally known for many years) could be seen flying from the staff of ships all around the world. Sadly this is no longer the case.

The Ensign should only ever be worn by Merchant Navy vessels, except for special occasions such as being discussed. I was therefore more than disgusted to see during recent street protest meetings around the country the flag being waved, torn and trodden on by the protestors. I doubt any of them realized what they were doing, but they should have been brought to account nonetheless.

Finally, I am concerned but not surprised, to see that it is necessary to apply to no less than four Government Departments for permission to fly the Ensign, but that is the way things are done in Melbourne.

With regard to the following article in the LOG re the resurgence of the US Merchant Marine, I think we have already had that discussion in relation to our own fleet. Whilst we have globalization, cheap and liberal registration rules and even cheaper crew labour, it will never happen.

Kind Regards

Peter Varani

An article on Steve Harris' letter on the desecration of the Red Ensign is in the December 2021 LOG.

Member's letters are always welcome Hon. Editor

February Speakers Summary



The speakers at the February meeting were from the Stella Maris Seafarers Centre Melbourne. The President Seamus Quinn and General Manager Lee-Anne Diano spoke about the difficulties in providing support services for seafarers during the COVID restrictions.

Being a charity they rely on sponsors and volunteers. Many of their normal fund raising activities were curtailed due to the pandemic. The only Government assistance they received was two months of Job Keeper. Stella Maris operates with a staff of four and has 38 volunteers who they can call on.

One of their major activities is arranging COVID vaccinations for seafarers. There is a steady demand for this service as only about 60% of seafarers are fully vaccinated when they join their ship. There is a difficulty providing seafarers vaccinated in Melbourne with a vaccination certificate that is recognised when they return home. Because seafarers are not allowed ashore the Stella Maris staff assist them by doing their shopping. This may range from everyday items like toiletries to coffee machines, TV's and entertainment systems.

Seafarer's mental health has suffered during COVID and Stella Maris works with other organisations such as Beyond Blue to provide assistance to those with mental health problems.

In response to a question both Seamus and Lee-Anne were emphatic that there will not be a merger between Stella Maris and the Mission to Seafarers. While both charities cooperate and assist each other when required, to merge would be going too far even though there could be financial benefits.

What was particularly interesting were some of their stories about the lengths they have to go to get around government red tape to deliver help to seafarers in need of assistance.

Stella Maris expects to see a growth in shipping and with it an increase in demand for their services. With this in mind a major focus this year will be to ensure Shipping Agencies have a proper understanding of Stella Maris and its wide range of support services.

Seamus and Lee-Anne were presented with a donation from the Branch to assist them with their work with seafarers.

Applications for Membership

The following applications for membership have been received

Aaron Lewis has applied for Ordinary Membership of the WA Branch. Aaron is a Master with Australian Offshore Solutions

Ryan Easter has applied for Associate Membership of the WA Branch. Ryan is a Chief Officer with Solstad Offshore

Ola Olubowa has applied for Ordinary Membership of the Melbourne Branch. Ola is a Marine Technical Advisor with Viva Energy.

Australian Transport Safety Bureau

In an article published on the Shipping Australia Limited Website, Angus Mitchell, the Chief Commissioner and CEO of the Australian Transport Safety Bureau (ATSB) wrote about the role and nature of accident investigations and commented on some of the more recent incidents they have investigated.

The ATSB was formed in 1999 with the amalgamation of the Maritime Accident Investigation Unit with the Bureau of Air Safety Investigations. Since then it has conducted over 200 investigations into shipping accidents and incidents.

Angus Mitchell is an ex Seaman Officer in the Royal Australian Navy who joined Sydney Ports as Deputy Harbour Master before becoming Executive Director of NSW Maritime. His next appointment was as General Manager of Maritime Safety Queensland which involved overseeing the movement of vessels in and out of Queensland's 21 ports and responsibility for compliance activities and safety investigations for Australia's largest recreational maritime fleet. When he took up his appointment with ATSB on 2nd September 2021 he became the first Chief Commissioner and CEO to come from a maritime industry background.

In the article Angus Mitchell makes the point that ATSB conduct independent "no blame" investigations which focus on identifying safety issues to improve transport safety.

ATSB may have a "no blame" policy but in February AMSA used the ATSB Preliminary report into the loss of containers from "APL England" to pursue its prosecution of the ship's Master.

On recent investigations he noted that the investigation into the grounding of "Roebuck Bay" revealed issues with ECDIS training and how relatively large features are represented on electronic charts.

The investigation into the fire on "Iron Chieftain" resulted in a recommendation that fire detection and extinguishing systems be installed in cargo handling spaces on self-unloading bulk carriers.

ATSB believes its independent role best serves industry in striving for continuous improvements in transport safety.



THE AUSTRALIAN MERCHANT NAVY AWARDS COUNCIL

Media Release February 2022

The Australian Merchant Navy Awards Council was formed by assembly as an autonomous entity on the second of June 1998 by merchant seamen for the benefit of merchant seamen and the nation.

The Awards Council functioned continuously for almost 19 years without impediment until the death of its founding and tireless Executive Officer Captain D. A. Smith RFD* RD 1 April 2017.

In late 2018 discussions commenced with industry parties interested in continuing the role of the Awards Council.

It has taken to December 2021 to be in a position to re-launch the AMNAC, and it has only been possible with the support of the maritime unions and the original designer of the awards.

The Awards Council's role continues "to ensure due national and community recognition of the contribution made by merchant seamen to the development and prosperity of the nation in both peace and war."

The AMNAC achieves its role through the provision of awards recognising:

- The Australian Merchant Navy Service Cross, for 15 years' service in the Australian Merchant Navy,
- The Australian Merchant Navy Meritorious Medal, for personal contribution to the Merchant Navy, and
- The Commendation for Achievement, for contribution in any sphere of maritime related activity.

The Awards Council's members (as of 1 February 2022) are:

- Shane Bryant, AIMPE – Member
- Ian Gray, Independent – Member and Chairperson
- Jason Lewis, MUA - Member
- Nathan Niven, AIMPE – Member and Registrar
- Ben Small – Member and Patron
- Brent Warhurst, AMOU – Member
- Steven Wenban, Ports – Member

For more information about the AMNAC or how to apply for an award recognising your service or to nominate a person for meritorious contribution to the industry see our website www.amnac.org or email admin@amnac.org

Postal correspondence can be addressed to the AMNAC's Registrar at:

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